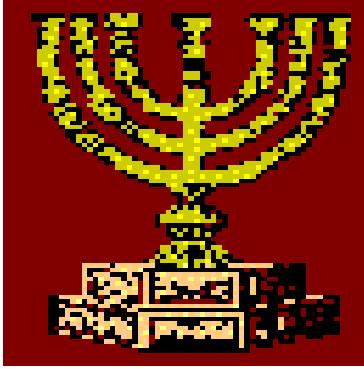


The Menorah



Seven Spirits of God
Seven eyes of the Lord
Seven thunders
Seven trumpets
Seven horns
Seven angels
Seven lamps

A pattern for church Structure

"The seven candlesticks are the seven churches (REV 1:20)"

The Menorah (candlestick) is the singular most comprehensive Biblical symbol of the church. In his familiar sermon on the mount, Jesus said: "Ye are the light of the world . . . Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick;" (Mt 5:14-15)

If one understands the Hebrew mind of our Lord, there can be no mistaking the reference that Jesus is making is to the Menorah when He said "Ye are the light of the world". This conclusion is reinforced by his encouraging us to place our light on a "candlestick".

The most dominant numerical pattern displayed by the candlestick is the seven lamps. Universally, the number seven is the theological number representing God's fullness, completeness and perfection. As a point of interest, the following are a few biblical references to groups of seven: The Seven Spirits of God are of particular significance to us since they are referenced more often in scripture than any other. If the church is to reflect the fullness of God (Eph 1:23, Eph 3:19), these seven spirits must be operating through it. When this happens, the church becomes, in effect, a flaming candlestick sending forth light into all the world (the community - our world). With these the church possesses the anointing and power to go forth blessing, conquering and overcoming.

"And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and the seven lamps thereon, ..."

Then he answered and spake unto me, saying not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord." ZeEC 4:2, 6

What are the seven spirits of God?

"And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might , the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." Isa. 11:2

These seven words descriptively identify; ". . . the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." (Rev. 5:6) This sevenfold anointing upon the church results in bringing spiritual and numerical growth to it and high profile to the truth in the immediate community and beyond, or sets the church "on a hill" as it were. (Mt 5:14)

How does this structurally manifest itself?

"Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars." Pr 9:1

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God." (Rev.3:1)

"Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." (Ac 6:3)

The scripture teaches that the body of Christ is the house of God (1 Tim 3:13). The suggestion here is that the fundamental pattern of structure for the local manifestation of a Biblical church are these seven pillars. These "pillars" are manifested as seven individuals upon whom rests an anointing of a specific nature.

Beyond the pastoral leadership and elders of the church, there should be seven individuals identified as representing these seven spirits. Each individuals God given talents, interests and skills will demonstrate the nature of their anointing in this group of seven. These seven individuals are the seven eyes (observers)and seven horns (motivational forces) of the church. (Rev. 5:6)

Jos 6:4 And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams' horns: These seven priestly ministries were foreshadowed by those who bore the Ark of The Covenant across the Jordan river as Joshua went to conquer the promised land. Each of these seven leaders in the church will have the responsibility to define, promote, maintain and give practical direction to those of like spirit in the church. They ensure that each of these seven spirits of God is consistently operative both in the church and in the city. They keep their particular lamp trimmed so that the seven lamps or spirits are always burning in the body. When each of these spirits are clearly defined, the process of plugging people into their most compatible activity will be easily facilitated.

Defining the seven spirits:

"John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you , and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; (Rev.1:4)"

These seven spirits alluded to in the very opening of the book of Revelation are highly credited with conveying a divine message to John and the gentile churches of Asia. The author of this book seems persistent in drawing our attention to the existence of these seven spirits and makes the reference four times early-on. Seven messages were sent from God through seven angels (spirits) to seven churches. The nature of each of these seven spirits can be ascertained by the content of his message of concern. This is also a "life" truth. One can know what anothers pursuits and interests are in life through their conversation. If they are a carpenter, an archeologist or a aeronautical engineer their interests and speech betray them every time. So is it with an individual who is highly motivated by one of the seven spirits of God.

The seven Spirits of God are identified with some specificity in two places, Revelation Chapters 2&3 and Isaiah 11:1-2. We will discover that there is a close correlation between the personality and character descriptions of these seven spirits found in the seven letters to the seven churches and the one word description given to us by Isaiah. The following is a comparative chart demonstrating this correlation.

Some, but not all, of the words appearing under the heading of NATURE are found in the seven letters to the churches of Asia.

<u>Church</u> (Rev. 2&3)	<u>Nature of spirit</u>	<u>Corresponding description</u> (Isaiah 11:1-2)
1. Ephesus	Love	Lord
2. Smyrna	Preservation	Might
3. Pergamos	Remembrance	Counsel
4. Thyatira	Revelation	Understanding
5. Sardis	Perfection	Wisdom
6. Philadelphia	Publishing	Knowledge
7. Laodicea	Restoration	Fear of the Lord

However, a thorough investigation of these letters will reveal that those principles are definitely expressed in them. Also, as we make a comparative study of Isaiah and Revelation, the correlation becomes apparent.

What are their practical manifestation?

1. Spirit of the Lord or Love:

This spirit burns from the center lamp of the Menorah. Historically, it is know as the "Servant Lamp" or Shamash. It is from this spirit that all others emerge. It serves to hold all things in tact. 1Jo 4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Since "God is love" it is the word love that best describes the very essence of who and what our Lord is. "For God so loved the world" says it thoroughly. This spirit is redemptive in nature. It is the underlying motivation and passion for missions. It compels and propels us into the "great commission".

The spirit of love wrote his letter to the Ephesus church with the complaint "You have left your first love." The book of Ephesian is almost totally devoted to the need for love within the body of Christ. Jesus Himself said in "Joh 13:35 "By this shall all [men] know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

However, our first demonstration of love must be toward one another in the body of Christ. This is the "first love" which is referred to in Revelation 2:1. We can never truly love the lost until we have love for each another. A Church that supports "missions" and is active in declaring the redemptive gospel to the "lost" can succeed only as we maintain it's first manifestation. You can not hate your brother and simultaneously love the lost. By love shall all men know . . .

The individual in a church who is anointed with this pillar spirit manifests a burden for the lost, for missions and for cultivating Godly devotion to each other. This spirit of love wards off the spirit of division not by design but simply by temperament.

2. The spirit of Preservation or might:

The secret to spiritual longevity is to be "Strong in the Lord and in the power of his might".

We are promised that our whole "spirit and soul and body [can] be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.(1 Thes. 5:23). This theme is declared in the eternal priestly benediction which proclaims "The lord bless you and keep (preserve) you . . ." The nature of God's covenant with Noah was one of preservation, that of being saved from destruction. Satan is the destroyer who is intent on crushing us all. Some members are stronger than others. However, even the strongest are challenged. We have need one of another at such times. Still, there are weak members of the body who's "Feeble knees hang down".

The individual anointed with this pillar spirit is one who specializes in spiritual ICU's (intensive care units). They keep the body posted on the needs of the weaker. They organize visitation. They are concerned over abortion, the homeless and the poor and forsaken. They recognize the unrecognized and honor the less honorable. They concern themselves with meeting the need of the people. They notice visitors and seek to embrace them through warm welcome. They follow up with contact by phone or correspondence or visitation. This spirit preserves the fruit: Joh 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and [that] your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

3. The spirit of remembrance or counsel.

Heb 2:1 "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let [them] slip." Remembrance is a vital, indeed a marvelous, part of our brain capacity. However, it is dependent entirely upon stimuli. That is, it must be prompted. To re-member simply means to re-connect or put back together. This is what counseling is all about. Counseling is an effort to re-establish or re-connect the order of things in our thought patterns & processes.

The Biblical Feast days (Passover, Pentecost and tabernacles)were instituted as a liturgical calendar so that we may be reminded of the goodness of God. Jesus said of the Communion Supper "This do in remembrance of me." In the natural course of events we celebrate birthdays, anniversaries and holidays of all description to stimulate our memory. Signs and symbols such as the cross and the candlestick or a dove facilitate recall of vital truth. The Sabbath was instituted through the fourth commandment for a remembrance practice.

The individual with this pillar spirit in a local church is very active in counseling. They are approachable resident counselors in whom you can confide. They are individuals who keep the church posted on upcoming events and coordinate celebrations (remembrance practices) stressing their significance.

4. The spirit of revelation or understanding

Eph 1:17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The church of Thyatira was seduced into believing false teaching because they did not have the spirit of revelation. Truth is not acquired through investigation, interpretation nor translation or even education, as important as these things may be, but rather through divine disclosure entirely.

An individual anointed with this spirit in the local body grasps the principle of divine truth to become a quality teacher. They are the superintendent of the teaching effort of the church. They may even be an interpreter of dreams. An individual with a prophetic spirit.

5. The spirit of perfection (maturity) or wisdom.

Eph 1:17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: This is a progressive spirit. It produces a commitment and is a driving force to do better. It produces spiritual growth and maturity. It transforms us into givers and not takers only. By this spirit we are weaned from the milk of Gods word and able to receive strong meat [deeper truth].

The individual anointed with this pillar spirit is a perfectionist with wisdom. They insist on things being done properly and seek ways to improve and devise ways to encourage people to fulfill obligations and become responsible. They are encouragers of the people in what God has called them to do. They are not judges and critics but observers and motivators. They encourage the body to be doers of the word and not hearer only. They say "Let's do it!" They insist that "All things be done decently and in order". They are "diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." They are business managers.

6. The spirit of publishing or knowledge

This is the spirit of the scribes. Without this spirit we would not have a Bible.

Ps 68:11 The Lord gave the word: great [was] the company of those that published [it].

This is a "key" spirit that opens and shuts doors. The declaration of the word, either written or verbal, is a power force. By it, ideas and thoughts become reality.

The individual anointed with this pillar spirit wants to get the word out through publications. They are motivated to advertise the church and it's message through every existing medium (radio, television, newspaper, billboards, etc.). They monitor the literature department and see to it that the word gets published. These people are driven to see the earth filled with the knowledge of the Lord.

7. The spirit of Fear or restoration

It is a healthy fear of the Lord (not necessarily dread but perhaps respect) that helps maintain a good relationship with him. The objective in conducting revivals in the church is to make this emphasis and by it people are restored or renewed. This is what the spirit was attempting to do with the Laodicean church (Rev. 3:14-15).

Re 3:14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

Acts 9:31 "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied."

The individual with this pillar spirit in the local body refuses to "write people off." They maintain relationships with those who have fallen or deserted the body in faith and hope of restoration. If the spirit of preservation does not retain them, this spirit will pursue and retrieve them. They are coordinators of local revivals Also they maintain a consciousness within the body of the need to pursue the prophetic restoration message of our time and encourage the pastor in it's declaration.

These are the seven eyes and horns or spirits that are manifested in Christ, then through the Church to the world. Only when these spirits a burning through us personally and through the Church corporately can we truly become the "Light of the world."

"Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows:... He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities...the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:4-6).

The above scripture is God's answer to the sin question and His provision for humanity's fallen condition whether Jew or Gentile. Reliance upon and acceptance of the Messiah (Jesus) is the only true way of faith for man, regardless of race or nationality. No man can circumvent God's redemptive plan. It is needful to say this before proceeding with our subject, since the question of redemption invariably arises when one attempts to assert any possible uniqueness attached to the Jew in the purposes of God today. To suggest that any people, other than the Church, could have a favorable status with God violates what many Christians have come to believe.

Here we hope to offer a balanced view of the controversies that surround the Jewish question and the role that Israel and the Jews play in the divine scheme of things in our time. Much prayer and caution have gone into this composition so that its scriptural and historic integrity might be preserved. Through the centuries the issue of Israel and the Church has proven to be one of great contention. This book offers some reconciling perspectives for both those who are enthusiastic about national Israel and those who have great reservations as to its spiritual significance.

We face an either/or situation. Either God is at work with the Jewish people to regather them to their land and restore their nation or He is not. If He is, it is vitally important that we all, to some degree, become supportive and involved in what He is doing. If on the other hand He is not, the Church would be wasting its time, misrepresenting God's will and perhaps playing into the hands of Satanic forces to involve us in some questionable way. Rather than be burdened with taking a definitive position, some are choosing to plead ignorance and down play or minimize the importance of the whole issue, hoping to absolve themselves of any obligations to act responsibly. However, decisions must be made. There will be no "middle of the roaders." Everyone must eventually take a position since God has surely done so. God does not wink at ignorance (Acts 17:30). The Church must know the truth and be a participant. We believe the truth of this controversy can be ascertained by the answer to one all important question: "Who are THE SEED OF ABRAHAM - Christians or Jews?" If you are not sure, this book will prove to be stabilizing. If your mind is made up, it will either reinforce your position, challenge it or change it.

THE SEED OF ABRAHAM

(Conflicting Theologies)

Historic controversies continue to stir within the body of Christ today concerning the Biblical distinction between the Jewish people and the Christian believers. Which of these two groups should legitimately be considered "The Chosen of God?" Who, from God's perspective are the "Seed of Abraham" today? Contending "winds of doctrine" are tossing many believers to and fro, inflicting considerable damage.

Unless this dilemma on the issue is quickly resolved and greater clarity of understanding surfaces, a time of severe doctrinal crisis for the Church is inevitable and in fact is already in evidence.

The most prominent of polarized positions on the subject might best be identified as "Replacement Theology" and the "Theology of Continuation." The Replacement concept contends that the ministry of Jesus rendered a situation wherein the Church totally replaced ISRAEL as the people of God, creating a "Spiritual Israel" or seed of Abraham, and that He no longer deals with the natural Jew in a divine way. The Continuation concept maintains that although the Church was a spiritual body of believers birthed by Jesus through the New Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant with the Jew was not terminated nor cancelled but rather was reinforced and remains binding upon them today. Therefore God continues to have plan and purpose for the natural Jew for Abraham's sake. This, it is contended, has affected their movements as a nation of people and will ultimately conform them to a divine destiny which is reflected in their regathering to the land and restoration to statehood.

Of course there are varying shades of persuasion between the two concepts. Each has merit but an extreme of either position must be cautioned against. For example, an extremist on "Replacement" might suggest that the Jew is unredeemable. While an extremist on "Continuation" might suggest that through their national suffering, Jews have now become their own redeemer or savior. However, there is some middle ground available which can reconcile both positions that seem intrinsically pitted against each other. All too often, one side tends to ignore the persuasive points of the other, preferring to vociferously emphasize their own. The truth often lies between two extremes. The ultimate conclusion must be definitive and absolute, but the rationale that leads to the proper conclusion may be somewhat complex. A little stripping away of some traditional ideas should help to bring it into clearer focus.

REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY

(Its Roots)

Of the two concepts, perhaps "Replacement Theology" is the least scriptural, yet the most universally accepted and taught by the Church. Why? Let us examine its origin and the circumstances which gave it birth.

The concept of "Replacement" is a brainchild of necessity born of historical crisis whose roots can be traced back to the formative years of the first century Church. This crisis was more specifically an "identity crisis" which troubled the infant Church for at least the first ten years of her existence. So close was its identity with the nation of Israel in character and faith, that for many years the Church was simply considered a "sect of the Jews." The only distinction was its belief in Yahshua (Jesus) as Messiah. Believers were not known as "Christians" (a term created by their detractors) until about 42 A.D. (Acts 11:26). Through the process of time, the demand for a clearer distinction between believing and unbelieving Jews increased. Eventually that body of believers consisting of both Jews and Gentiles, adopted the identity "Christian Church" which continues with us today. While this went far toward resolving the identity crisis, it also set the stage for a polarization between Israel and the Church, or Christians and Jews that has been warlike ever since. No extreme was spared to disassociate one from the other, laying the ground work for systematic replacement theology taught in the Church.

The doctrine of "replacement" not only asserted the replacement of the Jews by the Church, but presented a laundered gospel which deleted everything Jewish from the doctrine and liturgy of the Church. The historic Church was so victimized by this anti-Semitic concept, that for the most part it remains entrenched in it today.

In the post-Pauline period an entire catechism was developed, dedicated to the popularization of extreme "Replacement Theology". It was carefully tailored so as to entirely strip the Jewish people of their identity with the Covenant of Abraham, making the Church the sole heir of God's promises, concerns and covenants. After Paul's departure, church leaders took advantage of some of his statements that the Covenant of Grace replaced the Covenant of the Law (Hebrews 8:13), reading into them the notion that the reforming work of Christ (Hebrews 9:10) also cancelled the Abrahamic covenant with the Jews and that they were now "rejected" and had been "replaced" by the Church. Nothing could be further from the truth. No scripture of the New Testament fosters such an idea, not even Hebrews 8:13 (as we shall show). It is important to bear in mind that we are dealing with three separate and distinct covenants.

There is an enormous difference between the Covenant of Abraham, the Covenant of the Law and the Covenant of Grace (New Covenant). There were more covenants than just the two commonly referred to as the "Old" and the "New".

THE VANISHING COVENANT

"in that He saith, a NEW COVENANT, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away" (Hebrews 8:13).

The Old Covenant referred to here is not the Covenant of Abraham nor even a restatement of it as some scholars contend. It was a separate covenant made with Moses and the children of Israel at Sinai (the law). It might even be referred to as the Mosaic covenant since Moses (not Abraham) was its administrator.

Those who feel that God is no longer committed to the Jewish people in covenant, quite often invoke this passage of scripture to conclude that the Abrahamic Covenant is no longer in force. A close inspection, however, reveals that it has nothing whatever to do with the covenant that God made with Abraham. How can we know this? We are assured of it by the following scripture: "For finding fault with them, He saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers (Moses and the Elders) in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt ..." (Hebrews 8:8-9).

Clearly, this scripture is speaking of the Covenant of the Law, not the Covenant of Abraham. However, most Christians do not know the difference between the Mosaic Covenant (Law) and the Abrahamic Covenant. Their understanding is, for the most part, limited to the common understanding that there was only an Old Testament (Covenant) and the New Testament (Covenant). Their impression is that the NEW replaced the OLD and (presumably) that ended the matter. Abraham's Covenant tends to get lost in the shuffle. There were other personal covenants made between God and man throughout Biblical history (seven in all), but the three primary covenants to concern us are: the Abrahamic, the Mosaic and the Messianic Covenants. They are as follows:

ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

(unconditional)

"And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an EVERLASTING covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, THE LAND wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God" (Genesis 17:7,8).

MOSAIC COVENANT

(conditional)

"And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights: he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments" (Exodus 34:28).

MESSIANIC COVENANT

(Grace)

"This is my blood of the (New) Covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28 NIV).

The Messianic Covenant of Grace did indeed replace the redemptive effects of the Mosaic Covenant of the Law but not the Covenant of Abraham. It is important that this be made perfectly clear, because this is where much of the confusion lies as to whether or not God is still committed to the Jewish people today. Simply stated, if Jesus did not nullify the Abrahamic Covenant with the Jew, then that piece of real estate in the middle east called the "Holy Land" continues to be their promised possession, which obviously accounts for the miraculous restoration and perpetuation of the statehood of Israel.

Replacement Theology has merit but its merits are lost in the confusion of covenants. The Covenant of Abraham was "unconditional" and eternal but the Covenant of Moses was "conditional" based upon obedience to the law and was therefore terminated (in its redemptive value) because Israel failed to meet those conditions and broke their covenant made at Sinai. Should there be any question as to the singular and separate nature of the covenant made with Moses as compared with that of Abraham, the following scripture should remove all doubt"

"The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day" (Deuteronomy 5:3).

The Covenant of the Law is the only "Old Covenant" that can in any sense of the word be considered replaced by the "New Covenant." Although it was not replaced in an absolute sense considering Jesus' statement, "I came not to destroy the law...". It was terminated as a means for obtaining righteousness which comes only through Jesus Christ. However, God has never found fault with His Covenant made with faithful Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3). Therefore, it has never been terminated nor replaced. The Abrahamic Covenant continues to apply to the Jewish people today. The Covenant of Abraham and the Covenant of Christ are coexisting in the earth today. The effect is that Abraham has two manner of seed manifested in the earth, a natural seed (Jews) and the spiritual seed through Christ (the Church). Unless this is clearly understood, many statements of the New Testament could appear confusing and indeed contradictory.

TWO MANNER OF SEED

Who are the seed of Abraham today? The following scripture provides some good insight into the answer. This is the God of heaven speaking to Abraham in allegorical and prophetic terms at the time of covenant:

"That in blessing I will bless thee (Abraham), and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the STARS of the heaven, and as the SAND which is upon the seashore..." (Genesis 22:17).

The words stars and sand are used symbolically to describe Abraham's seed. The Bible quite often employs such picture language to convey divine thought. Its use in this particular scripture sheds a great deal of light on the subject in question, WHO ARE THE SEED OF ABRAHAM? Notice that it emphasized two important characteristics of Abraham's seed: (1) They would be great in number. (2) They would be as stars and sand. Let us examine the second. Why did God use the analogy of STARS and SAND in the divine description of Abraham's seed? Is it only because they would be great in number? If so, only one of these descriptions would have been necessary. Perhaps there is more to it. A deeper lesson can be learned here. Let's look at it. Stars are elements of the heavenly realm while sand is terrestrial (of the earth). The inference seems to be that God would produce two manner of seed through Abraham; HEAVENLY and EARTHLY or SPIRITUAL and NATURAL. One major event set the stage to create this scenario: "And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the STARS of heaven for multitude; because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the LORD thy God" (Deuteronomy 28:62).

The promise of being "as the stars of heaven" was cancelled through Israel's disobedience, which in the foreknowledge of God set the stage for the implementation of an alternative program wherein all, or "whosoever will" through the Covenant of Messiah, may become "star seed" of Abraham. "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29 NIV).

Daniel, the prophet saw this in prophetic vision: "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the STARS for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3).

By this, two manner of seed were created which is now manifested as Christians and Jews. Both of these are a result of God's covenantal relationship with Abraham. It is what one might call a "dual posterity" in the earth (Hebrews 11:12, Galatians 3:29). We see this same principle expressed in I Corinthians 15:46: "...that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual."

Such is the case with the Jewish People and the Church. The Jews (natural) came first, then came the birth of the Church (spiritual). One did not cancel the other. Paul's direct reference is to Adam and Jesus. Adam produced the human family (natural). Jesus the Messiah produced the Christian family (Spiritual). Father God was the author of both. Again, one did not cancel the other. They coexist in this earth today. Abraham reflects a similar dimension in that through him came his son, Isaac (natural seed) and Jesus (spiritual seed, Galatians 3:16). From this we must conclude that there are two continuing manifestations of Abraham's seed in the earth, Jews and Christians. Today, God is at work with His "dual posterity", the stars and sand, seed of Abraham, (the Church and Israel). While restoring the Church to its full spiritual potential He is also restoring the Jewish people and their nation, with a view toward their ultimate spiritual restoration (Romans 9:27).

That the Jews are the seed of Abraham and a covenant people seems clear but the question arises: What is the Biblical perspective of the Arabs in all of this? The Arabic people are indeed a natural seed of Abraham also through his son Ishmael and God has promised to bless them (Genesis 21:13, 17:20). They are not however, a promised seed nor a Covenant people as are the Jews (Abraham's descendants through Isaac). Therefore the Arabs are not included directly in this covenantal promise of Genesis 22:17.

GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE

Nearly everyone has heard it said, "The Jews are God's chosen people". What does that statement mean? How do we know? And if so, are they the only ones? These are reasonable questions that deserve sensible, factual answers. Many believers are not sure of what it means. Others who use the phrase quite often cannot fully explain it. Does it mean that the Jews are more loved by God than are other people? Are they about half saved? What, in fact, does it mean? Yes, Jews are a chosen people, but not for any of the aforementioned reasons. Isaiah, the prophet, tells us specifically what they were chosen for: "Here am I, and the children the Lord has given me. We are signs and symbols in Israel from the LORD Almighty, who dwells on Mount Zion" (Isaiah 8:18 NIV).

To be "chosen" does not necessarily mean to be righteous. From their very beginning as a nation, they have been used by God to demonstrate the truth of His word in both blessing and cursing. They inherited this "chosen" status because Abraham was a chosen vessel. All that they have experienced historically has been predicted in the Bible. Naturally speaking, they are the greatest physical sign in the earth that there is a sovereign God in control of the universe, that the Bible is true and is His authorship. The scattering of the Jews throughout all the nations, their persecutions, their regathering as a nation and restoration to statehood, are all "signs" that God's word is faithful. They were the chosen family to bring forth the Messiah to redeem mankind.

The Scripture teaches that only three witnesses are necessary to remove all doubt about any question (2 Corinthians 13:1). Here we have produced more than adequate historic evidence and present day witnesses to confirm that the Jews are a chosen people. But are they the only ones to be considered a "chosen" people? No! The Church is also a chosen body of people in the earth. Jesus said, "I have chosen you out of the world" (John 15:19). The Church was chosen and ordained to perform spiritual signs in the earth: "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark 16:17,18).

Natural Israel is a natural sign, spiritual Israel (Church) is a spiritual sign. Both the natural seed (sand) and the spiritual seed (stars) are fulfilling their purpose in the earth. They are as parallel beams of light who, through the prism of God's work, will be bent into the same destiny of the KINGDOM. God has committed Himself to both of the seed of Abraham; Christians and Jews.

WHO IS A JEW

Those who would deny any ongoing significance for the natural or physical Jew in God's purposes today are quick to offer the following New Testament passage to substantiate their position: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly... and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit..." (Romans 2:28-29).

On its face, this verse appears to strip the natural Jew of his identity. However, Paul in his discourses is constantly alternating the direction of his comments between the natural and spiritual concept of Old Covenant and New Covenant. In this particular passage he is indeed speaking spiritually, saying that Jews are not (New Covenant) Jews unless they have a heart experience (Ezekiel 11:19), which is the New Testament concept. But it is both interesting and educational to note that he immediately proceeds into the next chapter and states a profound truth (although confusing to many) about unbelieving Jews: "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? MUCH EVERY WAY..." (Romans 3:1,2).

We know that Paul's reference includes the unbelieving Jew (in N.T. terms) in that he further states, "What if some did not believe?" In spite of what he had just previously said about their not being Jews, he still acknowledges them as Jews even if they are in an unbelieving state and contends that there is a definite "advantage". Is Paul contradicting himself? He is if we persist in having a "one track mind" about WHO ARE ABRAHAM'S SEED? If however, we will flow with Paul from the spiritual context to the natural, we will begin to see the STARS and SAND or the two manner of seed in the earth, natural and spiritual. In these two chapters is reflected the two polarized positions of doctrine which exist in the Church today; Replacement and Continuation. Usually one chooses the interpretation or quotations that best suits his or her particular point of view. Paul recognizes both without sacrificing either one completely. Both Christians and Jews are a product of God's sovereign wisdom. Neither stands alone to represent the whole truth. Therefore, they are in a sense inseparable in the divine strategy of things. The word "Jew" becomes a generic term which means "Covenant People" and can be applied to people of either the Old or New Testament.

THE CHILDREN OF GOD

Another scripture which on the surface appears to rule out any significance for the natural Jew today is Romans 9:8: "...the children of the flesh (Jews), these are not the children of God..."

A casual reading of this verse may cause one to conclude that the natural Jew in the New Testament concept has once again been stripped of his identity and replaced by the Church. A closer inspection will reveal something quite different. Although they are not children of God in a "Christian" sense, it does not say that they have ceased to be the SEED of Abraham, unique in the purposes of God (Romans 11:2). The biological fact remains that they are Abraham's descendants of the covenant for whom God has plan and purpose. It is not necessary to be a believer (in Christ) to retain the identity as "Abraham's Seed" nor even to be identified as people of God as some may have concluded from Galatians 3:29: "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye (also) Abraham's seed..."

This was not intended to be an eliminating statement concerning natural Jews, but an inclusive statement about the relationship of Gentile Christian believers to Abraham. It was intended to show that as Gentiles, by accepting Christ they were now considered to be part of the "commonwealth of Israel" (Ephesians 2:10-12). A paraphrase of this might read, "If ye be Christ's then are ye STAR seed even if ye are not SAND seed". These Galatian people were not Jews (the natural descendants of Abraham). Nevertheless, through a heavenly operation they became included in the promises of God and the covenant to Abraham as a spiritual seed. There can be no question that believers in Christ, no matter who they are in nationality, are considered Abraham's seed. But what about the Jewish people as a whole? Can they in any sense be considered a people of God? Yes, they are His natural seed through Abraham: "...Hath God cast away HIS people (natural Jews)? GOD FORBID... God hath not cast away HIS people which He foreknew..." (Romans 11:1,2).

There can be no question that the Jews are a people of God. To consider the Jews a "rejected" people is something God "forbids". However, there are those in Christian ministry today who are not so sure. Some will even go so far as to contradict the Apostle with a seeming cavalier disregard for his instructions, proceeding to preach and teach the notion that the Jews were somehow "cut-off" and cast-away. Obviously God has done nothing of the kind. It is unconscionable that anyone could persist in a theological posture that Paul said was forbidden by the Lord. The New International Version removes all doubt in the matter by stating categorically, "God hath not rejected His people". This Scripture established two important truths for us: (1) The Jews are still His (God's) people and (2) They are not rejected. No

other conclusions can be drawn. Paul reinforces his position in Romans 11:11: "I say then Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid..."

Therefore, if they did not fall it remains that to some degree Jews still stand before God as a people of purpose and destiny.

AN ELECT PEOPLE

"As far as the gospel is concerned, they (Jews) are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) for God's gifts and His call (upon Israel) are irrevocable" (Romans 11:28,29 NIV)

What a remarkable statement from the New Testament this is. It flies in the face of the exclusivism in Christian thinking. Promoters of the "Replacement" concept cannot possibly accommodate this scripture nor the many others just like it. Paul is actually saying that even unbelieving Jews remain an "elect" people. Bear in mind that this was stated nearly thirty years after the death of Jesus. Paul recognized their uniqueness in God's plans. Ironic isn't it? Although the Jews may be considered the enemies of the Christian faith, this too has a divine purpose. He said that it was on your account, or so that a spiritual seed could be created in the earth (the Christian Church). Through their misfortunes, salvation has come to the Gentiles (Romans 11:11).

Unlike the Covenant of the Law which was destined to be replaced, the Covenant of Abraham was an "everlasting" covenant (Genesis 17:7). The Jews remain an "elect" people unto this present hour. Why? Not because they are so good or a "pet" people but because of God's abiding covenant with Abraham and the patriarchs. It is in this context that Paul can say with confidence that God's call and gifts to Israel are irrevocable.

Those who would question this uniqueness attached to the Jew in the purposes of God today quite often rely upon the uncertainty of dreams, visions and revelations as criterion for faith on this issue. However, these are all too vulnerable to human error and subjective interpretation. Healthy positions of doctrinal faith must have their focus in fact and in scripture, not in religious experience. No amount of religious rationale nor theological maneuvering can revoke God's gifts and calling on Israel.

What are God's gifts to the Jewish people? One of the major "gifts" to the Jewish people is the land of Israel. This is unmistakably confirmed by the prophet Ezekiel"

"...Because I swore with uplifted hand to give it (Canaan) to your forefathers, this land will become your inheritance" (Ezekiel 47:14 NIV).

This is not speaking of their initial occupying of Canaan land at the hand of Joshua but their prophetic restoration. These encouraging words were penned by Ezekiel while a captive in Babylonia. Obviously he also knew how irrevocable God's gifts were despite his circumstances. Should they be any less today?

Another gift of God to the Jews was His Word: "What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God" (Romans 3:1,2 NIV).

The realization of this fact alone should cause the Christian to be more grateful for and appreciative of the Jewish people. It is not asking too much that we should be thankful and deliberate in our expressing this to the Jewish people. Historically they have paid a great price for this accomplishment and the devil has sought to destroy them because of it. In contrast God has called the Church to "bless" them for it. But we cannot be zealously motivated to do so unless we better understand who they are and what is God's present day perspective toward them.

3-D VISION

Do the prophetic passages that speak of Israel apply to historic Israel, modern Israel, or do they now refer only to the Church? This question presents a dilemma in the minds of many students of scripture. Surely there is a divine creative law provided whereby we can arrive at the truth. God does not want us to remain in a condition of uncertainty. His will for us is: "...with all thy getting get understanding" (Proverbs 4:7). In the creation, God said, "Let us make man in our image, and after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). The human body is the only creation of God about which such a statement is made. Our bodies contain the most complete display of God's laws and principles (physically and spiritually). Every system and every organ of our bodies is paced with eternal creative law that has spiritual application. The laws of physical sight can teach us much about the principles of good spiritual vision. Knowing this, Jesus did not fail to make use of this technique for teaching. One such occasion is found in Matthew 6:22. Jesus said, "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." It is said that 80 percent of all learning comes through the eye. Therefore, good vision is very important to us both physically and spiritually. Science has discovered that one of the most basic laws which must be in operation for proper physical vision is that it be "three-dimensional". The three dimensions of physical sight are the perceiving of depth, width and height. It follows then that this principle (3-D vision) must be employed for good prophetic vision in Biblical truth.

The three dimensions of Biblical vision are (1) historic (old Israel) (2) spiritual (the Church) and (3) end-time national (kingdom age, or restored Israel).

Controversy arises as to whether or not certain prophecies apply to the Church or Israel. For example: "AWAKE, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion..." (Isaiah 52:1).

Do such Biblical texts as these which speak of Zion, refer to the Church or Israel? Such scriptures have certainly experienced a lot of ministerial tossing around. The truth is, they may be applied to both Israel (historic and restored) as well as the Church. We know this because the Church in the New Testament was certainly referred to as Zion (Hebrews 12:22). All three applications of prophetic vision, including spiritual vision, is impaired vision and consequently leads to confusion. Understanding this principle is very important to the resolution of the Jewish/Christian relationships dilemma.

ISRAEL SHALL BE SAVED

The one-on-one Christian witness to those with whom we come in contact, whether Jew or Gentile, is the responsibility of every believer. But God's plan for national Israel is something quite different. Israel is unique to any other nation on earth in the divine strategy. Their spiritual awakening will be a sovereign work. God has reserved for them a special visitation. Their complete restoration will be brought about through a process of time; one that moves from one stage of development to another. This fact is most clearly demonstrated for us in the story of Ezekiel's bone yard (Ezekiel 37:1-14). There is a great lesson to be learned from this scriptural narrative that will be useful in our working with God concerning the nation of Israel. I like the story because it shows how much more patient God is in His work than we often are with ours. The Spirit of the Lord began to move upon the bones and there was a great noise as they came together but they were dead. Then there came sinew and tendons on the bones and still they were dead. As the process continued, they developed flesh and muscle and

finally the skin. All of this is being done through the work of the Holy Spirit but they are not yet alive. This is a prophetic demonstration of Israel's end-time restoration. While we may share the message of the Messiah with the individual Jew at any time the door of utterance is opened, the great spiritual awakening in the nation of Israel is a divine strategy which is prophetically timed to achieve maximum effect on the international scene, signalling the end of this age and the coming of the Kingdom Age. It is closely tied to the Second Coming of the Messiah. The story concludes as Ezekiel prophesies to the bones and the four winds of heaven cause breath to come into them. Immediately and in unison they come alive and stand to their feet as a mighty army. This is a physical demonstration of a spiritual event, i.e., Israel's national day of salvation. It will be the greatest revival and spiritual resurrection known to human history. The apostle Paul understood this perfectly and alludes to it in Romans 11:15: "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but LIFE FROM THE DEAD?" (resurrection).

The fact that the Jewish people have not become Christians "en masse" has no bearing on whether or not God is at work with them now. It is He who has gathered them back to their land. It is He who has brought about the re-creation of the statehood of Israel and God is continuing to deal with them to bring about His perfect will. They are His national people. He works with them in His own way and in His own time. Let us stay in step with God's stages and work with Him. This is the blessed hope, as it is written, "ALL ISRAEL SHALL BE SAVED" (Romans 11:26).

COMMISSION TO COMFORT

"COMFORT YE, comfort ye MY PEOPLE, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD's hand double for all her sins" (Isaiah 40:1,2).

This is God's call for the comforting of Israel and the Jewish people after years of persecution. There are those who would have us believe that this is God asking the Church to bless itself or asking us to bless and comfort each other. Such an interpretation is neither grammatically sound nor intellectually coherent. The "YE" being addressed in this verse is speaking most specifically to the body of Christ because it is the Church who has the spirit of the Comforter (John 14:26). "My people" is a direct reference to the Jewish people and the nation of Israel. Through the prophet Isaiah, God Himself is giving a directive for someone to be His love extended and to be a comforter to the downtrodden remnant of Israel. The Church and Israel are the only two bodies of people in the earth who have been referred to as the people of God. The statement "her iniquity is pardoned" is not so much a redemptive word for Israel as a word of conclusion. This is the time when God says enough is enough and He will no longer permit their continual persecution and dispersion. This is a national forgiveness: "For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them AGAIN to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up" (Jeremiah 24:6).

Concerning the commission to comfort, the following New Testament passage has been identified by theologians as the "Great Commission", meaning the phrase encapsulates the mission of the Church upon the earth: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to OBSERVE ALL THINGS whatsoever I have commanded you..." (Matthew 28:19-20).

Unfortunately this commission has too often been limited in scope to include only the redemptive gospel or just those things which have been set forth in the New Testament. However it is important that we also hear the words of Jesus as He spoke through the Old Testament writers. The "I AM" who spoke unto Moses from the burning bush (Exodus 3:14) is the same as He who said unto the disciple: "...I AM the way, the truth and the life..." (John 14:6). Jesus is the eternal embodiment of the word of God to mankind. Therefore, the commissions which Jesus has delivered to the Church include those that are set forth in the old Testament as well as those in the New Testament. One of those commissions was heard through the prophet Isaiah: "COMFORT ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God" (Isaiah 40:1). This is not an option but a command and a mandate to the body of Christ. We must obey it and teach all nations to be obedient. Every minister of the Lord Jesus Christ is therefore duty bound to make the comforting of Israel a vital part of his ministry. Every church should make this a vital part of its agenda and teach all nations that blessing Israel is a significant aspect of the "all things" which are to be observed by the Church.

Once the remnant of Israel are gathered and restored to their land it will be a permanent restoration. It will also be a prelude to their spiritual restoration and redemption as is indicated by the following verse: "And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart" (Jeremiah 24:7).

We see clearly the prophetic order of events. They must be restored to their land before their national day of salvation occurs. The individual Jew may be saved at anytime he accepts Messiah. But the great national revival that awaits them is a specific appointment and it is the comforting efforts of the Church that will contribute to the preparations that are necessary for this great event to occur.

CONCLUSION

The controversy between the two polarized theologies of "Replacement" and "Continuation" can be resolved. Let Israel be Israel and the Church be the Church. There is no conflict. We must permit the Old Testament prophecies concerning Israel to apply to both the Christian Church and the nation of Israel. This is Abraham's dual posterity, it is his natural and spiritual seed coexisting in the earth. God will, in due process, bring them both into His perfect will. Does God want His natural seed to become spiritual seed? Of course He does. Will it happen? We have God's word on it " ...blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins" (Romans 11:25-27).

God works uniquely with the nation of Israel as with no other nation on earth. The Church must accept this, seek to understand it and assume its proper role in the divine strategy of their restoration and redemption.

God does not love the Jewish people beyond other nations of the earth. However, the Church must be a channel through which the Jewish people will receive the "mercy" which has been so long denied them by the nations of the world: "Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy" (Romans 11:31 KJV).

As the tide of world opinion flows against the Jews, the Christian believer must stand in the gap and compensate for our failures of the past to do so.

The spiritual seed of Abraham are under obligation to bless the natural seed. It was the Jews who blessed the nations with God's plan of salvation. Jesus said: "...for salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22 NIV).

There is a sense in which Abraham was the father of salvation because Christ was the seed of Abraham. The Covenant of Abraham and the Covenant of Grace constitute God's redemptive plan.

The good news is that a fresh awakening to truth is taking place and many believers are getting a new vision of God's covenantal relationship to the Jewish people and the nation of Israel. If the Church must emphasize a "Replacement Theology" let it be one which declares the prophetic "re-placement" of all their land into the hands of its rightful owners, the Jews. Ultimately we shall rejoice to see both the land and the people restored to the eternal purposes of God and to participate in the full and complete reconciliation between Israel and the Church, Abraham's natural and spiritual seed (Ephesians 2:14). This is what God is working to achieve. LET US WORK WITH HIM. So who are "THE SEED OF ABRAHAM?" Can there be any doubt?

"O THE DEPTH OF THE RICHES BOTH OF THE WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE OF GOD!"(Romans 11:33). Return to Awareness Ministries Literature

THE MENORAH

The Lamp of God

(What Christians Should Know About It)

"..I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of Gold...and his seven lamps thereon..." Zechariah 4:2

FOREWORD

Reader Beware! If this is your first exposure to Robert Somerville's biblical insights, you will quickly discover he has led you to the table of the Savior who called, "Come and dine."

As you read this material concerning the Menorah and discover its biblical significance to the Christian community and scriptural exegesis, you will know that a greater knowledge (revelation) of Jesus Christ is dependent upon understanding the Judaic "roots" of the Christian faith. The Holy Spirit is inspiring ministries of this kind to bring a greater "awareness" to the Christian community throughout the world, of their need to understand the rich truths revealed in biblical Judaism and its accompanying symbols. As a result, many are sensing that this must become a more significant part of the church's value system.

If you pursue this path of renewal, you will find that Robert Somerville, of Awareness Ministry is one of the most articulate speakers and succinct authors on such matters. This booklet on the Menorah will whet your appetite for more of Bob's insights into other important topics that needs to be factored into the spiritual value system of the serious believer.

These topics include "the eternal memorial feast days (Sabbaths, Passover, tabernacles etc), the seven spirits of God, the "hours" of prayer, the covenants of God with mankind and the "gospel of the Kingdom of God."

I have known the Lord for more than thirty years and have served Him in many roles (Christian husband, father, deacon, elder, pastor and NASA aerospace engineer/manager). Knowing Bob Somerville as a friend, teacher and beloved brother in Christ for the past 12 years has deepened my service to God in these roles. His teachings on biblical truth are both inspirational and practical. As many wise sages have noted, "If it isn't practical, it's not scriptural."

Bob's teachings are full of [these types] "truisms." For example, he often notes that: · Man was made of the earth, in the earth, for the earth. If God had meant for us to live in heaven eternally, he would have created us there.

- If you don't know why you were born, you won't fully understand why you must be 'born again'.
- While there is an Old and New Testament, the Word of God is neither 'old' or 'new' ¾ it's eternal!
- The more Biblical you become, the more Jewish you may appear to be!
- Thing Biblical are not just Jewish or Christian, they are divine and therefore eternal and universal (for everyone)

He can make more of an impression on you with a few words than most people you will ever encounter. Therefore, READ ON!! You are in for a treat. The Spirit of God in you is about to say "Yes - Amen!"

Kenny Mitchell

Symbolism

- Crucial to Biblical Understanding -

HE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST - - - These are the opening words to the last book of the Bible (Rev.1:1). They leave no room for doubt as to the results desired by its author which is a complete exposition of every facet of our Lord's triumphant ministry. An exposé of the all encompassing effects of his Judean ministry on the eternal scene is the objective. Still, a recent survey indicates that many laymen find this book too mystical to be appreciated. Some scholars are now giving it second-class billing in importance for study, considering any interpretation of it to be purely speculation or conjecture and therefore too controversial. Some pastors and religious educators boast of deleting it entirely from their teaching agenda. What accounts for this? Why the apparent paralysis of interest and prevailing difficulty in appreciating the content of this book with such lofty introduction?

One major cause for the limited understanding of this book's content is the prevailing unfamiliarity of the average Christian with *Biblical Judaism and its accompanying symbols. The *Menorah (candlestick) is one of those important Hebraic symbols. Why is it so important to understand the Jewishness of this book that some refer to as the "Readers Digest" of the Bible? Dr. John Walvoord of

***Menorah: The Hebrew term for the seven branched lampstand.**

Dallas Theological Seminary has noted that "Of the 404 verses of the Apocalypse, 278 are direct quotes from [Torah], Jewish scripture." Unfortunately, historic efforts to delete everything "Jewish" from the doctrine, liturgy and symbolism of the first century church and from Biblical expression has contributed to a certain interpreting handicap. The absence of this all important

*Here we make a distinction between "Torah-centric Judaism" [Biblical] and "Rabbinic Judaism" [Talmudic.] A Torah-centric Judaism was the religion out of which the first century church grew maintaining it's biblical contours in the faith and theology of Israel.

Lack of understanding of this dimension has left the church ill equipped to understand many of this book's Hebraic expressions and symbolic references. It has deprived us of some richness of understanding that would otherwise be available if the Revelation of Jesus Christ and the entirety of scripture, for that matter, was interpreted from a Hebraic mind-set. What to do about it ¾ perhaps Catholic scholar Edward H. Flannery has expressed a "touch-stone truth" when he states: [An over Hellenized, over Latinized Christianity needs a re-Judaizing process

to bring it back to its founding Jewish roots and renew it more in keeping with its own inherent ideals.] It is with this thought in mind that we approach the matter of symbolism as it pertains to the candlestick and its importance to the Christian spiritual value system. In the final analysis, symbols such as the Menorah are not Jewish in an ethnic sense, nor even Christian in a religious sense, but they are simply Biblical in a divine sense, and therefore eternal and universal (for everyone).

The book of Revelation is in large part a book of symbolism. Those who would minimize the importance of symbolism minimize not only the importance of that book but the entirety of scripture. Symbolism plays a crucial role in Biblical revelation and interpretation. One of the first symbols encountered as we begin reading the book of Revelation is the seven-branched Menorah. Jesus [the Son of man] is observed in the midst of seven of them.

And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man . . . (Rev 1:13)

These candlesticks were not just seven isolated singular candles as one might suppose at first glance, but they are seven (Jewish) Menorahs - God's idea of a lampstand. Immediately we are informed that the candlesticks represented the Judeo-Christian churches of Asia: The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches. (Rev. 1:20).

This declaration therefore, by association, makes the candlestick a Judeo-Christian symbol and representative of a New Testament Church. It is important that believers perceive the all-encompassing message embodied in the Biblical lampstand. You may be surprised how up-to-date this symbol of antiquity really is. As the Church continues on its present course of restoration and renewal, the seven-branched candlestick could well become one of the more prominent symbols displayed by Christendom, perhaps comparable to the ubiquitous cross. Christians will do well to become better informed on this aspect of Biblical heritage in symbolism. It is for this reason that we make the effort to publish this book. The scriptures teach that the Menorah was and is esteemed of God a symbol extraordinaire. Indeed it has been referred to in scripture as the "Lamp of God." If it is, then God's people should embrace it and perceive the lessons embodied therein.

(insert Titus Menorah and ancient depiction here)

No one knows for certain the exact shape of the original Mosaic Menorah. We do know that it contained a numerical pattern. History gives us the two possible renderings shown above. Both have been used by the Jewish people in symbolism for centuries and both have merit. The Titus Menorah seems to favor the Exodus 25 description. We are certain that the configuration of the candlestick depicted on the Arch of Titus was the kind used in the last Jerusalem Temple which was destroyed in AD.70. Titus was a Roman general who sacked Jerusalem and returned bringing many of the Temple treasures with him.

Menorah

-The Lamp of God -

... I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of Gold ... and his seven lamps thereon ..." (Zech. 4:2).

The lampstand (Menorah) is conceivably the most comprehensive of all Biblical symbols. As such, it is important that believers investigate the origin, use and purpose of this symbol referenced in both Old and New Testaments. We will discover that this lampstand symbolizes many things such as the Nation of Israel, the Church, the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, the Seven Spirits of God, even the Lord Jesus Christ himself as "the light of the world."

The first direct mention and detailed description of the candlestick (Menorah) is found in Exodus 25:31-40. Moses had just returned from Mount Sinai where he had been in communion with God. It was there that he had been instructed to make the candlestick. Not only had he received detailed instructions concerning the critical design of this instrument of light to be placed in the Tabernacle, but also of the various other implements that would be used for service in God's divine worship system. Many of these symbols ceased to be used under the New Testament but not the Menorah and for good reason as we shall clearly show.

- Divine Design -

All of the furnishings of the temple including the lampstand were to be constructed according to the "pattern" of heavenly things: for, See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount. (Ex 25:40, Heb. 8:5)

Obviously, God demands precision. Consequently, the Menorah has a divine configuration. From the biblical description of the lampstand spelled out in Exodus Chapters 25 & 37 (reinforced by historical record), we discover that a numerical pattern emerges. There were 7 lamps on the top of the Lampstand, 70 (*2) garnishings on its branches and **12 foundational divisions of its stacked hexagon base. The specific numbers 12, 70 (2), and 7 represent a basic numerical pattern of operation for both Israel and the Church. In the governmental structure of Israel there were 12 men who served as leaders or heads over their tribes with whom Moses could communicate (Num. 1:44). Moses chose 70 (2) elders of the people to be with him on Mount Sinai as a support system (Num.11:16). After Moses' departure, Joshua appointed 7 priests who led the camp of Israel into victory blowing the rams horns (Joshua 6:4). In the same manner, Jesus began the formation of the New Covenant Church (Heb 8:8) during His earthly ministry by choosing 12 apostles who became the foundational governing pillars of the church (Mk. 3:14). He then appointed other "70" (2) and sent them out in ministry (Lk. 10:1). After His crucifixion, the 12 appointed a body of 7 men to assume a great portion of the care and responsibility for the churches so that the twelve apostles could return to Jerusalem and give themselves continually to prayer and ministry of the word (Acts 6:2-3). These seven men were far more than deacons as is commonly supposed. They were all powerful ministers clearly demonstrated by Philip and Stephen. Obviously the very framework of God's government for His people is reflected in the design of the lampstand. We find these numerical patterns and or multiples of them, in many Old Testament and New Testament demonstrations. References to them are particularly noted in the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ.

*The knops, flowers and bowls appear to add up to seventy plus two. There seems to be a bit of mystery regarding the apparent conflict in translations as to whether this is "seventy" or "seventy- two". However, there does seem to be a nagging presence of this nuance of a supplementary two, even in some Old Testament passages. Be that as it may, the number 70 plays the dominant role in Biblical expression and numerology. Concerning the candlestick the first-century Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus confirms "It was made with its knops, and lilies, and pomegranates, and bowls (which ornaments amounted to seventy in all);"

** See base explanation accompanying the two depictions of Menorah.

Is it any wonder then, that God has placed such significance on this symbol and given it "high profile" from Genesis to Revelation when you consider that it represented the presence of all truth, hence the light of the world? God informed Moses that the Menorah was to be

located in what was known as the "Holy Place" in the sanctuary of God. Throughout the many years of Temple worship, it was tended to on a daily basis being trimmed every morning and lighted by the ministering priests. It was the only source of light in the wilderness tabernacle as it continued to be in all future Temples except for the annual glowing of the Shechinah glory visitation in the Holiest of Holies. The lampstand occupied a place of great prominence among the instruments used in worship. I am proposing that the Menorah should also take its rightful place in Christian symbolism. Not that the Menorah should become an idol but rather an ever present symbol of truth (ie, the cross).

Some may rightly question how we reconcile the following commandment with God's subsequent orders to do what appears to be in opposition: Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: (Ex. 20:4).

Nevertheless, we find that Moses was charged by God with the responsibility to do that very thing. He was commanded to build a sanctuary according to the "heavenly" pattern. It was to contain such imagery as the candlestick, a table of shewbread, altars, the ark of the covenant, golden cherubims of glory, angelic figurines embroidered on the inner curtains of the sanctuary, and many other items that Moses had seen in his heavenly vision. Solomon's temple would prove to be even more elaborate and ornate than the old tabernacle, having graven images of lions, oxen, etc. Does this represent a contradiction on the Lord's behalf? Not at all! The answer to this question is found in the following verse of scripture: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, ... (Ex. 20:5). The worship of them would be a sin. While mankind was commanded of God not to bow down and worship symbols, they play a crucial role in promoting spiritual understanding.

The Menorah an ever present symbol of truth

The Apostle Paul expressed it unequivocally: For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse (Ro 1:20).

These "things that are made" include not only those things that God made in the creation such as the earth, beasts, trees, stars, etc., but included those things that He commanded men to make for revelation purposes such as the Menorah. God is not worshiped in these things that are made but He is most definitely revealed through them.

A UNIQUE LAMPSTAND

And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision. And it came to pass at that time when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see; And ere the LAMP OF GOD went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep: (1Samuel 3:1-3).

Here the Menorah becomes identified as "THE LAMP OF GOD". As such, the Menorah is a timeless symbol. This seven-branched candlestick, for many Christians (if recognized at all) has been regarded as little more than a Jewish relic. However, this God-given symbol should not be considered something "out of date" nor simply Jewish but divine and therefore timeless. Notice in the foregoing scripture that the Menorah was not referred to as the "Lamp of the Jews" or the "Lamp of the Temple" nor the "Lamp of the Synagogue" but the LAMP OF GOD. Why? Because it was God who designed it, had it constructed, and commanded its use (Ex 25:31, Number 8:2-4).

The candlestick, perhaps better than any other item that God commanded Moses to make, serves the ends and purposes of revelation by symbolism. We will discover that the Menorah symbol regularly surfaced in the spiritual experiences of many other prophets and visionaries as it did with Samuel. Notice the circumstances surrounding Samuel's prophetic call and the existing condition of Israel. The lamp of God was going out and soon afterward the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant. Eli, the judge and High priest of Israel, had died and a child was born to Phinehas his son who's name says it all, Ichabod meaning "The glory of God has departed." In principle this story could very well parallel many of the conditions within the Church in history and serve as a prophetic picture of our own time. The setting was at evening time, the light from the Lamp of God was shining less brightly in the temple and there was "no open vision" (revelation). It is very unusual that the lamp of God would have been going out at the very time of day when it normally should have been freshly fueled and burning its brightest. The Church can learn valuable lessons from this story. We could very well be approaching the end of the age (evening). The Lamp of God, which is the Word of God (Psa. 119:105) and our understanding of it, has been seriously eroded due in great part to our forsaking the foundations of our faith rooted in the Hebrew heritage. The judgment of God is impending as Jesus predicted.

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. . . . While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. ... And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. (Mt 25:1,2,5,8).

In parabolic expression, Jesus predicts that just prior to his coming a large percentage of the Kingdom of God will be spiritually asleep. He seems to indicate that there would be an unawareness of the gravity of time. A clear vision into the purposes of God and the destiny of man would be missing. The virgins were not aware of the eminent coming of the Bridegroom. Because the Church seems to be experiencing storms of "every wind of doctrine" (Eph 4:14), there is a lot of eschatological (end-time events) confusion in our world. This is generating complacency and serious apathy towards truth. Many seemingly do not care ¾ that is the down side. The up side is this: And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. (Mt 25:7)

A sweet rain of pure truth has been predicted for the "pure in heart." God has promised: My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distill as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God (Deut. 32:2-3)

... and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month (Joel 2:23).

This refreshing rain of truth for the work of restoration and renewal is central to God's strategic plans. It will cause the lampstand (Church) to be ablaze with the light of absolute truth. We should pray earnestly for "rain in the time of the latter rain" (Zech. 10:1). Let it become a continuous theme in the prayer life of us all.

We must shine forth as lamps in a world of darkness

It was at evening time when the lampstand was refueled for greater burning in the Temple. If we are indeed in some close proximity to the end of the age it is "lamp trimming time." In other words, it is 'Biblical research time' for the body of Christ:

There is a beautiful Hebrew idiom that suggests: "Study is the highest form of worship." Christians would do well to grasp the richness of that philosophical truth. If we are to shine forth as lamps in a world of darkness as Jesus indicated (Luke 12:35), God's word must become very precious to us and an accelerated understanding of it a high priority. Apathy toward truth is undoubtedly one of the subtle sins of our time. It is this condition that God is presently addressing so that His people are motivated toward a restoration of all things Biblical. The Apostle Peter confirmed explicitly on the day of Pentecost what Jesus taught us in the parable of the virgins:

And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution [restoring] of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began (Acts 3:20-21).

Candlepower

Another prophet of restoration in whose vision the symbol of the candlestick appeared was Zechariah. He was one who was highly motivated for and involved in the restoration of the walls of Jerusalem and the Holy Temple. There is a definite similarity between Samuel's experience and that of Zechariah. As the vision unfolded before Zechariah, he beheld a huge candlestick (Menorah) with seven lamps upon the top of it. While beholding the scene, he heard a voice: And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: . . . Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, [the restorer] saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts (Zech. 4:2,6).

Christians from time to time can be heard reciting the inspirational and familiar phrase from this notable scripture "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts." It has been applied in numerous ways and unfortunately, most often out of context (salvation, healing, miracles, etc.) While this application may be well intended, the message can be lost. Now, what is there about the sight of the golden candlestick (Menorah) that would evoke such an utterance? Not many Christians would give a similar response to such a vision. Why? Because, for the most part, we would not recognize the Menorah nor appreciate it for what it represents. In this case it symbolized the seven-fold spirit of God at work in the restoration efforts taking place in Jerusalem.

After being held in Babylonian captivity for 70 years, the Jews were frail and few in number. It was only through a special anointing from God that they were able to maintain their determination in the face of much discouragement to continue rebuilding the Jerusalem walls and the Temple of God. This extraordinary anointing for restoration was symbolized by the candlestick. It will undoubtedly take an equal measure of anointing for the Church to be successful in declaring the Gospel of the Kingdom throughout the nations (Mt. 24:14) and bring the restoration of all things. Also, it is only through a complete seven-fold anointing that doctrinal unity and maturity can be brought to the body of Christ to insure our success in God's purposes.

There is as much [in some ways more] to be learned about God from the Menorah symbol than from many of the more familiar symbols such as the cross, the lamb, the dove, or the fish that are of common use throughout Christendom today. That idea is resident in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus was a Jew and well acquainted with His Judaic heritage. Since we know the setting was in the season of the feast of Tabernacles when huge Menorah's were being lighted throughout Jerusalem, some historians suggest and it is reasonable to assume that the Menorah (Lampstand) was what He had in mind when He declared: Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a CANDLESTICK; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. (Mt. 5:14-17)

The church here is represented by the symbol of the candlestick. The lesson is that the Church must become the light of the world (a reflection of the Word of God). The book of Revelation gives substantial affirmation to this assertion when the angel states: . . . the seven CANDLESTICKS which thou sawest are the seven CHURCHES. (Rev. 1:20)

Further confirmation is given to us in chapter two where God, through his angel, implores the church of Ephesus to return to its first love: Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy CANDLESTICK out of his place, except thou repent. Rev. 2:4-5

A spiritual interpretation could be reasonably rendered from this passage but evidently there is also a very practical side to consider. There is every reason for us to conclude that this Menorah symbol was physically on display in those first century churches, and for good reason. First, as a congregation, they were more "Judeo-Christian" in nature and appearance than the subsequent church that became more Greko-Roman in orientation. The indication is that the candlestick must have served as an official symbol of identity with that body of Christian churches originating in Jerusalem who had been birthed of Judaism. The Lord did not want the Ephesus congregation, if it remained in its existing loveless condition, to even be considered by the public as representing the Judeo-Christian Faith.

God-given symbols are Biblical and therefore eternal and universal.

The spirit of Love is central to the very essence and nature of God as is demonstrated in the symbolism of the candlestick. The center lamp of the Menorah is, in Hebrew, called the Ner Elohim the "Lamp of God" as well as Shamash. Since the scriptures teach that "God is love" (1 Jo 4:8), one might even call this center light the "Love Lamp" amidst the seven. Therefore the threat of the candlestick's removal was very significant. The absence of love was sufficient cause to threaten the disenfranchisement of the Ephesus congregation from the body of churches representing Christ (Messiah) in that area. Obviously few if any Christian churches of today would feel intimidated by the threat of losing a candlestick (assuming one existed), considering the lack of understanding by the church of the meaning of this symbol of antiquity. Even the familiar interpretation of what this threat implies (departure of the presence of Christ) requires exhaustive teaching today. Such was not the case for the congregations of the first century. It is quite evident that they were much closer to Biblical Judaism in thought, practice and symbolism than is the Christian church of today, and they clearly understood the implications of this threat. There are, however, some indications that significant Judaic restoration to the body of Christ is imminent. Increasingly, pastors and congregations are becoming inspired of the Holy Spirit to introduce many of these Judaic principles into their teaching and worship. This is also being demonstrated by the reintroduction of the Biblical Feast Day celebrations [seven in all], the use of banners, the use of the Hebrew names of God, Sabbath celebrations, etc. None of these practices were foreign to the first century congregations. It should therefore come as no surprise to discover that the Menorah symbol was on display within these Judeo-Christian congregations in Asia. Their understanding of these Biblical things is assumed in these letters. That no doubt accounts for the abundance of Judaic expression in the book of Revelation. Interestingly, this was true

in spite of their being predominately Gentile churches in constituency. It was not and is not an issue of ethnicity but one of Biblical correctness.

The circumstances and the particulars of the candlestick's mention early on in the book of Revelation merit investigation. In the first chapter, we discover the Son of Man (Jesus) in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. What does this mean? Since we have learned that the candlesticks represented the churches, we must conclude that it depicts those churches wherein the spirit of Christ is truly alive and motivating. The overriding theme of the angelic cry to the seven churches of Asia was not redemption, but restoration to a Christ-like spirit and Biblical order. The Apostle Paul alludes to this in his letter to the Galatians: My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you (Ga 4:19)

Paul is not suggesting by the term "birth" that the people be saved again or born again * again. It was not a case of Jesus being absent from their hearts, but rather there was an absence of the form of Christ in their lifestyle, their value system and in the corporate setting of the local congregation. Jesus had travailed for their eternal salvation, but it was Paul who had "travailed" for their birthing and development as a church in the formative years in the city of Galatia. It was he who had taught them the word so that they might become a living lampstand. Paul did not say they needed Jesus formed in them, but Christ * there is a difference. The name Jesus means "savior", while "Christ" means the "anointed" or "the anointed word." The "form of Christ" means a Biblical pattern symbolized by the candlestick. The Galatians had forsaken their Godly heritage and began taking up the "elements [patterns] of the world." In this same chapter, he reproached them specifically for having adopted the celebration days and festivals of the gentiles, forsaking the Biblical order, hence contributing to their loss of the "form of Christ." The Apostle Paul was travailing for a corporate restoration or rebirth. This is exactly what God is calling for in the body of Christ today $\frac{3}{4}$ a Church rebirthed in Biblical patterns.

The Spirit of Prophecy

Have you ever considered what all might be included in the familiar term a "Christ-like" spirit, and in what ways is it manifested? Well, it undoubtedly includes all of the more familiar ways that readily come to mind (i.e., love, joy, compassion). However, there is one character trait in a Christ-like spirit with which the Church is much less familiar $\frac{3}{4}$ the spirit of prophecy.

... the testimony of Jesus is the SPIRIT OF PROPHECY. (Rev. 19:10)

The entire life of Yeshua (Jesus) was an exercise in prophetic display. Do not construe the word prophecy as meaning a spirit to prophesy. It was not in the nature of Jesus' ministry to go about making many grandiose predictions but rather to fulfill the messianic prophecies of old. He was the Light of the World because He brought to light and lived a life of fulfilling prophecy. His entire life was a divine orchestration of fulfilled Biblical prophecy which set him apart from all would-be messiah's. His other (mystical) body, the Church, should do no less if we are to become the light (candlestick) of the world. It is the spirit of prophecy that will bring greater Biblical mission and purpose to the body of Christ. The Old Testament is prophecy declared, the New Testament is must be prophecy revealed and fulfilled (Mt. 11:13, Acts 3:21) The restoration of these Biblical symbols, celebrations and values to the Gentile church is a prophetic mission in and of itself. Isaiah foretold of its occurrence when speaking of the "strangers" who would keep His sabbaths and His covenant (Isaiah 56). Therefore, God will and is abundantly blessing those churches that are motivated with the Spirit of prophecy and who place an emphasis on His word being fulfilled. They understand that a return to the Hebraic foundations of our faith is a prophetic program being fulfilled in our time. Like Zechariah, these congregations function in the spirit of the minor prophets symbolized by the Menorah (Zec 4:6) They are discovering what God is doing and work with Him. They are not working for God; they are working with God. As a result, these believers are becoming living LAMPSTANDS of prophetic restoration.

The Seven Spirits

Finally, we see seven flames of fire, a heavenly Menorah as it were, blazing before the throne in heaven:

And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. (Rev. 4:5)

What are the *seven spirits of God and what is their mission? Isaiah the prophet is very specific on this point: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. (Isa 11:2)

The purpose for mentioning these seven spirits ablaze before the throne of God is to show that the principles of the candlestick are also manifested in the heavenlies. For the Church to be a living lampstand in the earth, and the light on a "candlestick" that Jesus predicted (Mt 5), all of these seven spirits of God must be burning in our personal lives, as well as in the corporate Church. The seven-branched candlestick was given to constantly remind us of that important truth. Even a casual observer of the scripture must draw that conclusion.

And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. (Rev 5:6)

Should we not pray "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" and participate in the process? The Menorah symbol is a constant reminder of that imperative.

*A detailed analysis of the meaning, purpose and practical applications of the Seven Spirits of God is available from Awareness Ministry publishing department.

Practical Uses

I can think of no Christian event where the Menorah would be inappropriate for display. I would encourage the notion that its presence in all Christian churches is not only appropriate but practical and fundamentally useful. It can accompany any liturgical ceremony. The following is an example of a liturgical declaration or [any variation thereof] that could be recited as the Menorah is being lighted in your own home or church.

Liturgy of lights

Pastor: And I saw seven spirits of God burning before the throne!

Congregation: The Spirit of Love (Lord)

The Spirit of Wisdom The Spirit of Understanding The Spirit of Counsel The spirit of Knowledge

The spirit of Strength (and) The Spirit of the Fear of the Lord

Corporate: Jesus is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

Now we are the light of the world!

We will shine forth as lights in a world of darkness!

Lord Jesus Christ, you are our light and our salvation! Amen!

(Ref. from Rev. 4:5, Isa. 11:1-2, Jn. 1:9, Mt. 5:14, Ph. 2:15, Ps 27:1)

The Menorah can be effectively used at wedding ceremonies, infant dedications, home dedications, the dedication of a business or any other occasion where a declaration of the *seven spirits of God would be appropriate.

Conclusion

Obviously, from the preferential treatment accorded the beautiful golden candlestick in scripture, it is indeed esteemed of God a symbol extraordinaire. As the body of Christ progresses in restoration and renewal, this symbol should occupy a place of greater prominence in our churches and our spiritual value system. The prediction is that this will become a trend of the future. It is fitting and proper that this symbol be displayed in all Christian churches and in the homes of believers (Jew or Gentile). Again, the cross has definite value in Christian symbolism as a reminder of the suffering and shame endured by our Lord for us as a sacrifice, but the candlestick symbolizes the grandeur and brightness of His glory and presence.

The candlestick is the Biblical symbol of the Church.

While the preaching of the cross and its message is indeed "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16), so horrible was the scene at the cross, that the Heavenly Father could not bring Himself to look upon it. Therefore it is doubtful that Jesus, if He was on earth, would encourage the historic emphasis and high profile we have placed on the emblem of the cross. Although the message of sacrifice and redemption would have remained the same, it is unlikely that He would "cherish the old rugged cross" any more than He would some other instrument of cruelty that may have been used to cause His suffering and death. Indeed, it is entirely possible that He would even discourage its being excessively displayed. The cross would bring back haunting memories of excruciating torment as is indicated by the writer of Hebrews when he states that our Savior "endured the cross despising the shame" (Heb. 12:2). Perhaps this is why the cross is so glaringly missing, indeed totally absent, from the abundance of symbolism to be found in the book of the "Revelation of Jesus Christ." It is simply nowhere there to be found.

On the other hand, He would no doubt be heartened and thrilled at the sight of the golden candlestick, which is so profoundly meaningful in the revelation of who He is in the power of His resurrection and the light of His presence. As we more fully appreciate the significance of this magnificent symbol, we will join with the angel to declare "NOT BY MIGHT, NOR BY POWER, BUT BY MY SPIRIT SAITH THE LORD" (Zec 4:6).

Jesus said that we were to be the "light of the world." And that we were to put our light on a candlestick (Mt. 5:15). Could it be that the candlestick would surpass the cross as the symbol for representing the Christian church? Probably not, but at the very least, it should be included. Christians everywhere should be encouraged to display the Menorah "Let your light so shine" (Insert Hanukkah lamp)

HANUKKAH

- FEAST OF THE DEDICATION -

To those unfamiliar with Jewish history, confusion often arises as to the difference between the symbolism of the seven-branched Menorah (candlestick) that God commanded Moses to make for use in temple worship (Ex. 25:31) and the nine-branched Hanukkah light of common use in many Jewish homes. It is easy to confuse these two if you are not counting. The Hanukkah light was created to memorialize a momentous national deliverance of Israel from an evil invader. Hanukkah means dedication. Hanukkah became one of the many traditional festivals of Judaism. This festival is also known as the Feast of Lights and the Feast of Dedication. There is a reference to it in the New Testament:

And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. (Jn 10:22)

While Hanukkah is not one of the seven divinely appointed festivals of scripture, it is historically significant with regard to the restoration and rededication of the ancient Temple of God. In the year 169 B.C., an evil invader by the name of Antiochus Epiphanes, a vile and godless man, campaigned against Egypt. Despite his victory, he was compelled to withdraw from Egypt at the command of powerful Rome. At that time, Palestine was under Syrian rule. Returning to Syria, Antiochus vented his wrath upon the hapless Judeans by entering Jerusalem, destroying a large part of the city, and slaughtering men, women, and children. He crowned his evil deeds by plundering the Holy Temple, carrying away the golden altar, the candlestick, golden vessels, and other sacred treasures. To show his utter contempt for "Yahweh" God, he sacrificed a pig in the Temple to the god Jupiter. He forbade the Jews in the Holy Land to observe their religion, particularly the Sabbath and the laws pertaining to clean animals. He therefore commanded that only pigs be sacrificed in the Temple of God. He himself cooked a pig in the Temple and poured its broth on the holy scrolls of the law and upon the altar, thus polluting them.

One day an officer of Antiochus arrived in the small township of Moden, three miles north of Jerusalem and commanded an assembly of Jews to sacrifice their swine. A man by the name of Mattathias, the Maccabee, head of a priestly family, became enraged by the ungodly decree and killed the first Jew who was about to comply with this order. This caused a revolt that was encouraged by Mattathias son of Judas Maccabee. They eventually drove the Syrians from Jerusalem together with the disloyal priesthood who collaborated with the invaders.

After cleansing the Holy Temple, the Maccabees rededicated the Temple of God amidst great rejoicing and consecrated a new altar in place of the old. In their efforts to restore proper temple worship, they searched for some unpolluted oil with which to trim the seven-branched lamp of God. Finally, hidden in one of the nooks of the Temple, the Jews found a small jar of consecrated oil used in former days. The oil was sufficient for only one night, but lo and behold, the little cruse of oil miraculously lasted for eight days, until a new supply could be prepared, a procedure that normally required seven days to complete.

Annually, in memory of this wonderful victory over the wicked king, the festival of Hanakkah has been celebrated by lighting eight candles consecutively for eight days in every Jewish household. It began with lighting one on the first day, two on the second, progressively until the eighth day. The reason for the Hanukkah light being a nine-branched candlestick is that one special candle is used to light the other eight. The ninth one represented the small cruse of oil that had been discovered in the Temple. The remaining eight candles commemorate the miraculous eight-day burning.

Prophetic Lessons

One may well draw some prophetic significance from this historic event with regard to the personal and corporate renewal of the Church. The apostle Paul often refers to our bodies and the corporate Church as the Temple of God. A graphic story could be told of that first century church and its plunge into years of apostasy. It is a sad story of deliberate efforts to divorce the Church from its Biblical Jewish roots and Hebraic contours of first century Christianity, replacing [hence polluting] it with pagan symbolism and teaching. This de-Judaizing effort is epitomized by the edicts of Constantine the Great through political fiat. Subsequent centuries of on going spiritual and doctrinal pollution were experienced until God moved upon the "reformers" to begin the embryonic process of restoration and renewal that continues until this day. Many men of great light and understanding, people of restoration zeal and dedication have contributed to the progress of the arduous journey for renewal. Today the Lamp of God [the church] remains in the earth and grows brighter and brighter because of these pioneers of truth.

- A Rebuilt Temple? -

Some also see in this story of Hanukkah a prophetic picture to be repeated in the last days. It is believed by some that the false prophet will pollute the physically restored temple in Israel prior to the second coming of Jesus. This false Messiah [it is believed by some] will claim to be God as did Antiochus, but he will be destroyed and the temple will either be reconsecrated or rebuilt to be used by Jesus during the millennial kingdom reign. Whether or not that is exactly the case I do not know. We can be assured, however, that history has a tendency to repeat itself in some form or fashion.

Personal

Personal applications can also be made from this historic event with regard to the spiritual life of the individual.

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy for the temple of God is holy; which temple ye are. (I Co. 3:16-17)

In the light of this scripture, we should have no difficulty in seeing how meaningful the Hanukkah celebration can be to the Christian believer. Again, the very word itself means "dedication." It is only from dedicated spiritual temples [our body] that the acceptable incense of praise and worship can flow unto our God (Eph. 2:5). In this context, it would be quite acceptable for the Christian to observe this feast and even display the nine branched lampstand at this time of year as an occasion for renewed commitment and a personal "Feast of Dedication" for the upcoming year. We might sing with David this song of old: O LORD, thou has searched me, and know me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compasseth my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me ... Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me ... (Ps. 139:1-5, 23-24)

Rededicate your temple! Make it a Celebration!

*While the nine-branched candlestick has historical and perhaps spiritual significance, we have no record that God commanded its construction. Therefore, it should not replace nor take priority over the seven-branched Menorah. The Mosaic Menorah retains the far greater Biblical significance. Return to Awareness Ministries Literature

If Your New To Things Jewish - Read This!

Hi there! You're probably interested in this little brochure because you are new to things Jewish, or you know someone who is, and could do with some simplification of things. If this is your first encounter with all of the "Jewish" stuff, you may be getting the impression that an over emphasis is being placed on the "J-word." That's understandable. I know I did initially! And you're probably right! Enthusiasm tends to create an over emphasis. It seems to be inherent in any new idea, but be patient!

You may be experiencing some uncertainty, even concern - thinking: •This could be dangerous - Legalism lurks here! •Is this necessary? It seems complicated. •Are they trying to make Jews of us? •I'm confused, but I'd never admit it. •I think there is something right about this but I'm not sure. •How far do we go with this?

Any one of those thoughts or any combination of them could describe the initial impressions of the typical Christian to what has been dubbed the "Jewish Roots Movement."

A little "fear of the unknown" is a normal, even a healthy reaction to something with which we are unfamiliar. Don't be overwhelmed. You are not alone in your apprehensions and you're in the good company of many other sincere believers who have simply never been exposed to "things Jewish." The Jewish connection to Christianity has actually never occurred to many Christians, because the Church has simply failed to teach us about it. That failure is now being exposed and corrected.

WORDS

To a great extent, the word Judaic is often used for the lack of a better term (Biblical might have served us better). The fact is, God simply utilized a nation of people who happened to be Jews, as a vehicle to communicate His will or word (i.e., His oracles) as a blessing to all of mankind: "...and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Ge 28:14).

Christian - For a long time I did not know that Jesus was a Jew. I just assumed that he was a Christian. Wait!! I was not informed of the fact that the word Christian did not exist until nearly ten years after the death of Jesus. The scripture says: "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Ac 11:26).

Dr. Billy Graham has pointed out that the word Christian was a term of scorn created by the public against believers in the first century. Now I am not trying to discourage anyone from the use of the word Christian. It should not, however, become the antithesis of the word Jew or Judaism. Thankfully, the Church is becoming more familiar with the term "Judeo Christian."

Hebraic & Judaic -- Don't be confused! These two words mean essentially the same thing. The only distinction might be that one refers to the people and the other to their religion. Many Hebrew words have an unusual guttural (clearing the throat) sound. I remember when I first heard them. I thought something guttural might be coming my way (if you know what I mean), as when one properly pronounces the word "Hanukkah." When one pronounces the Hebrew name for Jesus Ye-shoo-ah], someone may think you have just sneezed.

You may question; why not just say it in English? Well, no one language is perfect in its expression nor conveys precise translations of thought. However, among the languages of mankind, the Hebrew tongue is known to be among the purest. To the extent that we are able, Christians want to know the exact meaning of sacred scripture. Since a greater percentage of the Bible was originally written in Hebrew,

familiarity with some Hebrew words facilitates better comprehension of Biblical text. If you are a serious student of scripture, a little patience to learn some basics of the Hebrew language will pay great dividends to that end.

Judaizing -- Now there is a scare word for you. Loosely, Judaizing means the attempt to proselytize to traditional Judaism. It is often used in Christian expression to create fear in the minds of those who value the Jewish roots of the Christian faith. There is a difference between being Judaized and simply developing a Jewish consciousness.

Hellenize -- Not everyone knows what this word means. It is a reference to being schooled in Greek thought, philosophy and culture. It is believed by many that Hellenism undermined Christian theology by severing it from its Jewish roots and that accurate Biblical interpretation has been sacrificed in the process.

DISCLAIMER

No, we are not trying to make ethnic Jews out of anyone! Oh! There are some zealots out there who may be trying to create a new Jewish tribe which I satirically call the "Wanabee" tribe - that is, while they are in fact Gentiles, they ostensibly want-to-be Jews. Unfortunately, some are even masquerading as Jews. Don't be fooled or turned off by these extremists. Rest assured, you can enrich your Christian life and understanding without changing your faith. Having said that, however, may God hasten the day when something is judged, not by whether it is traditionally Jewish or Christian, but by whether it is Biblical and Christ-centered.

SYMBOLS

The two most prominent symbols of Judaism, are the candlestick (Menorah) and the six-pointed star of David. The Menorah is a religious symbol. The star of David is more of a political or national symbol.

The Biblical candlestick (Menorah) has seven branches. However, the traditional religious candlestick has nine branches and is called the "Hanukkah Light." It is easy to confuse these two if you are not counting. The seven branched candle stick was introduced by God through Moses. The "Hanukkah" light was created to memorialize one of Israel's most important national deliverance from an evil invader. This nine branched lampstand commemorates a miracle that occurred during the rededication process of the temple.

The Star of David is not purely a Biblical symbol. Opinions vary as to its historic origin. However, it is now the political symbol of the nation of Israel, appearing on their flag, official documents and public buildings.

SHARING

Reactions that you will experience from individuals while sharing the "Jewish roots" idea can vary. Usually Christians are, as I was, very unfamiliar with our Judaic heritage or even that there is such a thing. When that is the case, the listeners' eyes may glaze over like Krispy Kreme doughnuts, wondering what you are trying to say. Their eyes may be open but with the shades drawn. Remember that they may be victims of either no teaching on the subject or even historic anti Semitic teaching by the Church. Bible teacher Bill Gothard defines persuasiveness as "The ability to guide vital truths around another's mental road blocks." Such expertise will be required. Search for and point out "things Jewish" in what they already believe but have never realized they were Jewish. Example; the ten commandments, saying Hallelujah, tithing, etc. Don't be surprised by failure -- this is cutting edge stuff.

PAGEANTRY

Unlike the typical church setting, there may be an unusual amount of pageantry associated with a Jewish roots meeting or conference. This is a form of liturgical order that serves to impress the mind with Biblical truth in an indelible fashion. Sometimes it may border on the bizarre but it is an effective Biblical concept (Ps 20:5).

The Bible is not a collection of books or writings with conflicting concepts and teaching. They (the Scriptures) are altogether harmonious and in mutual agreement. There is not a God of the Old Testament and a different God of the New. The Father God did not make a mistake in creating Judaism and then in utter exasperation send His son to correct it 4,000 years later. The Bible is a progressive revelation from which we can become fully instructed unto righteousness and the Kingdom of God (2 Ti 3:16).

KEEP GOING FORWARD IN FAITH. YOU'LL BE GLAD YOU DID!

Why Christians Celebrate Biblical Memorial Days

"A matter of worship" Zechariah 14:16

Passover Pentecost Tabernacles

FESTIVALS

In our celebration of traditional religious holidays, the biblical Holydays should not be excluded. This is confirmed by the New Testament. Here is perhaps the most compelling statement in the New Testament as to the continued influence and recognition of the Biblical Holydays by the body of Christ even among the Gentile Christian churches of the first century.

"....For even Christ our PASSOVER is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast,....." I Cor. 5:7-8

Further evidence of this is found in the book of Acts.

"....I must by all means Keep this FEAST that cometh in Jerusalem.. ." Acts 18:21 KJV

"For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of PENTECOST...." Acts 20:16

Nearly thirty years after the death of Jesus (a time when many believe the importance of these celebrations had ceased) the Apostle Paul is still highly motivated with Christian zeal to return to Jerusalem and celebrate the day of PENTECOST. Obviously Paul's spiritual value system included the honoring of biblical feast days. Would he discourage the practice today? The Biblical feast day celebrations were instituted by our God as a system for remembrance and served as a liturgical calendar. They identified special times in the year for offering praise, thanksgiving and honor unto our heavenly Father for specific acts on behalf of His people. Indeed every major move of God in Biblical history occurred on a feast day as is recorded in both Old and New Testaments. The precise dates of Noah's Ark landing on Mt. Ararat, the exodus of Israel from Egypt, the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai, the dedication of Solomon's Temple, the birth of Jesus, His death, burial and resurrection, the coming of the Holy Spirit, all give evidence of God's strict adherence to times and seasons. Recognition of these special days of memorial is now being restored to the church by the Holy Spirit as a vital part of worship. Their complete restoration is not a matter of "if" but only a matter of time.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Historically Christians have not given formal recognition to the Biblical memorial days such as Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles (Ex.23:16). The preference has been to continue the honoring of such traditional holidays as Christmas, Easter and All Saints Day (Holy Evening or Halloween). Interestingly, these are calendar days for which there is no biblical support even though the events so honored may be biblical. How did this condition come about and who is responsible? There is certainly no record that the first century church ever celebrated the traditional holidays as we know them. They were an "invention" of the subsequent church leadership. There is, however, abundant evidence to confirm that the early church continued to celebrate the biblical feast days.

History indicates that the cessation of biblical Feast Day celebrations by the followers of Jesus Christ was brought on by a growing anti-semitic spirit (resentment of Jews and things Jewish) that had invaded the church by the second century. Regrettably, this spirit has resulted in almost total deletion of everything Jewish from the doctrine and liturgy of the church, replacing it with alternative forms and titles of celebrations adopted from other religions and introduced by the church fathers. By the beginning of the fourth century, Constantine, who had become both head of the church and Emperor of Rome, forbade the recognition of anything that remotely smacked of Jewishness to the point of imprisonment and even death. An example of this can be seen by the actions taken at the Council of Nicea in 325 AD. The Church, which had been commemorating the death and resurrection of Christ on the Passover day, changed the date for observing the resurrection to make it correspond with the pagan carnival called Easter instead of the Jewish feast of Passover. Today we are victims of that orchestrated effort and therefore the Christian's sense of value for Biblical memorial day celebrations is almost non-existent.

RESTORATION ISSUES

A better understanding of the festivals in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ must be restored to the church as they once again become a vital part of our worship system. However, when such a suggestion is made the question invariably arises; but what about the New Testament scriptures which seemingly discourage the practice of observing "special days"? Such conclusions are often drawn as a result of misinformation, faulty interpretation of scripture, unbelief, fear and to some degree hypocrisy. For example, the following scripture is often cited as a pretext for non-observance of Biblical feast days by the Christian: "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." Gal.4:10-11

Here is a classic example of faulty interpretation of scripture. This reference has nothing to do with Biblical memorial days. Paul's statement to the Galatians is concerning their returning to former pagan or heathen practices. Clearly he is not speaking of Biblical celebrations, which is borne out in the very structure of the letter itself. Notice that this was something they were reinstating which they had been practicing when they worshiped false gods (see verse nine). The Galatians had never celebrated Biblical (Jewish) holy days, because they were Gentiles. Therefore, they could not be returning to Jewish festivals.

The fact is, few Christians actually believe this scripture to be absolute or if they do, their actions are inconsistent with their beliefs. If taken at face value, we would simply have to refrain from celebrating or memorializing any "Days", religious or secular. As it now is, we often go to great lengths and great expense both at home and in church to celebrate such times as Christmas, Easter, birthdays, anniversaries, Mother's Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, etc. To be sure, we "observe days" and they are often accompanied with great pageantry and extravaganza. One may contend that this verse of scripture does not specifically mean the kind of celebrations which have been enumerated here and perhaps it doesn't. The point is that many have concluded that we are free to celebrate any holidays except Biblical ones, they are somehow forbidden and viewed as being strictly Jewish and therefore anti-Christ, non-Christian and indeed dangerous. Yet the ones we have arbitrarily created for ourselves which have little or no Biblical support are somehow "safe" and honorable, even sacred. The intent here is not to cast reflections on or to denigrate the non-biblical times of celebration but rather to expose the duplicity inherent in the Galatians 4:11 stance of non-observance of Biblical feast days while proceeding to devise our own. Again, Paul's reference here is concerning pagan holidays and not the God ordained memorial days which the same writer had encouraged the Church to "therefore keep" (1 Cor. 5:7-8).

Here is another example of faulty exegesis of scripture concerning special days. "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:" Colossians 2:16

This is not a statement about celebrations and observances but about judgmental attitudes. One would be hard pressed to find anyone who practices this as is commonly interpreted. The truth is, there are on-going judgmental attitudes manifested in the church about meats, drinks, holydays and Sabbath observance. Those who don't observe such things tend to reflect on those who do as "legalists" (adherents to the Law). Those who observe them quite often view those who don't as unrighteous or at best, second class citizens of the Kingdom. Simply stated, "those who do judge those who don't and those who don't judge those who do" and on it goes. Yet the Christ-like attitude is "Judge not" (Mt. 7:1). The Apostle Paul gives similar advice to the church in Rome.

"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. ...But why dost thou judge thy brother?" Romans 14:5, 6, 10

No one's righteousness should be judged on the basis of these issues, any more than one should be judged as to whether or not he is a Christian on the basis of his church attendance. Righteousness is simply not of works. If one is "persuaded" that celebrating feast days enhances his worship of God, he should not be judged for it. All judgment of men's hearts is best left in the hands of God.

There is also a third group who are selective in their interpretation of some aspects of Col.2:16. They arbitrarily select the particular things they are for or against and proceed to categorize them as a do or don't. For example: some who would extend liberty for one to eat any and all kinds of meats might well be the first to place restrictions on what is acceptable to drink, then proceed to preach and teach that judgment. In our zeal for righteousness we must guard against the possible distortion of scripture. Paul is simply trying to avoid the pharisaical attitudes of judgment and nothing more.

A MATTER OF WORSHIP

Now, let us establish some proper motivational factors. The Biblical memorial days were instituted by God as an integral part of the divine worship system in the church (both O.T. and N.T.). They are not a matter of salvation or acceptance before God. Therefore our motive in celebration should be as God originally intended; remembrance and honor for what He has done. God said his feasts were "Forever Feasts" and times of memorial (Ex. 12:14, Lev. 23:21, Lev. 23:41). If God never changes, and we have His word on that He does not (Mal. 3:6), it is obvious that He still desires to be honored in this manner. Jesus said that the time has come to worship the Father "In spirit and in truth". Surely He is worthy. Indeed prophecy indicates that the feast days will continue to be celebrated even after the coming of Christ in the

Kingdom age (Zech. 14:16). The feast days retain a deep abiding meaning for the Christian, especially since their fullness (not termination) is found in Jesus the Messiah. It is safe to say that the Christian has as much reason for celebrating these feasts as does the Jew, perhaps more (1 Cor. 5:8). The feast days contain more divine information of spiritual and prophetic value than perhaps any subject of scripture. It is through our deliberate recognition and celebration of them that the riches of truth contained in them is released for our understanding.

The things that are done to celebrate these days are not so important as the acknowledgement of the day itself. We need not be concerned with ancient ritualism from which we were liberated in Christ (Heb. 9:10) but focus on the basic principle of their prophetic and spiritual meaning as is revealed under the New Covenant. The Apostle Paul called it serving in the "...newness of the spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter" (Ro. 7:6). Since it is not a matter of salvation but one of worship, there is liberty and flexibility in what we can do as a remembrance practice.

The spirit of praise and worship simply demands the recognition of the Biblical feast days. No other conclusion can be drawn. The celebration of these memorial days is being restored to the Church as Biblical worship becomes more complete.

The question before us is; should Christians celebrate the feasts? Clearly we should. Why? Because they are Biblical, Christ-centered and God ordained. While feast celebrations may not be essential to salvation, they are certainly essential for a more perfect worship order in the church. Reason simply dictates this conclusion.

REMEMBER

Feast days are not Jewish in an ethnic sense. They are divine in a Biblical sense and therefore eternal.

THEREFORE, LET US ALSO KEEP THE FEAST!

Celebrate Passover

The Feast of Passover "A Time to Die"

Should Christians celebrate the feast(day) of Passover? The Apostle Paul clearly answers the question for us: "...Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore LET US KEEP THE FEAST...(1Co 5:7,8). But how should it be celebrated and why would this new testament writer encourage Christian believers to celebrate this biblical memorial day? The truth is, what we commonly refer to today as the sacrament of the "Lord's Supper" is the New Testament rite of Passover. In all of the prophetic pictures and demonstrations of the Old Testament, none more clearly reflects the redemptive work of the Messiah than does Passover, for He was to be "...the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). It was therefore preordained that the Messiah would die for the sins of the world on that precise day and that it should be regarded as a "memorial" day (Ex 12:14).

The wise man Solomon tells us: "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven: A time to be born, and time to DIE..."(Ecc 3:1, 2). The purpose of Passover was to pinpoint the "death-day" of Him who would be the true Messiah. Jesus was crucified on that very day. In the book of Romans it is stated that "...in due time (appointed time) Christ died for the ungodly" (Ro 5:6). The Messiah was appointed to die on the Passover day and Jesus met that appointment to perfection. The scriptures reveal that He died on the cross "In the fourteenth day of the first month (Nisan, or Abib) ...the LORD'S Passover (Lev 23:5).

Now let us note the relationship between the "Lord's Passover" celebration and the "Lord's Supper." The very first communion in the New Testament was conducted by our Lord Himself early on the day of Passover, at the last supper (Mt 26:19-26). In Biblical times the new day began at sundown (6:00 p.m.) and not at midnight as we reckon it today. Jesus and His disciples actually ate the supper shortly after 6:00 p.m. on what would be Tuesday evening to us, but the beginning of Wednesday to them; therefore He ate the supper and was crucified on the same Biblical day (see chronology). In essence this was both the last and the first supper. It was to be the last time that the Old Testament order of the Passover meal using a slain lamb, bitter herbs, etc. was to be carried out, and the first introduction of the New Testament order of Passover using bread and wine only (1Co 11:23-27). What we refer to today as "Lord's Supper" "Eucharist" or "Communion" is actually the New Testament Passover. Paul's use of these terms in speaking to the Corinthians was not an attempt on his part to rename this feast but simply to clarify its purpose and order. It is now the Lord's supper instead of Moses' supper. Therefore, the sacrament of the "Lord's Supper" should continue to be identified as the Feast of Passover (1Co 5:7, 8). In its beginning this feast day was declared to be a feast celebrated "forever" (Ex 12:14). In fact, Jesus tells us that it will continue to be celebrated after His return when the international "Kingdom of God" is established upon the earth (Ex 12:14;Lk 22:16).

Annually for nearly 2,000 years a lamb had been slain on the day of Passover, which prophetically demonstrated what would take place concerning Jesus at Calvary, Jesus fulfilled this prophecy on the very same day (Passover) as the "Lamb Slain" when he was crucified. Accordingly, Christians should honor this day as Jesus requested; "This do in remembrance of me." Before this time it was done in remembrance of Moses and Israel's deliverance from Egypt, but to the Christian it celebrates Jesus and our deliverance from sin. One may contend that it is permissible to observe Communion (Passover) any time we feel so inspired. This is true. Under the New Covenant, we should feel at liberty to do this by inspiration at any time of the year, but it should not be done at the expense of ignoring the true anniversary, Nisan 14. The specific annual date may be easily obtained from most calendars. By honoring the correct day we are more fully worshipping "in spirit and truth."

It is perfectly acceptable for the Jewish community to celebrate the Sedar Meal (Jewish order) as they did in ancient times because it was they who were delivered from Egypt and not Gentiles. Undoubtedly it has also proven to be a learning experience for many Gentile Christians as well. However, all believers in Messiah (both Jew and Gentile) should observe the communion which Jesus introduced on that memorial feast day.

MELCHIZEDEK - JESUS

"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth BREAD and WINE: and he was the priest of the Most High God: (Ge 14:18). Inherent in this scripture is the prophetic reason for Jesus' setting aside many of the trapings of the Old Testament Passover celebration. The Apostle Paul confirms this in his letter to the Hebrews:

"For he testifieth, Thou (Jesus) art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb 7:17).

The exclusive use of bread and wine as symbols for the body and blood of our Lord at the last supper, was an indication that Jesus was actually reinstating the Melchizedek order of this celebration. Today it is known to most Christians as the "Communion" (1Co 10:16).

Obviously, celebrating the Passover Feast Day is not a matter of redemption and/or salvation but rather a matter of worship, praise and honor. This alone should be sufficient reason for us to respect and acknowledge it. Memorial Day celebrations are a vital part of God's eternal worship system. Why not make the celebration of the Passover Day a part of your spiritual value system? Jesus is worthy of this honor!

CELEBRATION OF DELIVERANCE

Passover is God's appointed Memorial day to celebrate his ongoing work of DELIVERANCE. As Moses delivered the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage, so also did Christ deliver humanity from the bondage of all sin and its associated physical and spiritual affects. Deliverance must be a continual work in the life of every believer: "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us:" (2Co 1:10).

Celebrate Pentecost

Feast of Pentecost

"A Time To Reap"

"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

Pentecost (Shavuot) is a biblical memorial day given to the people of God as a special day for worship. From the New Testament perspective, it is (among other things) a day to celebrate that first "outpouring" of the Holy Spirit upon the church that John the Baptist had predicted (Matthew 3:11). This first happened within the Jewish community. Sometime later, a similar event occurred at the house of Cornelius, an Italian family, when the Gentiles experienced a phenomenal "outpouring" (acts 10:45). Today we have this continuing promise of God through the Apostle Peter, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39). This means it is available to you also!

The word Pentecost is found only in the New Testament (Acts 2:1). It is identified in the Old Testament as the "Feast of Weeks" (exodus 34:22) and the "Feast of Harvest" (Exodus 23:16). Pentecost, a Greek word meaning fiftieth, signifies that it occurred fifty days after the high priest offered to God the firstfruits of the barley harvest (Leviticus 23:10,11). Initially, this feast (as well as the other two great annual feasts, Passover and Tabernacles) was an agricultural festival.

Pentecost embodied many spiritual and prophetic demonstrations about the work and ministry of the coming Messiah. In fact, the entire life of our Lord was foreshadowed by a precisely timed series of events. The coming of the Holy Spirit is no exception. After the ascension of Jesus (Yahshua) to the right hand of God and His becoming our High Priest, the next great event was the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). It is not surprising, therefore, that the writer of the book of Acts informs us that this event occurred "when the day of Pentecost had fully come...."

The complete saturation of believers with the Holy Spirit bestow many supernatural gifts and enablements for declaring the Good News with power and effectiveness (Acts 1:8). This is reasonable, for if the work of God could be accomplished through human abilities, the "endowment (or clothing upon) with power from on high" would be rendered unnecessary and meaningless.

The Apostle Paul hastened to be at Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost (Acts 20:16)

It is a mistake to isolate one manifestation as evidencing this infilling. Pentecost represents a many-faceted demonstration of His presence as we shall see. Some of the spiritual abilities with which the church was endowed are these: word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, and speaking with tongues, both heavenly language and foreign languages of men (1 Corinthians 12; 1 Corinthians 13:1). You will discover that gifts to the ministry are included in this equipping. (Ephesians 4:8,11).

Simply stated, this Holy Spirit baptism was for the equipping of those who would be used of God with whatever they needed, on any occasion and under any circumstances, to be an adequate witness and to work the works of God (John 14:12).

Today, more than ever, we must have these spiritual talents working in us so that the gospel of the kingdom may be published into all the world for a witness before the end comes (Matthew 24:14). The fact that Pentecost is also identified as the Feast of Harvest gives us some spiritual insight concerning the harvest of souls that God desires to be reaped from the earth. The Bible teaches that Jesus was the Son of man who came to sow good seed--the word of God (Luke 8:5-11). The church is the reaper sent forth for harvesting (John 4:38; Matthew 9:38). Through Spirit-filled witnessing, the harvest of earth will be reaped. It is for this reason that Jesus made the declaration "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you and ye shall be witnesses unto me...unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The people of God can never be effective and productive in this harvest without an abundant anointing or baptism of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost symbolizes ANOINTING FOR THE HARVEST. A yearly observance of this biblical memorial day by the church serves to remind us of our total dependence upon the Holy Spirit to give us the guidance and anointing we must have for this spiritual harvest of earth. The apostle Peter referred to it as a "time of refreshing."

Pray ye the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers! Our attitude toward this memorial day should be very much kindred to that of the great apostle Paul who hastened to be at Jerusalem for the day of Pentecost (Acts 20:16). Surely this yearly celebration brought to the first century church a remembrance of the glorious things that had happened at the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit a few years earlier when Peter had declared to the nation of Israel and the world, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel."

TEN COMMANDMENTS

Jewish tradition asserts that YAHWEH God wrote the Ten Commandments on tables of stone with His own finger and gave them to humanity on the day of Pentecost. This should tell us something about the Holy Spirit whose work it is to write the laws of God upon the tables of our hearts (2 Corinthians 3:3).

HARVEST FIRSTFRUITS

Here is another invaluable truth to be learned from this agricultural feast. God said, "Ye shall bring out of your habitation TWO WAVE LOAVES (wheat bread)....they are the firstfruits unto the Lord." The spiritual and prophetic lesson to be learned from this demonstration of the Old Testament concerns the Jew and Gentile people. The body of people that God will harvest out of these two nations is represented in the two loaves (1 Corinthians 10:17; James 1:18). The first century church was predominantly Jewish. The last century church will be predominantly Gentile. Knowing this, we can better understand the apostle's statement that the blessings of God were "to the Jew first and also the Gentile."

Celebrate Tabernacles

Feast of Tabernacles "Thanksgiving Festival"

Of the three major Biblical Memorial days (Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles) celebrated by Israel and/or the first century Christian Churches, the Feast of Tabernacles (succoth) was by far the most festive and joyous of occasions. History records that four huge candelabras were constructed, lighted, and attended by young men ascending ladders periodically with pitchers of oil to keep them burning. The light from these lamps illuminated the whole city, and around them danced distinguished men with torches in their hands, singing hymns and songs of praise. The dancing as well as the music continued until daybreak. It was an extravaganza! Scholars suggest that Jesus referred to this custom when he spoke those well known words, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). The harvest was completed, the work was done, hearts were filled with gratitude. For these reasons, this festival is also known as the Feast of Ingathering (Ex. 23:16). All of these blessings were viewed as evidence that God was dwelling with His people.

All Biblical truth has a threefold application; historical, spiritual and prophetic. Historically, the festival is called the "feast of Tabernacles" (Lev. 23:34). The Israelites actually "camped out" in temporary shelters in remembrance of how God had been their provider (JehovahJireh) in their wilderness journeyings, having supplied all of their needs; food, shelter, clothing and good health. It also became a designated time for giving special thanks for the harvest of the fields and newborn livestock of the year. It could be rightly viewed as the first THANKSGIVING celebration.

Spiritually the celebration of Tabernacles represents the fullness of Christ in His Church. It reminds us that He is our shelter and our refuge in the time of storm: "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his TABERNACLE shall he hide me; (Ps. 27:5). "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the TABERNACLE (dwelling) of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, (Rev. 21:3).

PRAY FOR THE LATTER RAIN

During the Feast of Tabernacles in Old Testament Biblical times, a priest would pour out pitchers of water in the temple, which had been carried from the pool of Siloam, to signify Israel's gratitude for the rain that had produced the harvest, and to pray for rain in the next year. There is a spiritual lesson in this demonstration. The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ should be in special prayer for the rain of God's Holy Spirit and the revelation of restoration truth in these latter times.

"Ask ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain; so the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to everyone grass in the field" (Zech. 10:1).

"Be glad then ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God; for he hat given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. AND I SHALL RESTORE..."(Joel 2:23-25).

My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass" (Deut. 32:2).

Interestingly, it was at this very celebration of Tabernacles, during the pouring out of water and prayers for the latter rain, that we read: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst let him come unto me, and drink.

"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (St. John 7:37-38).

Since the Church is the "...true Tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb. 8:2, and since our Lord is that "water of life" (St. John 4:13-14), WE HAVE MUCH TO CELEBRATE!

Prophetically, this festival celebrates both the first and second coming of the Messiah (a brochure on Jesus' birth is available). Rabbis have called it "Messiah's Feast" because of the following words of the prophet Zechariah:

"And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And it shall come to pass, that 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" (Zech. 14:4,16).

Obviously, celebrating this feast should be a vital part of Christian worship. Jesus is coming again! If we are to participate in the WORSHIP of the King it is important that the Church receive some understanding of this Biblical celebration day. It is appropriate, and indeed ordained of God, that the Christians begin now to make this celebration a vital part of our appointed times for special Worship and Praise. As the Feast of Ingathering, this festival also demonstrates the final world sweep of the gospel and the ingathering of God's "elect" from the four corners of the earth, about which Jesus prophesied.

ENCOURAGED BY JESUS

Jesus said, "Go ye up unto this feast..." (St. John 7:8). Our Lord celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles during His Judean ministry and encouraged His disciples to do so. Why? Because the ministry of Jesus brought additional meaning to the Festival. Therefore, it should continue to be celebrated by the Church today. Other memorial days have also been identified by God as "forever" feasts (Ex. 12:14, Lev. 23:21, 14). Therefore, to celebrate them is to celebrate Him. Failure to do so would deprive our Lord of the honor for which these celebration days were originally designed.