

# **DAILY LIFE IN BIBLE TIMES**

## ***Spiritual Lessons From Israel's Geography & Culture***



On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. (John 2:1-2)

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## **INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK**

The Bible can only be accurately understood and interpreted in light of the culture of its day. Each verse must be taken in context, and that includes the context of culture. The events and teachings in the Bible did not happen in a vacuum. They are anchored in time and place to Palestine 2,000 BC to 100 AD. In order to understand the Bible, we must look at it through the eyes of those to whom it was written. We must be able to put ourselves in the place of those who wrote and those who read the Holy Scriptures in order to accurately interpret them. Only then can we know the correct application to us today in our time and culture. I have always been interested in learning about daily life in Palestine during the Old and New Testament times. I hope this book helps you better understand God's Word and its truths for us today. It should help bring the words and events of Scripture alive for you and those you teach.

Rev. Dr. Jerry Schmoyer

## **BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR**

Rev. Dr. Jerry Schmoyer is a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary where he received his ThM in 1975 and DMin in 2006. He served as a church pastor in the USA for 35 years until 2016. He is founder of Christian Training Organization where he leads marriage, family, and youth conferences, and is active in counseling and mentoring pastors. He has ministered to pastors in India since 2006.

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# ***Daily Life in Bible Times***

## ***I. PALESTINE***

### **SPIRITUAL LESSONS FROM ISRAEL'S GEOGRAPHY & CULTURE**

**By Rev. Dr. Jerry Schmoyer**

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# Daily Life in Bible Times – I. PALESTINE

## 1. IMPACT YOUR WORLD

Imagine yourself at a crossroads in your life. You have a difficult decision to make or a crisis to resolve. Knowing what others have done in similar situations can be very helpful in saving time, hurt and pain. Finally, you get through it and learn some things in the process, things you would like to share with others coming along the same way later. You can do so by keeping a journal or some kind of written record. But what about if you lived before paper and books were available? What kind of records could you turn to for information, or could you leave for others? The Jews had a special way

of leaving records for others, called “Standing tones.” They were put where others would see them, and where the Jews lived everyone could see them!

**ISRAEL’S LOCATION** God is in absolute, sovereign control of everything. He chose the people He planned to use -- Abraham and his descendants, the Jews. He had a plan to accomplish through them. He also chose the place where this was to happen, and the place is as important as the plan and the people in accomplishing what He wanted. He didn’t choose Iowa or Florida of England, Africa or Canada. He did pick a little place called Palestine, the size of New Jersey.



What was most significant about this location is that it was the land bridge between three continents. All travel and trade from Africa to Asia or Europe and back would pass right through there! It was only 20 miles wide. The western was seacoast and marsh. The eastern side rugged mountains. All travel went up and down the main road through the middle. God didn’t put His people in some private, out-of-the-way place where they wouldn’t be touched by the world, He put them in a very public place. It was like living where three major interstate highways converged. Why would God put them in such a busy place? It was so others passing by would see them and their testimony for God, so they could more easily spread His word to others as they passed through (Isaiah 43:12; I Kings 8:60). God brought the world to them so they could impact their world for Him. He didn’t want them hiding from the world but changing their world. He didn’t want the world to change them, but them to change it. At least that was His plan.

The cities of Gezer, Hazor and Megiddo were especially important for the main highway, the Via Maris, went right by them. Those cities controlled that road. The road controlled the trade, and that controlled and influenced a large part of the whole world. Unfortunately, the Jews rarely followed through and possessed those cities, thus they didn’t impact their world as God wanted.



Today, too, God saves us to go into the world and impact it for Him (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8). He puts each of us in a strategic location to change those who come in touch with us. How sad when we change to be like them instead of influencing them for Christ! The key locations in our world today aren’t in the hands of God’s people. Thus, the world is being influenced for evil by TV. Movies, fashion designers, athletes, musicians and politicians. As Christians we are to take these culture-impacting areas and use them for Him. We are NOT to have them turn us from Him!

**CITY GATES** As stated, the cities were the key to the control of the Via Maris which influenced the whole known world. The key to the cities were its gates. That's what made a city strong or weak. That is where enemies attacked. Thus, gates were strong, well-built, elaborate affairs. They were more like a maze with rooms on each side and on top. These rooms had openings for soldiers to shoot arrows at enemies who had to enter a few at a time, thus meaning a few defenders could keep large numbers of enemies out. A city's safety, and therefore its reputation, depended on its gates. The gods they worshipped were seen as strong or as weak as their ability to protect their people, and that meant the gates. The gate was the key place in the city. Not only were soldiers always there, but it was a busy, active place. Government officials gathered there (Lot, Boaz, Eli and Mordecai and functioned there). It was the "city hall" where legal matters were settled. It was also the local farmer's market and flea market -- all shopping took place there. It was where people gathered, where announcements were made, and where the prophets spoke God's message to the people. It was the center of life.

**STANDING STONES** That brings us to the standing stones that were used as witnesses to people passing by. They were placed by the gates where people would see them. These were erected for special events or to record a historical event. Some were written on, some weren't. They were like historical markers we see along the highway today, but had more significance. Actually, it seems the practice of erecting tomb stones developed from this practice of erecting standing stones.

This was done by all cultures in Palestine. The Canaanites did it long before the Jews came. Everyone traveling through would see them and know or wonder about them. In fact, many of the stones came to be worshipped, since they testified to the help a local god had given his people. The Jews were not to worship them, of course, but to tear them down and set up their own. Jacob did this with the stone he used for a pillow after wrestling with God. Jacob set up 12 standing stones after crossing the Jordan and when he made a covenant at Shechem. Seven times Joshua set up standing stones. Unfortunately, the Jews didn't continue to set up these testimonials to God. They didn't influence those whom they touched but allowed the Gentiles to influence them. You know the rest of the story: defeat, misery and captivity followed. That was all because they didn't take advantage of the place God chose for them to impact their world for Him. They wasted their opportunity.

God has put each one of us in a special place to impact others around us. We are to erect monuments of testimony to Him by what we say and how we live (1 Peter 2:4-12). There are lives which we touch for God which no one else does. There is a world badly needing our light. Live in such a way as to effect those around you for God. You'll not regret it!



# Daily Life in Bible Times – I. PALESTINE

## 2. CROSS YOUR JORDAN



Most ancient civilizations grew up around a river. Babylon had the Tigris and Euphrates, India the Ganges and Egypt the Nile. Often these rivers were worshipped because of their importance in providing life for the people there. When God chose Palestine for the Jews He made sure they weren't tempted to do this. Their only river, the Jordan, was often more of a curse than a blessing! It didn't flood to fertilize their lands, didn't provide transportation, didn't really do anything but provide a convenient eastern boundary.

**THE JORDAN RIVER** The Jordan River was small, 50 to 75 feet across. It was only 3 to 12 feet deep. "Jordan" means "descender" because the river drops 3000 feet (about 3/5 of a mile) from its source to the Dead Sea. This is about 70 miles as the crow flies (in a straight line). But with all the twists and turns in it the river actually travels over 200 miles. Twenty-seven rapids make boat travel impossible.

Much in the Bible happened in this river valley. Lot moved here to be in rich farm land (Sodom and Gomorrah are now under the Dead Sea). David hid from Saul in caves in the Jordan River valley. John the Baptizer lived and baptized here at the upper and lower fords. Perhaps the most important event there, though, was when the waters parted to let Joshua and the Jews enter the land (Josh 3:15-16). The same thing happened for Elijah & Elisha, too (2 Kings 2:7-8).

**CROSSING THE JORDAN** Many songs or poems today talk about "crossing the Jordan" as entrance into heaven. "I looked over Jordan and what did I see? Coming for to carry me home? A band of angels coming after me...." But what happened to the Jews after they crossed the Jordan and entered the land under Joshua? Was it heaven? No, that's when their battles and warfare started! I see it this way:

The Jews were in bondage in Egypt (type of the world) and under Pharaoh's power (type of Satan). God had to intervene to deliver them by innocent blood being shed (Passover) and by power (Red Sea parting). These picture

salvation which is by blood (Jesus on cross) and power (resurrection of Jesus). Then God took them to Mt Sinai to give them His Word so they could know how to live and serve Him. Thus, equipped they were to enter the Promised Land by faith, but failed through unbelief. Thus, they had to wander for 40 years, wasting their life. They still had their salvation but were carnal believers who lived out of God's will. When Joshua led them into the land there were again in God's will and place for them. That's when the battles with the world, the flesh and Satan began. The Promised Land was a picture of being in God's will. There is peace and rest for the soul there, but many battles must be fought to claim and settle in that land -- lifelong battles. That strange combination of peace within but battles without is what the Christian living for God faces.





**BARRIER TO BE CROSSED** What stood in the way, what kept the Jews from being in God's perfect will for them, was the Jordan. At flood stage it was uncrossable and a barrier. We today have barriers that seem uncrossable, that which keeps us out of God's perfect will and place for us. These must be crossed to have peace and rest within despite battles without. We all have our 'Jordan' to cross today. It may be the opinion of others, lust (food, sex, things), fear, greed, laziness, etc. It **MUST** be crossed or we will wander in our own wilderness, not growing but wasting our lives. We must cross as the Jews did under Joshua.

**HOW TO CROSS THE JORDAN** There are two lessons we must learn to cross our Jordans:

First, we have to get our feet wet. The water of the Jordan only parted when the priests in front stepped into the water (Josh 3:15-16). It took total commitment to do that, for going down the steep bank and plunging into deep, swift water would have meant sure death if God hadn't stopped the water. Those going first took the greatest risk, needed the strongest faith, but received the largest reward and blessing. Not only did God stop the water, He dried up the ground so they didn't even get muddy!

As new Christians, right out of Egypt, God parted the Red Sea for them before they waded into it. Their faith was new and weak. Now, though, He expects them to step out in faith **BEFORE** He opens the way. We, too, must take that first step of faith, risking all, and trusting God to provide in order to cross our Jordan.

Second, the priests who led the way didn't go into the water alone. They were carrying the Ark of the Covenant with them (Josh 3:1-6). This was where God's Presence dwelt among them. It was the central focus of the Tabernacle and all Jewish worship. They followed the ark when they marched around Jericho, too.

Thus, they stepped into the waters making sure God was with them! We must be sure we are going where God wants us to go and entering His will and place for us. We can't do it in our own strength, and He doesn't ask us to do that. We must be in close fellowship with Him to have His presence and power with us.

Thus, the way for us to cross our individual Jordan Rivers so we can be in God's will in our lives means to step out in faith, trusting God will provide as we obey Him. It also means making sure He is with us as we go His way. We can't do it on our own, we can't choose our own way. It must be His way in His timing with His presence. Then we, too, will enter that special promised land where we will find peace and rest in our spirits. The battles will begin, for sure, because then we face opposition to our commitment to serve God. But He is with us through the battles too. The giants we face now, just like the ones the Jews, will fall before the power of the Lord. Are you in the land? Or are you wandering in the wilderness, wasting your life by just existing from day to day? Cross your Jordan and get into the land of milk & honey!

# Daily Life in Bible Times – I. PALESTINE

## 3. GIVE YOUR BEST

This lesson contains all the things you wouldn't think would be in the Bible: sex (a prostitute is a main character), violence (thousands of men, women and children are killed -- by God's orders) and situational ethics (lying to help God out). What story is this? It's the story of Jericho.

**JERICOH'S SIGNIFICANCE** Jericho is located 8 miles NW of where the Jordan River enters the Dead Sea. The climate is tropical because it is 8,000 feet below sea level (the lowest city on earth). Because of its great location it is also the site of the oldest city so far ever discovered. City after city was built one upon another on the same location. What made it so strategic was that it was located on the only east-west road in that part of Palestine to connect the two major north-south highways which went from Africa to Asia and Europe (the Via Maris and the King's Highway). It wasn't a large city, but had great walls and defenses. No one could enter Palestine from the east without their approval -- and they weren't about to let the Jews past!



**JERICOH'S DEFEAT** The story of Jericho's fall to Joshua is well known (Joshua 6). The same ark which led them through the Jordan led the way around the city. On the seventh day God destroyed the walls and the Jews destroyed everyone in the city. Some wonder how a loving God could destroy women and children like that (Deuteronomy 20:16-18), but He couldn't let any live for their sin would spread to the Jews (which is exactly what happened). He gave them plenty of time to repent, adding 400 extra years after Abraham came to the land (Genesis 15:16). The innocent children did go to heaven, which wouldn't have happened had they grown and been taught to reject God as the adults did. God is holy and righteous and He judges sin. He did so in Eden, with the flood and at Babel as well as Sodom and Gomorrah. That's why He created hell. Judging Jesus on the cross is the ultimate statement of how He feels about sin.

**JERICOH'S DESTRUCTION** The Jews weren't to let any alive or they would be influenced to commit the sins of the Canaanites. The city had to be leveled and the possessions destroyed, lest any of it influence God's people to sin. This was so important that God pronounced a curse on any whoever rebuilt Jericho (Joshua 6:26-27 -- eventually Ahab allowed Hiel to rebuild Jerusalem, and he paid the penalty God had stated (1 Kings 16:34).

**SET APART FOR GOD** God had them destroy Jericho and leave it unbuilt for another reason. It was to show He was their God. The Jews owned no land and never did (only the plot Abraham bought to bury Sarah). God is giving them all of Palestine and this is their first actual land to own. Giving it back to God shows the principle of Firstfruits. As stewards we must remember that all we have is really God's. He just passes it through our hands for us to manage and use for Him, but we don't own it.

God had recently instituted the feast of Firstfruits (Leviticus 23:9-14) where the first of all crops, animals or produce was taken to the tabernacle (later the temple) and offered to God there. This was hard for the first to be harvested was often the very best, and very much in demand after a long winter without enough to eat. This principle is what the Pilgrims based their Thanksgiving feast on. By

claiming Jericho as His own God was showing the importance of the Jews giving the first and best back to Him.

**JERICO A MEZUZAH** The Jews still, to this day, put a small container with scripture verses written on paper inside (Deuteronomy 4:4-9; 11:13-21) on their door post. Those who lived there would touch it each time they entered, remembering their commitment to God. Everyone would see this and know their home was dedicated to God. As people entered this home this would be their first impression. Whenever anyone entered Palestine from the east the ruins of Jericho would be their first impression. It, on the doorway to Palestine, showed that all here was God's. What a strong reminder it must have been! That strong city was now just rubble because of what God did! What a visual reminder it was!

**JESUS AND JOSHUA** When He was going to Jerusalem to be crucified, Jesus chose to enter the land by the Jericho road (Luke 18:31-35). He came to open a new 'promised land.' Too. His was spiritual while Joshua's was physical. As you know, both Joshua (Hebrew) and Jesus (Greek) mean "God is salvation" in English. Joshua opened the land physically. Jesus followed the same road to open it spiritually. Both came in God's name and in obedience to God. For both it started at Jericho, where the first and best was dedicated to God.

**GIVE GOD YOUR BEST** God wants us today, too, to give God our first and our best in recognition that all is His. Before paying any bills, write out your check to God. Before eating any food, pray and bless it. Before using a new purchase, thank God for it and commit it to God's glory. Give God the best of your time, too -- not just what is left over. Sunday is His day. The first and often best time is the very start of the day. Use that time for God's glory. Give Him the first and best of your talents and gifts, too: do what you can for your church and family, friends and neighbors. Give them your first and best as unto the Lord. Always be conscious of setting apart to God the first and best of everything you have and are. This is Jericho.

Also, from Jericho remember to acknowledge God in a way that others can see. We need to have spiritual 'mezuzah's' hanging many places in our lives. Show you are dedicated to God's use by Christian symbols and plaques in your home, on your clothing or jewelry, and on your car. Probably YOU YOURSELF have been set apart to God by your parents. Don't take back from God what is His for there is no blessing in that as Ahab found out when He took Jericho back from God. God is a loving God, but He is also a holy God. He demands the best. He deserves the best. Give it to Him.

# Daily Life in Bible Times – I. PALESTINE

## 4. STAND YOUR GROUND

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Samson could strangle a lion, but he couldn't strangle his own lusts. He burst the fetters of his foes, but not the cords of his own flesh. He burned the crops of others and lost the fruit of his own virtue which burned with his desires. Samson is a man that would be admired today. Physical strength and fitness are greatly admired today. Unfortunately, we don't view moral strength as nearly as important, and neither did Samson. To really understand his story, we must understand the geography and culture in which he lived.



**THE SHEPHELAH** The geography of Palestine consisted of a mountain range going north and south alongside the Dead (Salt) Sea. It was rugged territory, better suited to flocks than farming. The Jews settled here. The coast was marsh land and where the Philistines lived. In between was a fertile land called the shephelah which means “foothills” or “lowland.” It was the best place to farm, the most fertile farm land in the area. The main trade route between Egypt (and the African continent) and Mesopotamia (and the continents of Europe and Asia) went right up the middle of the shephelah. It was called the Via Maris. Thus, many battles were fought for the shephelah for it was not only the best land around, but also the key to controlling the Via Maris and its trade and therefore influencing the known world. The two nations which battled for this land were the Jews and the Philistines.

**THE PHILISTINES** The Philistines are mentioned often in the Bible, almost 300 times. We tend to think of them as the barbarian enemies of the cultured Jews. Actually, the opposite is true. The Jews were the barbarians living in the hills while

the Philistines were much more refined, artistic and civilized.

The Philistines were not Semites like the other nations in Palestine. They were Aryans, Hellenic peoples from the area of Greece, some of whom migrated to the coast of Palestine. They brought their Greek armor and ways with them. Their very name means ‘migrant.’ The name ‘Palestine’ comes from their name.

They developed five great cities on the coast: Gaza, Ekron, Ashdod, Ashkelon and Gath. They produced the finest pottery in Palestine. Ekron alone produced a thousand tons of olive oil a year (30% of what the whole nation of Israel produces today). But it was the use of iron that set them apart. They brought the secrets of iron working with them and with that were able to dominate the whole area.

**PHILISTINE RELIGION** The Philistines worshipped a god they named Dagon who was a god of fertility. His consort, the female Ashtaroth was their goddess of fertility. As can be imagined, the worship of these gods was very immoral. By the way, the European fertility goddess ‘Easter’ was her equivalent (rabbits and eggs are fertility symbols). These gods were worshipped by sacred prostitution and child sacrifice. Sex was focused on and worshipped in their culture, even more than in ours today. When

the ark of the covenant was taken by the Philistines and put in the temple of Dagon, though, the statue fell down in worship before the ark (1 Samuel 5:1-7).

The Philistines also had a god named Baal-zebub, meaning “lord of habitation.” His name in Greek became Beelzebub, “the ruler of the demons.” The Jews, recognizing the demonic nature of the Philistine gods, changed his name to Beelzebub, ‘lord of the flies.’ Flies gather on dung heaps, and that is what they said Satan was lord of --not exactly a complement!

**ENTER SAMSON** Samson was chosen by God before birth to defeat the Philistines and bring relief for the Jews. Our purpose here isn’t to show all about Samson’s life but how the culture and geography of the area affected his life and ministry. (For a detailed account of Samson’s life see “Samson and Male Sexuality” by Jerry Schroyer.) Samson’s story is in Judges 13-16.

There was no border between the Jews and the Philistines for both nationalities had cities scattered throughout the shephelah. Thus, Samson grew up seeing Philistines nearby. Like all Jewish boys he grew up dreaming of the day he would defeat his enemies and free the land of their oppressive presence. He was to be God’s instrument to destroy the pagan culture around them so God’s people wouldn’t be affected, but instead he himself gave in to the fleshly attractions of that culture and its sensuality. One can only imagine the appeal a tall, blond, immodestly dressed Philistine woman who was an accomplished flirt had on Samson who up to this time only knew short, dark-skinned, completely covered and veiled Jewish maidens who gave no eye contact and barely answered when talked to. The whole sensuality of the Philistine life, the brazen in-your-face sexuality, the easy availability, and the continual impact on Samson’s sensory system quickly made him want more. Thus began a life of sensuality and sexuality, ending in his destruction. While God used him anyway to break Philistine power and to destroy the temple of Dagon, it is a sad story for Samson.

Entering into this story, too, is the fact that Samson was a Nazarite (Numbers 6). That means he took a special vow to live a life totally separate from sin, even more than the average Jew. He could eat no grape products of any kind, which was hard in a place where water was scarce and grape juice the main beverage. Samson broke this when he drank at his wedding feast. Next, he could not touch anything dead, thus he had to be a vegetarian in a meat-eating society. Samson broke this by touching the dead lion. Finally, he could not cut his hair or beard, giving him a wild-man look. This was broken when Delilah cut his hair.

Like Samson, we are called to be set apart from our culture so we can bring Jesus to those caught up in it. Instead, we, like Samson, often become part of the very culture we are called to destroy! Today, too, sexuality is often Satan’s best tool to defeat God’s people. As you live among the ‘Philistine’ towns scattered around you, don’t be attracted to their sin. They, too, worship sex but we must be separate from that. We must raise our children to be separate, too, and equip them to be able to bring God’s love to others. Learn from Samson’s failure.



# Daily Life in Bible Times – I. PALESTINE

## 5. CONQUER YOUR GIANTS

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God created the nation Israel to be His people. He was to be their king and they His people, but they rejected Him as king and wanted a king “like everyone else has.” Finally, God gave in, not because it was His perfect will for them but because He knew there are some lessons that must be learned the hard way.

**SAUL** Saul was the first king. While he was a shy, insecure man before becoming king, the power turned his head and he didn’t follow God’s ways. He lived by selfishness and fear, not submission and faith. This is clearly seen in the story of David and Goliath.

**GOLIATH** The Philistines and Jews continually fought for control of the shephalah, the fertile lowlands between Philistia (on the coast) and Israel (in the mountains by the Dead Sea). One such encounter was near Succoth in the shephelah (1 Samuel 17:1-3). The Philistines practiced a tradition from their Hellenistic past in having their best warrior fight their enemy’s best warrior to see which nation would win (4-11). This way armies and manpower weren’t being constantly destroyed. The champion of the Philistines was a giant (9 foot tall) named Goliath. His spear weighed 125 pounds and the point of it 15 pounds. The Philistines had state-of-the-art weapon technology which the Jews didn’t (1 Samuel 13:16-22). They could work iron, a secret they brought with them when they came from Greece. The secret was using charcoal to get a fire hot enough to form the metal. Thus, the Philistines could form weapons that were far superior to the Jews’ wooden and stone implements. Plus, the Philistines, being Aryans, were far taller than the Jews. Goliath himself was probably a descendant of the giants which were in the land when Joshua first conquered it (and why the Jews had been afraid to enter the land earlier).



**ENTER DAVID** David was the youngest boy in his family, not old or large enough to be in the army. When he brought food to the army he found out about the challenge to God (1 Samuel 17:12-30). He was highly indignant and saw it all, not as a challenge to the Jews by the Philistines, but to God by Satan (v. 26, 45-47). David was right, it was spiritual warfare in the heavenlies which also affected events on this earth like ripples in a pond. The battles between good and evil on this earth, between light and darkness down here, really are heavenly battles between angels and demons, between God and Satan. David recognized the immense implications of what was happening and knew his God could not be defeated. Perhaps God would let the Israel army loose battles, as they often did, but when the challenge was against God Himself there could be no doubt as to the outcome! The same is true for us today.

The Jews only had one set of armor which Saul owned, probably taken from a dead Philistine. Since Saul was a head taller than any of the Jews (1 Samuel 9:2) he was the same size as the Philistines. Being the biggest Jew as well as the commander of the army and king, it should have been his role to fight Goliath but he was afraid to. That’s why he jumped at the chance to let a boy only about 10 or 12 years old fight the giant unarmed. Now David had faced ‘giants’ before -- a bear and a lion. God had delivered him then and he knew God would do so again (v. 31-38). God keeps increasing the size of the ‘giants’ we face as our faith grows.

**THE SLING** The only weapon David took was a sling. This would have been a strip of leather with a larger spot in the middle which could be folded around a stone. When swung over one’s head it gained

great force and when one string was released the stone when flying out at tremendous speed. It was hard to be accurate with such a weapon, but it worked fine for boy's fling stones in the general direction of lions or wolves who might get too close to the sheep they were watching. David, as any bored boy in the out-of-doors, spent lots of time flinging stones and was pretty good at it. We may wonder what skills we have that God can use, but even those which seem insignificant to use can do wonders when used for God. We, like David, must do our best to develop them and then make them available for God's use.

**THE 'BATTLE'** When Goliath saw a young boy was coming at him he evidently ripped off his helmet and threw it in anger (v 41-44). Throwing things in anger is a terrible habit to develop. David approached him unafraid, trusting in God. What if his stone would miss? What if others would rally to Goliath's defense even if David did hit his mark? Goliath did have 4 brothers, is this why David brought along 4 extra stones (v 40)?

No matter how good someone became with a sling shot, it was still a crude, inaccurate instrument. A moving target was quite hard to hit, and David himself was running as he shot (48-49). In fact, the chances of David hitting, much less killing Goliath were slim. David used his skill to the best of his ability, knowing any success he had would come from God (45-47). God directed the stone right to its mark, killing Goliath and winning the battle for Israel (50-54).

**GIANTS WE FACE** David won against impossible odds. Humanly speaking there was no way he could win. Still, God used a weak person and an insignificant skill to bring about a miraculous victory. God still does that today. He puts you and me against an impossible situation, a 'giant' we cannot possibly overcome on our own. He tells us to use our small, puny skills to the best of our ability and He will make sure of the victory. Remember, the battle is His. It is not the world, the flesh or the devil against us. It is God they challenge, and He has never lost a battle yet. To help you with your battles, read and memorize the wonderful words of David's and use them over and over. *"You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands."* (1 Samuel 17:45-47).



# Daily Life in Bible Times – I. PALESTINE

## 6. PURIFY YOUR PRACTICES

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Christians are in a battle today. Christian values battle with secular. Much is at stake. Israel faced the same thing in its day. The Bible's world view was being challenged by the world's in the form of Baal worship. It doesn't matter what form the anti-Bible world view takes, they are all basically the same. By understanding Satan's schemes to defeat God's people 3,000 years ago we can better equip ourselves to defeat God's enemies today, too.

**BAAL WORSHIP** The central pagan deity was a male god named Baal (or sometimes Molech). He was worshipped by different names from Rome to Egypt and Mesopotamia. He was seen as the creator-god who had defeated all other gods. He was seen as the god of rain, sea, storms, thunder and death. As supreme god over the lush Palestine area, he was especially worshipped as the god who brought fertility to the area. It was believed that death was defeated each spring when he returned to fertilize the land, animals and people. Baal was worshipped in the form of a bull to portray his fertility and power.

**Asherah** was the main female deity, Baal's mate. She was also called Ashtoreth, Astarte, Aphrodite (by the Greeks), Venus (by the Romans) and Eastre. Eastre was the Anglo-Saxon name of a Teutonic goddess of spring and fertility, to whom was dedicated a month corresponding to April. Her festival was celebrated on the day of the vernal equinox; traditions associated with the festival survive in the Easter rabbit, a symbol of fertility, and in colored Easter eggs, originally painted with bright colors to represent the sunlight of spring, all symbols of fertility which come down to us today in our traditional 'Easter' celebration.

In the spring the worshippers of Baal and Asherah would bring offerings to entice them to come bring fertility to their land. Grain, animal blood, and even human blood was sacrificed. Children, usually babies, were placed on the white-hot outstretched arms of Baal's statue and rolled into the blazing fires within. Archaeologists have found sites in the ancient world where thousands and thousands of sacrificial victims have been buried. The purpose was to get Baal's attention and encourage him to bring fertility to the land.

Another method used to motivate Baal and Asherah to mate and thus ensure fertility for their people was to use public acts of sexual intercourse in their worship. This would start with a priest and priestess but soon spread to the worshippers. This was a very common part of Baal worship and one of the reasons God so condemned it.

**IMPACT ON THE JEWS** Baal worship was in full bloom when **Abraham** entered the land. When Jacob's children started marrying into and accepting the beliefs of the Baal-worshippers in Palestine God took them to Egypt to develop into a pure nation. God gave the Canaanites 400 more years to repent, but they didn't.

When Moses led the people out of Egypt and went up Mt Sinai to get the law from God, **Aaron** built a golden calf for the people to worship. This was an idol of Baal. They even included the sexual orgy (Exodus 32:6). God severely judged the people for their sin (Exodus 32:19-28).



Because he couldn't curse God's people to stop them, **Balaam** suggested exposing them to Baal worship so God Himself would discipline them and destroy many of them, and that is what happened (Numbers 25:1-13).

After entering the promised Land, a land so fertile it was said to flow with milk and honey, the Jews were fully exposed to Baal worship. They were told to destroy all the people so they would be influenced by them, but refused to do so. Thus, there was much temptation to sin (**Judges** 2:10-15; 3:7; 6:24-27; 10:6-7). Even **Solomon** built altars to pagan wives (1 Kings 11:1-11).

The **Northern Kingdom**, Israel, went into captivity because of this sin (1 Kings 16:29-33; II Kings 17:7-20). Jezebel (who is even named after Baal - 'bel') brought Baal and Asherah with her. The Jews never abandoned worship of YHWH, they added Baal worship to it and worshipped both. Prophets like Elijah, Elisha, Hosea and Amos strongly condemned this practice but weren't listened to.

The same thing happened to the **Southern Kingdom**, Judah (2 Chronicles 28:1-4; 33:1-6; 36:11-14). Jeremiah (7:30-34; 19:3-9; 2:20-25) and Hosea (11:1-4) warned the people. Hezekiah instituted reforms so the Jews weren't destroyed (2 Chronicles 31:1) and escaped Assyria's capture (Isaiah 36:1; 37:1,5-18,36-37). The reform didn't last long, for Manasseh, Hezekiah's son, turned the people back to Baal worship (2 Chronicles 33:1-6). His son Amon continued in his way (2 Chronicles 33:21-22) but Amon's son Josiah led the people back to worship God (2 Chronicles 34:1-33). Twenty-three years later, though, Judah was captured by Babylon because of its Baal worship and other sins (2 Chronicles 36:15-20; Ezekiel 23:36-39).

**BAAL WORSHIP TODAY** We consider ourselves today much too sophisticated and intelligent to ever get into anything like Baal worship today, but Satan and cleverly brought about the same kind of worship through other means. We, too, worship sex today. Ours is a sex-saturated, sex-oriented society. Sex is often seen as the most important thing in life, the thing we worship. The focus is off of God and onto sex, as in the times of Baal worship.

The other similarity today to the worship of Baal is the practice of sacrificing children for our own material benefit. Isn't that why most people get abortions? The baby would inconvenience their life and take time and money. Therefore, the baby is sacrificed for the benefit of the parent -- the same as babies sacrificed to Baal. At least they then buried the babies recognizing they were real human beings. Today people even deny that!

Satan's tools are the same then as now: emphasis on sex and putting self before others. Sex and self-centered materialism are his tools today as well. We look down at those who worshipped Baal by sex and child sacrifice, but we today aren't much different! How could they do that we ask? But aren't we desensitized to sex and abortion today? Don't we allow violence, profanity, off-color jokes and overt sensuality come into our living rooms daily by means of the television? We learn to ignore it, even compromise with it, then think we are better than them because we aren't into overt Baal worship. Satan doesn't care how he does it, just so he gets our focus off of God. Self and selfishness are two of his best tricks. They worked then, unfortunately they still work today. Make sure they aren't working in your life!

# Daily Life in Bible Times – I. PALESTINE

## 7. PROCLAIM YOUR ALLEGIANCE

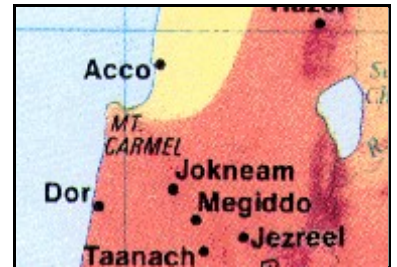
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Despite our best intentions, it is usually fear that keeps us from taking a stand for God. Fear can do awful things (Proverbs 28:1) but it never comes from God (2 Timothy 1:7). Courage is needed to take a stand for God. Noah took such a stand, so did Moses and Joshua. Gideon did it as did Ester and Daniel. Peter and John did so, as well as David, Joab and Paul. Elijah took a courageous stand, too.

**“CHASTE” JEZEBEL** The story of Elijah starts with Jezebel, whose name means “chaste.” Raised in a pagan culture as the daughter of the king of Tyre, she was strongly into Baal worship before marrying weak Ahab, king of Israel. In him she has a husband and kingdom she could control. In her he found a mother substitute, someone strong enough to not need him to be strong. In addition, she brought a good political alliance. The story of Naboth’s vineyard (1 Kings 21) shows a lot about them. Because he could not have the vineyard he went to bed and pouted until she got him the vineyard (by deceit, lying and murder). Then he was happy again.

**WEAK AHAB** Ahab became the worst king Israel had (1 Kings 16:29-33) because of her influence (1 Kings 21:25-26). The worship of Baal and Ashoreth caused God to announce, through Elijah, a drought. After 3 1/2 years God sent Elijah to challenge the prophets of Baal to see who was the greatest (1 Kings 18:16).

**COURAGEOUS ELIJAH** Elijah, whose name itself is a challenge to Baal (“My God is the LORD”), risked his life by challenging Ahab and Baal, but he obeyed God and called for a showdown on Mt. Carmel. This mountain was the perfect stage for all to watch this historic confrontation. Baal was the God of rain and fertility, and for almost 4 years had been silent. Everyone was anxious to watch this battle to the finish (v. 20).



**WAVERING PEOPLE** When Elijah challenged the people to take a stand for God they didn’t (v. 21). They didn’t turn from God, but they didn’t turn from Baal, either -- they wanted both. How dangerous it is for anyone to have anything in life that in any challenges God’s total control.

**DEAD BULLS** Elijah told the prophets of Baal to choose a bull, sacrifice it on their alter, and let their God show his power by accepting his sacrifice by burning it with fire (v. 22-25). The 450 prophets of Baal spent most of the day doing pagan dances, screaming their chants and mutilating themselves with knives (all things Satan loves, ways of getting his attention and approval). When they failed (v. 26-29) Elijah took his turn (v. 30). While rebuilding the neglected altar to God, he preached to the people about God ( v. 30-33). To make sure no one thought he hid a spark in the wood or in any way rigged the outcome, he drenched it all with water (33-35). Then he prayed and asked God to accept this offering (36-37; James 5:16-18).

**AWESOME GOD** Then God sent fire and burnt the wood, sacrifice, stones, ground and even the water (v. 38). There’s nothing subtle about God’s answer! This isn’t the first miracle God did through Elijah but it is certainly the most dramatic. Elijah’s courageous stand was rewarded.

**REPENTANT PEOPLE** When they saw this, everyone recognized God's greatness and turned back to Him (v. 39). They realized that fire could have (should have) hit and destroy them instead! They then killed all of Baal's prophets (v. 40).

**RAINY WEATHER** God then ended the drought by bringing rain (v. 41-46). Everything was going great -- but there was still Jezebel for she didn't come to the showdown.

**ANGRY JEZEBEL** Instead of repenting as the others did she threatened Elijah's life (19:1-2). Even though she lost her power and influence (temporarily) Elijah lost his courage and fled. (3).

**DEPRESSED ELIJAH** Despite seeing such a great victory by God, Elijah ran in fear. He said he wanted to die (v. 4). He isolated himself from everyone (v. 4). He felt sorry for himself (v. 10). Why did he react this strange way after such a great display of God's power? Well, he was human (James 5:17) and susceptible to depression. There are other in the Bible who were so depressed they wished they were dead (Job 7:3-11; Moses Numbers 11:11-15; Jonah 4:3; Jeremiah 15: 10-18). These were all introverts (Melancholy temperament) for they are more open to this. Elijah was drained emotionally and physically after his ordeal on Carmel. He climbed to the top and down twice, built an altar and preached, then ran 20 miles to see Jezebel. Emotionally he was drained by the whole experience, as is common after a mountain-top experience.

**RESTORED ELIJAH** How God handled this is very worthy of note. He made sure Elijah ate, slept and ate again (v. 5-8). Then He let Elijah talk -- get it all off his chest (v. 9-10). God then revealed Himself to Elijah. Perhaps Elijah was thinking that the Mt. Carmel experience was the norm and God wanted to correct that misconception. Sometimes we assume that God should be working in our lives in a dramatic, supernatural way like we think He does for others. Sometimes we do things to manufacture such experiences. God showed Elijah this is not so. A wind, earthquake and fire (as on Mt. Carmel) appeared and God clearly showed He was not in any of them (v. 11-12). Instead, God revealed Himself in a gentle whisper (v. 12-13). Elijah, like us, had to learn where/how to look for God. When He did that he could listen to God again.

God then gave him directions to get back to work (v. 13-18). Sitting around feeling sorry for himself was no way to get out of his depression. He also provided a companion, Elisha, that helped him, too.

Thus, we see that even those who show courage in standing for the Lord have times when the failure. It's what happens then that matters. Getting back into obedience to God is what is most important.

**COURAGEOUS YOU** God needs people like Elijah today -- not perfect people but people willing to obey and serve Him no matter what, people who will take a courageous stand no matter what the cost, people who know where and how to look for God, and people who will get up when they fail and fall. Are you such a person? Start by taking a stand against the things in your life that draw you away from God, the idols that compete for first place in your heart. Be alert to them and turn from them. Remember our amazing, marvelous God and how much greater He is than anything else. He took a stand for you, take your stand for Him!

# Daily Life in Bible Times – I. PALESTINE

## 8. STRENGTHEN YOUR OUTPOSTS

Imagine you and your family are trapped in the ancient city of Lachish as it is besieged by one of the cruelest armies the world has ever known -- the army of Assyria. Your walls are strong, but you are vastly outnumbered. You have lots of food and water, but it won't last forever. Up in the hills to the northeast, 40 miles away, is the capital city you are guarding -- Jerusalem. The royal army is there. The Assyrians must destroy you to open the way to the hills and wait for deliverance, for that is where your hope is. "I lift up my eyes to the hills -- where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:1-2).



**LACHISH** was first settled 4000 BC (2000 years before Abraham entered the land). It has been destroyed and rebuilt at least 6 times. It was strategically located to protect Jerusalem from access from the south. No army could get to Jerusalem from that direction without first having to destroy Lachish. It was a very strategic outpost. Most armies who marched on Jerusalem tried to approach from this direction, so Lachish was of key importance. Other outpost cities were Micmash, Gezer, Beth Shemesh and Azekah. Jerusalem depended on these for its survival.

**ASSYRIA** Located in what is now Iraq, Assyria was the strongest power in that whole area from 800 - 600 BC. Ninevah was its capital. Their army was strong and cruel, with a demonic lust for blood and torture. No wonder Jonah ran the other way when told to bring them God's message! Having destroyed Israel (the northern 10 tribes), Assyria now moved on the south.

**HEZEKIAH** When Assyria made its move toward Jerusalem, Hezekiah was king. He was a godly man who did much to turn the people back to God. He removed Baal worship and brought spiritual reform and revival to Judah. When faced with death from a serious illness, he prayed for God's mercy and God granted him another 15 years of life. God also gave him a sign that would happen, to sun's shadows moved backwards 10 degrees (Isaiah 38:1-8). Isaiah was very influential in Hezekiah's life, and together they were one of the few lights in a very dark time in Jewish history.

When he was told the Assyrians were coming Hezekiah did what he could to defend himself. He dug a 1,700-foot tunnel through solid rock to supply the city with water. He did what he could but knew that only God could deliver them. When Lachish fell and the Assyrian army surrounded Jerusalem, Hezekiah and Isaiah prayed and God killed 185,000 at night (2 Kings 19:15-36). The rest of the army fled in humiliation and defeat. Even though the outpost of Lachish fell, God Himself defended His capital.

**OUTPOSTS TODAY** There are some very good spiritual lessons to be gained from this today. There are core issues to be protected, as Jerusalem. These included the existence of God as a loving, sovereign creator and the inspiration of the Bible as God's revelation to man. Also included is the fact that God came to earth as the man Jesus and was fully God and man, He provided salvation by His



suffering on the cross and proved that by His physical resurrection from the dead. Salvation is only by acceptance of His finished work on the cross. These are central, core truths that must be defended and maintained at all costs. As with Jerusalem, God Himself defends these truths when the outposts fall. If these are core issues to defend, what are the outposts which our enemy attacks first?

Outposts issues today would include moral issues (sexual practices, honesty, character), the role and purpose of the church, spiritual growth, unity among believers, evangelism becoming salt and light to a world of darkness, worship, spiritual gifts, family relationships, and so forth. These areas where the enemy is attacking today. These aren't core issues, but their fall leaves the way open for our enemy to attack the core values.

This principles applies to other areas in life. Take sexual faithfulness in marriage (for those married) and sexual abstinence (for those unmarried). That is the core issue. Outposts issues, where we need to have victory to protect this core issue, include things like looking at or thinking about that which is immoral and "innocent" flirting. We must have victory at these key outposts in order to keep our core values pure.

Another example would be marriage. We all want to have good, solid, growing relationships with our mates. This happens only when we win the outpost battles that hit our self-centeredness and pride. Apologizing, forgiving, not answering in a short or sarcastic tone, going out of our way to put the other first, doing little things we don't feel like doing or things we should have to do -- these are where the battle for a growing marriage is won or lost.

This is also true of our own individual walk with the Lord. We all want to be more like Jesus, but that only happens as we spend time in prayer and Bible study each day, and we seek His will in all things, as we learn to overcome temptation, as we confess all known sin and as we trust in His Spirit to fill and use us. Again, the battle is won or lost in the outpost conflict. Not realizing this means we don't take these areas as seriously as we should. We think that as long as we win in the major issues the minor ones don't matter. However, our enemy knows that if he can defeat us in one of the minor issues, the major ones lie open and vulnerable to attack and defeat.

How can you win these outpost battles? Not in your own strength. Lift up your eyes to the hills, to the Protector of all of us. Where does your help come from? Your help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth (Psalm 121:1-2). Look to Him for deliverance and victory. He will surely come to your aid. Don't wait until the battle rages around the core issues, make sure you have victory at the outposts!

# Daily Life in Bible Times – I. PALESTINE

## 9. FOLLOW YOUR SHEPHERD

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One of the most common mistakes we make is thinking people in Bible times thought like we do today. We interpret Bible truth as if it were written by and for us in America today. Unless we see it through their eyes we won't be able to accurately interpret the Bible. It's not so much a time issue, it's more a geographical problem. Even today Eastern and Western thought is quite different. We in the West like to have things clear, black and white, outlined in technical form, and all scientifically taken care of. Eastern thought moves in shades of gray, focuses more on feelings and emotions than technical content, and doesn't concern itself as much with organized flow.

For example, suppose I was to ask you to describe God. How would you do it? What words would you use? As a typical Westerner you'd probably use words like sovereign, love, compassion, omnipotence, mercy, justice, etc. Each of those terms have specific definitions and implications, and in our mind we have this very accurate and very technical description of God. There is nothing wrong with that. However, if the question were asked of an Easterner like the Jews, one would get a different answer; one perhaps more personal and intimate. Describe God? Easy: the Lord is my Shepherd.

Do you see the difference? Now we wouldn't think of putting it that way because we don't think in those kinds of terms. Even if we did, the idea of a shepherd isn't part of our life today. We don't have shepherds among us, and none of us ever was a shepherd. Yet that was part of life for the Jews in Bible times.

**A WILDERNESS PEOPLE** The Jews were shepherds, not farmers. Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Amos and on down were shepherds. In Palestine, they didn't have the good, rich land needed for farming. They were confined to the wilderness (a desert area). They lived there during their wanderings, too. John the Baptist grew up there, and Jesus was tempted there. That formed and defined their life style. They weren't city-dwellers, they weren't farmers, they weren't sailors, they were shepherds.

**DUTIES OF A SHEPHERD** The shepherd was totally responsible for the care of his sheep. Sheep are defenseless, helpless animals. They can't find their way home. They can't find water or food on their own. They can't clean their own wounds. They will wander off following the wrong sheep if not constantly watched. They are totally dependent on their shepherd. The shepherd protected and defended the sheep from danger, even at the risk of his own life. David fought a lion and a bear to protect his sheep. The shepherds faced danger from the elements, too: flood, drought, extreme heat or cold, or even fire. There were robbers who would kill him for the sheep.

Shepherds would put their sheep in an enclosure at night, then lay their own bodies across the opening. Thus, they it was literally true that any danger which came would have to come "over their dead body."

Each sheep was known by name, and each healthy sheep knew and followed his shepherd. If a sheep continued to go its own way, often it was left to learn the error of its ways the hard way. Its life was protected, but often it took pain and suffering to teach it obedience.

Thus, when an Easterner thought of a shepherd they thought of someone who loved and cared, someone who was in charge and control, someone who did what was best for the sheep no matter what they deserved, someone who was motivated by compassion. The shepherd was thought of as



sovereign, love, compassion, omnipotence, mercy, justice, etc. The shepherd was to his sheep as God is to us. Thus, truly the Lord is my shepherd.

**THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD** Now isn't that a nicer, more personal and intimate way of describing God? No wonder God is referred to as a shepherd over 200 times in the Bible (15 in the New Testament). God Himself used the term to describe His relationship to His people because He knew they would understand and respond to it (Psalm 80:1; Ezekiel 34:14). "The Lord is my shepherd" (Psalm 23) and "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11) are among the most familiar and comforting passages in the Bible.

When He called His prophets and pastors 'shepherds' He knew everyone would understand (John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2-4). Pastors today are under shepherds, assigned to care for God's flock as He would were He here. Woe to those who didn't do so (Jeremiah 23:1-4). One day He will return and gather His flock under His control once again (Matthew 25:31-33).

**IS THE LORD YOUR SHEPHERD?** When you think about God, try thinking of Him as a shepherd. Sovereign, love, compassion, omnipotence, mercy, justice, etc. describe God, but seeing Him as your shepherd make Him more personal and your relationship more intimate. However, it takes more than just saying the words, we have to obey and follow Him as a sheep does a shepherd. Do you follow Him and allow Him to lead and protect you? Or are you more like a rebellious sheep who will have to learn to trust their shepherd the hard way. Our pride and self-sufficiency often stand in our way.

What a wonder it is that God is sovereign, love, compassion, omnipotence, mercy, justice, etc. What a privilege it is to have Him willing to shepherd us, to take on our care and welfare. What a privilege to be a sheep in His fold! How foolish it is to think we know better. Is He your shepherd? Do you follow and obey Him? You can't go wrong if you do!

# Daily Life in Bible Times – I. PALESTINE

## 10. SERVE YOUR KING

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Herod was one of the greatest men of his day. That's why he was called Herod THE GREAT.

**HEROD'S FIGHT FOR HIS KINGDOM** His father, Antipater II, was made ruler of Palestine when Rome again took control of that whole region. He was soon killed and Herod ruled for 33 years. They weren't easy years, though. Herod was always fighting for his kingdom. He backed Pompey when he fought Cracius and Julius Caesar and thus lost his kingdom, then won it back by helping Julius Caesar escape the Egyptians.



When Mark Antony and Octavius fought Crasius and Brutus, he caked his long-time friend Mark Antony and again lost everything. He was given his kingdom back and set about rebuilding his fortune. When the Hasmoneans revolted he almost lost his kingdom again. He married the last of their line, Mairamne, to bring reconciliation. Then Antony, who had fallen in love with his rival to the south, Cleopatra, took much of Herod's land and gave it to her. Herod went to Antony and got it back, again fighting for his kingdom. When Antony was defeated by Octavius, Herod again lost everything.

Five times he won his kingdom back and rebuilt his lost fortune. Palestine became the largest kingdom in the Roman empire and Jerusalem one of the greatest Roman cities. Herod built the hippodrome and restarted the Olympics in Jerusalem. He built public buildings and palaces everywhere. He freed Galilee from bandits and rebuilt it. He also rebuilt Caesarea, Decapolis and Athens. He was the greatest builder of his day. Many of his buildings still stand as attraction for tourists.

He was considered the greatest politician of his day. He was intelligent, very athletic, strong and popular. That is, he was popular with everyone but the Jews he had to rule.

He was fair to them and brought them peace and prosperity, but they hated him and opposed every move he made because they wanted their own freedom. He started hating them back. When there was a very severe famine in Palestine, he used his whole fortune to fee the people to keep them alive. When it was over, they again revolted against him anyway.

**HEROD GOES WILD!** Toward the end Herod started losing his mental balance. For the last 10 to 15 years of his life, he had Arterio Sclerosis, Psychosis, rapid mood changes, delusions of persecution, heart and kidney function deterioration and ulcers in his mouth. The last two years he had constant pain and diarrhea. His lower bowels became gangrenous and were full of maggots. He attempted suicide but failed. All this caused him to act crazy. He was paranoid about losing his kingdom and having to build it up again. He began killing anyone whom he thought was trying to take it, including his wife, sons and any political rivals. He killed thousands, many of them his near relatives. Oh, yes, he also killed about a dozen young boys who lived around Bethlehem just before he died.

That wasn't a major crime of his. He was motivated by fear of losing his kingdom to another king. He responded in a typical fashion by killing any threat.

**ENTER KING JESUS** But was Jesus really a threat to him? Yes and no. Herod certainly thought He was. That forms the backdrop for Matthew's short statement: "during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem" (Matthew 2:1). Why did God have it that Jesus was born during Herod's reign? There was no one nearly as great before or after him for centuries. Why wasn't Jesus born in Herod's palace instead of a cave? If you or I had been a bystander when Christ was born, we certainly would have thought Herod seemed much more like a king than Jesus!

**CONTRASTS: KING HEROD AND KING JESUS** The lives of Herod and Jesus crossed in Jerusalem shortly after Jesus was born and before Herod died. It's almost as if God wants us to compare and contrast Jesus with Herod, and what he built for himself. What he built was made of stone to last for centuries. However, he died in misery and pain, losing all he had given his life for. He built to honor himself, and today all that remains are some tourist attractions.

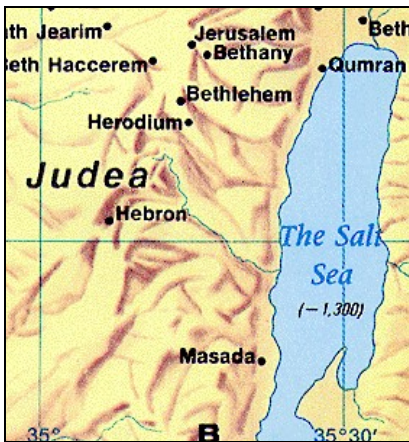
Now think of Jesus. He built no earthly kingdom. He left no fine buildings, no large empire. He didn't own a home or even a grave site. Jesus didn't try to build for himself, He was committed to honor His heavenly Father and build His spiritual kingdom. It is alive and continues to grow, changing lives and the very world we live in. Jesus, too, died in misery and pain, but it was because of the consequences of the sins of others, not consequences for His own sin. In His death and resurrection, He gained everything for those who would accept Him as Savior and follow Him as Lord. He came in humility, as a servant, and didn't try to exalt Himself. God lifted Him to glory and greatness.

**THE CHOICE IS OURS** Which do you honor today? Oh, I know you'll say "Jesus," but down inside, by your values and goals, which life style do you embrace? Do you live for yourself, trying to build your own kingdom (with God's help, of course), or even God's servant, ready and willing to do whatever it takes to advance His kingdom? Is what you're spending your life on going to last or decay? Are you living a self-centered, self-gratifying life like Herod, or a life of humble service for God and others like Jesus? You only have one life, so make sure you live it right!

# Daily Life in Bible Times – I. PALESTINE

## 11. GIVE YOUR LIFE

The story is told of a monastery in Portugal, perched high on a 3,000-foot cliff and accessible only by a terrifying ride in a swaying basket. The basket is pulled with a single rope by several strong men, perspiring under the strain of the full loaded basket. One American tourist who visited the site got nervous halfway up the cliff when he noticed that the rope was old and frayed. Hoping to relieve his fear he asked, "How often do you changed the rope?" The monk in charge replied, "Whenever it breaks!"



**GOD OUR ROCK** Discovering halfway up a cliff that you're being held by a frayed rope doesn't make for much security! Unfortunately, many people believe they can have no better security in their relationship with God. They don't understand that God is a rock. The Jews knew this aspect of God, and by calling Him a Rock were identifying Him as Someone secure, dependable, safe and trustworthy. Deuteronomy 32:4 "He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he." 2 Samuel 22:32 "For who is God besides the Lord? And who is the Rock except our God?" 2 Samuel 22:47 "The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock! Exalted be God, the Rock, my Savior!" Psalm 18:2 "The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold." 1 Corinthians 10:4 "They drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ."

The Jews were wilderness people, living among rocks and sand. David hid from Saul there, and John the Baptist grew up there. They were shepherds roaming there. They knew rocks and sand. Sand was shifting and dangerous. Rocks were stable and secure. Thus, rocks were like God (2 Samuel 22:1-7). One could flee there for protection and safety, one could hide and find refuge, they were an anchor amidst a shifting sea of sand.

**MASADA ROCK** One of the larger outcroppings of rock in the Judean wilderness was named "Masada" which means "stronghold, fortress." David hid from Saul in this area, maybe on this very same mountain. In fact, he called God his "masada" ("fortress").

Masada was large: 21 acres in size and 1,300 feet above sea level. The only ascents were a snake path on the east and an even more difficult path on the west. On top of this rock Herod built a magnificent fortress with a huge wall and 30 defensive towers. There was a Northern Palace with mosaics and frescoed walls. Its balcony provided spectacular views of the Dead Sea. The Western Palace was Herod's main living quarters on Masada. It was 37,000 square feet and richly furnished. There were bathrooms and a pool. A separate Bathhouse contained hot, warm and cold baths. Cisterns underground could hold 1,500,000 cubic feet of water which was brought there to help them in time of siege. Storehouses, quarters for soldiers and many other buildings completed the beautiful complex. It was especially prepared in case he needed to flee there to defend himself. Thus, it was a great fortress, a perfect picture of God our Rock.

**BETTER DEAD THAN ROMAN** Almost 70 years after Herod died the Jews revolted against Rome. Eventually Rome's army destroyed Jerusalem and killed one million Jews while taking 100,000 into

slavery. The Zealots who had led the revolt were defeated. A few who escaped took refuge at Masada. Here they hoped to outlast the Romans. They thought they and their families would be safe to live their lives on this mountain fortress. The new Roman governor, Silva, wasn't about to let any of them live, though. He sent the tenth legion in 72 AD to lay siege to Masada. A wall was built by Jewish slaves around the base of the enormous mountain plateau, six feet high and more than two miles in length. Because of Herod's extensive storehouses which were still filled with food and weapons and his cistern with water, there was little chance of starving the defenders out. The Zealots felt safe there.

Over the next seven months the Romans built a siege ramp against the western side of the mountain. When the ramp was finished, a battering ram was winched to the top, and Roman soldiers smashed a hole in the fortress wall. The Zealots fortified their wall with timbers, but these were set on fire. That night the Zealots got together to plan. Their leader, Eleazar from Gamla, argued forcefully that suicide was the only honorable action. They had seen what the Romans would do to them, their wives, and their children. They had lived their lives for freedom and the opportunity to serve God alone. Now they must remove all possibility of serving anyone else.

Every man killed his family. Ten men were chosen to kill the Jewish soldiers; one killed the other nine and then committed suicide. In so doing, the Zealots stole the final victory from the Romans. But the revolt was ended. Two old women and five children survived to share the story with the world.

**FREEDOM MORE IMPORTANT THAN LIFE** To these Zealots, this rock did not bring the security they needed. Only God can really bring that. The rock Masada brought better protection and security than the uncertain sand around it. Real security is only found in Christ. These people wanted freedom, but no earthly rock can provide that. Only the Rock of Ages can provide that. These Zealots felt it was better to die than live in bondage. Freedom was that important to them. They turned to an earthly rock for deliverance but it failed. Only God the Rock can truly protect and deliver.

There is a story about a young boy who was always catching and caging wild things. He particularly loved the sound of the mockingbird, so he decided to catch one and keep it so he could hear it sing any time. He found a very young mockingbird and placed it in a cage outside his home. On the second day he saw a mother bird fly to the cage and feed the young bird through the bars. This pleased the young boy. But then the following morning he found the little bird was dead. You see, a mother mockingbird, finding her young in a cage, will sometimes take it poisonous berries. She evidently thinks it better for one she loves to die rather than live in captivity. That's what the Zealots on Masada thought, too.

What about you? Do you find your freedom in God your Rock? There is no other.

# Daily Life in Bible Times – I. PALESTINE

## 12. RESIST YOUR CULTURE

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Monkey trappers in North Africa have a clever method of catching their prey. A number of gourds are filled with nuts and firmly fastened to a branch of a tree. Each has a hole just large enough for the unwary monkey to stick his forepaw into it. When the hungry animal discovers this, he quickly grasps a handful of nuts, but the hole is too small for him to withdraw his clenched fist. And he doesn't have enough sense to open up his hand and let go in order to escape, so he is easily taken captive. This is a picture of many Christians. The devil with his crafty devices tried to ensnare them. He appeals to the appetites of the flesh which can lead to their spiritual downfall. As long as they hold on to worldly bait, they cannot escape from Satan's trap. But he keeps on urging, "Don't let go! Enjoy the pleasure of your sin just a little bit longer!" So, listening to the tempter's alluring voice, they continue in their evil way.



**ISOLATION STRATEGY** What is the way to victory over sin? To some it is to get as far away as possible from the worldly attraction that ensnare. It is to isolate themselves from their culture in hope that they will be safe from such temptations. There have always been those who have tried this solution. We are quite familiar with the monastic movement from the middle ages even down to the present. There are the Amish and others who try to withdraw from their society. In Jesus' day there were the Essenes who did this same thing.

**THE ESSENES** Seeing the corruption in the world around them, even in their fellow Jews, the Essenes were a group of people who withdrew to live in the wilderness by the Dead Sea. They reacted against the Hellenistic world view so prevalent in their time. It glorified the human being through culture, philosophy, athletics and religion. It really wasn't much different than New Age philosophy today. In order to prepare themselves for the coming Messiah and His great battle in which He would lead the sons of light against the sons of darkness, they lived a very esthetic life. Their whole purpose was to be pure. They held all their property in common, wore white, and had ritual washings similar to baptism. They even avoided marriage. While never being an Essene, John grew up near them and probably had some contact with them. They would have rejected him as well as Jesus, though, because of their contact with corrupt Judaism. They felt all should withdraw as they did.

Similar to John the Baptizer, the Essenes lived in the wilderness (Luke 1:80) and dedicated their lives to preparing the way for the Lord (Isaiah 40:1-5). They used baptism as a sign of repentance and inner cleansing (Mark 1:4) and proclaimed that the one to come would baptize with fire (Mark 1:7-8). Society rejected them and their message (Matthew 21:32). They spent their time fasting and praying (Mark 2:18; Luke 11:1). They sold their possessions and shared everything (Acts 2:44-45). They even have a ceremonial meal with bread and wine anticipating the future great messianic banquet. Still, they weren't Christians and didn't accept Jesus as the Messiah. They differed with Jesus and the early Christians over Sabbath observance (Matthew 12:1-13) for they were even more strict about keeping the law than the Pharisees. They rejected marriage and sex. They felt the only way to live for God was to be separated and isolated from the world while Jesus sent His followers into the world to be salt and light (Matthew 28:19-20).

**THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS** Although small in number, they did have a great impact on the world in their day. That impact even continues to today, for they spent much time copying Bible books. When the Romans came through to put down the revolt in 68 AD, Qumran, their community, was destroyed and they scattered. Some may have joined the zealots, others became Christians, and the rest reentered society. Before being scattered, though, they hid their precious scrolls in caves near the Dead Sea. These weren't discovered until 1947, but they gave the world copies of the Old Testament 1,000 years earlier than were previously available. Because there were no major differences in the Bible over that time, they helped prove that the Bible has come down to us in at totally reliable form.

**IN THE WORLD BUT NOT OF THE WORLD** What is the solution to this dilemma of living in the world but not being influenced by it? We know we aren't to conform to the world. It is under Satan's control (1 John 5:19) and following it is wrong (Exodus 23:2). When we live for God the world opposes us (John 15:19; 17:14) because when we follow God's way we show that the world's values and motives are self-centered and sinful. Satan is the one behind the world system today (2 Corinthians 4:4) and we are not to be a part of it (Deuteronomy 18:9-14; 2 Corinthians 6:14-17).

We as Christians are to be salt and light. Jesus sends us into the world as His messengers. Still, we must not conform to the world or participate in its sin. Where to draw the line is hard and takes God's wisdom and guidance in every real way. Sin is deadly.

Radio personality Paul Harvey tells the story of how an Eskimo kills a wolf. The account is grisly, yet it offers a fresh insight into the consuming, self-destructive nature of sin. "First the Eskimo coats his knife blade with animal blood and allows it to freeze. Then he adds another layer of blood, and another, until the blade is completely concealed by frozen blood." "Next, the hunter fixes his knife in the ground with the blade up. When a wolf follows his sensitive nose to the source of the scent and discovers the bait he likes it, tasting the fresh, frozen blood. He begins to lick faster, more and more vigorously, lapping the blade until the keen edge is bare. Feverishly now, harder and harder the wolf licks the blade in the Arctic night. So great becomes his craving for blood that the wolf doesn't notice the razor-sharp sting of the naked blade on his tongue nor does he recognize the instant at which his insatiable thirst is being satisfied by his own warm blood. His carnivorous appetite just craves more -- until the dawn finds him dead in the snow!"

However, we choose to deal with the temptations of this evil world, they must be seen as evil and destructive -- nothing to play around with. They are deadly and will destroy those who get involved with them. I don't know where you draw the line between separation from the world and involvement as salt and light, but make sure you draw it on the safe side. Satan is deadly serious about his purpose. Watch out!



## Daily Life in Bible Times – I. PALESTINE

### 13. AWAIT YOUR BRIDEGROOM

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“Any Jew who has not a wife is no man” so declared the Talmud, recording how Jews felt about marriage. To them the marriage event was even more important than the event of birth or death. In order to understand many passages in the Bible we must understand Jewish marriage practices. Over and over Jesus used marriage and family illustrations to show our relationship with God: ‘born again,’ ‘family of God,’ ‘bride of Christ,’ etc. Let’s talk about marriage as Jesus and the Jews knew it.

**CHOOSING A MATE:** God’s people could only marry within the body of believers. Marriage usually came soon after puberty: about 13 for a girl and 18 for a boy. Parents chose the mate for their son or daughter, but usually consulted with their children to make sure they approved. Romance before marriage was no unknown, but it played a very minor role in the life of teenagers of that era. They did not marry the person they loved; they loved the mate they married. They didn’t let themselves fall in love until after being married. Love began at marriage (Genesis 24:67).

**BETROTHAL:** When a match was being made, a price was agreed upon. This was paid in money or services (Jacob worked 7 years for Rachel) to the father of the girl to compensate him for the loss of her services to the family. This was accompanied by a written agreement. A cup of wine was used in the ceremony. The young man first took a drink then handed it to the future bride. If she accepted it and drank from it; she was showing a willingness to be his bride. This made the betrothal binding. The wife had all the rights and privileges the law provided for a married woman. It was a legal contract, broken only by death or divorce. It was during this period that Joseph discovered that Mary had become pregnant. (Matthew 1:18-25).

This betrothal period lasted one or sometimes even two years. It assured the groom of the bride’s virginity and that any children born to them would be his. This was very important to keep the line of each Jewish family pure and true. Although legally one, each of the young people continued to live with their own families. The groom would spend the time building a room for himself onto the family insula. You see, when a woman married she moved in with her husband’s family and became a member of that family. The whole family lived together in one large complex. Even if her husband died, she was still part of that family and one of her husband’s brothers would take her as a wife to provide for her physical, emotional and sexual needs. The groom’s father remained head of the insula. The family was a little kingdom of which the father was the king.

The insula consisted of a central courtyard where the daily activities of life took place. Around this would be various rooms, one for each family who lived there. Each brother would bring his wife home after building a room for them. Their sons would do the same thing. Since many of Jesus’ disciples were extended family, perhaps he moved into their insula when he moved to Capernaum (Matthew 8:14; 12:46-13:1; Mark 2:1-2; 7:17). This family compound concept was used throughout the times and lands of the Bible.

While the young man was building their home, the bride was preparing herself to be his wife. She was keeping herself pure, learning skills needed to be a good wife, gathering necessary household items, and awaiting the time they could be together.

**THE WEDDING PROCESSION:** When the groom’s father felt it was time, he told his son he could go fetch his bride. He would gather his attendants (John 3:29) and head for her insula. As they approached, one of his friends would blow a Shofar (trumpet) announcing their coming. As they got closer the

bridegroom himself would call out so the bride knew she was the one being called. Perhaps there were other brides awaiting their groom who also heard the trumpet call. Usually this happened in the evening so adults were not working and could come join the celebration. This torches were needed, as in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. The groom would get his bride and bring her back to his new room in the insula.

**THE WEDDING SUPPER:** Meanwhile the woman of groom's family had been busily preparing a feast and decorating the rooms of their insula for the marriage celebration. Guests were invited. It was a great privilege to be invited and a terrible insult to not come. Usually some advance warning was given, but no specific time set until the event was to take place. There was no formal religious ceremony back at the groom's insula, but it is probable that some ratification of the espousal with an oath took place (Proverbs 2:17; Ezekiel 16:8; Malachi 2:14) and that a blessing was pronounced (Genesis 24:60; Ruth 4:10-12). The essence of the ceremony consisted in the removal of the bride from her father's house to that of the bridegroom or his father. Thus, the expression "to take" a wife is often used (Genesis 21:21; 24:3, 38; 26:34). Concluding this short ceremony, the bride and groom would go into their room (the bridal chamber) and the marriage would be consummated. This made them officially husband and wife. The head groomsman would be waiting by the door to announce the consummation of the marriage and the celebration would begin, lasting from 7 to 14 days (John 2; Judges 14:12).

**MARRIAGE USED FIGURATIVELY:** Marriage is illustrative of Jehovah's relation with Israel (Isaiah 54:5; 62:4-5; Jeremiah 3:1; Hosea 2:16-20). In the New Testament the image of the bridegroom is transferred from Jehovah to Christ (Matthew 9:15; John 3:29) and that of the bride to the church (2 Corinthians 11:2; Eph 5:23-24, 32; Revelation 19:7; 21:2,9; 22:17). The most striking analogy, though, has to do with the rapture. Understanding Jewish marriage customs sheds new light on the rapture.

The Father (God) chooses His Son's bride (election of believers to be the bride of Christ). The groom (Jesus) leaves His Father's house to go to the home of the bride and pay the price for her (redemption, His blood on the cross). The covenant (salvation) was legally established forever. The cup was drunk by the Groom (Matthew 20:22-23; 26:27, 39-42). Then it was handed to the bride to accept or reject (as pictured by the Lord's Supper). Upon acceptance the two are legally one forever. However, they are not living together yet. The Groom returns to His Father's home (ascension) to build his insula. "In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you." (John 14:2) Meanwhile, we are still at our 'home' on earth preparing ourselves for our coming union with our Groom (Ephesians 5:25-27). We are to be pure and holy, worthy for and awaiting His coming. As a bride anxious for her groom, we are to be awaiting the trumpet that will announce our groom's coming for us (2 Thessalonians 4:13-18). When the Father decides it is time, He will tell His Son to go fetch His bride. Then the Son and His attendants (angels 2 Thessalonians 4:16) will come get us and take us to His home. We'll hear the trumpet and the shout of the Bridegroom (2 Thessalonians 4:16). The Groom will take us to His insula in the sky where the marriage will be consummated and we'll celebrate the Marriage Supper of the Lamb for seven years (Revelation 19:9). Sound great! It'll be much better than it sounds! Our Groom has done it all: come to our dwelling, paid the bride price, built the insula and now is awaiting the go-ahead to come get us. Our part: live in holiness and purity to be worthy of Him. Is that asking too much?

## Daily Life in Bible Times – I. PALESTINE

### 14. SPEAK TO YOUR TIMES

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**UNDERSTAND YOUR CULTURE** Compared to how it is in many parts of the world today, it's relatively easy to get someone to listen to the claims of the gospel in the United States, and even make a commitment. The percent of those who do claim to have accepted Jesus as Savior and then go on to spiritual maturity is relatively low, though. In countries where it is much harder to get a commitment for Christ, though, there is usually a much higher percentage of those who go on to spiritual maturity. Why is that? Understanding the cultures of each place explains why.

Even within the United States there is a world of difference. Response to the gospel in the northeast is much different than the south. The Midwest differs from the west coast. Even within the culture of the United States there are many different subcultures. To effectively minister to them these differences must be understood.

When a missionary goes to a foreign country there is not only a new language to learn, there is also a new culture to learn. Their eventual effectiveness will be determined by how well they grasp their new culture. France, China, Egypt, India -- all are very different. Believers there must understand their culture to be able to reach the people for Christ.

Jesus understood His world and culture. He ministered in the midst of it and identified with it. He spoke their language, not just by His mouth but also by His actions. We must do the same. Wherever God places us we are to minister to that culture for Him.

**UNDERSTAND JESUS' CULTURE** This same principle applies in another way, too. In order to really understand what Jesus said and did we must interpret it in light of His culture. Had He been born and raised in China 1,000 years earlier or England 1,000 years later His life would have been much different. We cannot separate Jesus' words and actions from His culture and accurately understand them. He must be listened to and seen through the eyes of those He spoke to and lived with. We must put ourselves in the shoes of the ones He directed His words and actions to in order to accurately understand them. Let me give you some examples.

**Archaelus and Luke 19** When Herod died in 4 BC his will divided his kingdom between his sons Antipas, Philip and Archelaus. Some contested the will and went to Rome to get a larger portion. Because the Jews in Judea and Jerusalem did not want evil Archelaus ruling them, they sent a delegation to Rome to ask that he not be made their ruler. Rome allowed Herod's will to stand as it was, so Archaelus came back, rounded up all the Jews who opposed them, killed them and their families and took all their property. Jesus talks about this very thing in His parable in Luke 19:11-27. While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' He was made king, however, and returned home. He said, 'those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them-- bring them here and kill them in front of me.'" Jesus was using part of their culture to teach them a lesson.

**Jesus grows up in Nazareth** Because God allowed this same Archaelus to be king of Judea, Joseph and Mary had to go to Nazareth to raise Jesus instead of Bethlehem which they preferred. Thus, the prophecies were fulfilled that Jesus would be a Nazarene.

**Jesus' salary paid by Herod?** Where Jesus grew up, in Nazareth in Galilee, Herod Antipas ruled. He was sly and immoral, taking his brother's wife for himself (she was the daughter of another brother). John the Baptizer condemned this and died for it. Antipas did have a major building program just a couple miles north of Nazareth in a place called Sepphoris. It became his special city and one of the most glorious cities of the day. He hired many builders to work on this city. This is where Joseph and Jesus enter the picture.

The Bible says Jesus was a 'tekton' (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3), a word used for a builder of buildings, a craftsman. Buildings were mainly made of stone because wood was so scarce. It was used for window or door frames in nicer houses. Jesus as a carpenter would have worked in wood, but he probably worked more in stone and perhaps even metal. Perhaps Joseph and Jesus made the short walk to Sepphoris or some other local building project funded by Herod, and thus Herod's money actually went to the support and raising of Jesus. It does seem that Jesus was away from Nazareth working when Mary became pregnant for she wasn't able to talk to him and he didn't find out until later about the pregnancy.

**Jesus and disciples supported by Herod** We do know that Joanna, who traveled with Jesus, helped pay the disciples' bills. She got her money from her husband, who was the manager of Archaelus' household. Again, we see Herod's money supporting Jesus.

**Jesus the builder** Think of Jesus as a builder of buildings. That sheds new light on much of what He talked about. He called Peter the rock He would build His church on (Matthew 16:18). Because He was known as a builder when He said that if they destroyed "this building" He would build it in 3 days, they assumed He meant building the temple (John 2:19-22; Mark 14:58). He told a parable about building a tower and the importance of first counting the cost (Lk 14:28-30). He referred to Himself as the capstone of God's building (Matthew 21:42; Acts 4:11-12). Peter picked up this analogy and further developed it (1 Peter 2:4-8).

Thus, these examples clearly show how directly Jesus related to His culture. They also show how important it is for us to understand Jesus' culture so we can accurately understand His words. History, culture, geography -- they are all essential to accurately interpret the Bible. For example, after Herod Antipas had beheaded John for criticizing his marriage, the religious rulers followed Jesus and waited until he entered Antipas' territory. Then they asked Him His views of divorce (Matthew 19:1-3). They were trying to get Him in trouble with Antipas so Antipas would kill Jesus and get rid of Him for them. Jesus knew this. Our interpretation of His answer must take this into account. This shows why Jesus' words on the same subject aren't always exactly the same. Different aspects are emphasized depending on the audience. We can't interpret everything Jesus said as if He were in a pulpit of a 20th Century American church talking to committed Christians. It takes work to learn history, culture and geography, but the rewards are worth it! What better way to make the Bible come alive? Where better to invest your time and energy than in understand Jesus and His Word?

# Daily Life in Bible Times – I. PALESTINE

## 15. CONFRONT YOUR ENEMIES

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**JESUS NEVER BACKED AWAY FROM CONFRONTATION** When confronted by demonic forces he rebuked them (Mark 5:1-10; Matthew 15:21-28). When tempted by Satan himself to avoid the cross he moved resolutely ahead (Matthew 16:21-23). Jesus never backed down from a confrontation with evil.

Yet at the same time Jesus gave strict guidelines for confronting evil. He said we are to be meek and merciful (Matt 5:5-7). He told us to be light in the darkness (Matt 5:13-16). He commanded us to do whatever we did out of love (John 13:34-35). These are strict guidelines for confrontation, yet Jesus practiced what He preached. They are hard standards for us to follow today, though. We tend to either avoid the confrontation, or to confront in anger and hate. Neither of these are acceptable. It's hard to have a correct balance.

**EXAMPLES FROM HISTORY** Perhaps the most outstanding example in history of Christians not confronting evil in love and meekness was the time of the Crusades. Christians then just didn't act like Jesus had acted. While we shouldn't and really can't judge their motives, we can clearly see that the methods they employed did more harm than good to the cause of Christ. Much of that harm still continues today, especially among Jews and Muslims.



**THE CRUSADES** The goals of the Crusades seemed noble enough: free the land of Israel and the home of Jesus from the control of unbelievers. The pope promised full forgiveness of past sins to those who would either go fight or would stay home but give money to finance the Crusades. Often a man was commanded by a priest to go on a Crusade as a show of the sincerity of his penance. It must have been tempting in those days to find an excuse to get away from life on the manor for it was a hard, boring, unrewarding life. Famine and economic problems were common. Excitement and free plunder appealed to many. Plus, going on a Crusade was often a way to avoid punishment for crimes.

**THE FIRST CRUSADE** The First Crusade began at Clermont, France. Only a few knights went with mobs of farmers, shop-keepers and other fortune seekers as they traveled from France to Germany and then to the holy land. Europe had many very old communities of prosperous Jews. These ignited a hatred among the Crusaders. Why should the "killers of Christ" be allowed to live in peace and good fortune at home while the soldiers of the cross traveled across Europe to their probable deaths? Some of the clergy tried to reason with the mobs, but frenzy of hatred was unstoppable. In Speyer, Worms, Mainz, Cologne and many other German cities Jews were slaughtered. Men and women, young and old -- all were brutally killed. Jews would try to find refuge in their synagogue, but the doors would be locked and the building set on fire. Many committed suicide as the unruly mob came into town. All were viciously killed, often after torture. Women were raped. Property and possessions were taken as plunder of war. All across Europe one massacre followed another. The Crusades were launched in blood!

This slaughter didn't stop with European Jews. Any and all Muslims suffered the same fate. Even Orthodox Christians who dressed or looked like Muslims were killed. Tens of thousands were

killed. When they arrived in the holy land, the same thing happened. All Jews and Muslims that fell into the hands of the Crusaders were killed or sold into slavery. Many large castle forts were built, many of which still dot the Palestine landscape. Much harm was done to those who lived in the holy land. All this was done under the sign of the cross and in the name of Jesus. Christianity earned a reputation then that it still hasn't lived down.

**THE REST OF THE CRUSADES** The Second Crusade wasn't much different than the first. It, too, focused on destroying Jewish communities in Europe. A few brave people raised their voice against this destruction but their cries were ineffective. The Third Crusade went against the Jews in Europe, for they had been spared in the first two. So it went. For nearly 200 years this continued. Even after the Crusades ended, the Inquisition continued this same way.

**RESULTS OF THE CRUSADES** Certainly there were godly Crusaders, and some good things did come from them, but the greatest legacy of the Crusades was the legacy of death and destruction. Many today still see Christianity as the hideous monster they saw in the Crusaders. Certainly, this was NOT the way Jesus taught to confront evil. This was not done in love and mercy.

**CRUSADES TODAY** Still, sometimes it gets very easy to sit back and condemn the Crusaders for their extremes. Instead, we must see what we can learn from them for us today. How do we confront the evil we face? How should we be confronting it? Do we compromise and ignore?

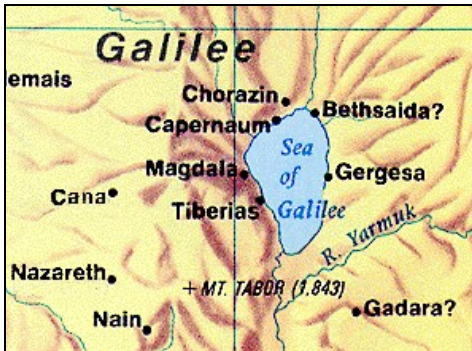
We are faced with evil we must confront in the name of Jesus: abortion, drugs, homosexuality, pornography, cults and New Age philosophy, and many others. We aren't to ignore or avoid confronting these evils. We must bring the light of Jesus to bear against this darkness. However, we must do it with love and mercy.

What is your heart attitude to those who push abortion, who promote homosexuality, who sell pornography? Can you confront them in love? Do you secretly delight when evil overtakes them? Do you find pleasure in their pain? Do you do what little you can to punish them by the way you treat them or criticize them to others? The sin must be condemned and totally rejected, but the sinner still needs Jesus' love as reflected through us. This can be very hard to show at times. Still, if we are to be Christ's representatives on earth we must be like Him in all these things. We must exhibit love and mercy while confronting evil. We must be like Jesus.

## Daily Life in Bible Times – I. PALESTINE

### 16. CAST YOUR NETS

Residents of Palestine have always been exceedingly fond of fish and pay double to triple the price for it that they do for meat. The fish come from the Sea of Galilee.



**SEA OF GALILEE** The Sea of Galilee is very beautiful. It is about 8 miles wide and 12 miles from top to bottom, shaped like a pear. It is 700 feet below sea level and 150 feet deep. Mountains around it raise up to 1400 feet above sea level (the Golan Heights is 2500 feet above sea level). All of the shoreline of the Sea of Galilee can be seen from any point on its shore. It is a very breathtaking sight!

Jesus spent most of His ministry on the northern shore of this Sea. Most of His miracles and teaching took place there. Here he walked on the water (Mark 6:47-50; Matthew 14:22-33; John 6:16-20) and calmed the storm (Mark 4:35-41; Matthew 8:23-27; Lk 8:22-25). The soil nearby was very rich and fine for agriculture. Fishing on the Sea

was a main industry in Galilee. Thus, the northern shore line was heavily populated. The Via Maris (Way of the Sea) ran through this area near Capernaum.

**FISHING** They were caught by various means: hooks, spears or nets. Fishing with hooks was slow and difficult, thus not too common. The same was true of using barbed spears along the coast line. Net fishing was the most profitable and is what men like Peter, Andrew, James and John used.

There were three kinds of net fishing that was done. Some used a circular net with small meshes and leaded weights around the edge. It was cast from shore in shallow water in such that the leaded edge forms the base of a cone, the apex being formed by the fisherman holding the center of his net in his hand. The cone thus formed encloses such fish as cannot escape the quick throw of the fisher. This was too limited and slow for commercial fishing, though. For this a long net or seine of one or two fathoms deep, leaded on one edge and provided with floats on the other, is played out in such a way as to surround a school of fish. Long ropes fastened to the two ends are carried ashore many yards apart, and men on each rope gradually draw in the net. The fish are landed from the shallow water with small nets or by hand. This is commonly practiced even today on the Sea of Galilee.

In deeper waters a net similar to this is cast from boats and the ends slowly brought together to form a circle. Men then dive under the water to bring one portion of the weighted edge over the rest so as to form a bottom. This is hauled into the boat so that the net is emptied into the boat. This is the method the disciples used (Matthew 4:18; Mark 1:16; Luke 5:2-10; John 21:3-11). This was hard, long work: cold in the winter and hot in the summer. It took patience, strength and skill. The majority of a fisherman's life was spent making and mending nets.

**FISH** Various species of freshwater fish were caught in the Sea of Galilee with the different types of nets. There were Musht (also called St. Peter's fish because, according to tradition, this is what he caught). This fish was in the northern end of the Sea and grew up to 15 inches and three pounds. It has relatively few bones and is very tasty. This is probably the kind of fish Jesus used to feed the 5,000 (Matthew 14:13-21), and which the disciples caught when Jesus told them to cast their nets on the other side of the boat. Biny was another kind of fish, a member of the carp family. It was used for feasts and banquets. Sardines were small fish that were caught in enormous numbers. Drying and



pickling them was the main industry of Magdala, home of Mary Mgadalene. These were probably the 'small fish' referred to in Matthew 15:34 and Mark 8:7.

**FISHING FOR MEN** Four of the 12 men Jesus chose to be His disciples were fishermen: Peter, Andrew, James and John (Matthew 4:18-20). That is 1/3 of the disciples, and all of the inner three. What traits were there in fishermen that made them good disciple material? What would fishermen look for in someone to follow?

For one thing, fishermen would stick when the going got tough. They had to have perseverance, patience and stability. Fishing for men as well as fishing for fish requires this. There are many parallels between fishing for fish and men, which is why Jesus used this analogy when He called these men to follow Him (Luke 5:1-11). Fishermen had one goal in mind: to catch fish. Now Jesus wants them (and us) to catch men. This takes hard work, patience and perseverance. There is skill that comes through practice. Knowing when, where and how to fish for fish and men is an acquired skill. The fish didn't come to the men, they had to go to where they were. They had to use bait that was attractive, they knew they wouldn't always be successful. They knew that much of their time would be spent making and repairing nets. Fishers for men must spend much time in prayer and Bible study preparing their 'nets' and mending their lives so they can be effective for God.

Fishermen worked together; they were much more effective that way. Jesus always sent out the disciples by twos. Fishing for men today is much better done in companionship with another person.

Once fish were found and trapped in a net they had to be landed. This took skill, timing and sensitivity. The same is true in fishing for men. One place where the analogy breaks down is that fish were taken against their will, for their destruction. Still, that is why they were created. God created all men to come to Him for salvation, but because of their free will we can't bring any against their will. What we are doing is preserving them from destruction. Think of witnessing for Jesus as fishing for men and you'll be able to do a better job for Jesus.

One final parallel between fish and Christians is the use of the Greek word for fish, **ΙΧΘΥΣ**. In English it would be "I<sub>x</sub>thus." It is pronounced "Ick'-thus." The early Christians used it



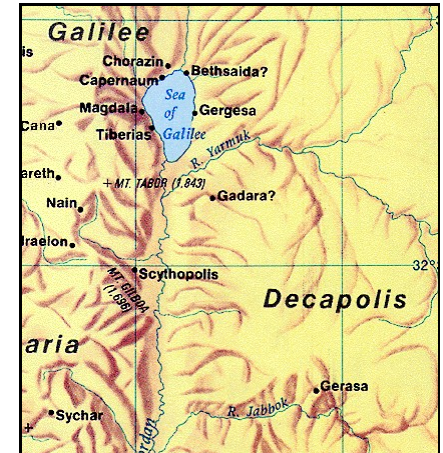
because they were to be fishers of men, but even more because of what the letters stood for. It was an acrostic that spelled "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior." The first letter of each of these Greek words, in this order, spell "ΙΧΘΥΣ", or "I<sub>x</sub>thus," meaning "Fish" in English. Before the cross became the symbol of Christianity the fish was used.

I = Jesus
X = Christ
Θ = God's
Y = Son
Σ = Savior

# Daily Life in Bible Times – I. PALESTINE

## 17. CHALLENGE YOUR DARKNESS

**THE DECAPOLIS** The Decapolis was a district of northern Palestine with a large Greek population, mostly on the east side of the Jordan River. As the name 'deca' implies, it consisted of ten large cities. They formed a league of free city-states, accountable only to Rome. They were independent and autonomous, even minting their own coins. The area was very Hellenistic. As such the human mind was seen as the ultimate source of truth and human pleasure the ultimate goal of man. The people were descendants of Baal-worshippers and kept many of their same practices. They glorified sexuality, violence, wealth and the human body. They even raised pigs as a sacred animal. As you can imagine, the Jews hated and rejected them. They looked down on the Jews as unenlightened and primitive. This was probably the area the prodigal son went to (Luke 15:11-32).



**JESUS IN THE DECAPOLIS** Actually Jesus spent most of His ministry very near to the Decapolis. He spent most of His ministry in the Capernaum area. From time to time, He would cross the Sea of Galilee and teach or preach in the Decapolis. One time He went across to Gerasenes, one of the 10 cities, to heal a demonized man. Satan had free reign in this territory, as he had had in all the Canaanites before the Jews moved in. Naturally Satan didn't want Jesus coming to bring deliverance to the land he ruled, so he sent a terrible storm to drown Jesus and the disciples before they could get there (Matthew 8:23-27). Jesus calmed the storm with a word, though, and they were able to land. The disciples must have really been wondering about what was happening, and about why Jesus wanted to go there so badly. Jesus didn't sit back and let others come to Him, He went and sought them out. He didn't avoid conflict but confronted evil wherever He found it.

When the boat landed two **demonized men** approached them (Matthew 8:28-29). One was the spokesman. These men lived in the graveyard, being attracted to the darkness and death because of the demons that controlled them (Mark 5:3). They were naked and very self-destructive. They had supernatural strength and acted like animals. They would go into fits of rage (Mark 5:4-5). Quite obviously they were not in their right minds.

Demons can and do cause **mental illness**:

- They can make a person be not in his 'right mind' (Mark 15:15).
- They can cause screaming and convulsions, foaming at the mouth (Luke 9:39).
- They can cause self-destructive thoughts and actions (Mark 9:22).
- They can make a person appear to be 'raving mad' (John 10:20).
- They can cause immoral, anti-social behavior that makes the person seem not right mentally (Mark 5:15; Luke 8:35).

It cannot be said with certainty if all mental illness is demonic or not. Other factors are involved such as chemical imbalances, birth defects, damage from injury or drug usage, etc. Demonizing must always be considered until completely ruled out. One way to tell if it is demonic or not is the person's willingness to listen or talk about Jesus. If they fall asleep, change the subject constantly, don't seem to be hearing you, get violent, want to leave in a hurry, etc., you have good reason to suspect demons

are involved. The demons in the man at Gadarsenes were unable to challenge or resist Jesus' power. though.

Immediately they recognized who Jesus was and begged to not be tortured yet (Mark 5:6-7). Jesus commanded them to **come out** of the man (or men, if both desired deliverance). The ruling demon was named "Legion" for he was leader of many demons (a legion is 6,000 soldiers). No matter how many, though, Jesus was stronger (1 John 4:4).

This wasn't the first nor the only time Jesus did this. At the start of His ministry, He cast out many demons (Matthew 4:23-24 Mark 1:39,34). In the Gadarenes He cast demons out of two men (Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-17; Luke 8:20). He cast demons out of the daughter of a Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:21 Mark 7:20), and cured a demonized man (Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-36). He healed a boy with seizures and demons (Matthew 17:14-20). He cast seven demons out of Mary Magdalene as well as out of other women followers (Luke 8:2; Mark 16:9).

**How** did Jesus cast demons out? Before casting them out He rebuked them (took their power away) (Matthew 17:18; Luke 9:42). Then He "drove" them out (Mark 1:39). He did it verbally (Matthew 8:16), not by a certain ritualistic procedure. He didn't let the demons speak (Mark 1:34; Luke 4:41), expect Legion and that was just to give his name so others would know what was happening (Mark 5:9). He never let them say who He was (Mark 1:25; Luke 4:35; Mark 3:11-12). He told them to "be quiet and come out" (Luke 4:35; Mark 1:25). Other times He told them to "go" (Matthew 8:32). Sometimes He was quite far from the person whom He was delivering (Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30). When He cast them out He forbid them to ever return again (Mark 9:25).

The demons in the Gerasenes man (or men) begged to go into pigs instead (Mark 5:10-13), for demons would rather inhabit animals than have no body to indwell. Their evil presence so panicked the pigs that they immediately became self-destructive themselves and drown.

It is sad, though, that the **people there rejected** Jesus and His power instead of coming to Him for deliverance. They begged Him to leave them (Mark 5:14-17). The man who was delivered wanted to go along, but Jesus made him stay as a witness to his people (Mark 5:18-20). He stayed, but Jesus and the disciples left. Evidently Jesus' whole purpose in coming was to bring deliverance to that one man! Nothing could stand in His way: not nature nor Satan. Nothing can stop His power.

That isn't the end of the story, though. At later times Jesus returned to the area of the Decapolis to find people who were interested and open (Mark 7:31-37; Matthew 15:29-31; etc.). Evidently the man did a good job of being a witness for Jesus, telling others what Jesus had done for him. Jesus can do the same today for us, too. His power is no less great today. We must be willing to come to Him (as the demonized man did) not send Him away (as the people did). Which are you doing? Your life in this world as well as the next is determined by what response YOU take to Jesus. Don't send Him away!

# Daily Life in Bible Times – I. PALESTINE

## 18. DEFEAT YOUR DEMONS

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**CAESAREA PHILIPPI** Caesarea Philippi is one of those places you have to see to believe. It was originally called Paneas because it was a center of worship for the pagan god ‘Pan.’ Pan, also called ‘Hades’, was considered the god of fertility of the mountains and forests, as Baal was the god of fertility in the flatter lands of the Philistines. The most outstanding feature of Paneas was the large cave from which flowed a small river. Especially in the spring, when fertility was needed, the spring burst forth bringing life-giving water. This was one of the main sources of the Jordan River. Thus, they believed this was where Pan spent the winter. They had all kinds of immoral and demonic worship to Pan at the opening of this cave to entice him out. This was what the city was known for, much as Niagara Falls dominates the area where it is located.

Philip, a son of Herod, modernized and beautified the town. He renamed it Caesarea as a complement to Augustus. He added his own name to it to distinguish it from Caesarea on the coast of Sharon. Located 120 miles north of Jerusalem, it marked the northernmost extent of Jesus’ ministry. It was in this direction Jesus often went to escape crowds and find some privacy with the disciples. It was near here that He was transfigured.



**JESUS’ INQUIRY** One day Jesus took the disciples to the area of Caesarea Philippi to get away and talk (Matthew 16:13). While there naturally their minds were on the spring of water with the idols and demonic worship of Pan. Perhaps they were even in sight of the cave and the idols that were around it. With the influence of the god Pan fresh in their minds, Jesus asked the disciples a series of questions to lead them to reveal who they thought He was. Did they think He was as great as Pan and the other pagan gods, or did they realize He was the only true God? Peter came through with the right answer: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). That really thrilled and encouraged Jesus, and he highly commended Peter for his faith. He then went on to say “On this rock I will build my church” (Matthew 16: 18). While Catholicism says that Peter himself is the rock the church is built on, and thus the first pope, Protestants traditionally interpret Jesus’ words as referring to Peter’s profession of faith. The church is built on the faith of its members in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God.

**THE GATES OF HADES!** Then Jesus made His famous statement: “and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” ‘Hades’ is the New Testament word for the grave, the place of the dead. That’s what is referred to in the Apostles Creed when it says that Jesus “descended into Hades.” ‘Sheol’ in the Old Testament is similar. That is what Pan was thought of as being the god over - Hades, the place of the dead, the underworld. By the time Jesus sat and talked at Caesarea Philippi, Baal and even Pan were ‘old fashioned.’ They were replaced by the newer, more modern gods of the Greeks and Romans. Zeus (Jupiter to the Romans) took the role of the lead god (Baal) the god of weather or storms. Artemis, the goddess of fertility and Aphrodite, the goddess of love, continued the Asherah cults under a new name (Acts 19:35). The names changed, but the worship practices were as immoral as other. It is said that in Corinth alone there were more than 1,000 prostitutes in Aphrodite’s temple.

Pan was depicted as an ugly man with the horns, legs and ears of a goat -- a regular picture of Satan himself! Most stories about him refer to sexual affairs. The worship practices of his followers were no different. He was associated with Dionysus, the Greek god of wine and orgies. His worshipers

continued many of the sexual rites of the Old Testament gods of the Baal cult, although human sacrifice had been outlawed.

Hades, the Greek god of the underworld, became the namesake for the place of the dead and even for hell itself. Thus Jesus, in the very shadows of the earthly dwelling place of Pan, later called Hades, states that "the gates of Hades cannot overcome" the church He will build on the faith in Jesus that its members will have. Even these great, prominent gods of the underworld cannot destroy what He builds.

**WHAT ABOUT "GATES"?** The gate of a city was its strongest, most defensible part. It was the source of its power. Also, inside the gate was where officials gathered to exercise authority and make decisions. The gate was the center of power and control. Thus, Jesus is saying that power on earth or under the earth can stand against what He will do. This, of course, includes Satan and is a direct challenge to his authority.

**SATAN & HELL** Actually Satan's gate (control center) isn't in hell. Hell itself (from the Greek word "Gehenna" referring to the garbage dump outside Jerusalem) is unoccupied at the present. Satan's control center is on this earth, he is the "prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). Satan and the Antichrist will be the first cast into hell, but not until the end of Armageddon (Revelation 20:10).

Where do those who now die without the Lord go? In Luke 16:23 Jesus describes a place called which is divided into two parts. One is Abraham's bosom (paradise), the other a place of torment called Hades. Perhaps this is the same as the Abyss often referred to in the Bible (Revelation 9:1,2,11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1-3).

**JESUS' POWER OVER SATAN** What a tremendous statement Jesus was making when He said that nothing could stand against those who put their faith in Him, not even the power of the evil demonic gods that counterfeited God. Not even the top gods, the ones who ruled the underworld, not even Satan himself, nothing (Romans 8:31-39) can stand against us (I John 4:4). What a tremendous statement! Jesus walks right up to that which stood for the control station, the power center, for Satan and his forces, and clearly states that His followers are immune to its powers because of their faith in Him as God! What a tremendous promise to claim!

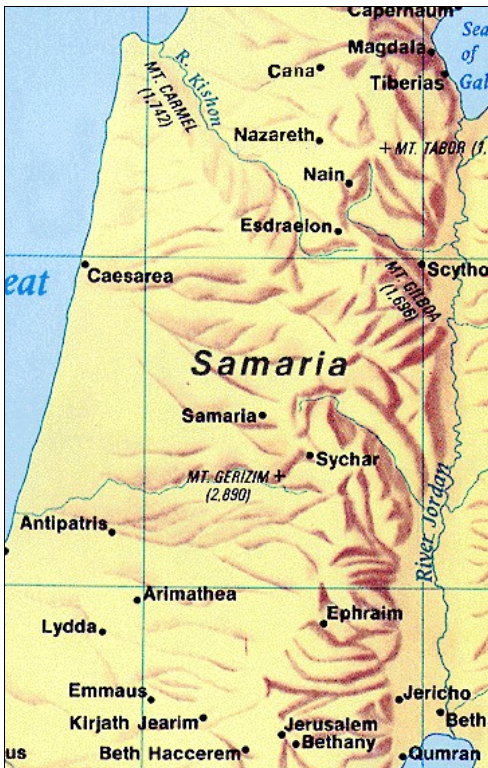
The existence of the church through 2,000 years of persecution and opposition is proof of that. The emperor Diocletian set up a stone pillar on which was inscribed these words: For Having Exterminated The Name Christian From the Earth. If he could see that monument today, how embarrassed he would be! Another Roman leader made a coffin, symbolizing his intention "to bury the Galilean" by killing His followers. He soon learned that he could not "put the Master in it". He finally surrendered his heart to the Savior, realizing that the corporate body of Christ and its living Head, the Lord Jesus, cannot be destroyed by the onslaught of mortal men. Hitler intended for the swastika to replace the cross, but the cross still stands!

The history of the church has been represented by the Waldensians in a picture of an anvil with many worn-out hammers lying all around it. Beneath this scene are the words: One Anvil -- Many Hammers. Organized religion may fail; but the living organism composed of all born-again believers will stand forever. God is calling out of this world a people for His name who will dwell with Him throughout eternity. Isn't it great to be on the winning side? What a wonderful, powerful God we serve!



## Daily Life in Bible Times – I. PALESTINE

### 19. BUILD YOUR FUTURE



**HEROD & JESUS** The lives of Jesus and Herod seemed destined to be intertwined from the very beginning. Both were kings of the Jews, both called ‘great’ by their followers. Both were rejected by the people they tried to help. Both lived during the same time frame in the same location. Jesus’ life was just beginning, however, as Herod’s was winding down. Jesus was born just five miles from Herod’s main palace in Jerusalem and less virtually within the shadow of his greatest palace at the Herodion. For anyone who saw them, though, it was hard to think of Jesus on the same plane as Herod. In life circumstances and personality, they were opposites. Herod was ambition, pushy, wealthy and self-centered. Jesus was born in a cave among animals and didn’t even have a home during His ministry. He was humble, meek and self-sacrificing. The contrast between the two is seen in many ways and places. The city of Caesarea is a good example of this differences.

**CAESAREA** In order to make money from his perfect location where east and west met, Herod needed a harbor. Caravans and ships could exchange goods and the economy would boom. However, there was no harbor on the Palestine coast, and no natural place to build one. Herod took a small town and made it into a city to rival Jerusalem in importance and grandeur. He renamed

the city after Caesar - Caesarea. He built sumptuous palaces, public buildings, a theater, an amphitheater and much more. There were even sewers to keep the city clean and a fresh-water system that brought running water into the city from as far as 15 miles away. The greatest achievement, though, was the harbor. It was the largest man-made harbor in the world and one of the wonders of the ancient water.

First breakwaters were constructed. One to the south was 600 yards long and to one to the north 300 yards long. The base for these breakwaters was made of concrete blocks, poured under water (sometimes over 100 feet deep). They measured 40 by 50 feet in size and were more than five feet thick. Archaeologists have discovered some of them with the wood forms still in place. Hydraulic concrete was a new invention in Herod’s time. The concrete was made of volcanic sand imported from Italy. Towers, a lighthouse, and huge vaulted storage rooms were built on the breakwaters.

**CAESAREA AND THE EARLY CHURCH** God allowed this and used it for His own plan and purpose. Many fine Christians spread the gospel here, including Philip the Evangelist. Peter went to Caesarea to minister to the Roman centurion Cornelius. Paul passed through there several times: sailing to Troas, returning from his second and third missionary journeys, and when he sailed for Rome in chains. He spoke to Felix, Festus and Herod Agrippa II while there. God used this city in a special way as a sending-off spot for missionaries taking the Gospel to foreign lands. It was an important place in the life of the early church.

**CAESAREA THROUGH THE CENTURIES** Riots between Gentiles and Jews in Caesarea gave rise to the Jewish war for independence from Rome. Terrible cruelties were practiced on the Jews

under Felix and Florus. Here the Roman legions landed on their way to destroying Jerusalem in 70 AD and ultimately Masada to end the revolt. Here Vespasian was hailed emperor by his soldiers. Titus here celebrated the birthday of his brother Domitian by setting 2,500 Jews to fight with beasts in the amphitheater. Eusebius was bishop of Caesarea (313-40 AD). In 548 AD a massacre of the Christians was organized and carried out by the Jews and Samaritans. The city passed into Moslem hands in 638. In the time of the Crusades it fell, now to the Christians and now to the Moslems; and was finally overthrown by Sultan Bibars in 1265 AD. Today the fine harbor and splendid buildings are in ruins. Nothing is left but the rough outline of Herod's buildings and millions of small pieces of broken marble.

**MARBLE & LIMESTONE** Herod, you see, built in marble. He imported it from Italy and used it everywhere. He wanted to make what he built so magnificent and unforgettable that he would be remembered and honored forever. He wanted to make an impression that would last for all time. Today nothing is left but pieces of marble that litters the land and is buried under the sea.

There was another king of the Jews who also was known for his greatness in empire-building. Jesus Himself is often referred to as a descendent of his. He was the greatest king the Jews had, and will only be superseded by his descendent, Jesus the Messiah, when He rules and reigns in Jerusalem. While David build, it wasn't mainly with stone. The legacy he formed was of stuff that lasts much longer and better. The stones he is remembered for were the sling-stones he picked up to kill Goliath. That was common field stone, probably limestone. He said he was doing what he did so "the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel" (I Samuel 17:46). David wasn't using the stone for himself but for God. He was building for God, and what he built has lasted through the ages.



One of the first Bible stories children learn is about David and Goliath, and it still stirs hearts to obedience to God no matter the odds. Meanwhile all Herod is remembered for is for killing baby boys in Bethlehem. What he built has not lasted because he built for himself. What David built endures because he did it for God and not himself.

Both David and Herod were great kings. Both loved and used stones. Herod built for himself and people today pick up the ruins of what he left behind. David acted for God and we will never forget his great legacy.

**WHO ARE YOU BUILDING FOR?** Are you building for yourself or for God. It doesn't matter how beautiful your marble buildings are, if you build for yourself it will soon crumble. Only what is built for God will last the test of time. Build for eternity!



# ***Daily Life in Bible Times***

## ***II. JERUSALEM***

### SPIRITUAL LESSONS FROM ISRAEL'S GEOGRAPHY & CULTURE

By **Rev. Dr. Jerry Schmoyer**

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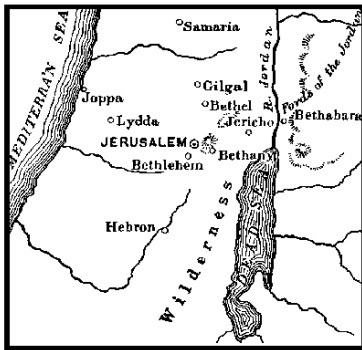
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- 20. 6,000 YEARS OF SOVEREIGN CARE
- 21. VALLEY THAT GAVE HELL ITS NAME
- 22. CRUSHED ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES
- 23. A TYPICAL WORK DAY IN JERUSALEM
- 24. HEROD: RAGES TO RICHES TO RAGS
- 25. FANCY ON THE OUTSIDE, DECAY WITHIN
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- 31. JUDAISM: THE INSIDE STORY
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- 34. THE BUILDING GOD CALLED 'HOME'
- 35. TOUR OF A SYNAGOGUE
- 36. JESUS' LIFE IN JERUSALEM
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- 38. THE EARLY CHURCH IN JERUSALEM
- 39. JERUSALEM: FROM THEN TO NOW
- 40. JERUSALEM: ACTIVE FOR ALL ETERNITY

## Daily Life in Bible Times – II. JERUSALEM

# 20. 6,000 YEARS OF SOVEREIGN CARE

Jerusalem is truly a very special city. It is the capital of the only kingdom God ever established among men. It is the only spot God Himself graced with His continuing presence. He Himself chose it to be His earthly home. It is the only city God ever called “holy,” or “My city” (Isaiah 52:1; Nehemiah 11:1). No site in all of Scripture receives such constant and exalted praise as Jerusalem. It is located at the meeting point of three continents: Africa, Asia and Europe. It is the meeting point of east and west. Nations to the east read right to left while those to the west read left to right. It is sacred to three great religions: Christianity, Judaism and Islam.



This special city has **SEVERAL NAMES**. It is called “Jerusalem”, “city of peace,” 600 times in the old city. In reality it is the world’s most hated city with more wars being fought there than any other single city. It is also called “Salem,” meaning “peace,” when Melchizedek was its king (Genesis 14:18; Ps 76:2). “Zion” is a common name. Of uncertain origin, it is first used of the oldest part of the city, then for all Jerusalem. Other names include “City of David” for the king who conquered it and “City of God.” All in all, it has about 50 different names in the Bible.

That Jerusalem is **VERY SPECIAL** is stated over and over in the Bible. “Great is the LORD, and most worthy of praise, in the city of our God, his holy mountain. It is beautiful in its loftiness, the joy of the whole earth. Like the utmost heights of Zaphon is Mount Zion, the city of the Great King. God is in her citadels; he has shown himself to be her fortress.” (Psalm 48:1-3) Awake, awake, O Zion, clothe yourself with strength. Put on your garments of splendor, O Jerusalem, the holy city. The uncircumcised and defiled will not enter you again.” (Isaiah 52:1) “Jerusalem is the city the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel in which to put his Name.” (1 Kings 14:21)

The **SITE OF JERUSALEM** was first inhabited about 3000 BC (5000 years ago). Semitic people first settled at the spring Gihon. It is first mentioned in the Bible as a Jebusite city called Jebus (Genesis 10:16). The first details we have about the city are when **Melchizedek** was its king and helped Abraham, who paid to tithes to God through him (Genesis 14:18). Hebrews 7:1-4 says that Melchizedek is a picture of Jesus (king of peace and righteousness, without beginning or end, king and priest both, etc.).

**Abraham** went to a spot right by this city when he (almost) sacrificed Isaac on Mt. Moriah (Genesis 22:1-2). That very rock was to become the location of the Holy of Holies in the temple which David planned and Solomon built.

Secular history sheds some light on the early history of Jerusalem, too. About 1450 BC letters were written from Ursalim (“city of peace”) to Egypt who owned the area at that time, asking for help against enemies threatening the city. This would have the time Joshua was conquering the land.

In **Joshua’s** day Jerusalem was the chief city of the Canaanites (Joshua 10:5), but Joshua never captured it, although one king was killed (Joshua 20:23-26). It was on the border of Judah and Benjamin. Judah and Simeon defeated the city once during the time of the judges but never really captured it.

It wasn’t until the time of **David** that the city was captured (1 Chronicles 11:4-7; 2 Samuel 5:6-9) by infiltrating through the water tunnel. The city was small: about 8 acres (400’ by 1250’) and about

1230 people. David made it the capital of Israel because of its neutral and central location. It was God, though, who was behind the choice of Jerusalem as His capital and headquarters.

**GOD PROTECTED** His city against attack after attack. The Philistines were soundly defeated when they invaded (2 Samuel 5:17-25). That was the end of Philistine's threat against Israel. When the tabernacle was destroyed David built a new tent to house the sacred ark and bought a threshing floor just north of the city to use for a permanent temple (2 Samuel 24:1-25).

While David planned for the temple, he didn't build it because he was a man of war and it was to be a place of peace. **Solomon** built the temple and did much to enlarge and beautify the whole city (1 Kings 5 - 8; 2 Chronicles 2 - 5). By now the city was 32 acres and about 5,000 people.

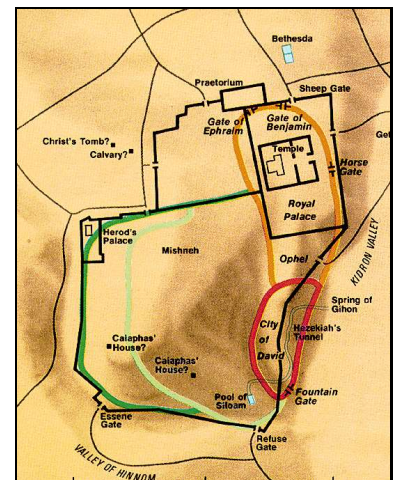
After Solomon's time the glory of Israel and Jerusalem faded. The people turned from God and He allowed enemies to come against them so they'd turn back to Him for help. The temple was looted 8 times, mostly for bribes to keep enemies from destroying them. The Syrians, Assyrians, Babylonians and even the northern 10 tribes all attacked. Despite this the city continued to grow and expand until it reached a size of about 125 acres and 25,000 people.

One of the most detailed accounts of an attack on Jerusalem was the one by **Sennacherib** (2 Kings 18-19; 2 Chronicles 32; Isaiah 36-37) when God intervened and miraculously destroyed the Assyrian army. Eventually, though, the city did fall to Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians because the people refused to repent and turn back to God (2 Kings 24 - 25; 2 Chronicles 36; Jeremiah 39; 52). This happened in 586 BC.. Jerusalem was defeated and the temple destroyed. Daniel and Ezekiel were taken captive, along with thousands and thousands of Jews.

Later some Jews were allowed to **RETURN TO REBUILD** the city wall and temple (Ezra 3:8-13; 4:23-25; 5:1-5; 6:15-18). Rebuilding started in 537 BC and was completed in 516 BC. The city and temple were lacking in size and glory. It was nothing like it had been, The city was only about 30 acres and had 4,500 inhabitants.

Wars continued to find their way to Jerusalem. It was totally destroyed at least 5 times. Finally, Alexander the Great conquered it in 332 BC. Antiochus Epiphanes profaned it in 168 BC, leading to the Maccabean revolt. Under Jewish control the city grew to 165 acres and 35,000 people. Pompey conquered the city for Rome in 64 BC and Crassus pillaged the temple in 55 BC. The Parthians occupied it in 40 BC but Rome won it back and gave control of the area to Herod the Great in 37 BC. He rebuilt the city and temple, making it one of the greatest cities of its day. During the time of Jesus, it had expanded to about 450 acres and 80,000 people.

What is most striking about Jerusalem through the last 5,000 years is God's obvious sovereign control over it. In prosperity or affliction, it is still God's city and His sovereign control is always evident. If He would care for His city in this way, wouldn't it stand to reason He would care for us, His people, even more? After all, WE are where His presence dwells on earth today (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Eph 2:21). Thank God for His continual watch-care over you.



## Daily Life in Bible Times – II. JERUSALEM

# 21. THE VALLEY THAT GAVE HELL ITS NAME

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When aiming a rifle at a target, it is essential to line up the two sights, the one in front and the one at the rear of the barrel. If they are lined up exactly, the shot will be accurate. If they aren't the shot will miss. To accurately understand any part of the Bible there must be two sights that also line up on it. The one is chronology the other geography. In order to accurately interpret any Bible passage, we must understand where it fits in historically (on a time line) and where it is located (on a map). These are essential to correct understanding and interpretation. Often we are more aware of Bible history than geography.

The **GEOGRAPHY OF JERUSALEM** is key to its significance. Any city site had to have two things: height (for defense) and water (for life). These two elements don't naturally come at the same place. In Jerusalem the water site was part way down the hill, but an underground tunnel allowed access even when under siege. There was no river or lake for water. The Kidron was dry most of the year. Jerusalem's water supply will be considered in a future article.

Jerusalem itself was on a "V" shaped hill with valleys on two sides for protection. A strong wall protected the north. It was 2550 feet above sea level, which was 33 miles to the east. It was 3800 feet above the Dead Sea which was just 14 miles to the west. The city was so situated that anyone approaching couldn't see it until they were right on top of it, then there it was! It was an impressive sight with the sun reflecting off the gold of the temple.

This location provides a nice **CLIMATE** for Jerusalem. The temperature averages 77 in summer (not above 86 in the day but with cool nights). During the 'sinter' the average temperature is 59 degrees with occasional light falls of snow which soon melt. The worst weather is drought when the temperature is high and humidity low. This occurs for about 50 days a year. The high elevation of the city exposes it to cooling breezes from the Mediterranean.

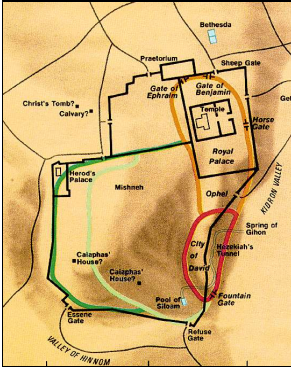


The valley to the east, **KIDRON**, is about 3 miles long and dry much of the year. It's only during the wet winter months that water flows in it. The Tyropoeon Valley runs to the west. As the city grew it was filled in to connect with another hill to the west. The valley that came down to the west of that hill and then cut under Jerusalem to connect with Kidron is called the **VALLEY OF HINNOM** (Joshua 15:8; 2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6; etc.). These valleys shaped the geographical limits of the city and protected it from attack on those sides. Important events happened there.

One of the most defining events for the people in Jerusalem was what happened in the Valley of Hinnom during the time of the kings. Located there was Topheth, "the place of the burning" (Jeremiah 7:31). During the reign of Ahaz and of Manasseh, idolatrous practices were carried on in this valley (for more information see article 6 in this series). Children were offered as burnt sacrifices to abominable heathen gods like Baal (2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6). During his great revival, Josiah ended this evil practice for good (2 Kings 23:10). Because of the evil practices conducted in the valley, Jeremiah announced a change in its name to the "Valley of Slaughter" (Jeremiah 7:31-33). The valley

became a place for burial until there was no more room and the bodies were just cast into it to be consumed by dogs and vultures. It thus became the city garbage dump with all sorts of refuse dumped over the southern wall into this valley.

What was “Hinnom” in Hebrew became “Ge-Henna” in Greek. Thus, in the New Testament this valley is called **GEHENNA**. Its distinguishing feature is the garbage dump, which is now continually burning to consume the rubbish dumped into it. It is a place of death, decay, awful smells and fires that burn but never go out. It is where dead bodies are dumped if the family isn’t rich enough to own a tomb. Jesus was to be dumped here after His death along with the criminals on each side of Him. That is why Joseph of Arimathea intervened to save His body from that fate.



What is significant about this valley, and why knowing Bible geography is so important, is that when Jesus started teaching about hell he used this place as a description of it. He used the name “Gehenna” to alter his listeners to the eternal doom that awaited all those who rejected Him.

Jesus said that those without salvation are controlled by anger and hate, and the result of this is eternity in **HELL**. "But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell" (Matthew 5:22).

Again, Jesus talked about hell as the place where the fire never goes out. He warns His listeners to avoid hell at any and all cost. "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where "their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched" " (Mark 9:43-48; Matthew 5:29-30; 18:8-9).

He also recognizes hell as a place of eternal torture. “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28).

Did you know that Jesus talked more about hell than anyone in the Bible? He certainly knew and believed in its reality and did all He could to warn His followers of its eternal dangers. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are" (Matthew 23:15). "But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him" (Luke 12:5). "The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell" (James 3:6).

Thus, understanding the history and geography of a valley to the south of Jerusalem is key to understanding Jesus' teachings about hell. What a vivid picture it paints! Thank God that His children never have to fear going to such a place!



## Daily Life in Bible Times – II. JERUSALEM

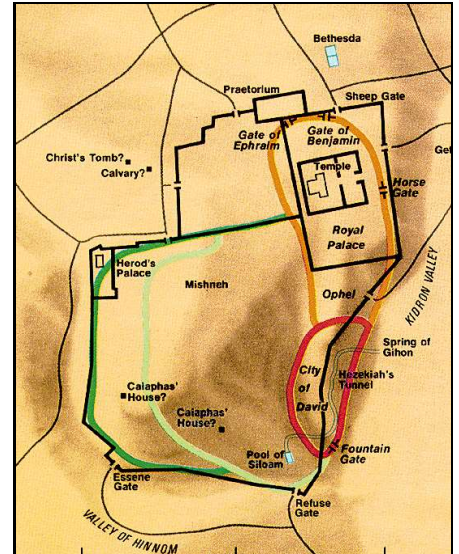
# 22. CRUSHED ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES

How can you tell when someone loves you? Usually, love is shown by someone's actions, but something done. How can you tell that God loves you? God used an olive press to show His love for us. In order to understand this, it's important to understand some more about the geography of Jerusalem.

In the last article we saw the significance of the Valley of Hinnon to the west and south of Jerusalem. This time we want to look at the valley and mountain to the east and its importance. This is the Mount of Olives.

The **MOUNT OF OLIVES** is a mile-long spur of limestone hills. It is a very conspicuous landmark of Jerusalem, rising 100 to 400 feet above the city. From the top all of Jerusalem can be seen to the west and the Jordan Valley seen to the east.

The **villages** of Siloam, Bethany (home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus) and Bethphage (where the donkey for Jesus' ride into Jerusalem was obtained) are on the Mt of Olives.



A very important **road** led out of Jerusalem (through the Eastern Gate) and over the Mount of Olives, going to Jericho. Roads were very important, as most travel was done by foot. It was on this road that the Babylonians pursued Hezekiah and caught him (2 Kings 25:4-5). Jesus used this road often (Luke 19:28). The parable of the good Samaritan takes place on this road as well (Luke 10:29-37).

Because of its topography the Mount of Olives couldn't be farmed. It was ideal for vineyards and orchards, though. Grapes, olives and figs grew in abundance (Numbers 13:23).

**GRAPE VINES** were one of the most important plants for the Jews, similar to what the buffalo was for native Americans and apples were to early settlers. Vineyards produce grapes, which could be eaten right from the vine. Many products could be made from grapes: grape juice, grape honey, wine and raisins. The variety and portability of these products made grapes very important. Usually, grape vines were grown in small, terraced plots with stone walls or thorn bushes to keep animals and thieves out (Song of Sol 2:15). There was much work involved with protecting, pruning (John 15), sowing, weeding, etc. Large vineyards had towers with guards to protect the ripening grapes. The poor often lived in the vineyard near harvest to protect their crop.

**FIG TREES** also were planted and cultivated there, for they produced 3 drops a year. They were eaten fresh or dried for winter use. When barren they were cut down and burned (Luke 13:6-9). Leaves and fruit grew together, so a tree with leaves and no fruit looked good from a distance but was useless, a picture of those just going through the outer motions of obeying God (Matthew 21:19).

The third crop grown on the Mount of Olives was that which gave it its name: **OLIVE TREES**. It took 14 years to grow to maturity and start producing, then they were very sturdy, living and producing for hundreds of years. Olives were easy to harvest. You could knock them off a tree with a stick (Dt 24:20). One had to be careful to not injure the tree, though, or that would affect the next harvest. A healthy tree would produce about 20 gallons of olive oil a harvest. Olive oil was a great source of wealth.

It could be eaten like butter or used for cooking like fat. It was also used to light lamps, make soap, anoint bodies (medicinal or ritualistic uses), etc. Olives could also be eaten fresh or dried (for easier transport and preservation). The wood was used to make cabinets and other furniture.

The sturdiest trees were those where a cultivated olive tree was grafted into wild (and thus stronger) roots. Paul talks about God doing the opposite of this when He grafted us wild trees into the cultivated roots of Israel (Romans 11), and says that they one day will be restored to their rightful fruit-producing position.

When the Romans surrounded Jerusalem in 70 AD they cut down all the olive trees, vines, etc. Today a few 900-year-old trees remain, having grown from the roots of previous trees going back to the time of Jesus.

The Mount of Olives, therefore, was very important to the life of Jerusalem. Because of the trees there and the shade they produced, many of the rich people in Jerusalem also used their groves and orchards as a cool place to escape the heat and noise of Jerusalem in the summer. **GETHSEMANE** was such a place. It served as a garden escape as well as a place for grapes, olives and figs to be harvested and processed. In fact, the word “gethsemane” means literally “olive press.” It was a round wheel-shaped stone that rolled around a groove in a bottom stone to crush grapes and figs so the juice could be extracted.

Isn't it significant that it is here that Jesus went to pray and even to spend His final nights on earth (Luke 22:39). Judas knew that if He wasn't in the upper room any more, He must have gone to Gethsemane as was His practice. Here, in the shadow of the olive press which forced the 'blood of the grape' out under stress and force, Jesus Himself had His own blood forced out by the stress and pressure of the anticipation of carrying our sins on the cross. The thought of going through our eternal hell, of being the helpless victim of all Satan and his demons could throw at Him and of being the object of God's awful wrath was so much that blood came out of His body with the sweat (Luke 22:44).

Thus, God used an olive press to show how much He loves us. It clearly describes that Jesus knew what He was getting in for. He could have avoided the cross, He could have left the area. Instead, He stayed and allowed Himself to go through that because He loves us. What a great picture of His love. What a beautiful way to describe. Without understanding the geography and culture of Palestine in Jesus' day this wonderful message can't be received. Take a moment right now to thank Him for what He did for you, for all He voluntarily went through for you.



## Daily Life in Bible Times – II. JERUSALEM

### 23. A TYPICAL WORK DAY IN JERUSALEM

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Suppose you were alive in the time of Jesus, even living in Jerusalem. What would it have been like? What would a typical work day have been like. While it might have seemed exciting and glamorous to live in Jerusalem in the time of Jesus, for those who lived there it was just ‘business as usual.’ Those who grew up inside the **WALLS** of Jerusalem hardly noticed them, but to visitors they were massive and dominated the view wherever you looked. They averaged 38 foot high and 24 foot thick. They were impenetrable.

The only in or out was through the **GATES**. The gates were very strongly constructed to keep enemies out (see article 1 in this series for more information). The gates were named after locations (Eastern gate, Bethlehem gate, etc.) or functions (sheep gate, dung gate, etc.). There were towers near the gates, as well as throughout the wall, for better protection.

Since everyone funneled through them coming and going to town they were very busy, active places. Because of this, and the large open areas by them, many activities took place “**INSIDE THE GATE.**” It was a common meeting place (Ruth 4:1; 2 Samuel 15:2; I Kings 22:10; Nehemiah 8:1-3). Because of the extra space, and exposure to so much foot traffic, many farmers and craftsmen with products for sale would set up a booth here (2 Kings 7:1; Nehemiah 3:1,3,28). “Inside the gate” became the main gathering place of the city, as the center square was in early New England towns. Even legal tribunals were conducted here (Dt 16:18; 21:19). That is where prophets and teachers would go to proclaim their messages (Prov 1:21; 8:3; 31:31; Jeremiah 17:19). Scribes set up their offices along the walls to read and write documents for the uneducated. Kings would hold court here, too (2 Samuel 19:8; I Kings 22:10; Jeremiah 38:7). It was here the militia assembled (Judges 5:8) and the town riffraff gathered (Psalm 69:12). It was the hub of all activity for the city. If you lived in Jerusalem your daily life, in one way or another, would revolve around the markets by the gates. That is where you would buy or sell, or both.

In Jerusalem there were many gates and many “inside the gate” areas. Each was a special gathering place. The location in the city (rich section, poor section or middle class) determined the type craftsmen who would gather. If you lived there you have one, probably the one nearest your home, and it would be your work place, shopping center, town hall, school system and office complex.

Whatever **STREET** you took would eventually lead to a gate. Streets were straight and squared off only in the newer Roman section where the very rich lived. In the rest of Jerusalem, they were twisty, narrow and crooked. There were often steps in them. Some were mud, others paved stones. Animals such as donkeys and camels were common on them. One-room shops opened up to them on each side of the street. Living quarters for the family was another single room in back of the shop.

Your **WORK DAY** in Jerusalem would start early, as sunup or before. What you did for your life’s work was determined by what your father (or perhaps an uncle) did, for they would have taught you their skill, as they learned it from their father. Common trades practiced inside Jerusalem included potters, carpenter, mason, metal worker, tanner, dyer, tentmaker, merchant, money-changer, banker, tax gatherer, physician and many others. Farmers, fishermen and hunters were usually found in more rural areas, although they did bring their produce to the cities to sell it.

**Potters** were much in demand as jars were needed to keep water, food and olive oil. They lived mainly in the southwest corner of town. All trades tended to stick together in one area. The skills were passed on from generation to generation, all living in the same family home. God is often pictured as

a potter who is sovereign over His people (Jeremiah 18:4-6; Rom 9:20-21) and one who will judge those who disobey Him (Ps 2:7; Jeremiah 19:11; Rev 2:27).

**Masons**, often translated ‘carpenters,’ were those who built with stone. They used wood to frame the doors and windows and for roof beams, but mainly they worked in stone. They built houses, terraces, walls -- whatever needed building. Herod and his sons used many masons for their building projects all over Palestine. Joseph and Jesus probably did this kind of work. Wood was very scarce while stone was plentiful. Jesus Himself then became our foundation, upon which we and all we have are built (Rom 15:20).

**Carpenters** would work with wood making furniture and tools (Isaiah 44:13) such as yokes, plows, locks & keys, doors, low tables, chairs, stools and storage chests. They were very skillful men who gave great attention to their work.

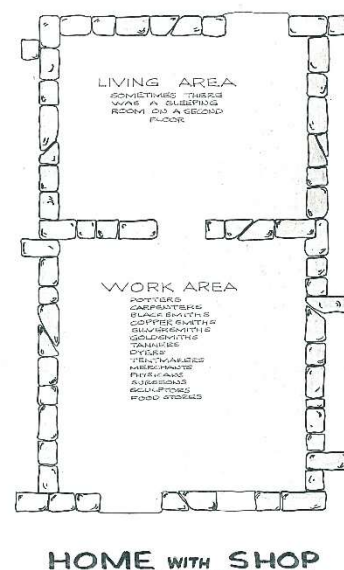
**Metal workers** were quite advanced at their crafts. Blacksmiths did work like they do today. Coppersmiths made pots, shovels, basins and other objects for the temple as well as homes of the rich. Silver and gold smiths also made jewelry, dishes and utensils and ritual objects for worship for the temple and the rich. They heated metal very hot to burn away any impurity so they would be pure, a picture of how God uses trials in the lives of His people (1 Peter 1:7).

**Tanners** worked with sheepskin and goatskin, making tents, shoes, bottles or whatever leather objects were needed. **Dyers** colored woven material brilliant crimson (in crushed worms), purple (from a special shellfish) or whatever color was wanted. Both tanners and dyers were on the edge of town, sometimes outside town, because of the awful smell their crafts created.

**Tentmaking** was a good, necessary craft. Tents were used by those traveling, and most trips were by foot and overnight. Other people lived in tents permanently. Paul was a tentmaker. He learned to cut straight edges to sew together, the same as he wanted others to have a straight interpretation of God’s Word (2 Tim 2:15).

**Merchants** were common, buying and selling dry goods, grocery items, utensils, leather and cloth goods, baked items, vegetables, fruit, meats and fish -- whatever was necessary for life. Prices weren’t set on items for things were always bartered for. The seller would ask a very high price, the buyer would offer something very low, and they would eventually meet in the middle somewhere.

Most of the men of Jerusalem practiced one of these crafts, so if you lived in Jerusalem in Jesus’ day you would probably be involved in one of them, and that’s how you’d spend your day, sunrise to almost sunset. It was a hard life, but it wasn’t a bad life. Aren’t you glad for the variety of occupations available today, and that you can choose any you want? Thank God for choosing when He wanted you to be alive on earth.



## Daily Life in Bible Times – II. JERUSALEM

# 24. HEROD: RAGES TO RICHES TO RAGS

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From rages to riches to rags -- that's the life story of Herod the Great. He started out with nothing and when he died he took nothing with him. In between he made quite a name for himself, one which lives on to today. He was a ruler, a king, a military leader, an astute businessman and a great politician, but most of all he was a builder. He chose architecture as his way of turning Jerusalem and all Palestine from a hill-billy, backward nowhere to a place as urbane and modern as Rome itself. Our purpose here isn't to focus on his life (for more information on that see the article in the Life of Jesus series, # 8, "The First Shall Be Last") but to focus on his buildings.

While Herod was responsible for great building projects throughout Palestine and other parts of the Roman empire, his main impact was in Jerusalem. He rebuilt other cities, but Jerusalem was his jewel. Much of his building, in Jerusalem and elsewhere, was of a military nature. He built Masada and other similar fortresses for his protection. He enlarged the walls of Jerusalem and strongly fortified it, building the fortress Antonia as well as his own personal palace, which was a fortress inside a fortress.

**HEROD'S PALACE** was made up of sumptuous bedrooms and dining halls, pleasure gardens, fountains and water courses. It was probably here that Jesus was brought before Herod before His crucifixion. Three towers protected the palace, each one a fortress in itself. The first was named Hippicus after one of his friends. The second Phasael, the tallest, after Herod's brother. The third, Mariamme, after the Jewish wife he loved but had put to death for plotting against him.

The other main fort in Jerusalem was named **ANTONIA** after Herod's friend Mark Anthony. The Roman garrison in Jerusalem was stationed there. It was attached to the temple so they could better watch the activity there and get in quickly in case of a revolt. Antonia was large and strong, with walls 60 feet high and towers up to 105 foot high. It was, in effect, a palace, an armed camp and almost a city itself. It was here that Jesus was brought to Pilate (John 19:13).

Perhaps Herod's crowning achievement was the rebuilding and enlarging of the **TEMPLE**, one of the wonders of the ancient world. That will be considered in detail later. Herod thought he could better rule the Jews if he did something nice for them and won their loyalty. It never worked.

To be more like a modern Greco-Roman city Herod built a **THEATER** which was very impressive. From the top the whole city of Jerusalem was visible. Thus, the Jews were forbidden to ever enter. Since there were no PA systems, large wax masks were held in front of the actor's faces to show the mood of the character they were portraying: anger, fear, sorrow, etc. These masks were called in Greek "hypocrites" and referred to someone who put on a false face.

Much of what Herod built in Jerusalem was sports-oriented. Herod himself was quite an athlete, being a champion wrestler, archer and horseman until his old age. He made sure that Jerusalem was filled with athletic-oriented buildings. One such was the **GYMNASIUM**. In it wrestling, boxing and discus-throwing were practiced by naked males (no females could enter). There were hot and cold saunas and baths, a library, and classrooms where philosophy (Greek wisdom) was expounded. These were very ungodly world views and attitudes. The Greeks felt that a person's mind and body both needed to be trained together. Pious Jews kept away from it all.

The **AMPHITHEATER** was, in Greek, called a "hippodrome" (meaning "horse races"). Gladiators and animals from all over were brought in to fight. It was also used for musicians, choral

acts and flooded for naval displays where ships were actually floated in it. Herod even held his own Olympic-type games every 5 years when athletes from all over the world would come to compete. Herod thought the Jews would like such an impressive, modern structure and all the entertainment, but it only turned the Jews completely against him. They couldn't stop its construction and use, but they did give him trouble because of it the rest of his life.

The other athletic arena he built was a **STADIUM** for foot races, boxing and wrestling. It was located outside the city walls.

**ATHLETICS** was a very big part of everyday life in Jerusalem. The Jews avoided because of the immodesty, pride and pagan philosophy that was so wrapped up in it. Still, they were very familiar with it. Paul himself used many athletic metaphors to teach about the Christian life. He said self-discipline is necessary in each of them. "Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize" (1 Corinthians 9:25-27).

In each there are rules to be obeyed. "Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules" (2 Tim 2:5). The goal in each is to win the prize, to persevere to the end, to not quit. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim 4:7).

For that to happen anything that would in any hinder must be removed. "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us" (Heb 12:1). Paul says prayer is like wrestling as we 'struggle' to have victory in it. "Join me in my struggle by praying to God for me" (Rom 15:30). Cooperating is needed in both (Phil 1:27; 4:3).

Paul even used an analogy of the gladiatorial fights, encouraging those in Corinth to set a good example for Jesus as they were being persecuted or killed. "It seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men" (1 Corinthians 4:9).

Understanding Jerusalem's buildings and their usage is very helpful in understanding Paul's metaphorical use of athletics and the Christian life. Herod seemed to be winning his race, but finishing life without salvation makes one a loser for all eternity. Make sure it doesn't happen to you!

## Daily Life in Bible Times – II. JERUSALEM

# 25. FANCY ON THE OUTSIDE, DECAY WITHIN

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In this day and age, it isn't easy to tell a very rich person from everyone else if you see them at the mall or on the street. However, if you lived in Jerusalem in Jesus' day it wouldn't be hard to pick them out right away. The rich were very, very, very rich. Everyone else lived in a far different world than they did. The rich were clearly noticeable by their dress and living styles. Their homes were far different from everyone else's.

The **PALACES OF THE WEALTHY** were large and beautiful. Covering about 2,000 square feet, they were located in the Roman section of Jerusalem, to the west of the old city. They had their own cisterns for water, ritual baths, and frescoes painted on walls. There were spacious living areas, slave and servant quarters, storage rooms, a library, and attached apartments for married children and grandchildren. Gardens, terraces, pools and colonnades made them places of beauty. Instead of being built of mud they were made of hewn stone and cedar wood. Their gates were richly ornate. They were like small villas themselves. Herod's palace (previous article) was the grandest of all. Others were nearly as grand, though none as large.

Near the western wall of the temple was the **HASMONEAN PALACE** which was used by the Jewish royal family from the time of the Macabeans. It was a very large affair with many, many rooms and quarters for numerous families. Large meeting rooms, ritual baths, and many storage areas were neatly arranged within its walls. Jesus may have been arraigned there before Herod Antipas (Lk 23:6-12). In Jesus' day it was where the Sanhedrin met. Peter and John were brought there to face them (Acts 4:5-22), Stephen was charged with being a follower of Jesus there (Acts 6:8 - 7:53), and so was Paul (Acts 22:30 - 23:10).

The other outstanding palace in Jerusalem was the home of **CAIAPHAS AND ANNAS**. It, too, was outstanding in size and opulence. Located in the southwestern corner of the city, in the newer Roman area, it was a large, sprawling affair. Annas was for many years the high priest, but Rome removed him because of practices they didn't like. He has a series of sons then take over the high priesthood, ending up with his son-in-law, Caiaphas, who was high priest during the time of Jesus. All these were just puppets for Annas. That's where the religious rulers met when they decided to put Jesus to death (John 11:49-50). Jesus was tried here the night of His arrest by both Annas (John 18:12-23) and Caiaphas with the whole Sanhedrin (John 18:24; Mark 14:53-65). It was in their courtyard that Peter denied Jesus (Mt 26:58, 69-75; Mk 14:54, 66-72; Lk 22:54-62; Jn 18:15-27). Here plans were made to kill the apostles, too (Acts 4:6).

So, it was very easy to tell the very rich from everyone else by their life styles and homes. It was also very easy to tell the rich apart from everyone else in death. The poor were dumped into Gehenna (see article 2 in this series). The rich were placed in fancy tombs.

Large **TOMBS** dotted the landscape of Jerusalem. One of the largest was called David's tomb. He died at 70 years of age and reportedly was buried there, along with many other kinds. Another large monument is called Absalom's tomb, but Absalom isn't buried there.

Most of the rich were buried in stone boxes on western bank of the Kidron river, across from the Mount of Olives. From a distance it looks like any cemetery today, but upon closer inspection it becomes obvious that it is quite different. You see, no one is buried under ground. All bodies are in the stone boxes which set on the ground. The very rich first put their dead on a shelf in a cave to decay so only bones are left or until the shelf is needed for a newly-dead relative. Joseph of Arimathea used

his newly-carved cave tomb for Jesus' body. For those who couldn't afford the luxury of a cave, dead bodies were placed directly into the stone boxes.

The outside of these stone boxes was kept very white by frequent reapplications of freshly slaked lime whitewash. They were kept spotless and snow white, often even more so than a person's home. During religious holidays, when many people came to Jerusalem, special care was made to have them looking as clean as possible. If anyone would accidentally touch one in their travels they would be 'unclean' and therefore unable to partake of the Passover or whatever festival was being observed.

In contrast to the beautiful, spotless exterior, however, was the inside. There was only stench, putrefaction and corruption within. Fully or partially decayed loved ones were what were inside. Unless left in the sun to bleach, some flesh would still adhere to the bones. Even in open air the smell would be overpowering, but trapped inside the hot boxes for long periods of time, it was indescribable. Perhaps there is nothing more revolting to a human being than to look into an open tomb containing a partially decayed human body. The sight and stench are nauseating. Imagine sealing a dead animal's body into a garbage can for several months in hot weather, then opening the top. What would it be like? With that in mind read these words of Jesus:

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' So, you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers! (Matthew 23:27-32)

Jesus' words are clear and convicting. Outer actions, hypocrisy, mean nothing to Him. He looks at the heart, not outer appearance. The LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

Check your inside appearance. Make your prayer "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (Psalm 139:23-24)

## Daily Life in Bible Times – II. JERUSALEM

### 26. LIVING WATER: KEY TO LIFE

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Have you ever been thirsty -- I mean REALLY thirsty? In this time and this country, it doesn't happen too much. If we had been living in the early days of this country, crossing the continent in a wagon, or if lived in one of the many semi-arid regions of the world, we would be more familiar with what real thirst is like.

Palestine was an area of contrasts. The mountainous areas received about 20" of rain a year, but the wilderness areas received only 2"! The rainy season was November - March. The rest of the year was very hot and very dry. Water was essential to life, but it was often very scarce. People had to depend on God to send the rain or they would die. "But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven. It is a land the LORD your God cares for; the eyes of the LORD your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end. So, if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today-- to love the LORD your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul-- then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and oil. I will provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied" (Deuteronomy 11:11-15).

Thus, **SEEKING FOR WATER** was like seeking for God. The people could clearly see the analogy. "O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water" (Ps 63:1). "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God" (Ps 42:1).

The **SITE OF JERUSALEM** was originally chosen because it had two elements that every inhabited area needed: height (for defense) and water. It wasn't common to find them both in one location. The spring was called **GIHON** and was part way down eastern flank of the hill. A tunnel was dug into the hill until it met with a shaft dug down from the surface. This was water could flow under the wall and be brought to the surface by a bucket, assuring water even in time of siege. It was through this tunnel and well that David's men gained access to the city and were able to capture it (2 Samuel 5:6-10). For generations they had been unable to get in.

During the time of King Hezekiah, a longer tunnel was dug bringing water to the surface (2 Chronicles 32:2-4,30; 2 Kings 20:20). This was a major engineering feat and can still be seen in Jerusalem today. It was 1777 feet long and 6 feet high. The water flowed into the Pool of **SILOAM**. It was here that Jesus healed a man blind from birth (John 9). It is still used by Arab women .

The only other natural water source at Jerusalem was a well, **EN-ROGEL** (or Job's well; 2 Samuel 17:17; 1 Kings 1:9). It was located 1/2-mile South of Gihon, where the Kidron and Hinnom Valleys met. Its yield was small compared to Gihon.

Much more water was needed than these two could supply, though. Rain water had to be trapped and collected during the rainy season for use during the dry. **BETHESDA**, meaning "house of mercy," was located just north of the temple complex by the Sheep Gate. It was in a busy suburb of markets, bazaars and workshops. Here is where Jesus healed the 38-year invalid who couldn't get himself into the water (John 9). Other pools were the Kings' Pool and Hezekiah's Pool. In reality these were just large cisterns.

In fact, until Herod built the large system of high-level aqueducts to bring water into the city and store in reservoir under the temple **CISTERNS** were the main source of water for the majority of the



people. Holes were dug in the ground under the house to collect rain water from the roof. They had to be plastered with clay and were constantly cracking and losing their water. Water sitting in them became flat, stagnant and dirty very quickly. Dead insects and even animals which fell in while drinking often littered the surface. They were very poor sources of water, but when thirsty people were glad just to have the water.

People would sell water in the markets or on the streets of Jerusalem. Sometimes a philanthropic person would pay for a seller's whole water supply so he could offer it free of charge to whoever needed it. He would call, "You thirsty ones, come drink for nothing!" This is the same offer God makes to His people: "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost" (Isaiah 55:1).

Of course, everyone preferred fresh, running water to cistern water. Who would choose cistern water over fresh flowing spring water? That is what Jesus offered to the woman at the well at Samaria (John 4:10-14). Yet choosing dirty cistern water over God's life-giving water is exactly what the Jews were doing. "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water." (Jeremiah 2:13, 17:13; 14:3). If that sounds crazy think how many today choose the world's sources to find satisfaction and refreshment for their thirsty souls. They drink at the pools of sex, drugs, materialism, pride and self-centeredness. No wonder their inner needs aren't met. What's really sad, though, is when Christians leave God's fresh springs to drink from worldly cisterns!

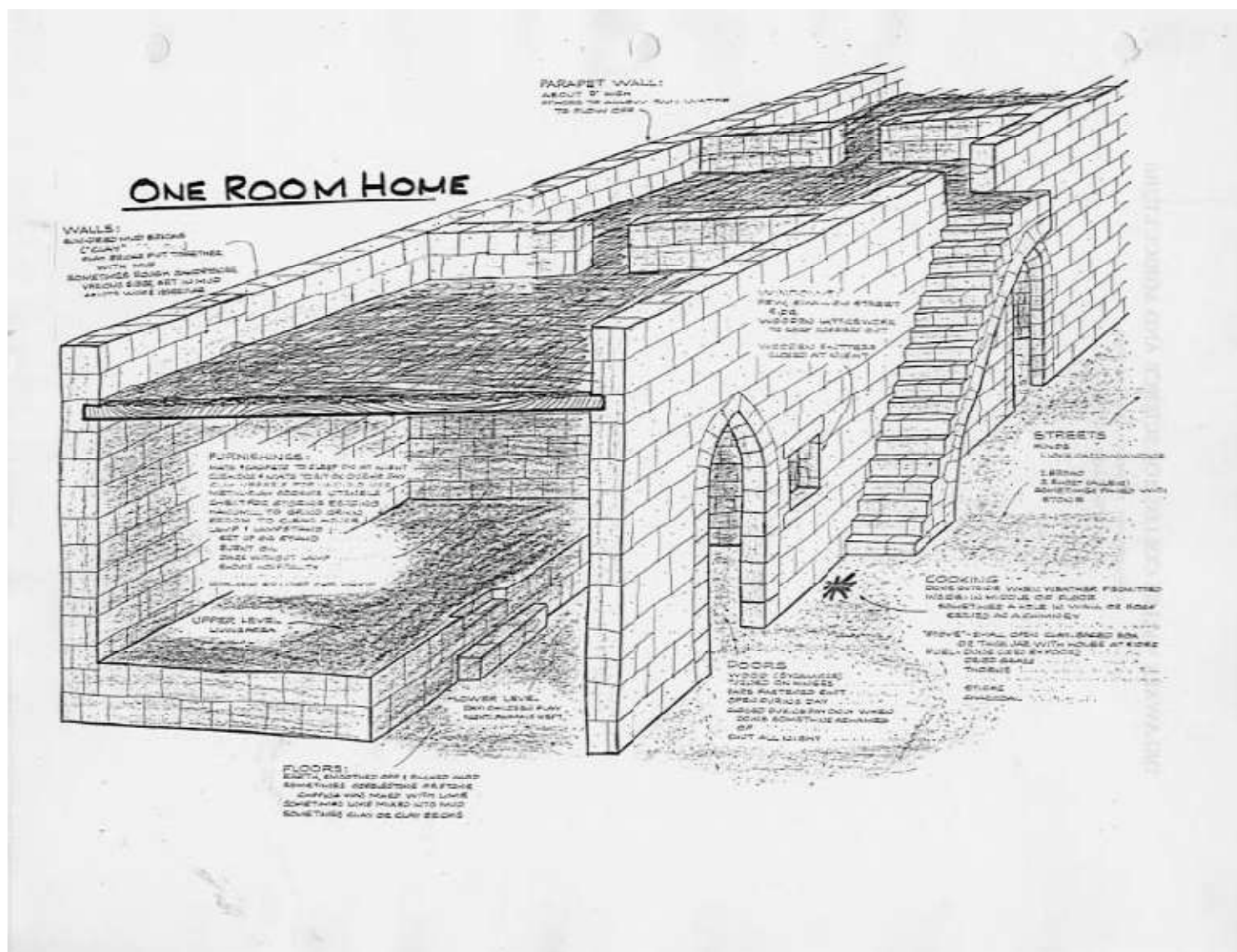
During the feast of Sukkot (also called Tabernacles or Booths) The Jews had a special water ceremony. It commemorated their wandering in the wilderness, the dry and thirsty land. It was held at the end of the dry season when everyone was awaiting God's fresh supply of water. The priests would form a procession to Siloam to get water and carry it back to the temple as an offering to God. It looked forward to the time God would send His water, ending the dry season. As this procession entered the temple Jesus said HE was the living water. "On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him'" (John 7:37-38). Are drinking from His living water? It's freely available to all, but you must drink it!

## Daily Life in Bible Times – II. JERUSALEM

### 27. ROW HOME, SWEET ROW HOME

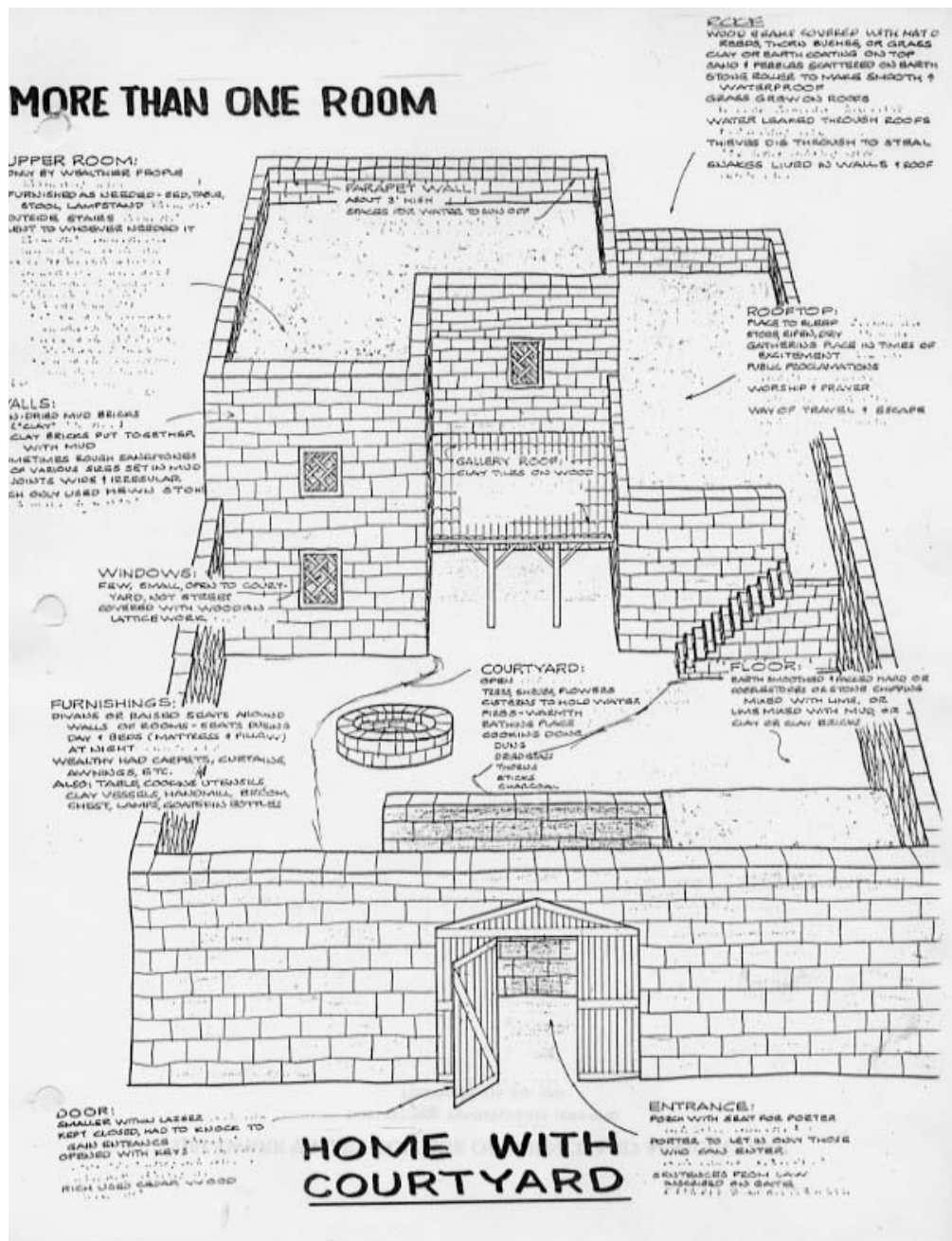
You don't really know someone until you visit with them in their home. Seeing someone in the context of their daily life makes it much easier to understand them. The same is true of Bible people. While we can't go back and visit with them in their homes, we can learn what their homes were like. This helps us understand Bible passages much better.

**ONE ROOM HOMES** were where the poor lived. Some had a room in front for their workshop (carpentry, tanning, sell merchandise, etc.). Others had a space for their animals to sleep at night while they rolled out their mats on a raised platform where animals wouldn't step on them. Inside was dark, damp, crowded and hot. Lamps were needed to see (Lk 15:8-10). They were lifted up to shed light everywhere (Mt. 5:1-16). When they smoked they were put out, unlike God who never rejects His own (Isaiah 42:3).



Cooking was done outside, and most living was done on the roof. This is where food was dried and stored. Rahab hid the spies behind piles of food (Josh 2:6). Rooftops were better than roadways for fast travel as well as spreading news (Isaiah 22:1; Mt 10:27; Lk 12:3). Peter went to a roof for quiet and privacy to pray (Acts 10:9) and Jesus took Nicodemus there for their talk (John 3:1-2). Grass would quickly grow on these roofs, for they were made of dirt. It would soon wither for it didn't have root (Psalm 129:6). When it rained the roof would leak and water would drip into the house. It produced an annoying effect, like a nagging wife (Prov 19:13; 27:15).

**HOMES WITH A COURTYARD** were much more expensive and elaborate. Cooking, living and relaxing were done outside in the courtyard. Often there would be a well or cistern. David hid from Absalom in such a cistern (2 Samuel 17:18-19). It was in a courtyard that Peter denied the Lord (Mt 26:69, 71; Jn 18:18). Bathsheba was bathing in the privacy of her courtyard when David went to the roof of his tall palace and was able to look down upon her (2 Samuel 11:2).



Sometimes there was an upper room, often with its own entrance from the back. This is the kind of place Elijah had (1 Kings 4:10), where Dorcas was raised by Peter (Acts 9:36-41), where Jesus had his last supper (Luke 22:7-13) and where the disciples were when the Holy Spirit came (Acts 1:13).

Entrance was by a front door. When open it was an invitation to enter (Rev 3:8). Usually, it was closed until the voice of the visitor was heard, then it was up to those inside to recognize and welcome the person or reject them (Rev 3:20), as is true of us when Jesus speaks to us. We, too, are to hear His voice and open to Him. He won't force the door down, it's up to us. Are you listening to His voice? Do you respond when you hear Him? Please do!

## Daily Life in Bible Times – II. JERUSALEM

# 28. A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A FAMILY - I

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If Peter, or John or even Jesus were alive today, in what ways would their daily life be different than what it was in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago? I guess we could better ask in what ways wouldn't it be different? Would they have liked living today instead of then? The differences are great. In order to understand a person, you need to understand their culture. Missionaries must know and become part of the culture in which they live in order to relate to understand the people. We must understand the culture the New Testament was written in so we can better interpret and apply it to use today. If we would have been alive when Jesus spoke and Paul wrote their words would take on new meaning. We can gain some of that by going back and better understanding their times and culture. Since all they said and did related to daily life, it's really important to understand just what daily life was like in Palestine 2,000 years ago.

In Jesus' day there were about **4 million Jews** in the world (7% of the population of the Roman Empire). The largest concentrations were in Alexandria, Egypt and in Syria. There were only about 700,000 Jews in Palestine. In fact, in Galilee and Decapolis there were more Gentiles than Jews. Thus, Palestine was heavily influenced by all the Romans and other Gentiles who lived there. The Jews lived in their own areas and communities, set apart from the Gentile communities all around them. The only contact was by travel. Today TV, radio, newspapers, movies, etc., cover miles instantly. That was not the case then. The only contact was by travel from one community to another.

**Transportation** was poorly developed in Palestine. Most was done by foot or donkey. Roads were unpaved but were fairly safe except for robbers in the hills (parable of the Good Samaritan). Horses were used mainly for warfare. Ox-carts were used to travel on short trips with goods, but were too bumpy to go far. Only the very rich had chariots, and camels were used by merchants for long trips across deserts. They were the tractor trailers of their day. Everyone, rich or poor, was able to walk. Walking took much time. For example, a trip from Capernaum to Jerusalem was 85 miles and took several days. Walking everywhere contributed to a much slower life style than we have today. Not only was walking healthy, but it was conducive to talking to fellow travelers and enjoying nature.

How a person's day developed was determined largely by their **social class**. Rich merchants and bankers, chief priests and leading rabbis composed the upper class. They lived a life of ease and luxury. The opposite end of the spectrum was composed of the slaves, who outnumbered freemen in the Roman Empire. They were prisoners of war, debtors and criminals. Many slaves were more educated than their masters and often were teachers for their master's children. Slaves had no freedom, rights or privileges. Theirs was a life of bondage and service. Most were treated kindly, but their day consisted of doing what their masters wanted. In between the upper class and slaves was the working class: farmers, small businessmen and craftsmen. These included shoemakers, tailors, carpenters, silver smiths, iron or brass craftsmen, wine makers, writers, butchers, wool-combers, flax-spinners, candle-makers, night watchmen, shepherds, dyers, and tanners. Life was hard but good for these people. Life wasn't fancy or easy, but it was filled with the basics: good food, nice family life and religious activities.

The **personality** of the people themselves is important to understand, too. They were witty, clever, good-humored, excitable, impulsive, quick and sharp-witted. They were creative and imaginative as well as fond of parables and good-natured arguing. There was a real enthusiasm for learning. Even though 'education' then wasn't as developed as today, the people were far from dumb.

They were quite intelligent, speaking several languages fluently and knowing large portions (even whole books) of the Bible by heart. Not only were they intellectually sharp, they were also emotionally sensitive to the feelings of others and very warm-natured. They were also loyal Jews, very patriotic and zealous for their nation. They were good, honest, hard-working, down-to-earth people. The religious leaders were self-centered and prideful, but they were only a small minority.

The focus of daily life was on the **family**. A large family of many children was considered a great blessing from God. Children were taught to obey their parents and were disciplined for lack of loving consideration of others. They weren't abused or beaten, though. From birth to 3 years of age the mother was the main teacher. The child learned Jewish history, traditions and customs. They were taught to honor and obey parents and all elders. They memorized Scripture, benedictions and prayers. From 3 to 5 the Father became the main teacher as formal instruction began. These included history, Bible, math and career training. At 5 years of age, they started to learn to read the Hebrew Bible and at 6 supplemented their education by taking some classes at the local synagogue. These were for moral as well as intellectual training. They also began learning their life's trade at this time: girls at home and boys learning their father's trade (or that of an uncle or older brother). By 10 girls formal education diminished as she was involved more and more in the work of running the home and raising younger children. Boys would begin studying the Mishnah and preparing for their manhood ceremony at age 13. At 15 boys would begin reading the Talmud and at about 18 they would marry.

Boys would **marry** at 18 or soon after, girls often before 18. Marriage was a very serious responsibility. Parents made the arrangements, but usually a man picked his own wife and she had to give her own consent. Of course, a Jew couldn't marry outside the Jewish race. First came the promise (like our engagement today). Then legal documents were signed -- the betrothal. The couple didn't begin living together for almost a year, until the actual marriage ceremony itself when the groom would go get the bride and bring her back to the home he had been building for her. Marriage was sacred and special, and most marriages were good, with deep love developing and growing as the years went on. Polygamy was rare. Divorce wasn't too easy or too common but was allowed because of the people's sin.

Family life, food, jobs -- everything in life seemed different compared to now. One thing was the same, though -- everyone still died. Basic needs for love and security were still there, and only Jesus could meet them then or now. (Continued in next article.)

## Daily Life in Bible Times – II. JERUSALEM

# 29. A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A FAMILY - II

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(Continued from previous article)

The **husband** was the head of the family. He lived a long, active life. The 60's were seen as the commencement of aging, 70's gray age, 80's advanced age, 90's bowed down, and 100 as good as dead! The life span then wasn't much different than today! The man, as head of the family, was responsible for family management, religious training, discipline and leadership. He was responsible to provide for and protect his wife and family in all their needs. His work was often in a room in the front of the house and even those who went away from the home for work were home for meals, weekends and evenings. Work time was flexible and flowed around family trips, activities and other needs. The family wasn't fragmented as it is today.

The **wife** was under her husband and very important. She had much influence over her children, took part in family affairs, and was greatly respected and honored by Jews. Among the Gentiles a woman was often valued on the same level as a good head of cattle. Jewish women were very modest and withdrawn from men's affairs. Meekness, modesty and shamefacedness are traits treasured by women. Bad qualities, grounds for divorce, included gossip, immodesty, ill-treatment of in-laws, yelling at husband, bad reputation and disobedience.

Daily life for the Jews everywhere, and especially those in Palestine, was influenced in every way by their religion. It wasn't just a creed but was applied to every relationship and duty and dominated every phase of life. For some it was mere ritual, just outer actions, but for others there was a deep inner faith in God. Their daily **devotional life** consisted of prayer when awakening and before going to sleep as well as any time during the day. There were daily public prayer times at the temple and synagogues. Prayer before and after each meal was standard policy. Scriptures were constantly studied and memorized. The Sabbath was strictly observed as unto God. It was a time of family worship, rest and praise to God.

As in any culture, much of life focused around **meal time**. Food preparation, consummation, and cleanup took much time and shaped much of the daily life, especially of women. A very light breakfast was eaten early, usually just a simple snack. The midday meal was a big meal, but the principal meal was eaten at 6 or 7 in the evening. Hands were washed before and after each meal, as food was eaten out of a common dish with the fingers. Tables and chairs weren't used, instead mats were used for reclining around a very low table.

Kosher laws clearly dictated which foods could and couldn't be eaten. Unclean foods were forbidden (Leviticus 11:4-8; Dt 14:7-8). Any quadruped which did not chew the cud and have cloven hooves was considered unclean. Also forbidden would be fish without scales and fins (eels, shellfish - Leviticus 11:9-12), birds of prey which eat worms and carrion (Leviticus 11:13), snakes (Leviticus 11:20-24, 42) and insects which walk as well as fly (Leviticus 11:20-24, 42). In addition, blood and bloody meat was forbidden (Leviticus 3:17; 7:26; 17:10-14; Deuteronomy 12:16,23). Anything consecrated to idols couldn't be eaten (Ex 34:15). The fatty portions of sacrifices had to be burned on the altar (Leviticus 13:17; 7:23-25). Strong alcoholic drink and getting drunk were strictly forbidden, too (Numbers 6:3; Prov 20:1).

Other food items were forbidden for sanitary reasons. These included cattle that fell down dead or were torn by wild animals (Ex 22:3; Leviticus 11:39; Deuteronomy 14:21), water touched by unclean insects (Leviticus 11:33-34), food or liquids which were in the tent of a dying person and weren't covered (Numbers 19:14-15) and a goat cooked in its mother's milk (Ex 23:19; 34:26; Dt 14:21 - done by

Canaanites in idol worship). As you can see, these made very good sense according to modern medical knowledge. God was protecting His people from diseases and sickness, and as a result the Jews were healthier than their neighbors. God knows what He is doing!

What foods were then allowed? More variety than we would think. Grains provided their chief nourishment. They were roasted in fire, eaten raw or baked into bread. Vegetables such as pulse, lentils, beans, onions, garlic, cucumbers and green herbs were used. Usually, they were cooked in pots and seasoned with oil. Fruits like oranges, apricots, plums, figs, pomegranates, lemons, grapes, raisins and dates were commonly eaten.

Favorite meats included oxen, sheep and goats. Next best were calves, lambs and kids. Pigeons and turtle doves were also common. The rich also ate stag, antelope, buck and winged game. Meat was usually boiled and served with broth. Fish was also abundant, especially in Galilee, and many Jews there preferred it to red meat.

Milk from cows, sheep or goats, either sweet or sour, thick or curdled was used. These were also made into cheese or butter. Milk was considered a food item, not a drink. Water was used for drinking. Often it would be mixed with vinegar and oil or sour wine to make it sour and better quench the thirst. Weak wine, watered down to a low alcoholic content, was also used, especially where sanitary water was unavailable.

Honey was used as a sweetener. Locusts were roasted after the wings, feet and intestines were removed, or they were boiled in water and buttered. They were also salted and preserved in bottles. Thus, there was a good variety of food, despite the lack of preservatives or refrigeration. People ate for nourishment and health, not mainly for taste as is often the case today.

**Funerals** were important, for the Jews (all except the liberal Sadducees) believed in life after death. Arms, legs and the whole body was washed and wrapped in linen cloth. Sometimes sweet-smelling spices were put in the cloth. They did not embalm or cremate. Funerals were held the day of death because of the stink coming from decay. They were carried to a burial place on an exposed bier. Women proceeded first, for they are credited with bringing death into the world through Eve. Hired mourners are also an important part of a funeral procession. Friends and others also walk to the burial spot where a short ceremony takes place. Death then, like now, is devastating

Do you think Jesus would rather dress and eat like He did then or like we do now? What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of each? What can we do to minimize the disadvantages today? What can we do to have some of the advantages they had? Thinking about these things can bring some rewarding and fruitful insights. (Continued next article)



## Daily Life in Bible Times – II. JERUSALEM

### 30. A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A FAMILY - III

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(Continued from previous article)

**Dress** was simple, without the variety of clothing available today. Neither were their changing fads. A few basic articles of clothing could and would last for many years. The items of clothing for men, women and children consisted of a turban (thick material wound around the head to protect it from the sun and dirt), tunic (basic sleeveless garment of leather, haircloth, wool, linen or cotton worn next to the skin), mantle (overcoat or cloak to shelter from rain or as a blanket at night), sash (long, thin piece of material tied around the waist to hold the tunic in place, often also used to carry money or other belongings), and sandals (worn outside, not in house). While similar, it was easy to tell men from women. Women's dress was longer, material finer, and a long veil covered their hair in back while another veil covered their face in front). Women of all ranks in society made clothing for themselves and their families (I Samuel 2:9; Prov 31:22; Acts 9:39).

When entering a home sandals as well as mantles would be taken off. Feet were covered by clothing when sitting on the floor as an act of reverence. People wore their tunics to sleep in and used their mantle for a blanket. To be 'naked' meant to have only a tunic on (Jn 21:7). Jesus' seamless tunic, which the soldiers gambled for, was very valuable since it was woven in one piece (Jn 19:23). "To be girded up" means to tuck the mantle in the sash so it wouldn't hinder action and movement (Lk 12:35; Eph 6:14). Going the second mile means giving someone your mantle when they sued for your tunic (Mt 5:40). Jewish law said no one could sue for the mantle because it was too important, but you could voluntarily give it away. Ruth used her mantle to carry 6 measures of barley (Ruth 3:15; Lk 6:38).

While a woman's long hair was often down but covered by a veil in back, men wore their hair short and trimmed their beards and mustaches. Items which were condemned included wearing oil or perfume in the hair, dying hair, wigs, artificially curling hair, fancy dress or showy jewelry, cosmetics (lipstick, eye shadow or eye brow paint), etc. The Bible gives us guidelines today about how to dress: I Tim 2:9-10; I Pt 3:3-4; Isaiah 3:16-24; Deuteronomy 22:5; and I Corinthians 6:9-10.

The **yearly calendar** for the Jews explains the cycle of the year and what happened when. This greatly influenced their daily lives, as our daily life is influenced by seasons & holidays.



## Daily Life in Bible Times – II. JERUSALEM

### 31. JUDAISM: THE INSIDE STORY

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You couldn't spit on the ground on this day, for that would disturb the dust and be 'plowing'. You couldn't look in a mirror on this day for you might see a gray hair and be tempted to pull it out and that was work. If a hen laid an egg on this day you couldn't eat it, unless you killed the hen. If your house caught fire on this day, you couldn't carry anything out for that would be work. You could, however, put on several garments at once and wear them out, then take them off and go in for more. On this day you couldn't boil an egg, turn a lamp on or off, move furniture (except ladder, then just 4 steps), wear ornaments, take sandals off, fix a water leak, stop bleeding or wear false teeth -- that was carrying a load! You couldn't tie a knot unless you could untie it with one hand. You couldn't write in permanent ink, but temporary writing was allowed. On and on the list goes, hundreds and thousands of rules were given and enforced, all about how to observe the Sabbath. Who was behind this? What brought this all about? To understand Judaism in the time of Jesus let's go back to the beginning.

God created the nation of Israel from Abraham. As they grew they developed into twelve tribes. Eleven of these were Jacob's sons, two came from the Joseph. That makes 13. One of the 11, however, was set aside as priests and temple workers for God. The tribe of **LEVI** replaced the firstborn male, which belonged to God since the night of the Passover in Egypt. These Levites took care of the tabernacle and then temple. They did the work involved, led the singing, played the instruments, policed the property and did whatever was necessary.

The **PRIESTS** were part of the tribe of Levi. They were descendants of Aaron. There were so many priests that they took turns going to Jerusalem to minister: two weeks a year (it was during his turn there that Zacharias was told his wife would give birth to John). The rest of the time they taught and ministered in their local home towns.

Over each of these 24 groups of priests was a **CHIEF PRIEST**. They had great influence, but were under the authority of the **HIGH PRIEST** who was the firstborn son of the firstborn son of the firstborn son, all the way back to Aaron. He was the king (in effect, not by birth), president and head of Parliament in his day. It was a lifetime position with great power, prestige and wealth. He was to be the main man to represent God to man and man to God, a picture of Jesus Himself, but in Jesus' day the office had degenerated into a political position.

The **SCRIBES** were highly trained, intellectual, committed men from any tribe who spent their lifetime studying the Scriptures and copying them by hand. They were students, interpreters and teachers of the law, highly respected by the people. They were called "scribe," "lawyer," "teacher," or "rabbi." They memorized and could recite by memory any law in the Old Testament, Targum, Talmud or oral law. They also knew large portions of the Old Testament by heart. Ezra and others are reputed to have the whole Old Testament committed to memory. Unfortunately, they rejected Christ and focused on external religious standards. Christ condemned their focus (Mt 16:21; 21:15; 23:2; 26:3; Mk 12:28-40). The Old Testament was studied in the original Hebrew, in an Aramaic paraphrase (Targum) and in Greek, the common language of the day (Septuagint). The Talmud consisted of the Mishna, which were oral laws which had been written down, and the Gemara, which were commentaries on the Mishna laws.

Thus, the priests and scribes had tremendous influence on the Jews of Jesus' day. The ruling body was called the **SANHEDRIN** which means "council." They had supreme civil and religious power over Jews no matter where they lived. It consisted of the High priest as president, the 24 Chief Priests,

22 Scribes to interpret the law, and 24 elders (rich, influential men who represented the laity). Jesus (Mt 26:57-68), Peter, John and Stephen were all brought before this powerful body (Acts 4:1-7; 6:12 - 7:1).

Now, to further complicate the matter, these men and others of influence in Israel belonged to various sects, 'political parties' they could be called. The largest and most influential group was the **PHARISEES**. They were the hypocritical legalists and were highly respected by the people who were impressed with their outer show of piety. They were behind all the Sabbath rules. They clashed constantly with Jesus (Mt 12:1-2; 23:1-33; Lk 6:6-7; 11:37-54). They looked for a coming Messiah who would overthrow Rome and restore their power, for they traced their roots back to the Maccabees. They accepted the inspiration of the Scriptures, but put the oral law above the written Word. They felt there was a future life and that salvation came from being born a Jew and keeping the law.

Their arch rivals were the **SADDUCEES**, the worldly-minded liberals. They were a smaller group and not as influential over the common people;. Wealthy and influential Jews sided with this group. They lived for the here and now and didn't care about a Messiah, future life or salvation. They rejected the inspiration of the Scriptures. Jesus condemned their beliefs, too (Mt 16:1-12; 22:23-33). That the Pharisees and Sadducees would work together in cooperation to remove Jesus shows how strong their jealousy of Him was.

Other less numerous groups were common, too. The **ZEALOTS** wanted to drive Rome out by force. They were underground terrorists. Barabbas, the 2 men crucified with Jesus and Simon the Zealot, the disciple of Jesus, were from this group (Mt 10:4). **HERODIANS**, were just the opposite. They wanted to further the power of Herod's family. They were very bitter enemies of the Pharisees and regarded Christ as a revolutionary because they didn't want any challenge to the political system as it was (Mk 3:6; 8:15; 12:13-17).

Another group, the **ESSENES**, formed a monastic community at the Dead Sea. They were very strict in discipline and lived a simple life. The four thousand or so members were preparing for the coming of the Messiah. One of their most strict communities was **QUMRAN**, where the Dead Sea Scrolls originated.

Just this short overview shows the conflicting ideas when and where Jesus lived. It shows why the Jews needed Him at that time, but also shows why they rejected Him. Today, too, He is needed yet often rejected. Make sure you aren't a hypocritical legalist or a worldly-minded liberal. Open your heart to the King of the Universe who came as the Jew's Messiah!

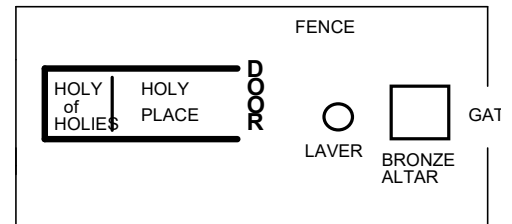
## Daily Life in Bible Times – II. JERUSALEM

### 32. THE TEMPLE: WHERE ALL ROADS LEAD

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World traveler and renowned historian, who lived during the time of the temple Herod rebuilt, said that temple was the greatest building in the ancient world, greater than the Acropolis (Athens) or the Forum (Rome). Truly, the temple in Jesus' day was a majestic building. It was also a very important building. It was the central place for all Jews: geographically, emotionally, spiritually and politically. A visit to it was the highpoint of any Jew's life.

God gave the pattern of the original **TABERNACLE** to Moses on Mt. Sinai, and for hundreds of years that was where God met with man (see series of articles, "The Tabernacle," by Jerry Schroyer). David planned for a permanent temple in Jerusalem, which Solomon built. However, it was destroyed by the Babylonians when the Jews went into captivity. Ezra started rebuilding it, but Herod is the one who made it into the magnificent building it was in Jesus' day.



**HEROD'S TEMPLE** was twice as large as the one Ezra started and Zerubbabel completed, 26 acres. He even cut the top off the hill north of the old City of David and built up retaining walls to enlarge the platform area. In the chambers under the platform supplies were kept. Later the Crusaders kept their horses here. One of the large underground foundational retaining walls, by the way, is the current "Wailing Wall," the only part of Herod's temple still standing. The Romans destroyed everything above ground in 70 AD. While Herod had many large building projects, the temple was his greatest. He wanted to win the approval of his Jewish subjects and spent great amounts of money on it. The work was done by 18,000 priests (for they were the only ones who could enter the temple). He started this project in 20 BC and didn't complete it until 64 AD, just a few years before it was destroyed. This became an important key in dating Jesus' ministry (John 2:20).

The Temple building itself was beautiful! It was made of white marble with parts covered with gold. Thus, the rays of the rising eastern sun would be reflected everywhere by it. It was high and could be seen from a great distance, and was very impressive (Mark 13:2-3). The outer walls were over 100' high, made of blocks weighing 50 to 100 tons each. Stones in the Wailing Wall, the remaining foundation, are 3 to 4 feet high (the largest is 6 feet high) and 3 to 10 feet long (the largest being 40 feet long). They fit so exactly without mortar or cement that paper can't be inserted between the blocks. No wonder the disciples were startled when Jesus said that not one of these stones would be left upon another (Mark 13:1-2).

The highest part of the temple, the **PINNACLE**, was 450 feet above the Kidron. This is where Satan tempted Jesus to cast Himself down (Mt 4:5) so all would see angels protect Him, and thus make Him king without having to go to the cross. James, Jesus' brother, was killed by being thrown off here in 62 AD (Acts 12:2). There were 8 **GATES** into the temple: 2 on the south (the Hulda gates), 4 on the west, the Sheep Gate on the north and the Susa (Golden) on the east.

Upon entering one of these gates, one was immediately in the **OUTER (GENTILE) COURT**. Here various people from all countries gathered to meet, buy and trade, worship and learn. It became such a highway and place of business that Jesus, in anger, tried to turn it back to its rightful use as a place of worship (Mark 11:15-16).

The southern portion of this great court was called the **ROYAL PORCH**. One hundred and sixty-two columns 100' high held up a gallery and above that a roof. An isle went down the middle 45' wide. Each pillar was so large it took 3 men to encircle it. Here the temple markets were set up and the temple tax paid. Here is where Joseph bought their pigeons for Jesus' presentation.

On the eastern side, toward the Kidron Valley, was **SOLOMON'S PORCH**. In the winter it was a shelter from the cold and would catch the warming rays of the sun (John 10:22). Here rabbis (teachers) went to teach their followers. Galamiel taught Paul here. Jesus was taught here by the leaders when he was 12, then later taught His own followers here (John 10:23). Peter and the other apostles went here to preach and teach as well (Acts 3:11; 5:12). Perhaps this was where Peter's message on the Day of Pentecost was given.

As one moved toward the middle of this great court and into the temple itself, one would first have to pass by a wall called the **SOREG**. This was to warn all Gentiles to enter no further. In fact, a stone with this inscription has been found: "No alien may enter within the barrier and wall around the temple. Whoever is caught violating this is alone responsible for the death penalty which follows." The Jews were quite serious about God forbidding any but His people entrance into his presence. Paul was once falsely accused of bringing a Gentile past this wall, and was only kept from death by the intervention of the Roman troops stationed there (Acts 21:27-36). His trial was moved to Caesarea, then to Rome itself when Paul appealed to Caesar. It was on that trip that Paul was shipwrecked. That whole event, starting with his arrest for seemingly violating the Soreg, moved Paul from the spotlight of the early church and eventually led to his death.

Of even greater significance, though, is Paul's statement that the Soreg in heaven was broken down by Jesus on the cross. *"For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility"* (Ephesians 2:14-16). Because of Jesus, we Gentiles now have what we before were denied: direct access to God's very presence!

Even better, however, is the truth that we don't have to go to a temple in Jerusalem to be in God's presence. God now sets up His temple in our hearts. WE are the temple of God (I Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:12-20; 2 Corinthians 6:16). Allowing Gentiles entrance into His presence was great, making His home on earth in our hearts is more astounding than words can describe. He is worthy of all our praise and service for this great act of love of His! No sacrifice is too great for One who would do something so wonderful for us!

## Daily Life in Bible Times – II. JERUSALEM

### 33. THUS FAR & NO FURTHER: COURTS

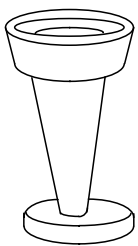
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Can you imagine someone watching over your shoulder as you put your offering in the plate on Sunday, recording what everyone gave? We would be shocked by the behavior of anyone doing such a thing, but Jesus evidently made a habit of doing that in the temple.

Upon entering the temple, crossing through the outer court (court of the Gentiles), one passed the Soreg, the wall keeping Gentiles out. Then one entered the **COURT OF THE WOMEN**. It was called this because it was as far as women could go, since they were considered ritually impure because of Eve's part in bringing sin into the world. Thus, they couldn't go into the court of the men or the priests.

In each corner of the Court of the Women were unroofed rooms for storage of sacrificial wine and oil, materials for the cleansing ceremonies for lepers, a place for those coming to take a Nazarite vow, etc. It was here that Anna and Simeon met Jesus when He was dedicated. It was here the woman caught in adultery was drug before Jesus. It was here Jesus gave His 'light of the world' discourse.

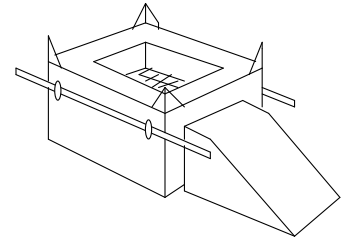
Around the court were set 13 chests for the collection of offerings to God and the temple. They were made of brass, shaped as inverted trumpets. When metal coin was dropped into them a large sound was made, and quite a show was given when rich men gave their offerings. A servant would sound a trumpet and other servants would slowly pour in bag after bag of pennies, making as loud and long a noise as possible. The rich man would stand in the front to receive the acclaim of everyone watching him give such a large gift. Evidently this didn't impress Jesus, though, as He watched one day. What did was a widow who gave the bare minimum required by law (Luke 21:1-7; Mk 12:41-44) which, Jesus knew, was all the money she had. Jesus really wasn't looking at the amount anyone gave, He was looking at their motive as they gave it. What does He think as He looks at your hearts as you give your offerings to Him?



To the west of the Court of the Women was a beautiful gate, called the Nicator Gate. Only men could go through it and enter the outer edges of the next court. This area was called the **COURT OF THE MEN**. Men could enter here to offer sacrifices, for they needed to place their hands on the animal (a picture of the animal becoming guilty of their sin) before killing it. The central part of this court was called the **COURT OF THE PRIESTS**. In it were the laver and the altar of sacrifice. The laver was for continual cleansing (after salvation -- I John 1:9).

Around the outer wall were rooms where the Sanhedrin and its various committees met. It was here that the man Jesus healed at Siloam was brought to be interrogated, that Judas made his bargain with the religious rulers (Mt 26:14-16), that Jesus was condemned (Lk 22:66-71; Mt 27:1), that Judas tried to return the money (Mt 27:3-10), and that the guards reported Jesus' resurrection (Mt 28:11-15).

The **ALTAR** itself was a picture of salvation, and dominated the court. Actually, the court was more a butcher shop than anything else. Even before entering one could hear the cries of the animals being killed and smell the burning skin, hair and fat of the sacrifices. As one got closer one could see thousands of animals being slaughtered and burnt. You could feel the blood under your feet on the stones as well as feeling the soot in your throat. Of course, there was much music and singing of psalms and praise songs, but the central object was blood -- innocent blood being shed because of sin!



All day long **SACRIFICING** went on. It started at first light, when a priest on the pinnacle would blow a sofar (ram's horn for a trumpet) signaling the start of the day. The priests inside would open the gates allowing people who had already gathered outside to enter. Some gates were so large and heavy they took 20 priests to push them open.

Immediately sacrifices would begin. First incense would be burnt on the altar in the Holy Place starting the rising of sweet-smelling prayers and praise to God. This was also toward the close of the day, when Zechariah heard from Gabriel about his son John.

With this completed, burnt offerings for the sin of the nation as a whole and the emperor would be given. These were paid for out of the temple treasury. Private individuals and groups could then make their own offerings. These consisted of trespass offerings for sins committed in ignorance as well as thank offerings which were given in praise and thanksgiving for God's goodness. Depending on the giver's financial status, animals (large or small), grain or oil were given. Tickets for animals were purchased in the outer court, and then the animal was brought to the sacrificer by the altar. The animal was thrown to the pavement with his body aligned north and south so when his head was twisted back his last sight would be the temple. This was a picture of his death for sin being because of God's holiness in not allowing sin in His presence. As his throat was slit a gold or silver bowl would be used to catch the blood. It was poured out at the base of the altar, where an underground channel would carry it into the Kidron River below. Then the dead animal was butchered and its parts distributed: some burnt, others kept by the offeror or given to the priests for their use.

All throughout this time trumpets, cymbals and other instruments would be playing, choirs of Levites would sing the psalms, and people would be chanting and praising God. This is certainly different that when we would be comfortable with when we walk into church!

It's obvious, though, that the blood of innocent sacrifices is the focal point of it all. To them it was a picture that sin had to be paid for by innocent blood. To us it is a reminder of the One who paid that price, Jesus Himself who died on the cross for our sins. The Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world is the final sacrifice for all sin, the **ONLY** sacrifice for sin. When the Jews rejected that sacrifice and kept turning to animal blood, God allowed the Romans to destroy Jerusalem and its records, so the sacrifices would have to stop. Even today they cannot be resumed because the Dome of the Rock, the second most sacred place to Islam, is now on that spot, which is the only place sacrifice can be offered to God. Praise God that the final sacrifice has been made, and that our sins are now eternally covered by the blood of the Lamb!

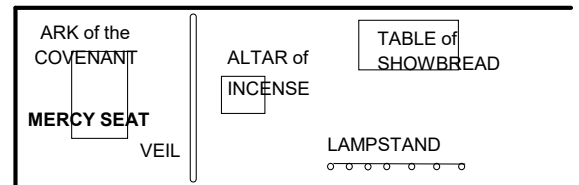


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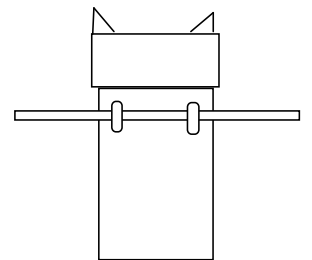
### 34. THE BUILDING GOD CALLED ‘HOME’

What a sight! Marble and gold reflecting the morning sun. Power and glory evident everywhere. Tremendous external glory only surpassed by the internal glory of God’s very presence. This place is the temple, patterned after the tabernacle. Solomon built the first permanent one (planned by his father David). The Babylonians destroyed it and Zerubbabel rebuilt it. Herod remodeled it into one of the most splendid buildings of its day.

Situated in the midst of the various courts, the temple building itself housed the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Around the outside were the priest’s chambers where they stored things and perhaps even lived.



**THE HOLY PLACE** When one entered the Holy Place immediately one was taken with all the beauty. Only priests could enter, and only as it was their turn to serve. On the right was the table of showbread, on the left the lampstand, and straight ahead the altar of incense. Each Of these was very important in its function and significance. The lampstand provided light and was a picture of Jesus as the light of the world. The table of showbread speaks of Jesus as the bread of life, the One who nourishes us. The altar of incense is a picture of prayers ascending as a sweet smell to God. (For detailed information on this see “The Tabernacle” by Jerry Schroyer).



ALTAR OF INCENSE

Having come by the only door (Jesus is the only way), past the altar where innocent blood is shed (salvation provided by Jesus) and the laver where daily cleansing takes place (confession of sin through Jesus), when a priest (a picture of all believers, for we are all priests before God, 1 Peter 2:5-9; Rev 1:6) entered the Holy Place all changed. The sights, sounds and smells of the courtyard were replaced by quietness and a sweet smell. It was a picture of coming into God’s present to worship. Of all in the camp, only some came by the blood for salvation. Of those, only a small part entered into God’s presence to minister in his light, enjoy a sweet time of prayer and be nourished on the Bread of Life. What could be better than to withdraw from the business outside and enter into the presence of the Lord? That’s what we need today, too. It’s available in the same way for us. However, we must come.

FURNITURE	SYMBOL	TYPE
BRONZE ALTAR	Atonement by Sacrifice	Atonement of Christ
BRONZE LAVER	Spiritual renewal	Regeneration & renewal by the Holy Spirit
TABLE OF SHOWBREAD	Spiritual sustenance	Christ the Bread of Life
LAMPSTAND	Spiritual illumination	Christ the light of the world, esp. His people
ALTAR OF INCENSE	Acceptable supplication	Prayer in the name of Jesus
THE ARK	Access through covenant	Christ as our covenant access
MERCY SEAT	Acceptance at the throne	Acceptance with God in Christ

**THE HOLY OF HOLIES** Separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was a thick, strong curtain. The Holy of Holies was a perfect cube, 30 foot on each side. The Holy Place was two cubes: 30' by 30' by 60'.

The Ark of the Covenant (which held a pot of manna, Aaron's rod that budded and the tablet of the 10 commandments) was in the middle of the cube. The lid of the Ark was called the Mercy Seat. It was a solid gold plate with two angels looking down at the ark on top. One day a year the High Priest would come in with blood on Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) and offer it as a sacrifice to God for the sins of the year. He would wear a rope around his ankle in case God rejected the offering and he died there. His body could be pulled out to keep from decaying and desecrating the place. At no other time and in no other way could anyone enter God's presence.

### **HEAVEN   TEMPLE**

God's dwelling place	God's dwelling place
God surrounded by cherubim	God surrounded by cherubim
God surrounded by His heavenly hosts	God surrounded by His earthly hosts
God seated on a throne	Ark is God's throne
Altar representing the blood of the saints	Blood sprinkled on the altar
Incense as the prayers of the saints	Altar of incense where the priest met with God
Sea of crystal	Sea of bronze

When Jesus died that very veil was torn in two, from top to bottom, showing God was opening the way into His presence. In fact, Hebrews 10:20 says the veil was a picture of Jesus' body broken on the cross for us. Because of what He did on the cross we can come into God's presence any time we want. When we pray "In Jesus' name" we are recognizing that it is Jesus' blood that allows us access into God's presence any time. What a privilege!

An even greater privilege than being able to enter into where God's presence dwells is having God's presence dwell in us (I Corinthians 3:16). While there is no temple in Jerusalem now (the Dome of the Rock, sacred to Islam, now stands on the spot), that doesn't mean God isn't dwelling on this earth. He makes His abode in the hearts of His people. His throne is in our hearts. We who have accepted Jesus as Savior are now His dwelling place on earth! Does He REIGN in your heart? Do you allow Him His rightful place of authority in your life? What a privilege that He would be willing to indwell and use us. What a difference that makes in every moment of life!

## Daily Life in Bible Times – II. JERUSALEM

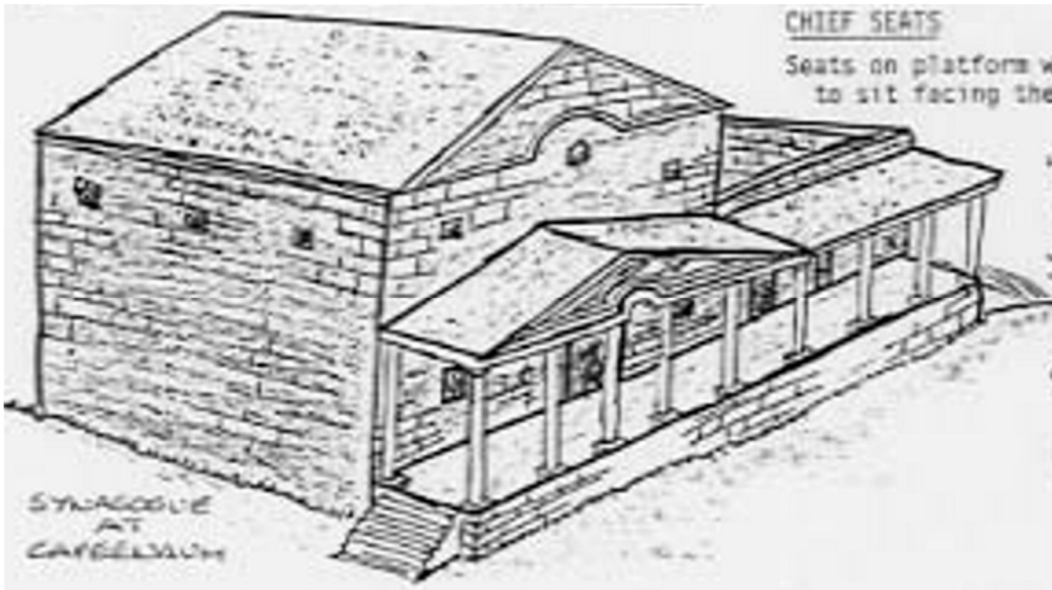
### 35. TOUR OF A SYNAGOGUE

“Lord,” “Savior,” “Alpha and Omega,” “Rock,” the names we have for Jesus goes on and on. Those who lived when He lived, though, only had two. His name, of course, was “Jesus.” The title that was given Him by people who knew Him was “Rabbi.” While we know this means “teacher,” just what were they saying when they called Him “Rabbi.” Just what was a rabbi and what did he do? To understand this, we must know about synagogues in Jesus’ day.

**ORIGIN OF SYNAGOGUES** The synagogue system was started in Babylon by Ezra, when the Jews were there in captivity. Without the temple, there was no central place to gather, nothing to hold the fabric of the nation together. The synagogue has been that for Jews for almost 3,000 years. For the last 2,000 years, without a temple, the synagogue has been to Jews what the church is to Christians. Synagogues were built everywhere. Jerusalem itself had about 450 during the time of Jesus. People gathered much as today: by ethnic background, cultural status, neighborhood proximity and even occupation.

**LOCATION OF SYNAGOGUES** Synagogues were always built near water for cleansings, washings and other rituals. If they weren’t able to afford a building, meetings were held outside near running water (Acts 16:13-14). Synagogues were built facing Jerusalem if at all possible. Often they were on a high point of the town so they could get a better view toward Jerusalem.

**CONSTRUCTION OF SYNAGOGUES** They were built out of stone, decorated with motifs of garlands, animals, stars or vines. Some were plain, others quite fancy. Archaeologists can tell them from other buildings because of the Jewish symbols or inscriptions carved on them, because of the small aspect



the east end hold the Torah, and because the benches face this aspect. There are numerous windows so their encounter with God would be more direct (in a symbolic way).

#### **INSIDE SYNAGOGUES**

If the people were rich it would be very ornately furnished, if not it would be plain. Colonnades would help support the roof. Usually there was a Biblical quotation on the wall such as “You shall

love your neighbor as yourself.” In the wall closest to Jerusalem there was a small opening with an ark (a chest to keep rolls of Scripture). A veil was hung in front of it, like in the temple, and lamp above it was always burning. There was a raised platform in front of this ark, called the “bema,” with steps up to it. The elders had seats on the platform, and the service was conducted from it. There was also a pulpit there, in front of the ark, to set the scrolls when they were being read from. Often a 7-branched Menorah was on the platform, too. Men would sit in the middle, facing the platform. Women would be



## Daily Life in Bible Times – II. JERUSALEM

### 36. JESUS' LIFE IN JERUSALEM

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While Jesus spent most of His time in Galilee, especially the start of His ministry, Jerusalem was where it all ended. Jerusalem also fits into Jesus' ministry from the very beginning.

The very first event, you could say the first domino to fall, which eventually culminated in Jesus' death and resurrection in Jerusalem, was the **announcement to Zacharias**. While in the temple Holy Place offering incense (prayers to God), the angel Gabriel appeared to him and told him he would have a son. This son was John the Baptizer.

A few months later Jesus was born in a little village 5 miles from Jerusalem, **Bethlehem**. Word from the local shepherds spread throughout the area and into Jerusalem. This must have thrilled the small group of faithful Jews awaiting the Messiah. Some even got to meet Jesus when his parents brought Him for His presentation at 40 days of age. **Anna** and **Simeon** had been waiting for Him for years. Jesus then spent some time in nearby Bethlehem, until Herod's edict to kill all the young boys drove them to Egypt. The **Magi** themselves passed through Jerusalem looking for the young King, stopping to talk with Herod at his palace.

Jesus didn't get back to Egypt until He **12 years old**. From Egypt His family moved back to Nazareth in Galilee where He grew up. When He was 12 and became a man they took Him to Jerusalem for the Passover. He stayed in **Solomon's Porch** taking with the Religious Rulers, who were impressed at His insight and knowledge. Mary and Joseph were frantic!

Jesus spent the next 30 odd years maturing in Nazareth. While it can't be proven, Jesus probably traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover as well as other feasts every year. All Jewish men who were able were expected to make this trip for the three main feasts each year (Passover, Tabernacles and Dedication).

Jesus' first trip to Jerusalem after being baptized by John was when He was tempted by Satan. Satan tempted Him by taking Him to the temple, on the **pinnacle** (the corner of the Royal Porch overlooking the Kidron Valley 450 feet below). By throwing Himself down from there and having angels catch Him, watching people would have been so impressed they would have made Him King then and there, without having to go to the cross. Fortunately for us, Jesus resisted this temptation!

Jesus went to Jerusalem every Passover during His public ministry (and for other feasts, too). The **first Passover** was a particularly eventful time. It was the summer of 27 AD. Jesus cleansed the temple for the first time. What a first impression this made on the religious rulers, the very ones He making the decisions about accepting or rejecting Him as Messiah! It was following this that a man named Nicodemus came to Jesus at night and they went to the roof where Jesus was staying. Talking on a roof was quieter, cooler and more private than going inside a house or on a street to talk – it was a common practice.

Following this Jesus returned to Galilee (by way of Samaria, where He talked to the woman at the well). He spent the next year teaching and preaching, healing and helping in Galilee. If He traveled to Jerusalem during this time, and He might well have gone for the feast of Tabernacles or Dedication, nothing is recorded. It is recorded, however, that He again went to Jerusalem in the summer of 27 for His **second Passover**. It was during this trip that he healed an impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda. This was one of the water reservoir in Jerusalem, for water was a scarce and important commodity.

Again, Jesus' main ministry was in the north, Galilee, during the next year. In the summer of 29 AD, He returned to Jerusalem for His **third Passover**. No details are given of what happened during that visit, but Jesus then started focusing His ministry more in Jerusalem and the surrounding area. He had spread His message through Galilee and now, as the time for His death drew nearer and nearer, He wanted to make sure those in Jerusalem and Judea had the same opportunity. He knew the response would also be rejection, but He wanted to make sure all had a fair chance. Jerusalem, because it was the seat of the religious and civil authorities,

would be the place where the final decision was made. Thus, Jesus' ministry shifted south during His final year on earth.

The **Feast of Tabernacles** in the fall of 29 AD was a very busy time for Jesus. He faced a lengthy, heated challenge from the religious rulers who were jealous of His popularity and wanted to discredit Him before the people. They were jealous and thought only of their own prestige. It was during this conflict that a **woman caught in adultery** was brought before Jesus, in the Court of the Women, to trap Jesus. Freeing her would break the law, condemning her would show He wasn't as merciful as they were and alienate people. Jesus turned the challenge right back to them, and once again they failed to discredit Him. During this same time, though, a mob **attempted to stone Jesus** in the temple, but God protected Him. He then **healed a man who was born blind** at the Pool of Siloam, and later gave a talk known as the **Good Shepherd Discourse**.

Jesus then traveled throughout the countryside around Jerusalem for several weeks, but returned to Jerusalem for the **Feast of Dedication** in the fall of 29. Again, they attempted to **stone Him**. Jesus was in the temple, in Solomon's Porch (the eastern side of the temple) teaching them about their need for repentance when their stubbornness caused them to rebel.

During this time Jesus spent much time with friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus in **Bethany**, which was right over the Mount of Olives from Jerusalem. On one occasion Martha worked while Mary sat at His feet learning. Another time Lazarus died and Jesus waited two days before going to their rescue. This was so He could show His power by bringing Lazarus, who had been dead for 3 days, back to life. This caused a tremendous stir among the people and priests in Jerusalem. Many came to see Lazarus and the religious leaders decided he as well as Jesus would have to die to stop this new movement from growing. Everything is now set up for Jesus' final week on earth. No one knows what the future will hold but Jesus. Jesus will stay in Jerusalem now. He has been home to Galilee for the last time. The focus of the most important events in the history of the world would be unfolding in the next few days. Jerusalem would be the stage where these events would transpire. Jerusalem. So much had already happened in her walls. Jerusalem. So much more will soon happen...

## Daily Life in Bible Times – II. JERUSALEM

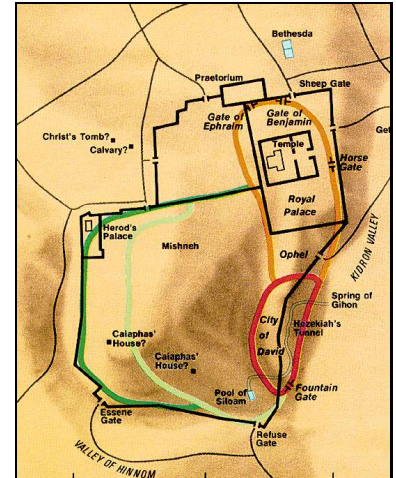
### 37. DEATH & RESURRECTION IN JERUSALEM

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Before He even took time (6 days) to create the universe, God planned the events which would bring salvation to those who would accept it. The stage for this most-important episode was Jerusalem. God planned it that way. What a privilege to host this most-important occurrence.

Jesus arrived in **BETHANY**, across the Mt of Olives from Jerusalem, according to schedule on Friday, March 27, 33 AD. He stayed with friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus, as was His practice when going to Jerusalem. Because of Sabbath travel restrictions He stayed in town Friday evening and Saturday. Saturday evening, when the Sabbath was over, Lazarus had a feast for Jesus and the disciples. This is when Mary anointed Jesus, Judas complained, and Jesus supporter her choice.

On Monday, March 30, Jesus made His grand entry into Jerusalem. Every other time He just walked the short distance across the **MT OF OLIVES**, but this time He rode an unriden colt (proclaiming Himself Messiah-King) and encouraged His followers to proclaim Him God and King (“Hosannah,” palm branches, etc.). When Jesus looked down on the city from the crest of the hill He started crying for He knew what an awful fate awaited the city and nation because they were going to reject Him. Instead of proclaiming Him king, the people scattered and wondered what He was doing. After spending a little time in the **TEMPLE** Jesus went back to Bethany for the evening.



The next day, Tuesday, March 31, Jesus again walked into Jerusalem from Bethany. This time He stopped to curse a fig tree that wasn't bearing fruit – a picture of hypocritical Israel. He showed God's coming judgment by cleansing the **TEMPLE** again. After spending time teaching He left, but now He started spending the night on the cooler **MT OF OLIVES**. Evidently an owner of a garden there let Jesus use it. It was more private and also took the heat off Lazarus and his family in Bethany.

When Jesus and the disciples passed the cursed fig tree on Wednesday, April 1, they saw it was dead and withered – an omen of things to come for Israel. Jesus spent the morning in the **TEMPLE COURTS** arguing with the religious rulers who were trying to show Him up, but failed. Then he went into the **COURT OF THE WOMEN** where the containers for offerings were located and watched as a poor woman put in all she had – 2 mites.

When they were walking out Jesus told the disciples that every stone in the **TEMPLE** would be torn down. They then paused on the **MOUNT OF OLIVES** as Jesus gave a panorama of coming events – the Olivet Discourse. Later Jesus was back in the temple teaching, probably in **SOLOMON'S PORCH**. Meanwhile, in **CAIAPHAS' HOME** in the rich section in southwestern part of the city plans were being made to arrest Jesus. Judas came there to make His offer.

Thursday was Passover day for the people from Galilee, a day before the others. After spending some time in the **TEMPLE** teaching, Jesus went **JOHN MARK'S HOME** in the poorer southern section of the city. There He and His disciples celebrated the Passover. Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, changing the focus from the Passover Lamb to Himself, the Lamb of God. Late that night, when the meal was over, Jesus and His disciples walked the streets of Jerusalem heading out to the **MT OF OLIVES**. He talked, taught and prayed while walking. He crossed the dark Kidron, running with blood from the thousands of lambs even then being killed in the temple.



After praying in **GETHSEMANE** Judas arrived with soldiers to arrest Jesus. Jesus knew Judas would know to look there, so He went awaiting His own arrest. The disciples scattered and were safe among the trees, for they weren't ready to stand up for their faith yet. Jesus was alone.

By now it was Friday, April 3. He was taken first to the **HOME OF ANNAS**, the figure-head high priest who was controlled by his father-in-law, Caiaphas. Before long He was transferred to Caiaphas' home, connected to Annas'. When that, too, failed to come up with charges that would stick, other like-minded members of the Sanhedrin were called in. Breaking all their own laws guaranteeing a fair trial, they decided Jesus had to die.

During this time Judas tried to return his money to the priests in the **TEMPLE**. When they refused it he took his own life, ultimately being buried in the **FIELD OF BLOOD** southeast of Jerusalem which was bought with his blood money. Peter was having his own crisis, too. In the **COURTYARD** of Annas' and Caiaphas' home he denied Jesus 3 times.

At about sunrise the Jews took Jesus to **ANTONIA**, the Roman fortress north of the temple area. There the Jews eventually forced Pilate to give his approval to their plan to have Jesus 'legally' murdered. Jesus was temporarily transferred to Herod who was probably staying at the **HASMONEAN PALACE**. Before long, however, He was taken to **GOLGOTHA**, a small hill north west of the city just outside the city walls. There, by a busy gate with many people passing nearby, He was crucified. When dead He was taken to a nearby **GARDEN TOMB**. The tomb was sealed and Roman soldiers stationed outside.

Most of the disciples gathered back at **JOHN MARK'S HOME** in hiding, fearing for their own lives. That all changed on Sunday, April 5. Some women went to the **TOMB** to finish covering the body with spices to cover the smell of decay. Eventually several woman and probably Peter, too, saw the risen Lord there.

Mary and Cleophas saw Him on the **ROAD TO EMMAUS** north of Jerusalem, but that same evening He was back in Jerusalem appearing to 10 disciples and others in the **UPPER ROOM**. He returned the following week when Thomas was back, and appeared to others in Jerusalem.

After a short time in Galilee, Jesus and the disciples were again in Jerusalem, on the **MT OF OLIVES**, where Jesus ascended into heaven.

Jerusalem was indeed the stage for these events, the place where the most important events in the history of the world took place. It was God's choice for these things to happen there.

## Daily Life in Bible Times – II. JERUSALEM

### 38. THE EARLY CHURCH IN JERUSALEM

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Not only did the important events of the crucifixion and resurrection happen in Jerusalem, so did the birth of the new Church God was starting. While Israel was on the decline in God's program because of their rejection of Jesus, God was temporarily replacing them with the Bride of Christ, the Church. This, too, took place in God's special city – Jerusalem.

After the ascension of Jesus, the disciples gathered in the **UPPER ROOM** awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit. During this wait they chose Matthias to replace Judas. Each day the followers of Jesus gathered in the **TEMPLE COURT** to pray and worship God.

One day before long, while gathered in the **TEMPLE**, the Holy Spirit descended like a fire. Peter preached and 3,000 were saved. Some were from out of town, just visiting for the Feast of Pentecost. They took the good news of Jesus back to their homes and synagogues. Others were residents of Jerusalem. They continued to meet in the temple each day, as well as in small groups in neighborhood homes. Many lost their jobs, savings and families because they became Christians, so others sold their possessions to help the poor.

With the **TEMPLE** as their central gathering place, the church continued to grow. Once Peter and John healed a lame man by the **BEAUTIFUL GATE**, which separated the Court of the Women from the Court of the Men. This led to an opportunity for Peter to preach, so he did in nearby **SOLOMON'S PORCH**.

Not everything went well, though. Peter and John were arrested in the **TEMPLE** and jailed there. They were taken to the **COUNCIL ROOM** in the temple to be tried. After threats and intimidation, they were released. They continued to preach and the church continued to grow.

One sad event about this time was the death of Annanias and Sapphira in a **HOME** in Jerusalem. They lied, saying they gave all their money, when they had kept some back for themselves. Still, God blessed the early believers and they prospered. God even gave the leaders power to do miracles and heal people in **SOLOMON'S PORCH**. They were again arrested but released.

Before long the church was so large, and so many needy believers were being helped with food and clothing, that the leaders were using all their time to meet these physical needs. Seven deacons were taken to make sure the resources were distributed fairly among the needy. This took place in **HOMES** throughout the city.

This time of prosperity and peace was soon to end, though. One of the deacons, Stephen, was so good at defending Jesus in debates that no one, not even the Jews' star debater named Saul (later Paul) was able to show him wrong. To silence him anyway Saul had him arrested and tried in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER** by the temple. He was then taken **NORTH OF THE CITY WALLS** and stoned under Saul's authority. With this a great persecution of the church began. Saul went from **HOME** to home, arresting, beating and killing believers. God used this to get the Christians to start moving out of Jerusalem and take the Gospel to others, as He had so clearly commanded them.

Saul continued his persecution, heading north on the **ROAD TO DAMASCUS** in 36 AD. It was there he met Jesus. He then spent a few years alone with God in the Arabian desert before returning to Jerusalem in 39 AD. If it hadn't been for Barnabas, Paul may not have been accepted by the Christians in Jerusalem. Paul then moved to Caesarea and helped in the church there.

Jerusalem continued to be the headquarters for the new church despite the earlier wave of persecution. Where else but Jerusalem? James, the brother of John, was thrown from the **PINNACLE OF THE TEMPLE**, then stoned to death, in 45 AD. Leadership of the early church was shared by Peter, John and James, the brother of Jesus. Spurred on by the success of having James killed, the Jews tried to have Peter killed, too. He was arrested and imprisoned in **ANTONIA**, but an angel released him and he went to the **HOME** where everyone was praying for his release.

Paul's first missionary journey, which lasted a year, brought to a head a long-standing theological debate: did a Gentile have to become a Jew before he could accept Jesus as his Savior and become a Christian? The leaders of the church from all over gathered in Jerusalem to discuss and decide. Again, they probably gathered in **SOLOMON'S PORCH**. God clearly showed them that they didn't have to become a Jew, a decision which has greatly affected even us today.

After going on a second ( 2 ½ years) and third (3 ½ years) missionary journey Paul ended up in Jerusalem again. He was bringing an offering collected from the Gentile churches for the poor Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. While in the **TEMPLE**, in the **COURT OF THE WOMEN**, he was accused of bringing a Gentile past the **SOREG**, the dividing wall to keep Gentiles out. To keep him from being killed by the hysteric mob, Roman soldiers rescued him. He preached to the crowd from the steps leading from the temple into **ANTONIO**. Later he was taken to the **COUNCIL CHAMBER** to be tried by the Jews. Before long he had to be transferred to Caesarea to be protected from assignation by the Jews. There he witnessed to Felix and Festus before being taken to Rome and eventually his death.

Jerusalem passed from the forefront of church leadership. First Caesarea to the north, then Ephesus to the west and eventually Rome further west became the center for the early church. Jerusalem had rejected their Messiah, and the consequences were severe. Still, it wasn't the end for Jerusalem. God never forgot His special city. One day it would again be the center of His kingdom on earth.

## Daily Life in Bible Times – II. JERUSALEM

### 39. JERUSALEM: FROM THEN TO NOW

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It is named the “city of peace,” but Jerusalem has known anything but peace. It has been the site of over 100 wars. From 70 AD to now it has changed hands and religions at least nine times. The city of peace won’t know peace until it accepts the Prince of Peace as its king!

**DESTRUCTION BY TITUS IN 70 AD** The long-smoldering discontent of the Jews against the Romans burst forth into open rebellion under the criminal incompetence of Gessius Florus, 66 AD. Palaces and public buildings were fired by the angered multitude, and after but two days' siege, the Antonia itself was captured, set on fire and its garrison slain. Cestius Gallus, hastening from Syria, was soon engaged in a siege of the city. The third wall was captured and the suburb BEZETHA burnt, but, when about to renew the attack upon the second wall, Gallus appears to have been seized with panic, and his partial withdrawal developed into an inglorious retreat in which he was pursued by the Jews down the pass to the Beth-horons as far as Antipatris.

This victory cost the Jews dearly in the long run, as it led to the campaign of Vespasian and the eventual crushing of all their national hopes. Vespasian commenced the conquest in the north, and advanced by slow and certain steps. Being recalled to Rome as emperor in the midst of the war, the work of besieging and capturing the city itself fell to his son Titus. None of the many calamities which had happened to the city are to be compared with this terrible siege. In none had the city been so magnificent, its fortifications so powerful, its population so crowded. It was Passover time, but, in addition to the crowds assembled for this event, vast numbers had hurried there, fleeing from the advancing Roman army. The loss of life was enormous; about 600,000 dead.

The siege commenced on the 14th of Nisan, 70 AD, and ended on the 8th of Elul, a total of 134 days. The city was distracted by internal feuds. Simon held the upper and lower cities; John of Gischala, the temple and "Ophel"; the Idumaeans, introduced by the Zealots, fought only Walls for themselves, until they relieved the city of their terrors. Yet another party, too weak to make its counsels felt, was for peace with Rome, a policy which, if taken in time, would have found in Titus a spirit of reason and mercy. The miseries of the siege and the destruction of life and property were at least as much the work of the Jews themselves as of their conquerors. On the 15th day of the siege the third wall (Agrippa's), which had been but hastily finished upon the approach of the Romans, was captured; the second wall was finally taken on the 24th day; on the 72nd day the Antonia fell, and 12 days later the daily sacrifice ceased. On the 105th day-- the ominous 9th of Ab-- the temple and the lower city were burnt, and the whole city was in flames.

**BAR-COCHA REVOLT, 132 AD** For 60 years after its capture silence reigns over Jerusalem. We know that the site continued to be garrisoned, but it was not to any extent rebuilt. In 130 AD it was visited by Hadrian, who found but few buildings standing. Two years later (132-35 AD) occurred the last great rebellion of the Jews in the uprising of Bar-Cocho ("son of a star"), who was encouraged by the rabbi Akiba. With the suppression of this last effort for freedom by Julius Severus, the remaining traces of Judaism were stamped out, and the very site of the temple was plowed up by T. Annianus Rufus; An altar of Jupiter was placed upon the temple site. Jews were killed if they entered Jerusalem.

**JERUSALEM REBUILT** In 138 Hadrian rebuilt the city, giving it the name Aelia Capitolina. An equestrian statue of Hadrian was placed on the site of the "Holy of Holies". Either Hadrian himself, or one of the Antonine emperors, erected a temple of Venus on the northwestern hill, where subsequently was built the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The habit of pilgrimage to the holy sites, which appears to have had its roots far back in the 2nd century, seems to have increasingly flourished in the next two

centuries; beyond this we know little of the city. In 333 AD, by order of Constantine, the new church of the Anastasis, marking the supposed site of the Holy Sepulchre, was begun. In 362 Julian is said to have attempted to rebuild the temple, but the work was interrupted by an explosion. The story is doubtful. In 450 the empress Eudoxia, the widow of Theodosius II, took up her residence in Jerusalem and rebuilt the walls upon their ancient lines, bringing the whole of the southwestern hill, as well as the Pool of Siloam, within the circuit

**PERSIA CONQUERS JERUSALEM** In 614 Palestine was conquered by the Persian Chosroes II, and the Jerusalem churches, including that of the Holy Sepulchre, were destroyed, an event which did much to prepare the way for the Moslem architects of half a century later, who freely used the columns of these ruined churches in the building of the "Dome of the Rock."

**MOSLEMS CONQUER JERUSALEM** Heracleus won the city back for Christianity, but his victory was short-lived. In 637 the victorious followers of the Prophet Mohammed appeared in the Holy City. After a short siege, it capitulated, but the khalif Omar treated the Christians with generous mercy. The Christian sites were spared, but upon the temple-site, which up to this had apparently been occupied by no important Christian building but was of peculiar sanctity to the Moslems through Mohammed's alleged visions there, a wooden mosque was erected, capable of accommodating 3,000 worshippers. This was replaced in 691 AD by the magnificent Kubbet es Sakah, or "Dome of the Rock," built by `Abd'ul Malek, the 10th khalif. For some centuries the relations of the Christians and Moslems appear to have been friendly: In 969 Palestine passed into the power of the Egyptian dynasty, and in 1010 her ruler, the mad Hakim, burnt many of the churches, which were restored in a poor way.

**SELJUK TURKS AND THEIR CRUELITIES** In 1077 Isar el Atsis, a leader of the Seljuk Turks conquered Palestine from the North, drove out the Egyptians and massacred 3,000 of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The cruelty of the Turks was the immediate cause of the Crusades. In 1098 the city was retaken by the Egyptian Arabs, and the following year was again captured after a 40 days' siege by the soldiers of the First Crusade, and Godfrey de Bouillon became the first king. Great building activity marked the next 80 peaceful years of Latin rule and a numbers of churches were built.

**CRUSADERS TO THE RESCUE** In 1177 they were repaired, but 10 years later failed to resist the arms of the victorious Saladin. The city surrendered, but City the inhabitants were spared. In 1192 Saladin repaired the walls, but in 1219 they were dismantled by orders of the sultan of Damascus. In 1229 the emperor Frederick II of Germany obtained the Holy City by treaty, on condition that he did not restore the fortifications, a stipulation which, being broken by the inhabitants 10 years later, brought down upon them the vengeance of the emir of Kerak. Nevertheless, in 1243 the city was again restored to the Christians unconditionally. The following year, however, the Kharizimian Tartars-- a wild, savage horde from Central Asia-- burst into Palestine, carrying destruction before them; they seized Jerusalem, massacred the people, and rifled the tombs of the Latin kings. Three years later they were ejected from Palestine by the Egyptians who in their turn retained it until, in 1517, they were conquered by the Ottoman Turks. The greatest of their sultans, Suleiman the Magnificent, built the present walls in 1542.

**OTTOMAN TURKS TAKE OVER** In 1832 Mohammed Ali with his Egyptian forces came and captured the city, but 2 years later the fellahin rose against his rule and for a time actually gained possession of the city, except the citadel, making their entrance through the main drain. The besieged citadel was relieved by the arrival of Ibrahim Pasha from Egypt with reinforcements. The city and land were restored to the Ottoman Turks by the Great Powers in 1840.

**JERUSALEM: CAPITAL OF A NEW NATION** In 1946 Israel became a nation, following the Holocaust of WW II. It took heroic acts of courage and dedication for Jewish freedom fighters to wrest control of their city from the Arabs, though. In 1967, outnumbered 60 to one, Jewish soldiers recaptured old Jerusalem and the temple area. What a great, yet sad, history Jerusalem has had in the last two millennia. But the next one will be better!

## Daily Life in Bible Times – II. JERUSALEM

### 40. JERUSALEM: ACTIVE FOR ALL ETERNITY

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While it might seem like Jerusalem is just like any other city today, it is still God's special city and has an important part in His continuing plans. God said it would be a place of wars until the through these times (Daniel 9:26). God's plan is for it to be under Gentile rulership (Luke 21:24) and oppressed but not destroyed (Zechariah 12:3). That is what has happened to Jerusalem.

God also prophesied that, after being scattered throughout the whole earth, He would bring His people, Israel, back to their land and Jerusalem (Joel 3:1). For a nation to exist for hundreds and hundreds of years without a homeland is truly a miracle!

The next event on God's prophetic calendar for Jerusalem is to have a **TEMPLE REBUILT** there (Daniel 9:27; 12:11; Jeremiah 31:8-9; I Samuel 55:11; 60:1-3; Mt 24:15; Mk 13:14; 2 Thes 2:3-4). This will be in place by the middle of the Tribulation. Of course, we know that the Rapture is the next event on God's calendar for mankind. Nothing has to happen before that happens. As of now the only site a temple can be rebuilt is in Arab hands. Presently the Mosque of Omar (the dome of the Rock) is on that site. It is the second most holy site to Moslems, and one they won't give up easily. Somehow that will be worked out, perhaps by the Antichrist at the start of the Tribulation. In any event, by the middle of the Tribulation the Jews will be worshipping in a temple rebuilt on its original site – but not for long!

In the middle of the Tribulation the Antichrist will suddenly reverse his policy and set himself up to be worshipped on the temple site, forbidding Jews to worship there. In fact, any worship of God will result in death. Daniel calls this the "abomination of desolation" (Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). It will be similar to but worse than when Antiochus Epiphanes did the same thing, leading to the Macabean war for Jewish independence in 165 BC.

Also, during this time in Jerusalem God will rise up **TWO WITNESSES** to minister for Him (Revelation 11). They will be men similar in ministry and miracles to Moses and Elijah. They will be persecuted, but God will protect them from death during the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation. They will be a sure throw in the Antichrist's side. Then, when their mission is complete, the protection will be lifted and they will be killed. Their bodies will lie in the streets of Jerusalem but, while the whole world watches (probably by satellite TV) God will bring them back to life and take them into heaven! What a testimony this will be. It will be at the very end of the Tribulation period, which culminated with the armies of the world destroyed at Armageddon. While to the north of Jerusalem, this battle and its results will spill down into Jerusalem. The Antichrist and his armies will be defeated. Satan and his demons will be bound for a thousand years, and God will purify and rebuilt His land.

Then will begin what is called the **MILLENNIUM**. It is a thousand-year rule of God on earth, a return to Garden of Eden conditions on earth. Jerusalem will be thoroughly and completely cleansed (Isaiah 1:25-26; 4:34; Joel 3:17; Zechariah 14:20-1). God Himself will again dwell in Jerusalem, and it will reflect His glory (Ezekiel 43:1,2; Isaiah 62:2). Ezekiel chapters 40 - 48 even gives the description and plans for the new temple that will be built in this glorified Jerusalem. It will be a large, beautiful place. A river will flow from it, splitting and flowing east and west, to the Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea. This topographical change seems to take place when Jesus' foot first touches down on the Mt. Of Olives, splitting it. All the details aren't known, but it is clear that it will take place in Jerusalem!

Finally, Jerusalem will become a city of peace (Psalm 122:6-9; Isaiah 60:17; 66:12). People who still live on earth (believers who weren't martyred during the Tribulation and then their children) will come to Jerusalem to worship God. In fact, all nations will come for instruction and blessing (Isaiah

2:2-4; Psalm 102:21-22). Joy will abound in the streets of this city which has seen so much sorrow (Psalm 53:6; Isaiah 5:11).

We will live in the **NEW JERUSALEM** in heaven above the earthly Jerusalem. There will be much contact and going back and forth (as Jacob saw in his vision of a ladder).

After the thousand-year Millennium, Satan and his demons will lead one final revolt and then be consigned to hell forever. Jerusalem will then continue to be the center of the earth, and universe, for all eternity. What a wonderful destiny God has prepared for the city that has His Name and Presence. Just remember that He has an even greater destiny for His people who also carry His Name and His Presence! We have a great future because we have a great God!

“In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:2-3)



# *Daily Life in Bible Times*

## **III. THE TABERNACLE**

### SPIRITUAL LESSONS FROM ISRAEL'S GEOGRAPHY & CULTURE

By **Rev. Dr. Jerry Schmoyer**

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TOPIC	MAIN IDEA
<b>1. BACKGROUND, OVERVIEW</b>	Overview, motivate to study
<b>2. FENCE</b> (Entrance 1)	Christ our shield, protection
<b>3. GATE</b> (Types)	Christ the Way
<b>4. BRONZE ALTAR</b>	Christ's blood removes sin
<b>5. LAVER</b>	Believers must be clean
<b>6. WALLS</b> (Boards & Bars)	Christ our Atonement
<b>7. CURTAINS</b>	Christ's overall greatness
<b>8. DOOR</b> (Entrance 2)	God's complete provision in Christ
<b>9. LAMPSTAND</b>	Christ the Light
<b>10. TABLE OF SHOWBREAD</b>	Christ the Bread of Life
<b>11. GOLD ALTAR OF INCENSE</b>	Prayer & Praise of believer to God
<b>12. VEIL</b> (Entrance 3)	Body of Christ
<b>13. ARK OF THE COVENANT</b>	God's provision for us in this life
<b>14. MERCY SEAT</b>	Christ's blood shed for us
<b>15. SHEKINAH GLORY</b>	God's glory
<b>16. CAMP, CONCLUSION</b>	God amidst His people

From 1993 – 1995 our home school group studied the tabernacle together. Each one has built their own model at home. It was so interesting that I thought I'd write a summary of each session.

Building directions, materials, and videos are available. Contact Jerry Schmoyer,  
Jerry@ChristianTrainingOrganization.org

# Daily Life in Bible Times – III. THE TABERNACLE

## 1. BACKGROUND, OVERVIEW

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### IMPORTANCE OF THE TABERNACLE

The tabernacle is the most important structure ever built by man: past, present or future. For one thousand years in the past, and another thousand in the future, God's very presence dwelt in it (and the Temple which is really just a permanent tabernacle). More space is given to it and its function than any other single subject in the Bible - 50 long chapters (the creation of the whole universe and earth is given just 2 chapters). In order to understand the Jewish sacrificial system, feasts, priesthood, etc., one must understand the tabernacle. The best part about the tabernacle, though, is that it is the most complete, detailed, beautiful picture/type of salvation and the Christian life in Scripture. All of it speaks of and glorifies Jesus in a way children as well as adults can understand. Learning the tabernacle makes it much easier for children to understand and apply Bible truths like salvation, Jesus' work on the cross, confession of sin, obedience, fellowship, praise and worship.

### BACKGROUND OF THE TABERNACLE

God created man perfect in Eden, but sin entered and man could not be in God's presence. Mankind from Adam on continued to sin and rebel against God, despite the flood and Babel. Eventually, when it was obvious mankind as a whole would not follow God, He chose one man, Abraham, to form a nation that would obey Him. The Jews were to be God's special people but Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants sinned, too. To keep them from intermarrying and not becoming a nation, God moved the Jews into Egypt during the time of Joseph. They were there for 400 years. After 10 plagues and the death of the Passover Lamb, Moses led the Jews out through the Red Sea and to Mt. Sinai where God revealed His law to the Jews. He was to be their King and the tabernacle His throne. It was where they were to meet with God, and everything about it taught of Him. It was the center of government and worship, the heart and core of the nation Israel.

### NAMES OF THE TABERNACLE

The tabernacle was the royal residence for the King of Israel. Its names and titles signified that. It was called a "sanctuary" (sacred place), "tabernacle" (dwelling place), "dwelling" (where God's glory dwelt, Psalm 76:2; Song of Solomon 1:8), "tent" (temporary, collapsible dwelling), "tent of the meeting" (where God met with man, Exodus 29:42), and "tabernacle of the testimony" (because of the tablets of law in the Ark of the covenant, Exodus 38:21; Numbers. 9:15; 17:7,23).

### DIRECTIONS FOR BUILDING THE TABERNACLE

The tabernacle was built specifically according to directions given by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 25:1-9, 40; 26:30; 27:8; Numbers. 8:4; Acts 7:44; Heb. 8:5). God revealed the pattern of it to Moses. Actually, God let Moses see God's throne in heaven which the tabernacle represented. The Bible refers to this often (Psalm 24:3; 2 Chronicles 17:12; Heb. 8:2,5; 9:23). John saw the same thing while on Patmos (Revelation 1:12; 2:17; 6:9; 8:3; 11:19; 15:5). He even refers to the furniture in heaven: Ark of Covenant (Revelation 11:19), Lampstand (Revelation 1:12); golden Altar (Revelation 9:13), and Bronze Altar (Revelation 6:9).

The Jews were to freely bring the needed materials (Exodus 25:1-9 - cloth, dye, wood, metals). God even chose the craftsmen to oversee the building, and filled them with His Holy Spirit to enable

them to do the work (Exodus 31:1-11). The Jews responded by bringing more material than was needed and Moses had to tell them to stop (Exodus 35:4 - 36:7). This was what the Egyptians had given to the Jews before leaving Egypt (Exodus 12:35-36). God provided what the Jews needed before they even knew they would need it! They really weren't giving anything to God, just returning some of which was really His anyway (the same as when we give to God). All together they gave about \$12 million in gold, silver and bronze alone (Exodus 38:21-31).

## **AFTER THE TABERNACLE**

Following the exact pattern of the tabernacle, which God gave to Moses, the Jews built a permanent tabernacle, called a temple, in Jerusalem. David planned it and Solomon built it. It was one of the wonders of the ancient world! After 300 years, though, Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians destroyed it. Seventy years later Ezra returned from Babylon and let a temple rebuilding program. For 400 years the Jews used this, then Herod enlarged and beautified it until it was once again one of the wonders of the world. After less than 100 years it was destroyed when Jerusalem was conquered by Rome in 70 AD. During the coming tribulation period there will be a temple on the same spot used by the Jews until the Antichrist takes it over and sets himself up to be worshipped in it. It will be destroyed during the battle of Armageddon. A Millennial temple there will become God's throne on earth for 1,000 years (Ezekiel 40-48).

## **GOD'S TABERNACLE TODAY**

When Jesus came to earth He was the place where God and man met, where God dwelt among man. John 1:14 says Jesus "became flesh and made His dwelling among us." Literally the Bible says He became flesh and "tabernacled" among us. Jesus was the tabernacle while on earth. It all pointed to Him and spoke of Him, and He fulfilled it while on earth. Like the tabernacle, Jesus's life on earth was temporary, humble, simple in appearance, God's dwelling place, and the place of sacrifice.

Today God doesn't dwell in a man-made building on earth. His dwelling is in the hearts of those who love Him and have accepted Jesus as Savior. WE are His tabernacle ("dwelling") today (I Corinthians. 3:16-17; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16). Thus, the tabernacle speaks of us, too! We are His tabernacle, and we are His royal priesthood (I Pet. 2:5, 9-10). What a privilege we have in serving God in our lives!

Think of how God prepared and cared for the tabernacle, how He used it to reveal His glory, how it was where He dwelt on earth among men. God prepares and cares for us even more. He uses us today to reveal His glory to others. It is in us that He dwells on earth. What a special blessing that is for us today!

# Daily Life in Bible Times – III. THE TABERNACLE

## 2. THE FENCE

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### THE FENCE

"STAY OUT!" That's the message a fences gives to those approaching it. It is put there to keep what is on the outside from coming in. The first things the Jews would see when approaching the tabernacle was a high (7'-6") fence keeping them out. You would think God's throne wouldn't have a fence around it but would be open so everyone could easily approach. However, God is showing that there is only one way to approach, and that is through the gate. You can't just come into God's presence by any way, only the way He directs. Before you can understand the gate, though, you need to understand the fences.

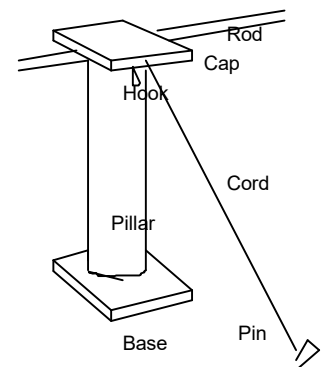
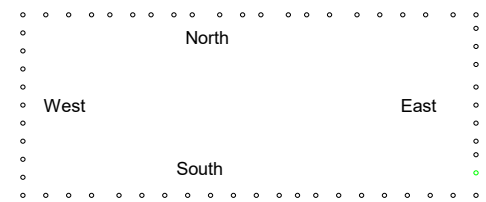
### THE PILLARS

God gave detailed instructions about how to make the fence (Exodus 27:9-19) and the Jews carried them out exactly (Exodus 38:9-20). There were to be 60 pillars (20 on north and south sides, 10 on east and west sides). They were to be 7'-6" high and 7'-6" between each, giving it a perfect balance. Everything in the tabernacle has this perfect symmetry, all is made up of squares or cubes. All God does has perfect planning and beauty. It is so simple, yet so elaborate. That is true of nature and the universe as well as us.

These pillars were made of acacia wood, a picture of Jesus' humanity. Both are from the earth, strong but not limitless (Jesus as a human being) and live on earth. They provided support and strength, as Christ is our refuge, strength and sufficiency (Prov. 18:10; Isaiah 32:2).

Under the pillars were sockets to hold them up - a bronze (pictures judgment) plate with a hole to receive the tenion on the bottom of the pillar. On top was a silver cap, which is a picture of redemption.

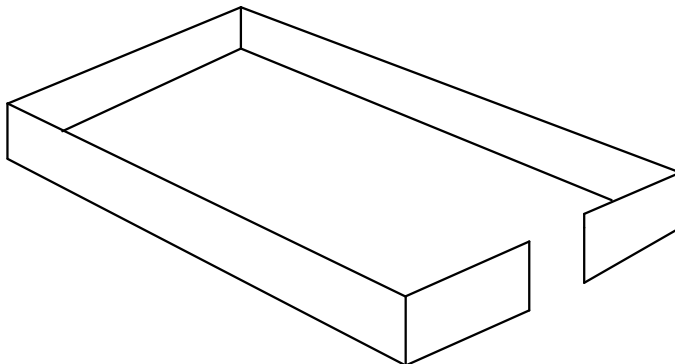
Rods of acacia wood covered with silver connected the pillars at the tops to provide stability. Cords of white linen were fastened to the top of the pillar and the ground by a tent peg to stabilize the pillars. There were also silver hooks at the top to hold the curtains, carcasses of sacrificial animals, priests' robes, or whatever.



## THE CURTAIN

Around the whole outside was a white linen curtain, woven from the flax plant. Except for a space for the gate in front, it went all around the tabernacle. The purpose was to keep people out. They couldn't even see in!

White linen stands for purity and today is used in weddings, christenings, etc., for that same reason. In the tabernacle it shows the holiness of God, for it was in sharp contrast to the dark, rough goats-hair tents of the Jews all around the tabernacle. This shows the contrast of our sins to Christ's righteousness (Rom. 3:32). Jesus was holy, sinless, perfect. Even Pilate could find no fault in Him. To approach God, we must be that sinless and perfect, for a holy God can allow no sin in His presence.



However, we fall far short and cannot enter, thus the fences keep us from God's presence. Actually, Jesus' perfect earthly life (white linen) as a human being (acacia wood) keeps us from God. It is not His life that redeems us, only His work on the cross. His life points out clearly how we fail. Since He lived a perfect life as a human being, we are accountable to also. We can't, and are under condemnation. Jesus' perfect life seals our doom, keeps us from God (as does the fence).

The fence does show that Jesus's perfect life was for the purpose of providing our redemption, though. Had He not been perfect He couldn't have been our substitute; He would have been guilty of His own sins. Had He not been God He couldn't have bore all the sins of all of us for all eternity condensed in 6 hours of time. No, we can't come to God through the fences for it shows we fall far short. Jesus paid for that, though, and because of His work on the cross we can have His righteousness as our own (2 Corinthians. 5:21; Rom. 3:2; Isaiah 61:10, Revelation 19:8). The bronze base under the pillars shows God's judgment on sin, but the silver caps and rods show redemption lifted up for all. Redemption (silver) over judgment (bronze) is only by God Himself as a man (acacia wood) being lifted up.

Thus, the fence is to keep people OUT. Man can only approach God when perfect and sinless, and comparing ourselves to Jesus shows how far we fail in that. We can never enter God's presence by our own works or goodness. They are as "filthy rags" (menstrual rags - Isaiah 64:6). Paul says our good works are like a dung heap in God's sight (Philippians 3:8). That is about our GOOD works. Imagine what our sin looks like in God's sight!

What about you? Are trying to earn God's approval by your righteousness? You'll never make it! God provided Jesus to be your righteousness, that's the only kind God will accept. Have you accepted His gift? Are you coming into His presence by the only way He has provided (the gate)? Have you already made that commitment, begin now within the white linen walls are or you still on the outside trying to work your own way in?

# Daily Life in Bible Times – III. THE TABERNACLE

## 3. THE GATE

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### THE NEED OF A GATE

Exodus is the book of Redemption. It opens in the gloom of slavery of a nation born in the brickyards of Egypt. It closes in the glory of the tabernacle. It tells the story of how God came down and delivered a people whose only appeal to His heart of love was their need, suffering and burden. He did not deliver them because they were good folk, moral people, or better than others. This was not true of them, they had no claim on God whatsoever, but they cried and their cry came up to God. Because of their hopelessness and because of His promise to Abraham, God led them out of Egyptian bondage. He led them to Mt. Sinai and there gave them the law. Since the law cannot save, there must be some manifestation of grace, or else there can be no salvation. The Jews were utterly condemned by the law, so it was essential to have a way of grace. The tabernacle was the means of grace, and the way in was the front gate. The fence of white linen kept people out. Without a door there would be no entrance. God, in His grace, made a way into His presence -- the gate through the fence.

### THE TABERNACLE AS A TYPE OF JESUS

When the resurrected Jesus appeared on the road to Damascus and talked with the disciples there (and later with all the disciples in the upper room) He showed them what the Old Testament said about Him, starting with Moses' writings (Lk. 24:27, 44). He had earlier said Moses wrote about Him (John 5:39-40,39-40). Much of what He said were what we now call 'types.' A type is an Old Testament event foreshadowing a New Testament event, person or truth. It's sort of like seeing a shadow before you see the real object. Jonah is a type of Jesus (resurrection after 3 days - Mt 12:39-40; Lk 11:29-30). The Passover Lamb is a picture of Jesus (Jn 1:29-30; I Corinthians. 5:7). The bronze serpent being lifted up foreshadows Jesus on the cross (John 3:14-15). There are many examples. The Old Testament is full of examples and pictures of that which is more fully developed in the New Testament (I Corinthians. 10:1-6,11; Rom. 15:4; Col. 2:17). In fact, you can't really understand the spiritual truths (theology) of the New Testament without understanding the physical truths (historical happenings) of the Old Testament. This is especially true of the tabernacle. It is God's photograph album of His Son -- hundreds of pictures of Jesus. Some are close-ups, other group pictures. These pictures walk and talk, so really they are more like videos of Jesus before His birth. Understanding the tabernacle brings Jesus' life and work alive in a new and special way, especially for children. The gate through the fence is a perfect example of this.

### THE GATE

The gate was to be 30 feet wide (4 pillar spaces). It was always open, an invitation to enter. It is a wonderful picture of Jesus as the door, the way to God. In fact, He called Himself the "gate" (John 10:1-9), and the "way" to God (John 14:6). As there is only one gate into the tabernacle, Jesus is the only way to God (Acts 4:12). It is open to all, easy to find, and large enough to admit anyone. All of this speaks of Jesus (John 3:15-16; 6:51; 7:37; 10:9; Rom. 10:13). If one doesn't come in the door they will never enter God's presence and see the glories within. Unless you personally accept Jesus as your Savior you won't enter God's presence or see God's glory. The fence says "stay out," but the gate says "come in." The only entrance requirement was to come with a sacrifice. There is no admission price, no special credentials one must have, no financial or church standing, no

educational attainment, and no moral perfection needed (Ephesians 2:8-9). Just an innocent blood sacrifice (more about this next time).

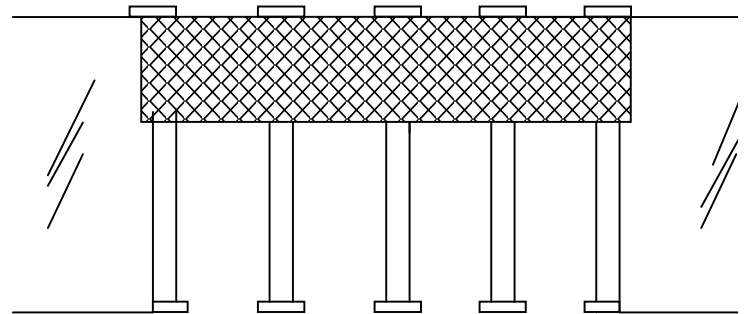
## THE EAST

The gate was always on the east side of the tabernacle, as was the entrance to the temple Solomon and Herod built. "East" in Hebrew means "front, first." It was where all directions started (like north is the basic direction we usually use). When the people would enter from the east in the morning they would be facing west with their backs to the east and the rising sun. That way there would be worshipping the rising sun as they had done in Egypt (the god 'Ra'). They had to turn their back on their pagan god to worship the true and living God.

## THE CURTAINS

The linen above the gate was different from the linen on the fence. It was the same color white, but had blue, purple and scarlet dyed threads woven into it. These colors were used throughout and we will be seeing them often. As in the fence, the white stands for Jesus' holiness and righteousness. Blue stands for heaven (the sky), God's abode. It stands for Jesus as God (John 8:23). Scarlet, the color of blood, stands for Jesus' humanity. As a man He had blood like us (Leviticus. 17:11). The red dye was made from crushing worms, also of the ground/earth. That speaks of His earthly origin and humility. Thus, Jesus is both God (blue) and man (red). When blue and red are combined they produce purple, which is the fourth color used here. Twenty-four times these colors are mentioned in connection with the tabernacle, and purple is always listed between red and blue. It speaks of Jesus as both God and man. Purple, the kingly color in ancient times, speaks of Jesus the King. He is the Messiah-King. The Messiah was prophesied to be both God and man in one, as the colors show. This is what Jesus was!

There's more! Silver hooks on the silver cap and tie rods hold this curtain up. The silver was redemption money the first-born males gave in recognition of the price paid for them to keep them from dying. Redemption is what Jesus has done for us as God-Man come to earth.



WHITE	BLUE	SCARLET	PURPLE
Jesus the Perfect Man	Jesus the Son of God	Jesus the Suffering Servant	Jesus the Messiah King
Luke	John	Mark	Matthew



## Daily Life in Bible Times – III. THE TABERNACLE

### 4. BRONZE ALTAR

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If you had been a Jew in Moses' day taking a Gentile through the tabernacle, he would have been very dismayed, confused, and shocked. In all the pagan nations, the idol of their god was the whole idea of their temple, but there was no image of God in the Jews' tabernacle. This was by God's direct command (Exodus 20:4-6). God could have put an impressive image of Himself there, like He revealed to Isaiah, John on Patmos, and others. But an idol would just show outer form and appearance. God was more interested in His people understanding His inward reality. Thus, everything in the tabernacle speaks of the person He is. The fence shows man can't enter God's presence unless sinless, and the gate shows how to have sins removed -- coming through Jesus only. What was first encountered upon entering the gate was extremely shocking and revealing. It was the bronze altar (Exodus 27:1-8; 38:1-7).

#### THE MAJESTY OF THE ALTAR

Usually we get a building first, then furnish it. With God's building the furniture is of the most importance, the building is just to house it. The seven (perfection) pieces of furniture are God's main teaching tool. As man approached God the first piece of furniture He encountered was the bronze altar (also called the altar of burnt offering and the altar of sacrifice). It spoke of the first step in man's approach to God.

It was located right by the gate - you couldn't miss it! You had to come by way of it. It was very large - 7'-6" square and 4'-6" high. It was larger than all the other six pieces of furniture put together, showing its great significance.

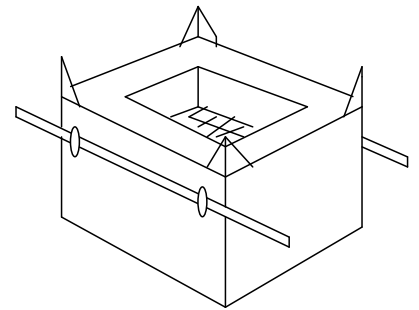
#### THE MATERIALS OF THE ALTAR

It was made of acacia wood, which is a very hard, durable, close-grained wood known for its strength. It was used for shipbuilding because it was very resistant to decay. All this speaks of Jesus as a man (Isaiah 53:2): from the earth, rooted in dry ground (acacia grew in the desert), short life span, didn't decay, etc.

The wood frame was covered with bronze, which was the most fire-resistant of all metals, because it is so hard. Bronze is used in the Bible as being symbolic of judgment (Revelation 1:15, John 3:14-15; Daniel, etc.). It tells of Jesus who took our judgment (Jn 3:14-15; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13). Christ, like bronze, was the One best suited to take our judgment of hell fire. As a man (wood), He was judged on the cross for our sins (bronze). Wood alone would have charred and burned. Bronze alone would have been too heavy to carry, but together they were perfect.

The inside was empty, hollow (as Jesus 'emptied' Himself to become a man (wood) (Phil. 2:7). A grate was placed half way down to hold the animal sacrifices which were burnt on the altar.

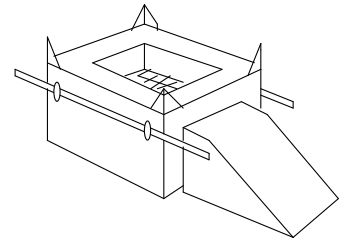
There was a 'horn' on each corner. This was an extension of the corner, turned upwards. It was used to tie the animal down before killing it and to help hold the carcass from falling off the altar when being burnt. Horns were symbolic of strength and power (as horns of an animal). They speak of Jesus' unlimited power and strength. While the animal sacrifice had to be tied down, Jesus went



willingly to the cross, held there by His love for us and nothing else (John 10:19; Phil. 2:9). These horns also stood for mercy, for someone wrongly charged with murder could escape revenge by fleeing to the horns of the altar and holding on there where they would be safe (I Kings. 1:50-51; 2:28).

## THE MINISTRY AT THE ALTAR

No steps could be built to the altar, for the pagans used them for their godless worship (Exodus 20:26), but a ramp of dirt was built going up to it so the priest could stand and minister. The priest was raised up above the people to offer sacrifice, as Jesus was raised up on the cross to offer His sacrifice.



Also, there were poles of wood covered with bronze slipped through rings so the bronze altar could be carried everywhere with the Jews. Jesus goes with us wherever we go, nothing can separate us from the love of Jesus (Romans 8:35-39). It was portable because the Jews were always on the move, not settling down in one spot. We, too, are strangers and pilgrims on their earth, wandering until we reach our final home in heaven.

## THE MAINTENANCE OF THE ALTAR

Fire came from God's presence to light the fire on the bronze altar (Leviticus. 9:24) and then it never went out. Fire is judgment, sent from God to consume the sacrifices offered there (Isaiah 66:15; 30:30; 29:6). Fire destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, disobedient Jews in the wilderness, and will be burning forever in hell! A holy God must judge sin, and when a person placed his hands on an innocent animal, thus identifying that animal with his sin, the animal had to die. Its throat was slit by the altar and after bleeding, the animal was burnt on the fire. Sin causes death and eternity in hell. This is what Jesus went through on the cross for us. That's why He said "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Because He took our death and eternal hell fire we don't have to (Rom 8:1). In the early days of the American West prairie fires would sweep through, killing everyone in their path. The settlers learned from the Indians to set a fire near them before the main fire arrived, then to step in the burnt-over area while the main fire roared past. "Where the fire has been the fire cannot come," the Indians said. That's exactly what happens when we put ourselves under the cross, where God's fire of judgment has already fallen. Our sins are forever paid for and gone!

But what about the innocent animals that died? God's teaching from the Garden of Eden on is that innocent animals must die to cover sin as a picture of Jesus' death on the cross for our sin. It was Jesus Himself before His birth in Eden that killed those animals to cover Adam and Eve, knowing they were a picture of what He would do on the cross. Millions of innocent animals died in the Old Testament, showing the awfulness of sin. They didn't remove sin, but foreshadowed Jesus' blood shed on the cross which does remove sin (Heb. 9:22; I Pt. 3:18; 2:24; Isaiah 53:5-6; Mt. 26:28; 2 Corinthians. 5:21; I John 1:7). Have you come to God by way of the altar of sacrifice, the cross of Jesus? There's no other way to enter but with an innocent blood offering - Jesus' blood shed for you. The tabernacle vividly showed the importance of coming by innocent blood. Upon entering the tabernacle, one would see animals, smoke, hear the screams of the dying animals, smell the smoke and burning flesh & hair, feel the mud between their barefooted toes (made from all the blood spilled on the ground) and even taste the burnt meat in the air. Don't forget we come to God the same way today!

# Daily Life in Bible Times – III. THE TABERNACLE

## 5. THE LAVER

One day years ago the King of England was out for a walk. It started raining so he went to the nearest home, all wet and bedraggled, and asked to borrow an umbrella, saying he would return it the next day. The lady of the house didn't trust him, so she gave him a very old, falling-apart umbrella, thinking she wouldn't see it again. Imagine her surprise the next day when an army officer dressed in his finest uniform came and returned the umbrella! Then she realized it was the king, but she had missed her opportunity to give the king her best. Often we miss an opportunity to give God our best when He comes calling, too. The Laver in the tabernacle shows us how to always be ready and to never miss an opportunity for service.

As priests we must always be clean and ready for God's service. The priests in the tabernacle had to be clean so they could serve. If not opportunities for servicing their sovereign would pass by. The laver was the place of cleansing.

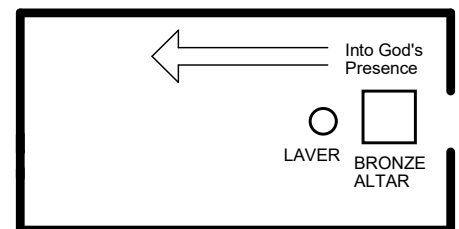
### THE LAVER IS FOR CLEANSING

"Laver" is the same as "lavatory" and refers to a place to wash. The laver was for cleansing, because the priests had to be clean in order to serve God. God is a clean (holy) God and those who serve Him must be clean, too (Psalm 24:3-4).

Note that the laver is only for the priests. All Christians today are priests (I Pt. 2:5-9). Although they were once washed at the start of their service (salvation) they continually got dirty in their service to God. The ground was muddy, the fire dirty, blood was everywhere.

### THE LAVER FOLLOWS THE BRONZE ALTAR

The only piece of furniture in the outer court besides the bronze altar was the laver. The altar was the once-for-all cleansing of salvation by the blood of Jesus (John 3:16). The laver stands for the moment-by-moment cleansing needed of sins after salvation (I John 1:9). Both are necessary to serve God (I John 5:6; Titus 3:5). "Rock of Ages," the well-known hymn, refers to this: "Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in Thee; Let the water (laver) and the blood (altar), from Thy wounded side which flowed (crucifixion, where cleansing provided for). Be of sin the double cure (sins past - salvation/bronze altar; sins present: confession/laver). Save from wrath (judgment [bronze] not on us but on Jesus at bronze altar) and make me pure (daily cleansing in the laver as we become more Christ like)."

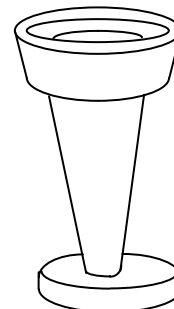


BRONZE ALTAR	LAVER
Meeting place between God & Man, where sacrifice made (cross, Christ's blood)	Place for constant cleansing of hands and feet, necessity of cleansing after salvation.
Fire = judgment on sin	Water = removing later defilement
Used only once (Heb. 9:26-28)	Used constantly, daily I Jn 1:8-10; Jn 13:1-11
Forgiveness of guilt of sin	Cleansing from defilements in life
For unbeliever ("believe")	For believer ("confess")
For sinner - punishment of sin	For sin - cleansing from sin
Death of Christ pictured to remove sin	Resurrection of Christ pictured to forgive, intercede in heaven today

In John 13:1-11 Jesus clearly explains this to Peter and the other disciples when He washes their feet. He says they are already washed (salvation) but need cleansing (confession of their pride and self-centeredness). Only one has never been washed and that is Judas. They don't need another whole bath (salvation is once-for-all) but do need daily cleansing (confession). The Greek words Jesus uses for 'bath' and 'wash' refer to the public 'bath' where the whole body would be clean, but upon arrival back at home the hands and feet would need to be 'washed' from dust and dirt picked up on the way. This is how it is as we serve God in this life, too.

## CLEANSING BY WATER

The laver was made out of bronze - judgment. Christ took our judgment of sin after salvation as well as before! It was made of highly polished bronze which was used for mirrors. The Bible is our mirror, which we are to look in and see our sin (James 1:23-25). Then when 'dirt' is noticed it must be washed away. We wash by the water of the Word (Psalm 119:9; Ephesians 5:25-26; John 15:3; John 3:5; Titus 3:5; Heb. 10:22; I Pt. 1:22). God always provides for man's cleansing, and when we confess (admit our sin, agree with God that it is sin and deserving of eternal hell) we are cleansed (I John 1:9). God completely forgets we ever sinned; it is gone forever (Psalm 103). That dirt will never be back. When washed that dirt is gone totally and forever. That's what it means to be washed in the blood of the Lamb!



Four times God told the priests that if they weren't clean they would lose their opportunity to serve Him (Leviticus. 8:6), for He is serious about His priests being clean. Salvation wasn't at stake for them or us, but daily service opportunities were. Sometimes God removes them from this life prematurely and takes them to heaven. He does that today, too, when a believer repeatedly refuses to submit to God and live a clean life of service for Him (I John 5:16; I Corinthians. 5:1-5; 11:30; I Chronicles. 10:13; Acts 5:1-10; John 15:1-5; Numbers. 20:12; 2 Corinthians. 2:5-11; Jeremiah. 7:16; 14:11).

When they traveled the Jews always took the altar with them. Cleansing always is necessary and available. No size is given for the laver. There is no limit to God's cleansing power. The Jews did have to surrender their mirrors (vanity, pride) and humbly come to God for cleansing, as must we.

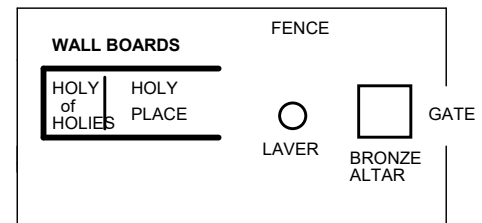
An interesting side note is that the laver in heaven has no water in it, for there will be no cleansing of sin necessary there (Revelation 15:1-3). Instead of water there is a glass in it to reflect God's glory. He gets the credit and honor for our cleansing, not us!

Don't be like the lady who missed serving her king. Always be clean and ready to serve your King. You've come to the altar and accepted Jesus' free gift of salvation, but don't hang around the altar your whole live. Move closer to His presence by continued cleansing whenever necessary. Be a clean priest!

## Daily Life in Bible Times – III. THE TABERNACLE

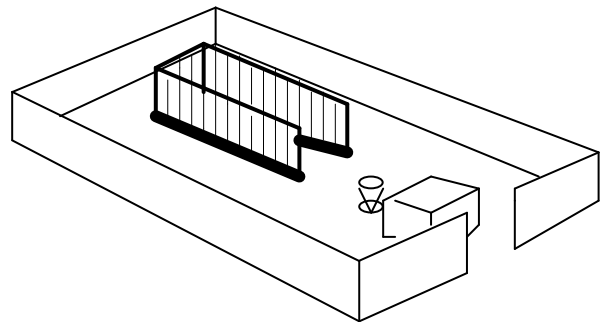
### 6. THE WALL

If you've ever gone camping you know what a difficulty it can be setting up and breaking down camp. Suppose you had to do that regularly for 40 years! You'd certainly want a tent that was easy to erect, easy to take down, and easy to move. That's the way God designed the tabernacle. Despite its large size, it was very portable. It was the first pre-fab building! God designed it that way (Exodus 26:15-30; 36:20-34; 30:11-16). It was a building inside the fence, past the laver. It was 45' long, 15' high and 15' wide (3 perfect cubes side by side). The first 2 cubes were called the Holy Place, the inner one the Holy of Holies. This was where the furniture was housed and the priests ministered.



#### BOARDS

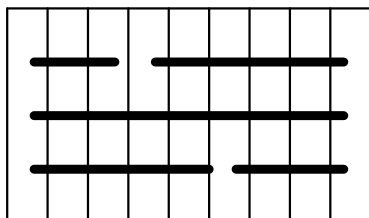
The tabernacle building was made of 48 boards: 20 on north and south wall, 6 on west wall, and one extra in back two corners for extra strength. The boards were 15' by 2'-6" and about 4" thick. They were made of acacia wood. It was hard to get wood that large, and the boards were quite heavy. As we saw before, the wood was a picture of Jesus as a man. He was a man in the full sense of the word (John 1:1,14; Heb. 2:17,14; I Tim. 2:5; I Pt. 2:22; John 3:5; 2 Corinthians. 5:21). Acacia wood was hard-grained, wouldn't rot or decay, very sturdy, and had no defects or failures in it. It pictures Jesus, also of the ground (as was wood), with no defects or failures (Heb. 4:15; 7:25; I Pt. 2:22; I John 3:5).



The wooden boards were then covered with gold about the thickness of a postcard. Gold always stands for deity, glory. The wood shows Jesus as man and the gold as God - together they show Jesus as God-man, both in one. The two materials didn't become a third material but stayed what they were, both separate but still one. Jesus was both God and man in one, but those two didn't form a third union. They were separate and distinct, but still one! While the outer court had bronze (altar, laver) now that we are past judgment (altar = salvation; laver = daily cleansing) everything is gold, showing Jesus' glory. You won't be able to see Jesus' glory if there is sin in your life. Jesus came to earth to take on the wood of our humanity so that we might partake of the gold of His deity!

#### BARs

To stabilize these boards and keep them in a straight line there were five bars on each side and the back. One long one went across the middle, two shorter ones above and below. These went from beginning to end, holding everything together. They speak of Jesus, Who was the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End (Revelation 1:8,17) and who holds the universe and everything in it together now (Col. 1:17).



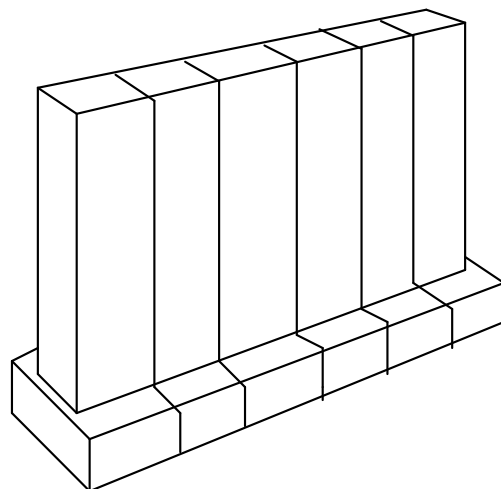
## BASE

To anchor the boards and hold them upright there was a large silver base at the bottom of each. Two tenions projected out the bottom of each board to fit into holds in the silver sockets. There was one base for each board, thus they were easier to transport. These supported the weight of the walls, bars and covering curtains. This was the foundation, as Jesus

is the foundation on which the church is built. Jesus carried the weight of God's judgment on the cross (Isaiah 22:20-25). Being made of silver, which stands for redemption, shows this same thing. All we are and have is founded on Jesus' redemption for us (John 12:24; I Corinthians. 6:20; I Pt. 1:18-19; Acts 20:28; Heb. 2:9). Redemption is the basis of everything, holds everything up, and allows us to come into God's presence.

To really understand the significance of silver standing for redemption we must go back. When the Jews left Egypt the ransom payment for the first-born to live was the blood of the Passover Lamb on the doorposts. God paid it. From then on, though, and as a reminder that He redeemed them from Egypt, the men regularly had to pay a ransom tax in silver (Exodus 30:11-16).

It was the first use of this that brought in the money used for the silver in the tabernacle construction. It was only 62 cents a person, so each could afford it, but each had to pay it himself. No one could pay it for another. It had to be a sanctuary shekel that was used -- it had to meet God's standard. All this speaks of their (and our) redemption. It was a clear reminder that sin demands punishment and a price must be paid for sin to be removed. They knew the silver didn't remove their sin, but was a picture of the price that God would pay to remove it (I Pt. 1:18). Just as the blood of animals didn't cover sin (Heb. 10:4), it pictured the coming sacrifice of Jesus that would do so. The blood shows the mode of atonement, the silver the cost of atonement. Both speak of the same thing. If the men didn't pay a plague would come upon them. In David's day 70,000 died because of this. When the price was paid the man was counted in the census as part of Israel and belonged to God. He was assigned a place in the army to fight the enemy and given a position in the camp. God was His leader. This happens to each believer when He is redeemed by the blood of Jesus today, too!



## NO FLOOR

Imagine the beauty inside the tabernacle! Gold walls and beautifully embroidered ceiling made it like no other building the Jews had ever seen! The strange thing was that this beautiful building had no floor! Imagine a multi-million dollar building with a dirt floor. When they looked down and saw the dirt they were reminded they were just pilgrims wandering this earth. There was no permanent location for the tabernacle, nor for them (or us), in this life. "This world is not my home, I'm just a passin' through." Besides, they were to look UP to see God's beauty and glory, not look down. When we look down we find nothing that satisfies or beautifies. We only see God's glory by looking up. Which direction are you looking? What are your sights on? Remember the tabernacle, look up, not down, as you travel this pilgrim road.

# Daily Life in Bible Times – III. THE TABERNACLE

## 7. THE CURTAINS

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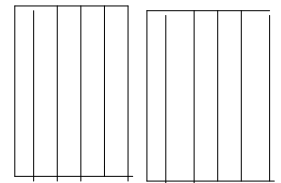
Every time God has appeared to man it has been the Second Person of the Trinity (called Jesus in the New Testament). No one has ever seen God the Father (John 1:18) and the Holy Spirit has no visible form. God the Son was the person of the Trinity who appeared to man in the New Testament, and it only stands to reason in the Old Testament, too. He is the one who walked and talked with Adam & Eve in Eden, then killed the first animals to cover their sin (a picture of what He Himself later would do). He appeared to Hagar in the desert, to Abraham before Sodom was destroyed, and to the 3 Jews in the fiery furnace. He wrestled with Jacob. God always reaches out to man in the Person of the Son. Thus, it is no surprise that the tabernacle is a picture of Jesus, the Son of God. Since it is His dwelling place on earth, all of it clearly teaches about Him. We have seen it in the fence, gate, altar, laver, and walls. We will see it in the curtains, too.

### ROOF OF THE TABERNACLE

The roof of the tabernacle was made by laying four layers of large pieces of material, one on top of the other, on top of the walls and hanging down the sides. The first was white linen with embroidered cherubim, the second goat's skin, the third ram's skin dyed red, and the fourth dugong skin. Let's look at each one.

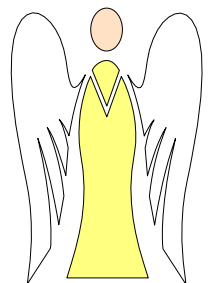
### THE LINEN CURTAIN

The first curtain was composed of 10 strips of white linen 42' by 6' (Exodus 26:1-6; 36:8-13). Five were sewed together lengthwise, and so were the other five. Then these two halves were fastened with hoops and clasps. This made a curtain 60' by 42'. The white linen stands for Jesus' purity and righteousness (Heb. 7:26), as in the fence.



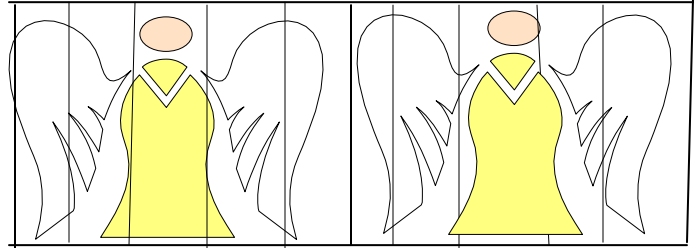
It wasn't left pure white, though, for blue, scarlet and purple thread was embroidered into it. As in the gate, the blue stands for heaven (Jesus as God), the red for earth (made from worms, blood of a man - Jesus as man), and the purple for blue and red together (Jesus as God and man), the kingly/Messiah color.

Instead of the colors being embroidered in any haphazard pattern, as on the gate linen, this linen was to be designed in the form of cherubim. They are the highest order of angels, emblems of the all-mighty God (that is what 'cherub' means; the 'im' ending is plural in Hebrew, like we add 's' at the end of a word). They are majestic, kingly, almost limitless in power, the masters of nature's forces, and the executors of judgment (Mt. 13:41-42). They represent God's greatness and protect His holiness (they were placed outside Eden to keep man out). God would not allow a representation of Himself to be made for it would become an idol, so He used the next greatest thing in the universe - cherubim. Since they were created by God and now bow down and serve God they show that God is even greater than they are! They will also be on the veil and mercy seat. If they worship and serve God, man certainly should, too!





The priests who served in the tabernacle walked beneath these curtains, for they formed the ceiling above them. As they looked up they saw this tremendous manifestation of the glory of God, wings and power everywhere! That's why so many Psalms refer to the safety of being under God's wings (Psalm 61:4, 7; 17:8; 57:1; 91:4; 36:7; etc.). It was a place of security, trust, refuge, comfort and worship. They couldn't be seen from the outside, only by those who entered in and looked up could see them. That is how God's glory is to us, too.



The 50 blue loops (heaven) and gold clasps (deity) that held the two halves together were right above the veil dividing the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. In fact, they helped hold it up. Everything here is a tribute to Jesus' deity and glory and majesty. Seeing that causes praise!

### **GOAT'S HAIR CURTAIN**

Above this curtain was a curtain of goat's hair (Exodus 26:7-13; 36:14-18). It was made of 11 strips 45' by 6' sewed together in groups of five and six. The halves were joined by 50 bronze loops and clasps. The bronze, as well as the goat's hair, speak of judgment on sin. Goats were used for sin offerings (Leviticus. 4:23, 27-28; 9:2-3; Numbers. 7:16; 15:24,27; 28:11, 15). As there were 11 sections of curtain, so there were 11 special sacrifices that required a goat. On the Day of Atonement, a goat was offered as a scape-goat (Leviticus 16; Numbers. 28:11-15). Jesus was our scape-goat, our sin offering to God (Isaiah 53:6, 10; Heb. 9:14, 26, 28; 10:10, 14; 2 Corinthians. 5:21; Ephesians 5:2).

### **RAM'S SKIN DYED RED COVERING**

No detailed information is given about this covering, only that it is to be of ram's skin and placed over the goat's hair curtain (Exodus 26:14; 39:19). The ram was used as a substitute. One was killed when a man was consecrated to the priesthood. God provided a ram for Isaac's sacrifice when Abraham was about to kill him (Genesis. 22:24). It pictures Christ as our substitute (I Pt. 3:18; 2:21; 2 Corinthians. 5:21; I Corinthians. 15:4; Galatians 1:4; Isaiah 53:6; Rom. 4:25; 5:8; John 3:16). They were dyed red as a picture of Jesus' blood (Isaiah 1:18). Christ, our substitute, shed his blood in our place (ram's skin) as a sin offering for us (goats' hair). This is why we glorify Him (linen with cherubim).

### **DUGONG SKIN COVERING**

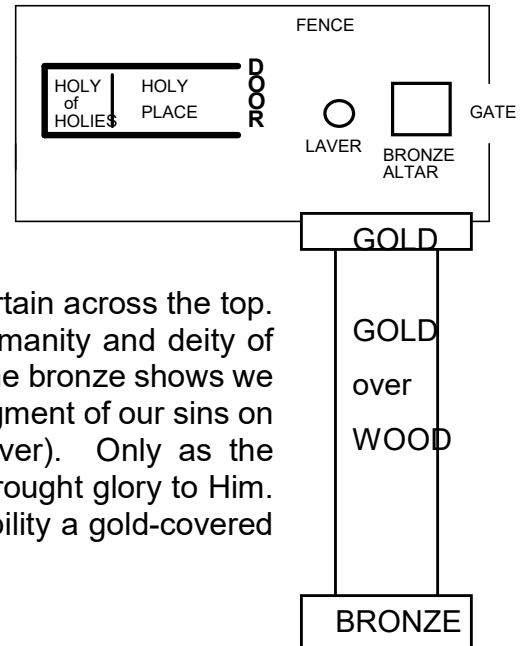
No details are given, expect that it was to top covering (Exodus 26:14; 36:19). King James translates the word 'badgers,' but they are nowhere near there! Scholars agree it was a manatee-type animal (seal, porpoise, dugong). It was a thick, tough covering (sandals were made of this). This offered protection to that within (as Jesus does for us). From the outside the tabernacle was unattractive, no different than the other tents around it. As a man Jesus looked like everyone else (Isaiah 53:2-3). He couldn't be distinguished from the other disciples, which is why Judas was paid to point Him out. From the outside, in appearance, Jesus looks the same as everyone else. His great beauty can't be seen or appreciated from the outside, only by those who enter in (John 1:10-13).

Have you come in by faith? Do you see His glory and majesty? Do you therefore live your life in praise and worship to Him because He was your sin offering, your substitute? You should.

## Daily Life in Bible Times – III. THE TABERNACLE

### 8. THE DOOR

The generation of Jews that left Egypt with Moses was totally uneducated. They were fourth generation slaves. God had to teach deep spiritual truths to 2.5 million illiterate people, so He gave them an object lesson -- the tabernacle. The idea worked so well as a teaching tool that the Jews' pagan neighbors picked up the idea and started building their own temples in the same pattern. In fact, they still use temples in the same basic outline today. These are Satan's counterfeits, to pervert God's truth and keep the Glory from Him. Still, the tabernacle was a tremendous teaching tool and had a profound effect upon the young nation. It got them started in the right direction. It taught those who couldn't read about God. It showed everyone in a very visible way how to have fellowship with God and serve Him. It continues to teach us today, too. This time we will look at the door into the tabernacle building.

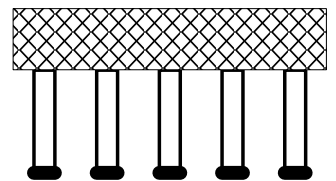


#### THE PILLARS

The door was built of 5 pillars covered with gold and a curtain across the top. Again, it was made constructed of wood covered with gold (humanity and deity of Jesus). This pillar was put on a bronze base with a silver cap. The bronze shows we can only come into God's presence through judgment -- His judgment of our sins on the cross for salvation (bronze altar) and daily cleansing (laver). Only as the God/man (gold & wood) could Jesus take our judgment. This brought glory to Him. The top of the pillar had a gold cap. To give the five pillars stability a gold-covered wood girder connected the tops.

#### THE CURTAIN

Over the front of the door was a curtain. In the East rich and elaborately embroidered curtains hung over the doors and entrances of tents which were occupied by the chiefs and princes of the nations. By having a curtain like this over His door, God is saying in unmistakable language that HE is the king, the ruler of His people, Israel. They understood this. God took it further, for the material and colors told about Him as their King.



The white linen showed Jesus as pure and perfect. The colors woven into the curtain were blue (heaven, Jesus as God), red (blood, Jesus as man), and purple (blue & red, Jesus as God-man). Not only do these for aspects of Jesus line up with the four gospels, but also with the robes Jesus wore before His crucifixion. Pilate declared Jesus innocent so he put a white robe on Him before sending Him to Herod (Lk. 23:11). Herod agreed with His innocence and sent Him back to Pilate in the white robe. Then Pilate put a purple robe on Him, mocking Him as being the King of the Jews (John 19:5,14). When He carried the cross to Golgotha He wore a scarlet robe (Mt. 27:28), the traditional color worn when one was executed. What color was Jesus' own seamless robe the soldiers gambled for? The Bible doesn't say, but it certainly could have been blue, the fourth color!

## THE SIGNIFICANCE

Actually, there are three doors in the tabernacle. One is the gate, two this door, and three the veil. All faced east, all were made of white linen with blue, scarlet and purple embroidery, and all lined up in a straight row. All were 110 cubits square. All hid what was in from those without, and led the way into a place closer to God's presence. They are similar because they all speak of the same person - Jesus!

<b>GATE TO THE COURT</b>	<b>DOOR TO THE TENT</b>
Available to any sinner	For those who have come by blood (bronze altar) and water (laver) only.
For those seeking salvation	For those who are saved and continually cleansed and now seek to worship and serve God.
Wider (20 x 5), therefore open for all	More narrow, but higher (10 x 10) showing worship & service is a higher privilege, but narrower because fewer enter that door

This second entrance, the door, was the entrance to the Holy Place. It let worshippers in. It was part of the process of entering God's presence and service (Phil 1:6). This, like the front gate, speaks of Jesus as the way to God. We give thanks to God in the name of Jesus (Ephesians 5:20). It is by Him we are to continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise (Heb. 13:15). Our spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God only by Jesus Christ (I Pt. 2:12). In our service to God, He is to be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ (I Pt. 4:11). There is no worship of God, no service for God, no fellowship with God apart from coming through Jesus.

The door was always open, always available for anyone. It was as wide open as could be, the whole width of the building. Still, not many came. Out of all the Jews only a small percentage came through the gate in the fence to the bronze altar (salvation, Heb. 9:14), then only a portion of those moved in further to avail themselves of the daily cleansing at the altar (confession, I John 1:9). Even of those, not many move into deep communion, fellowship, service and worship with God found inside the tabernacle building, through the door. The front gate was 20 cubits wide by 5 high (100 square cubits), while the door into the building was 10 cubits wide by 10 high (100 square cubits). They are the same square cubits, material, colors, etc., for they speak of the same person (Jesus), but the gate is twice as wide (more enter that than the door) while the door is twice as high (service and worship of God is a higher calling than salvation). Have you entered the gate (accept Jesus' free gift of salvation)? I hope so. It means the difference between heaven and hell! But what about the second entrance, the door? Have you entered into a close relationship of service, fellowship and worship with God? I hope so. It means the difference between victory and defeat, peace and emptiness, fruitfulness and barrenness. If you haven't please do enter into the fullness of His presence in all you do (just what that means and how we do it will be described by the furniture inside the building).

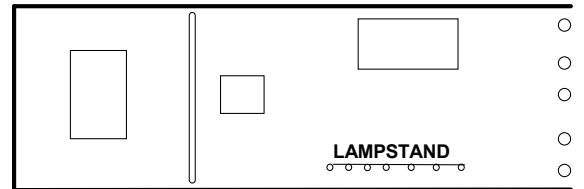
## Daily Life in Bible Times – III. THE TABERNACLE

### 9. THE LAMPSTAND

I love windows! One time I worked in a room without windows and it was awful. Windows let in light. When buying a house people always look at the windows. They are very important. But wait a minute! Where are the windows in the tabernacle building? There aren't any! Did God forget them? Hardly! Then how can the priests see to serve, fellowship and worship? Not by natural light, for natural light (physical or spiritual) doesn't produce these things! Instead, God provided His light within, as He does within us (I Corinthians. 2:14-15). It was a large lampstand (Exodus 25:31-40; 27:20-21; 37:17-24; Numbers. 8:1-4).

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE LAMPSTAND

The lampstand was pure gold - total deity of Jesus. When traveling it was to be covered by a blue cloth (also deity of Jesus). No measurements are given as to its size (Jesus' glory and deity can't be measured, they have no limit). Jewish tradition says it was built from about 125 pounds of gold and was about 5 feet high. Actually, it was a large floor lamp. It was located on the south wall (on the left as you enter). "South" in Hebrew means "warmth, light, blessing" for that is the side the sun is usually on.



#### FUNCTION OF THE LAMPSTAND

The function of the lampstand was to provide light for those serving, fellowshiping and worshipping inside. God is light, and He provides light for man (2 Corinthians. 3:12 - 4:6). Throughout the ages man has worshipped the sun, because of the importance of its light. In Egypt the sun was worshipped as Ra. In the tabernacle God is showing we come to Him by His light, not natural light (I Corinthians. 2:14-15). When Jesus walked on the earth, He clearly equated Himself with light (John 1:1-9; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46). Jesus, as light, reveals things for what they are (John 3:19-21), guides in the way to go (John 11:9), brings health and growth, and is necessary for life. Light is contrasted with darkness, which stands for sin and evil (Prov. 4:19; John 3:19). The world today is in darkness (Rom. 1:22, 25). Man, like bugs under a rock, tries to hide from the light (Revelation 6:15-17). Light is greater than darkness, though. Light can remove darkness, but darkness cannot remove light (John 11:9). Unfortunately, the Jews missed the real meaning of the lampstand. While it is their national symbol today (called the menorah, meaning "lampstand," or "lightbearer") they are in spiritual darkness, having rejected God's light and Messiah. Let that be a lesson for us! We can only function in God's presence as we walk in His light (I John 1:6-7). If we try to live by our light/reasoning/power we will fail.

God Himself is light. His presence in the ark gave Noah and his family light inside. His presence in the cloud provided light (Shekinah glory). In the future there will be no sun, the New Jerusalem will be lit by God's own presence (Revelation 22:5).

#### CONSTRUCTION OF THE LAMPSTAND

There is more detail about the lampstand than any other piece of furniture in the tabernacle. Also, it is pictured carved in stone in the Arch of Titus in Rome as a tribute to Titus' defeat of Israel in 70 AD. Thus, we know exactly what it looked like.

The center stalk supported and held up the others. It pictures Jesus. The six (number of man) branches stand for us who are attached to Him. As John 15 describes with the vine and branches, we must be in union with Christ to produce fruit. We are to produce His light (Mt. 5:14) for others.

The whole lampstand was formed from one solid piece of gold beaten and pounded into shape. This speaks of the sufferings Christ went through to mold and form Him (Heb. 2:10; Phil. 1:29) and which we must go through, too.

Everything in the lampstand speaks of Jesus' deity: solid gold (deity), 7 (number of perfection) lights, central stalk (Jesus as number one), and producing light (Christ as the light of the world).

### **DECORATION OF THE LAMPSTAND**

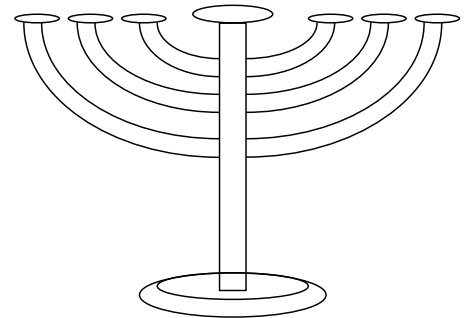
The lampstand wasn't just plain gold, it was formed and molded into the shape of a bud, flower and blossom/fruit of an almost plant. Each branch had 3 sets of these (3 = number of deity) and the central stalk, being superior (Christ) had one more, four. The Almond tree was the first to bud in Palestine in spring (like crocus' here) being a sign of coming life. It shows life out of death, resurrection life. The beating wasn't senseless, but for a purpose - to produce resurrection life in us. Aaron's rod that budded was almond, showing the same thing -- God's power over death.

### **ILLUMINATION BY THE LAMPSTAND**

Still, this beautifully formed lampstand has no light of itself! It is just the holder for the oil that burns to produce light. Never call this a 'candlestick,' for candles were unknown then. Each branch held an almond-shaped bowl with oil in it. God commanded they use only pure olive oil (Exodus 27:20; Leviticus. 24:2; 8:12). All the vessels in the tabernacle were to be anointed with this when first dedicated, as well as the priests and sacrifices. The Bible clearly and repeatedly says that oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit (Zech. 4:2-6; Revelation 4:5; Heb. 1:9; Acts 2:4). It is God's Holy Spirit in us that illuminates us and reveals God's truth to us today (John 16:12-15; I Corinthians. 12:14-15) just as the lampstand did in the tabernacle.

Oil doesn't burn by itself. It needs a wick. These were made from old priests' garments -- white linen which pictured Jesus' purity. The wick had to be maintained so there was light and not smoke in the tabernacle. There were tongs to pull the wick so it could be trimmed and snuff dishes to bring life coals from the bronze altar to start the light (Exodus 25:38). The center one (Jesus) was always lit first. In church today which use candles the acolytes always start with the central/highest candle, as they did in the tabernacle. The lampstand's light was never extinguished, it always burned when the tabernacle was set up and operating.

By the way, how is your light shining for Jesus? It is burning brightly or smoking and giving off a foul odor? If it needs some maintenance work, see to it! Trim away the bad parts (confess your sin) and ask God to fill you with His oil/Holy Spirit so you can shine brightly for Him. Live in His light and let His light shine through you for others!



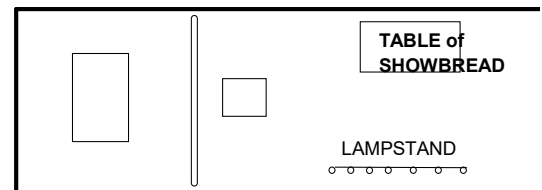
# Daily Life in Bible Times – III. THE TABERNACLE

## 10. TABLE OF SHOWBREAD

What is fellowship? We use the word often, even build 'fellowship' halls in our churches. We use the word to refer to eating lunch together, going bowling, having a picnic, or sitting around talking about football and friends. Yet none of that is what true fellowship is. The table of Showbread explains what fellowship really is. God gave Moses the instructions to build it (Exodus 25:23-30; 37:10-16).

### THE TABLE ITSELF

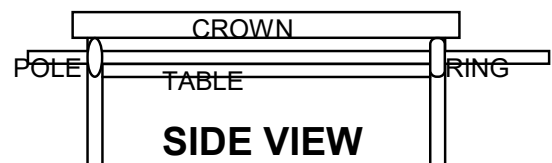
The table was on the north wall of the tabernacle building, on your right as you entered, across from the lampstand. It was also carved on Titus' Arch in Rome so we still have a picture of it today.



This is the first mention of a table in the Bible, and it's God's table. It was to be 3' wide, 1'-6" wide, and 2'-3" high. It is far smaller than the altar, because far fewer people come to the table (fellowship with God & others) than come to the altar (salvation). The height of the table is of the same height as the grate on the altar (where the sacrifice was burnt) and the mercy seat, showing that fellowship is paid for by Jesus' blood.

The table was made of wood (humanity of Jesus) covered with gold (deity of Jesus). As a man Jesus ate, spoke, got hungry, thirsty and tired, and shed tears. As God He gave eternal life, raised the dead, forgave sin and healed sickness. As man He was so tired He fell asleep in a boat despite a raging storm. As God He woke up and calmed the storm with a command.

The table was anointed with oil (Holy Spirit) before use, like Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit (dove at baptism) before His ministry.



Around the top of the table was a gold border like a crown (Jesus crowned with glory and honor, Heb. 2:9. It helped keep the articles on the table when it was being carried places. It was 4" high, called a "handbreadth," and reminds us that we are safe in Jesus' hand while traveling through this life (John 10:28).

Like all articles of furniture, the table had rings and poles to carry it everywhere. Wherever we go we can have fellowship with God and man.

There were to be three coverings over the table while traveling (Numbers. 4:7-8). Blue material (heavenly origin, deity of Jesus), scarlet material (human blood, Jesus a man), and dugong skins for humility as well as protection.

### CONTENTS OF THE TABLE

The table held three items: bread, wine and frankincense. The bread was composed of two stacks of 6 loaves each. Twelve is the number of eternal election, God's sovereign choosing. There was one loaf for each of the 12 tribes, each equal before God despite differences (number, wealth, etc.) on earth. We today as believers are all one and equal before God as the bread is all one (I Corinthians. 10:17).

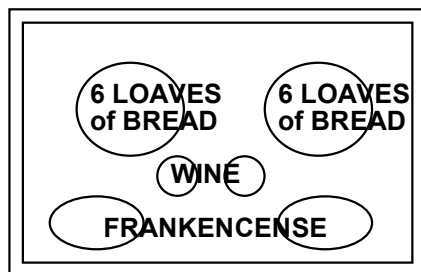


Bread is first mentioned in the Bible in Genesis. 3:19 where man has to work for it. It was the staple of life, the main (and often only) food item for most people throughout history. It was so important to the Egyptians that they considered it sacred. Bread stood for nourishment, provision and sustenance. For this reason, Jesus called Himself the "Bread of Life" (John 6). Both Jesus and bread are necessary for life, liked by and suitable for all, and satisfy man's basic needs (one physically, the other spiritually). Jesus is from Bethlehem, the "house of bread." The bread was put on the table to show this about Jesus, thus it is called "Showbread."

At this very time the Jews were fed on manna from heaven, given by God. Jesus compares Himself to manna, saying He is superior to it (John 6:32-33).

MANNA	CHRIST
Needed for life to continue physically	Needed for life to exist spiritually
Sent miraculously from heaven	Miraculous birth from above
Shaped round	Completely perfect
White in color	Totally pure, sinless
Placed on the ground	Took humble form of a man
Sustainer of life	Savior of live
Appealed to any taste	Meets all man's needs
Benefit varied according to need & condition of eater	Supplies each individual person's own needs
Whatever the eater needed the manna was to him	Whatever man's needs, that Jesus became to him
Supplied while in the wilderness, stopped when entered the Promised Land	Supplied to meet needs & help through our journey this side of 'Promised Land'
Moses the agent, gave directions for collection	God the Father the real giver of manna and Christ
Moses brought the manna to God's people	God gave the real bread of life - Christ Himself
Good for physical nourishment	Good for spiritual nourishment
Manna was found on the ground	Christ, the Bread of Life, was lifted up on the cross (as bread lifted up on Table of Showbread)
Shows God as life-GIVER	Shows Christ as life-SUSTAINER

God gave clear directions as to how this bread was to be made. The grain had to be ground very fine to remove all roughness (Jesus through the mill of suffering, John 12:24, 27). Leaven was prohibited, for it is a picture of sin the way it grows until destroys all unless stopped (I Corinthians. 5:8; Mt. 16:12; Exodus 12:15, 19; 13:7; Leviticus. 2:11; Dt. 16:4; Mt. 16:6; Mk. 8:15; Lk. 12:1; Galatians 5:9). This speaks of Jesus' sinlessness. This matzo is what the Jews used and still use at Passover. Before baking it was 'pierced' (Leviticus. 2:4), a picture of Jesus' suffering on the cross for us. Jewish tradition says each loaf was anointed with oil in the shape of a cross! Then it was put into fire to bake (Jesus took our fire of judgment (John 12:31-32).



**TOP OF TABLE**

The purpose of the bread was for the priests to eat, nourishing themselves in God's presence (I Samuel. 21:6). That is what fellowship is -- nourishing on Jesus in His presence, along with other believer/priests (I Corinthians. 10:16-17). Individually we do this in private worship and devotions. This is fellowship with God, nourishing ourselves on Jesus. When we gather with other believers and Jesus is the central focus of our time together that is true fellowship, singing, Bible study, worship, sharing what He has done in our

lives, encouraging each other in the Lord, etc. -- this is true fellowship. This is what happened around the table of Showbread in the tabernacle, but those who came by way of the altar (salvation) and laver (daily cleansing) into God's service and presence (tabernacle building



Besides the two stacks of bread on the table there were 2 bowls of frankincense and two glasses of wine. Two stands for unity, oneness: man with man (Galatians 3:28) and man with God. Frankincense was made from gum from a tree and, when mixed with other substances, made the odor stronger and more pleasing. It speaks of Jesus being pleasing and acceptable to God. It was given to Jesus as His birth, and rubbed on His body at His death. Also, two cups of wine were there. Years later Nebuchadnezzar stole these and God wrote His judgment on the wall when the Babylonians used them in mockery (Daniel 5). The wine, the blood of the grape, was symbolic of blood and was used instead of the blood of a lamb at many occasions. We use two of these elements in the Lord's supper today: unleavened bread and juice from a grape. The symbolism is the same. Our closest fellowship with God and each other is around Jesus' work for us (as symbolized by the elements which show His work for us).

## Daily Life in Bible Times – III. THE TABERNACLE

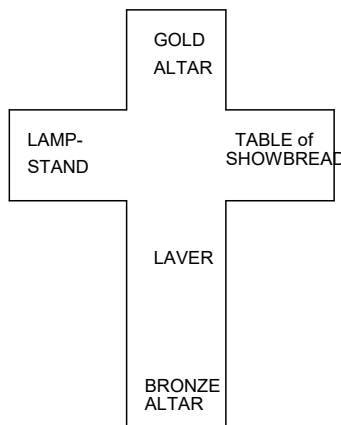
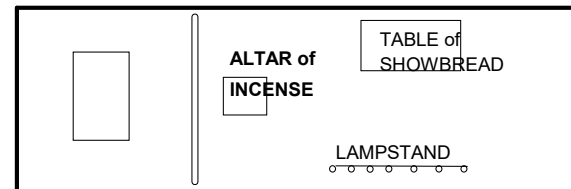
### 3. 11. ALTER OF INCENSE

One day an old priest named Zacharias was taking his turn serving in the temple in Jerusalem. He was chosen by lot to offer the incense on the golden altar, a once-in-a-lifetime (if you got to do it at all) privilege! It was the first week of October, 748 A.U.C. (6 BC). His life completely changed because of what happened there. You can read about his encounter with Gabriel in Luke 1.

The fact that he was at the Altar of Incense at this time was no coincidence. It was the perfect place for what happened, which is why God made sure the lot fell on him that day. God planned the altar and its function (Exodus 30:1-10; 37:25-29).

#### THE LOCATION

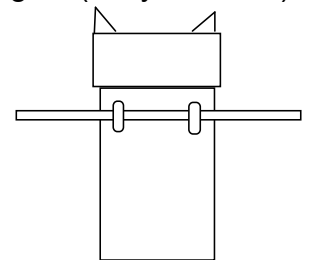
The altar of incense, or golden altar, was located right in front of the veil, straight ahead as you entered the tabernacle building. To get to this altar you had to come by way of the gate (Christ the only way), bronze altar (blood sacrifice for salvation), laver (daily cleansing), lampstand (Jesus the Light) and table of showbread (fellowship/nourishment on Christ, Bread of life). The pieces of furniture formed a cross.



#### CONSTRUCTION OF THE ALTAR

The altar was a square 1'-6" by 1'-6". It was 3' high. Actually, it was two 1'-6" cubes on top of each other. It is higher than the table of showbread, for this is where Jesus is exalted, lifted up.

It is made of wood (humanity of Jesus) covered with gold (deity of Jesus). A gold crown went around the top to hold the fire in place, speaking of Jesus crowned with glory and honor. In fact, all pieces of furniture that were made of gold had a crown except the lampstand which couldn't have had one. Jesus' deity and being glorified for it go together. There were to be horns on the corners, as with the bronze altar. This was a



place of refuge from judgment as well as a symbol of power and strength (able to protect from judgment). Rings and poles assured it would always be with the Jews. It was to be covered with blue material (Jesus' deity) and then dugong (humility, protection).

#### FUNCTION OF THE ALTAR

The purpose of the altar was to burn incense. No blood offering or sacrifice was ever made on it. Incense was used in those days to offer tribute and homage to kings. The burning incense made a sweet-smelling fragrance to pay tribute to God as well as combating the stink of the butchering and burning meat and hair on the outside bronze altar.

Strict directions for mixing of the incense was given (Exodus 30:34-35). It has to be pure (Jesus' sinlessness) and sweet (Jesus acceptable, precious in God's sight). To use any other incense would bring sudden severe judgment (2 Chronicles. 26:16-23).

The incense could not give off its fragrance unless it came in contract with fire. The fire had to come from the bronze altar. Any other fire used would bring immediate and swift destruction (Leviticus. 10:1-2; 2 Chronicles. 26:16-21). The only thing God accepts is what is provided by the blood of Jesus (bronze altar). Anything coming any way but by the cross is unacceptable to God. Even our good works done in our own strength will burn (I Corinthians. 3:12).

<b>BRONZE ALTAR</b>	<b>GOLD ALTAR</b>
Bronze: judgment, sacrifice	Gold: deity, worship
Blood of animals placed on it	Incense placed on it
First piece of furniture meet	Last furniture before Holy of Holies
Unbeliever comes to remove sin	Believer comes to worship
Very large, available to all	Much smaller, few come to worship
Christ on earth: death on cross	Christ in heaven: intercession
Fire came directly from God	Fire came from bronze altar

## APPLICATION OF ALTAR

Incense in the Bible is used to symbolize prayer and communion with God (Psalm 142:2; 1'41:2; Lk. 1:10; Revelation 5:8; 8:3-4; Ezra 9:5; Daniel. 9:21). This is what Zacharias was doing when Gabriel came to tell him his prayers had been answered (Luke 1). The gold altar with fire from Jesus' work on the cross shows the altar is a picture of Jesus, and thus the prayers His prayers ascending to God. What is Jesus doing for us now in heaven? He intercedes for us (Heb. 7:25; 8:1; Rom. 8:34). He prayed for His disciples while He was on earth, and He still prays for His disciples today (Luke 22:31-32). John 17 is an example of how He prays for us.



Before we sin, Jesus intercedes on our behalf. If we sin anyway, He then becomes our advocate (lawyer) and represents our case before God (I John 2:1). He comes to our defense when Satan wants God to enact the death penalty against us after we sin. His defense: our sins were paid for on the bronze altar.

It was the priests who burned the incense as part of their service and worship in the tabernacle. It was to be continually burning as they were to be continually in communion with God (Exodus 30:7-8; Psalm 16:8; 55:17). As believer-priests today we are to be in constant communion and fellowship with God, too (I Thes. 5:17-18; Heb. 13:15). Our continual attitude of communion and communication with God is a sweet-smelling savor to Him today, too. It is utterly pleasing to Him when we live in His presence every moment of our lives. Praying "in Jesus' name" makes our prayers like rich perfume to our Father in heaven.

What do we have to thank Him for? Go through the furniture in the tabernacle: that he has provided a way to Himself (gate), He Himself paid for our sins on the cross (bronze altar), He also has provided for daily cleansing of sins after salvation (laver). He is our light (lampstand) and Sustainer/nourishment (table of showbread), where we can have fellowship with Him and others. He allows us to commune with Him whenever we want, He is always there waiting for us. Come in!

# Daily Life in Bible Times – III. THE TABERNACLE

## 12. THE VEIL

When my children were younger they loved looking at pictures that had object hidden within. Find 3 fish, 2 balloons and 1 ice cream cone - and they'd look and look until they found it. However, you could only do it once. At first you didn't see any of the objects, but once you looked closer and discovered them they were easy to see each time - they just jumped out at you. That's the way it is seeing Jesus in the tabernacle. At first you wonder how this could ever speak of Jesus, but when you look closer and find Him He starts to jump out each time you look. The veil is an example of this. We read about it in Exodus 26:31-35; 36:35-36).

### THE PILLARS

Two thirds (2 cubes 10 cubits on a side) of the way back in the tabernacle building the Holy Place stopped and the Holy of Holies (a cube 10 cubits on each side) started. These two were divided by a veil held up by four pillars.

The pillars were wood (humanity of Jesus) covered by gold (deity of Jesus) with silver (atonement price, redemption paid by Jesus - the foundation of all else) sockets to hold them upright. The top had no cap like the other pillars but was to be 'cut off,' the same word used of Jesus being cut off for our sins (Isaiah 53:8; Psalm 102:34; Daniel. 9:25-27). The veil was held up by gold hooks on the top of the pillar as well as being fastened to the hooks above which held the two halves of the linen curtain together.

While there were 5 columns holding the curtain at the outer door, there are 4 here. Four is the number of earthly completion, God's complete provision for man's access to Him on this earth. The four gospels show this, too.

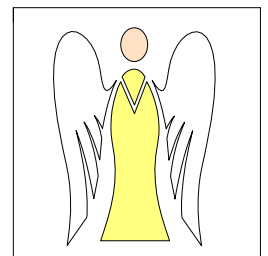
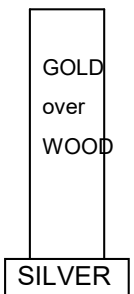
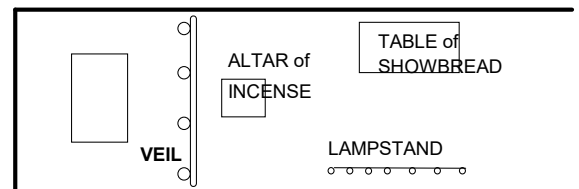
This is the third of three entrance ways. They show Jesus as the way, truth and life (John 14:6). The gate

WHITE	BLUE	SCARLET	PURPLE
PERFECT MAN Sinless, Holy Life	SON OF GOD Heavenly Origin	SUFFERING SERVANT Of the Earth	MESSIAH-KING God & man in One
WOOD (humanity)	GOLD (deity)	BRONZE (judgment)	SILVER (redemption)
LUKE	JOHN	MARK	MATTHEW
Sinless	Sovereign	Suffering	Savior

(#1) shows Jesus as the WAY to God (not by works, family, etc. Ephesians 2:8-9; Galatians 2:16). The door (#2) shows Jesus as the TRUTH of God (only Jesus' wisdom suffices, He is our light & nourishment, John 4:25). The veil (#3) shows Jesus as the LIFE of God (1 John 1:1-2; John 3). The veil stands for Jesus' life, His body.

### THE VEIL

The 15' by 15' square veil hanging from the pillars was of fine linen (the purity and righteousness of Jesus). It was embroidered with red, blue and scarlet thread in the design of a cherubim. The significance is the same as with the curtain above - showing God's majesty and power, His greatness and sovereignty. This third opening is the same size as the second opening, but while that was open this is closed, keeping everyone out.



## **DOOR #2   VEIL (Door #3)**

Way into Holy Place for service, worship	Way into Holy of Holies & God's presence
White linen; scarlet, blue & purple	White linen; scarlet, blue & purple Cherubim
Brass sockets (judgment)	Silver sockets (redemption)
Open to all at all times (way in)	Closed to all at all times (keep out)

The purpose of this veil is to protect God's holiness by keeping sinful man out of His presence, lest man be instantly destroyed. The veil was to show separation of man and God -- but it wasn't a wall (promising that the way would one day be open).

Only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies, past the veil, and then just once a year, the Day of Atonement. Then he had to come with innocent blood (Leviticus. 16:2; Heb. 9:6-8), access to God is only by blood. Still, he would have a rope tied around his ankle. If the sacrifice was unacceptable to God he was struck dead and would lie there and decay. The rope was used to pull him out. God wasn't being mean, just holy. No sin was allowed in His presence, like no germs are allowed in an operating room.

What does the veil stand for? That's easy, because Hebrews 10:19-20 tells us precisely that it pictures Jesus' body.

### **VEIL TORN BY CHRIST**

The temple Solomon built, and Herod rebuilt, was the same as the tabernacle just larger. The veil in Jesus' day was 30' square and 4" thick. It was a beautiful work of art, gorgeous in design, artistic in color, superb in the minutest detail, and rich in adornment. It was one of the greatest tapestries of the world. It was replaced regularly so as to not weaken. It was tested by oxen pulling on all four corners at once to make sure it was strong. They would take no chance on the barrier protecting man from God's judgment to be broken down.

The very instant Jesus died several things were happening in the temple. For one, the Passover lamb for the whole nation was being killed. Also, a priest was at the altar of incense offering prayers to God. right in front of his eyes the large veil tore from top to bottom, born by the hands of God (Mt. 27:46-52; Mk. 15:34-38; Lk. 23:44-46). Jesus had just said "It is finished," referring the work of reconciling God and man. Tearing the veil was God's way of saying, "Now we don't need this anymore." As Jesus body was torn, so was the veil in the temple. In the Lord's Supper we 'break' bread, memorializing this very event. The veil was torn from top to bottom, showing God considered Jesus' sacrifice sufficient payment for the sins of the world. It was torn in the middle so it would be obvious to all, like Jesus was crucified publicly before all. It was torn completely, the barrier was removed, not just part way or allowing a peek inside.

This event ended the old way, the law, and instituted the new -- grace (Heb. 10:19-22). Now we can come into God's presence any time we want. We don't have to wait for one man to represent us, once a year, with a rope around his leg. Every time we pray we come into God's presence as that priest did. Our access is because of what Jesus did on the cross. That's what we say when we pray "in Jesus' name." Our privilege of access is through Jesus. We don't appreciate what a privilege prayer is, or what praying "in Jesus' name" really means. Again, we see that all we have comes from Jesus' death. His life condemns us, for it shows our sin & failure. His death opens the way into God for all of us. Thank Him for that each time you enter His presence in prayer!

## Daily Life in Bible Times – III. THE TABERNACLE

### 13. ARK OF THE COVENANT

While the whole Old Testament speak of Jesus, the Exodus from Egypt is especially rich in significance. Paul recognized this and told the Corinthians (I Corinthians. 10) so. The closer man got to God's presence, the richer and deeper the spiritual truths got. As we enter God's throne room on earth, the Holy Place, we truly walk on holy ground. Like Moses, we must take off our shoes as we walk on this holy ground!

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The only piece of furniture in the Holy of Holies was the ark of the covenant with the mercy seat on top. It is the most important article in the tabernacle, what everything else points to. There are seven different names for the ark (all have 'ark' in them). More is recorded about its history and all the other pieces of furniture combined. The Philistine's god Dagon fell face-down before the ark when it was in his presence, and disease broke out in everywhere they took it (I Samuel. 5). It still is talked about today, with movies like "Raiders of the Lost Ark" speculating about its existence (I don't think man will find it unless God allows it to be found for His glory -- like finding Noah's Ark and the Dead Sea scrolls).

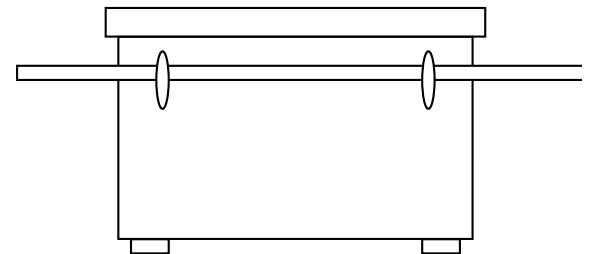
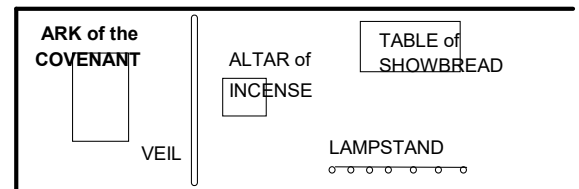
The ark always went before the people when they moved. God would lead from the ark, and everyone would follow. It, too, was made as God instructed (Exodus 25:10-16; 37:1-5).

#### CONSTRUCTION OF THE ARK

"Ark" means "place of safety, security," and thus it was used of a place to keep things safe. It is also used of Noah's ark and baby Moses' ark in the bulrushes. It was made of wood (humanity of Jesus, Isaiah 53:2); covered with gold (deity of Jesus, Col. 2:9). It was 2'-3" long and high and 3'-9" wide. It speaks of Jesus as God and man (John 1:1, 14). There was a gold crown (Jesus' glory and honor) around the top to hold the mercy seat in place. Rings and poles assured the Jews it, and therefore God's presence, would be with them wherever they went. It was anointed with oil before traveling, as Jesus by the Holy Spirit before starting His mission (Exodus 30:22-33). While traveling it was covered with the veil which separated the holy place and the holy of holies, then a dugong skin (humility and protection), and a blue cloth on top. It was the only article that wasn't covered with dugong while traveling, showing it contained heavenly (blue) things.

#### CONTENTS OF THE ARK

As a box for safety and security, what it carried was of the most importance. Hebrews 9:1-5 gives the record of its contents: tablets of the law, golden bowl full of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded. One of the names is the "Ark of the Testimony" because each of these bear testimony to God's holiness and grace and man's sinfulness and disobedience. They testify to man's failure and God's faithfulness.



<b>LAW</b>	<b>MANNA</b>	<b>ROD</b>
Original 10 commandments Exodus 20:1-17	Gold pot full of manna	Aaron's rod that budded Numbers 17:1-11
OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (We live by Christ, not law) Gal 3:24	OUR RESOURCES (Our day-by-day Help) Ex 16:1-36	OUR RESURRECTION (Life from death) Jn 11:25
SINLESSNESS of Christ to overcome the law	DEATH of Christ to be the Bread of Life	RESURRECTION of Christ to provide eternal life
God's Provision for the SOUL	God's Provision for the BODY	God's Provision for the SPIRIT
GOD and His character	CHRIST and His provision	HOLY SPIRIT & His direction
In Tab. & Temple Word of God is eternal	In Tabernacle only-Needed for Wilderness journey, not needed in Promised Land	In Tabernacle only-Needed for Wilderness journey, not needed in Promised Land

Just like we keep important contracts in a safe box, so the Jews kept their contract with God in the ark. The law couldn't bring salvation, it was to show a person how far short they fell from God's standard and thus their need of God's mercy (Galatians 3:24). We are no longer under the law because Christ bore the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13). The law demanded righteousness, but God gives us righteousness by His grace (John 1:17; Rom. 3:21-22; I Corinthians. 1:30).

The pot of manna was a memorial of God's goodness to Israel (Exodus 16:3). It reminds us of Christ, the Bread of Life. God provided it as nourishment for the Jews in their wilderness wanderings, as He provides for us in our wilderness wandering through this life (Heb. 9:4).

Aaron's rod that budded shows God's resurrection power. By having Aaron's rod bud when the other rods didn't God showed the Jews that Aaron was His chosen High Priest.

The book of John, showing the deity of Jesus, is structured around the seven (number of perfection) "I am's" in the book. The tabernacle teaches all these same truths:

1. I am the Bread of Life (6:35) - Table of Showbread
2. I am the Light of the World (8:12) - Lampstand
3. I am the Door of the Sheepfold (10:9,11) - Gate through Fence
4. I am the Good Shepherd (10:11) - Bronze Altar, Gate
5. I am the Resurrection and the life (11:25) - Aaron's rod, almond shapes on lampstand
6. I am the Way, the Truth and the Life (14:6) - 3 entrances: gate, door, veil
7. I am the True Vine (15:5) - Lampstand and gold branches

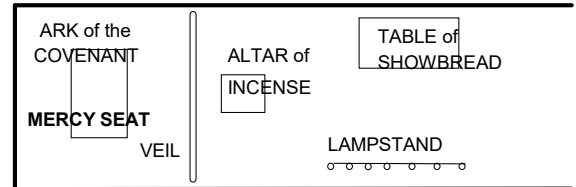
The law was also placed in the temple when Solomon built it, in the same ark. The rest of the furniture was remade, usually more and larger, but they used the same ark. The law, God's Word, will continue for all eternity. The manna and rod, though, weren't put into the temple. They are only needed for this wilderness life. Do you avail yourself of them? Do you feed on Him and depend on His life? They are as available for you as they were for the Jews. Just reach out in faith and receive all God has for you: His Word, His nourishment, and His eternal life.



# Daily Life in Bible Times – III. THE TABERNACLE

## 14. THE MERCY SEAT

The blood of Christ is a theme that runs throughout the whole Bible. It starts with innocent blood being shed to cover sin in Eden (Genesis. 3) and ends with Christ the Lamb slain and resurrected, in heaven, worshipped by believers in heaven who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 22). The blood is of special significance in the tabernacle. It is shed at the bronze altar and then poured on the mercy seat. To understand the use of the blood on the mercy seat we must first of all understand the mercy seat itself.

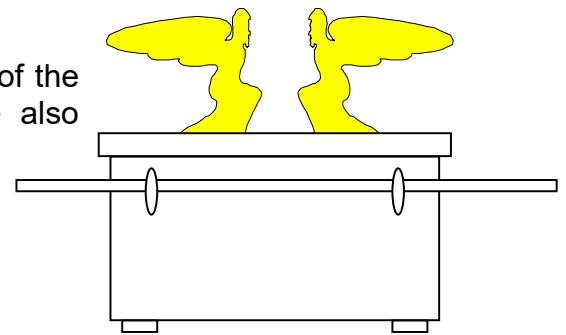


### THE GOLD

The mercy seat was to be made of solid gold (Exodus 25:17-22; 37:6-9). It was a flat piece of gold that was actually the lid of the ark of the covenant. The only other piece of furniture that was solid gold was the lampstand, and this was much larger. It was 2'-3" by 3'-9". Therefore, it was the most valuable piece of furniture, the most precious in God's sight. As valuable as the gold was, it was the precious blood (picturing Jesus' blood) that really gave it its value.

### THE CHERUBIM

On top of this lid were two cherubim, also beaten out of the same piece of gold as the mercy seat. Cherubim were also embroidered on the roof curtain and veil. They symbolize God's power and majesty. They spring up from the mercy seat showing God's power and majesty come from His mercy. They are one with the mercy seat, showing God's power and majesty can't be separated from His other attributes (like forgiveness and holiness), all rooted in His deity (solid gold). The cherubim show God's power and majesty, and being gold intensifies the deity and greatness of God. These cherubim are described seven times (the number of perfection - Exodus 25:17-22).



### GOD'S DWELLING PLACE

The space between these cherubim was the most important place in the tabernacle, actually the most important place on earth, for that is where God's presence was (I Samuel. 4:4; 2 Samuel. 6:2; 2 Kings. 19:15; Psalm 80:1; 99:1). It was His throne (Revelation 11:19). Called the 'Shekinah' glory (meaning God's 'Presence'), this is where God was and from where He spoke to man (Numbers. 7:8-9; Exodus 25:22).

In New Testament times God's presence was in Christ, who was God. He 'tabernacled' on earth (John 1:1-14). Jesus was called 'Immanuel' meaning 'God with us' (Isaiah 7:14; Mt. 1:23).

When the blood was poured there was the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) - Leviticus. 17. Aaron offered one goat on the burnt altar, catching his blood in a gold basin. Some was sprinkled on a second goat (the 'scape goat') and the rest brought into the Holy of Holies by the high priest, with a rope tied around his ankle. If the offering was rejected by God the priest was struck dead.

The blood was then sprinkled on the mercy seat (Leviticus. 16:14). This was done seven times (sacred perfection). There is no way man could enter God's presence without the innocent blood (Heb. 9:22). The writer of Hebrews says Christ (symbolically) took His blood to God to offer as the final sacrifice for all sin (9:24-28). Christ's sacrifice on Calvary was what the Day of Atonement pointed to. He fulfilled; it was never needed again. That's why the veil was torn by God, it wasn't needed any more.

## **CHRIST'S BLOOD**

Everything in the tabernacle is a picture of Jesus' sacrifice for us (Heb. 9:11-14). The tabernacle, especially the mercy seat, was where God man. The lid on top of the ark of the covenant was called the "mercy seat" because that is what it did. It is used 26 times in the Old Testament and 4 in the New Testament. The New Testament uses are especially significant: I John 2:2; 4:10; Heb 9:5; Rom. 3:21-25. The word translated "mercy seat" in the Old Testament is here translated "atonement" or "propitiation." Literally this means "to cover," for Jesus' blood covers our sins, pictured by the blood covering the mercy seat in the tabernacle. It means He satisfied God's demands on sin. He paid the price of judgment on sin so we can approach God free and clear. This is what makes Christ our mercy seat (Heb. 10:19-22).

Everything depends on the blood. That is why the Cherubim are pictured looking down at the blood. They are interested in the unfolding of God's redemptive purpose. They never experienced grace and redemption themselves, they only see it in us. Because of what it shows about God, they are deeply intrigued (I Pt. 1:11-12; I Corinthians. 4:9; Ephesians 3:10). They are amazed at God showing us mercy - and that's what the "mercy" seat is all about! It shows God's goodness bestowed on the unworthy and undeserving sinner.

The only way to approach God is through Jesus' blood. Trying to come into His presence without the innocent blood brought immediate death and destruction (50,070 men died because of this, I Samuel. 6:19-21). Apart from the blood there is no mercy, only judgment.

## **MERCY 'SEAT'**

Notice there are no chairs, stools, benches, etc., anywhere in the tabernacle. The only seat is in the Holy of Holies: the 'mercy seat.' It is a seat because Christ's work is finished (Hebrews 9; 10). Jesus is now seated at the right hand of God the Father (Heb. 10:11-12). That rest is available to us today, too.

The tabernacle is great in what it shows. It is a beautiful picture of the one we love: three dimensional, moving, brilliant color, sound, just everything. Still, no matter how great a picture may be, it is nothing compared to the real thing! We don't have to just rely on a picture today, we have the real thing! What young man would sit around looking at a picture of his girlfriend when she was sitting alongside him? He'd look at her. We have the real thing today, Jesus Himself living inside of us. Spend time with Him, enjoy Him, worship and praise Him, trust and obey Him, thank Him for His blood shed for us. We enter His presence because of the blood, there is nothing we can add to it. God wants us to come "Just As I Am." Have you come? The blood is available for all!

## Daily Life in Bible Times – III. THE TABERNACLE

### 15. SHEKINAH GLORY

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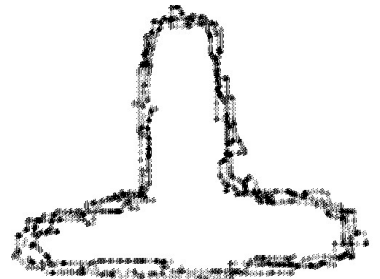
*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God* (John 1:1 - Jesus is God, as shown by the gold, blue, linen in the tabernacle). *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling* (lit. 'tabernacled') *among us*. (John 1:14a - Jesus as man, as shown by the wood and scarlet in the tabernacle). *We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth* (John 1:14b - all is to show Jesus' glory, as in the tabernacle).

The tabernacle wouldn't be anything without God's presence, His Shekinah glory. He dwelt between the cherubim on the mercy seat. His presence was also in the cloud that rose directly above the mercy seat, the cloud that had led the Jews out of Egypt and through the Red Sea.

Following a cloud during the day or fire at night was not unknown to people in ancient times. Generals would carry fire in the front of their armies, giving off much smoke during the day and lots of flame at night. This way everyone in the back and to the sides could see which direction to travel as they followed the cloud/light. Darius and Alexander the Great both did this. Arabs today going on caravans do similar things. God was showing He was Israel's general and king.

#### GOD IN THE CLOUD

God led Israel out of Egypt by this cloud (Exodus 13:20-22; 14:19-20; Nehemiah. 9:12). The cloud provided direction for the people followed the cloud during the day and the fire at night. It was shaped to give them shade, too, for there was none in the hot desert (doesn't God think of everything!). The light in the cloud was God's glory (Exodus 33:7-11, 14, 19-23; 34:29-35). Mt. Sinai shook when the cloud descended on it (Exodus 19:16-18; 20:18-21; Dt. 9:15; 5:23-26). The cloud was miraculous: it never dissipated, didn't move according to normal meteorological functions, had fire in it at night, and God talked out of it. When God wanted the Jews to move camp during their 40 years of wandering, His cloud would move and therefore the Jews had to move camp, setting up so the mercy seat was right under the cloud when it stopped (Exodus 40:36-38; Numbers. 9:17-23).



#### GOD'S GLORY

God has manifested His glory in creation (Psalm 19:1), supernatural intervention in history (2 Kings. 19:34-35, 19), through the nation Israel (Isaiah 46:13; 43:7; 44:23) and through the fire (in the burning bush and then in the cloud). We are here to bring Glory to God, too.

The Hebrew (Old Testament) word for glory is 'kabod' which means כבוד "heavy." It was the word used for the liver, too - the heaviest organ. They would weigh a person down with gifts, money, praise and complements. Paul uses this play on words (2 Corinthians. 4:17). In the New Testament the word for glory is 'doxa' (our word 'doxology' comes from it). It means to hold an opinion. The opinion we have of God gives Him glory. Often 'glory' is used of heaven (Col. 1:27; 2 Pt. 1:3; Heb. 2:10; John 17:24). When Stephen was stoned he saw God's glory (Acts 7:55). Paul, on the road to Damascus, saw Jesus' glory. In the New Jerusalem there will be no sun for Jesus' glory will be the light. Moses saw this at the burning bush and whenever he met with God (Exodus 33:7-11, 14, 19-23; 34:29-35). This was seen at Jesus' transfiguration, too.

## **GOD'S GLORY IN THE TABERNACLE**

When the tabernacle was finished and dedicated, God's glory went from the cloud down into the tabernacle, on the mercy seat (Exodus 40:34-35; Numbers. 9:15-16). The fire on the bronze altar to consume sacrifices came from the cloud (Leviticus. 9:23-24). From then on they kept coals alive and used them for the lampstand and altar of incense, too. When Aaron's sons used fire from another source, they were immediately killed (Leviticus. 10:1-2).

## **GOD'S GLORY AFTER THE TABERNACLE**

When Solomon built the temple God's glory went into it (2 Chronicles. 7:1-2; 5:14; I Kings. 8:11). Israel was protected and prospered as long as God was there. Because of Israel's repeated sin & rebellion God's presence left the temple (Jeremiah. 52:3; Eze. 11:22-23). He waited on the Mt. of Olives 1 1/2 years, then ascended ("Icabod" I Samuel. 4:21) - from the same place Jesus ascended and will return to. God's presence ("Shekinah") will again be in the Millennial Temple (Eze. 43:4-7; Revelation 21:22-24), and God will dwell with His people for all eternity (Isaiah 4:5-6).

## **THE CLOUD SPEAKS OF THE TRINITY**

It speaks of God the Father. He speaks from the cloud, offers guidance and protection, and shows His sovereignty. It speaks of God the Son. Whenever God appeared to man or revealed Himself to man, it was the Second Person of the Trinity (Jesus before His birth). It was Jesus before His birth revealing Himself to man (I Corinthians. 10:9; John 1:1-14; Mt. 17:1-5; 2 Pt. 1:17; Acts 1:8-9).

Finally, the cloud speaks of God the Holy Spirit. The coming of the Holy Spirit's Shekinah into the tabernacle is similar to the Holy Spirit's coming on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) when the fire came down again. Neither were given until God's people left Egypt (the world) after the innocent blood was shed (Passover Lamb - Jesus on cross). Both were God's free gift (John 4:16), given as a guide (Exodus 13:21; Rom. 8:14; John 16:13-15). They provided light (Exodus 13:21; Nehemiah. 9:12; I Corinthians. 2-3; Isaiah 11:2; John 16:13-14), were a shield & covering (protection) (Psalm 105:39). It was God's vehicle for speaking to man (Psalm 99:7; Exodus 33:9; Numbers. 12:5; Revelation 2:7, 17, etc.). To unbelievers the cloud was darkness (Exodus 14:20). God stayed faithful to His people despite their sin (Nehemiah. 9:19; John 14:6; Rom. 8:11; Ephesians 4:30).

Thus, the cloud speaks of the Trinity: God the Father in sovereign control, God the Son giving the light, and God the Holy Spirit providing guidance.

God said to Moses: "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." (Exodus 33:14). Do you have God's presence with you and in you? That is the only way to have rest, peace, and victory in Jesus. Make sure His presence is in you, and remember His main purpose in your life is to show His glory through you. Are you allowing Him to do that? Are you committed to serving Him whatever He would have for you, or do you try to get Him to serve you, doing your will instead of His? He is God. He deserves the glory. Give Him His due!

## Daily Life in Bible Times – III. THE TABERNACLE

### 16. CAMP, CONCLUSION

When you are familiar with the tabernacle on earth, you can better understand what heaven will be like, for the tabernacle is patterned after heaven (Revelation 11:19). In heaven there is an ark and mercy seat (Revelation 11:19), lampstand (Revelation 1:12), golden altar of incense (Revelation 9:13) and bronze altar (Revelation 6:9).

#### FINISHING THE TABERNACLE

The final finishing details of the tabernacle are given in Exodus 39:32 - 40:33. Again, everything was done exactly according to God's precise standards.

FURNITURE	SYMBOL	TYPE
BRONZE ALTAR	Atonement through Sacrifice	Atonement of Christ
BRONZE LAVER	Spiritual renewal	Regeneration & renewal by the Holy Spirit
TABLE OF SHOWBREAD	Spiritual sustenance	Christ the Bread of Life
LAMPSTAND	Spiritual illumination	Christ the light of the world, esp. His people
ALTAR OF INCENSE	Acceptable supplication	Prayer in the name of Jesus
THE ARK	Access through covenant	Christ as our covenant access
MERCY SEAT	Acceptance at the throne of God	Acceptance with God in Christ

#### THE TABERNACLE AND JOHN

There is amazing similarity between the tabernacle and the Gospel of John, as seen before in the seven "I Am's." Both reveal Jesus.

BRONZE ALTAR: John 1 "Behold the Lamb of God which takes away sin."

LAVER: John 3 "Except a man be born by water and the Spirit..."

TABLE OF SHOWBREAD: John 4-6 Jesus the bread of life

GOLDEN LAMPSTAND: John 8-9 Jesus the light of the world

ALTAR OF INCENSE: John 14-16 Jesus teaches disciples to pray

John 17 Jesus' High Priestly prayer of intercession

ARK & MERCY SEAT: John 18-19 Christ sacrificed; blood poured out

#### CAMP AROUND THE TABERNACLE

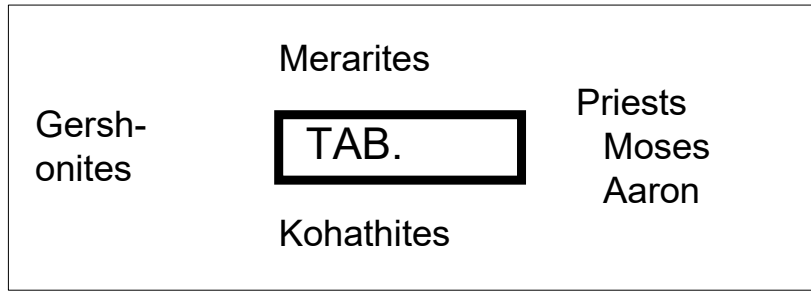
God planned exactly how everyone was to camp around the tabernacle (Numbers. 1:1 - 2:34). He was in the midst of His people, as He is today (Mt. 18:20).

# NORTH

Asher Dan Naphtali

## WEST

Manasseh  
Ephraim  
Benjamin



## EAST

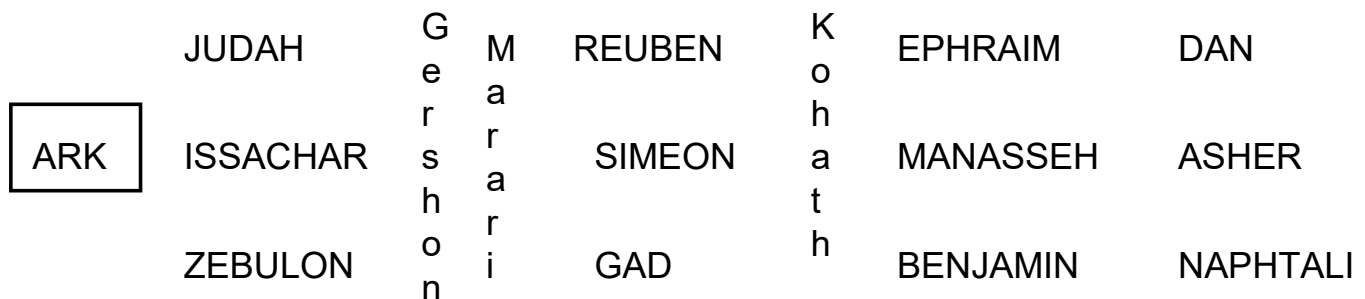
Zebulon  
Judah  
Issachar

Simeon Reuben Gad

# SOUTH

## TRAVEL WITH THE TABERNACLE

Duties and responsibilities for traveling were spelled out, too (Numbers. 3:1 - 4:33). Even the distribution of wagons was given (Numbers. 7:3-9) as well as the order of march (Numbers. 10:11-28). The Levites were spread throughout the 12 tribes. Each family of the Levites has special responsibility. Aaron's family was the priests. The oldest son of the oldest son was the high priest. Kohathites carried the furniture while traveling (Numbers. 4:1-20). Gershonites took down, carried and put up the material pieces (fence, doors, curtains & coverings) (Numbers. 4:21-28). The Merarites carried wood and metal items: boards, fences, bars, pillars, sockets, pins and cords (Numbers. 4:29-33). When the cloud would lift everyone would break camp. When all were ready to leave two blasts on a silver trumpet would signal the start (Exodus 32:26-27). The cloud would slowly move out (God's guidance) and the priests carrying the ark would follow, keeping the ark under it. When God had them where He wanted them the cloud would stop and descend and the tabernacle would be set up around the mercy seat. The walls would be built, the pillars put in separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, and priests would lift the veil off the mercy seat and back out of the Holy of Holies, hanging the curtain on the pillars. Taking it down was done just the opposite. This way there was never a person between the veil and the mercy seat (except on the Day of Atonement).



This shows how organized and systematic God is. It reminds us, too, that we are strangers and pilgrims in this world, with no permanent home until we reach our Promised Land - heaven!

# Daily Life in Bible Times – III. THE TABERNACLE

## 17. THE PRIESTHOOD

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When you hear the word “priest” what do you think of? Someone who wears special clothes and acts as a go-between of God and man in a religious group? If so, you are pretty accurate. While most religions have a priesthood, the one we are concerned about is the one God instituted in the Bible for Israel. The others are all Satan’s counterfeits.

God chose the tribe of Levi to be the priestly tribe because of their faithfulness to God when the others were sinning after Moses came down from Mt. Sinai with the law from God. Levi was a son of Jacob and Leah. His descendants are the Levites by birth. Levites assisted the priests in carrying the ark and caring for the things of the Tabernacle and later the Temple. They were the doorkeepers, provided the music, prepared the sacrifices, cleaned and repaired as necessary, and kept the fires on the altar going. Healthy males between the ages of 25 and 50 served. They began their service with a ritual of consecration and cleansing, and then needed continual, regular cleansing at the laver to stay clean so they could serve.

Levites owned no land but were given four cities in every tribe’s area so they could live among and minister to the people. They were paid by the tithes of the people and keeping parts of the sacrifices. They copied, taught and enforced the law and helped priests in any way necessary.

The priests were one small portion of the tribe of Levi. They were descendants of the family of Aaron, who was a Levite. His sons were priests. The oldest son of the oldest son was the high priest. Aaron was the first High Priest. Actually, Moses was God’s first choice but turned it down when he wouldn’t speak to Pharaoh for God. However, Aaron did so poorly that Moses

took over anyway.

Aaron’s sons were priests while he was high priest. Nadab and Abihu disobeyed and didn’t follow God’s directions, using ‘strange’ fire on the altar. As a result, God took their lives. Their brothers Eleazar and Ithamar took over for them. From there on it was the firstborn of the firstborn on down. If a son was crippled or infirm in any way he was not to serve as a priest.

The priests served from age 30 to 50. Younger than 30 was considered not mature enough for the responsibility that came with the privilege. They, too, lived in the same cities the Levites lived in so they could be among the people to minister to them. They lived on the tithes of money and food provided by the people.

When they first began to serve the priests were washed at the door of the Tabernacle or Temple. Hands were laid on a bull which was then slaughtered and its blood sprinkled on the horns of the altar. The priest was dressed in white for purity and anointed with oil. Blood from the bull was applied to their right ear, hand and foot as a picture of total consecration to the Lord.

While the dress of the priests was all in white, the High Priest had red, blue and purple woven in as well. He wore a special robe and an ephod which was used in his role as mediator between



God and man. In it were placed the Urim and Thummim. The high priest was a mediator, a go-between representing God to man and man to God.

Priests would carry out this responsibility by burning incense on the golden altar, as Zacharias was doing when the angel told him he would have John the Baptist born to his wife. They cleaned and trimmed the lamps on the lamp stands, kept fresh bread on the Table of Showbread, fed the fire and cleaned away the ashes on the Bronze Altar. In addition, they inspected the unclean, especially lepers, and declared them clean if God had healed them. They taught the people the law and acted as a high court of appeals if there were issues the Levites couldn't handle.

As was true of everything in the Tabernacle and Temple, the priesthood, too, was there to teach about Jesus. He is our High Priest (Hebrews 3:1; 4:14). While the Jewish High Priest put the blood of the sacrifice on the Mercy Seat, Jesus paid for our sins with His own blood (1 Peter 1:18-19). Jesus is our Mediator, our go-between, representing God to us and us to God (1 Timothy 2:5-6; Hebrews 4:14-16).

We can thank God for giving us such a wonderful, merciful High Priest who Himself became our sacrifice for sin. Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of the Old Testament priesthood.

So, the priesthood in the Old Testament speaks of Jesus as the High Priest. Then who are the priests who serve under Him? We are! All believers are priests (1 Peter 2:4-5). Starting with Adam every man was his own priest and presented sacrifices to God. Afterwards that office went to the head of each family: Noah, Abraham, etc. After Mt. Sinai only men from the Tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron could serve as priests. Now, in the church age, every born-again believer is a priest in the sight of God. What a great honor and privilege we have in representing God to man by our life and witness and in representing man to God by our prayers and intercession.

We, too, become priests by birth – new birth into the family of God. We are cleansed and consecrated, set apart to serve as priests, at salvation. We keep clean by washing when dirty by confessing our sins (1 John 1:9). After this we, too, are dressed in white showing our purity in His sight. We are also anointed with oil – the Holy Spirit. Instead of blood on our right ear, hand and foot, we are covered by the blood of Jesus.

We are available to serve Him as He needs. We serve Him by serving each other. God asks us to carry each other's burdens (Galatians 6:2), by encouraging them emotionally (Numbers 6:22-27), by interceding regularly for each other (Colossians 1:3; 2 Thessalonians 1:11), by lovingly confronting those who are in sin (Exodus 32:25-29; 2 Chronicles 26:16-21; Galatians 6:1).

You are a priest. I am a priest. What a great privilege. We don't need to approach God through another person; we can go directly ourselves, any time we want. We can talk to others about Him or talk to Him about others any time we choose. We can come into His presence any time we want. In the Old Testament only the High Priest could come into God's presence, and then only once a year and in fear and trembling. We can come into His presence any time we want because Jesus tore the separating veil by His work on the cross. Priests of Jesus – what an honor and privilege!



# ***Daily Life in Bible Times***

## **III. FEASTS & FESTIVALS**

SPIRITUAL LESSONS FROM ISRAEL'S GEOGRAPHY & CULTURE

By **Rev. Dr. Jerry Schmoyer**  
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1. THE SABBATH
2. THE LAST SUPPER/PASSOVER
3. SFIRAT HAOMER (First Fruits)
4. SHAVUOTH (Pentecost)
5. ROSH HASHANAN (New Year)
6. YOM KIPPUR (Day of Atonement)
7. SUKKOTH (Tabernacles)

For more detailed information, recipes, table decorations, art & craft objects to make, etc., see *"God's Appointed Times,"* by Barney Kasdan (Lederer Publications) or *"Celebrate the Feasts,"* by Martha Zimmerman (Bethany House Publishers). Both are excellent resources and available in paperback.

Our Last Supper/Passover meal last April was so well received I thought I'd look into some other Jewish feasts we could study and celebrate. Instead of coming together to do them as a group I'll give you the information in this newsletter, one each issue. You can study and observe them in your own home, with some other home school families or your support group, with a Sunday School class or your whole church. Please let me know if you do any of these. I'd really like to know how it went and hear your suggestions to improve it. Write me at: Jerry Schmoyer, 252 W. State St., Doylestown, Pa. 18901. God bless and enjoy!

# Daily Life in Bible Times – IV. FEASTS & FESTIVALS

## 1. THE SABBATH

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**THE SABBATH IN GOD'S PLAN** The Sabbath was the number one Jewish holy day. The name comes from the word *Shabbat*, meaning "rest." The Jews were told to rest from work on the seventh day as God did in creation (Genesis. 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11; Dt. 5:12). The Sabbath observance was not meant to be the burden the Jews made it. It was to be a precious gift to bless them (Mk. 2:27). The Pharisees misinterpreted what it meant to 'rest' so badly that they opposed Jesus Himself when He tried to show them the true purpose of it (Mt. 12:7, 12). God's basic truth in the Sabbath is that man needs a regular time of rest each week. This time is to be filled with special family joy and attention to God.

**THE SABBATH TODAY** We are no longer under the law, and therefore have no obligation to observe the Sabbath as the Jews did. In fact, the day we do celebrate is the first day of the week (Sunday) signifying new beginnings -- the day Jesus came back to life. Still, it can be very informative and educational to take a week-end sometime and, alone or with another family, plan a Sabbath celebration similar to what the Jews did (and many still do) each weekend. This is a nice way to begin a vacation or to use during a vacation, too. Following are some suggestions:

**SABBATH FRIDAY** You will need 2 white candles in holders (with matches), grape juice, a bowl of water and a towel, two rolls/loaves of bread or matzo, and a napkin. Clean your home, kitchen, set things up, and get dressed like you are having company. That will get your children's attention! Mothers, put everyone to work helping, don't do it all yourself. Remember, this is a FAMILY celebration! For a centerpiece on your table use something from nature (flowers, fall leaves, etc). Approach the event as a time of peace, coming into God's presence. Your table is like an altar, a place where you meet with God (Dt. 14:26b).

Just before sunset everyone gathers at the table. God established days to go from sunset to sunset in Bible times, so the Sabbath was from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday. Mother begins with the evening prayer: "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of our universe, who is the Author of peace. you who made the Sabbath holy. You who called upon us to honor this Sabbath, enter our home this night. Almighty God, grant us and all our loved ones rest on this Sabbath day. May the light of the candles drive out from among us the spirit of anger and the spirit of fear. Send Your blessing that we may walk in the ways of Your Word and Your light. Enter our hearts this night. Heavenly Father, we rejoice in Your creation! It is from you we receive every good and perfect gift. Giver of life and love, grant us Your peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." Then mother lights the candles. The woman does this because the first woman, Eve, extinguished the light. Also, the light of the world, the Messiah, was to be the seed of the woman. The first candle stands for CREATION, when God brought light out of darkness. The second is REDEMPTION and speaks of Jesus as the light of the world. Then the mother silently prays that each child may grow up with hearts open to understand and appreciate God's Word.

Then the father stands and goes to each child one at a time. He places his hands on the child and prays for their current needs and future service for God. Next he compliments his wife by reading Proverbs 31:10, 27-30 to her.

Next all softly and prayerfully sing a familiar chorus such as "This Is The Day, " "Jesus Loves Me," etc. Then the father prays for the grape juice: "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine." Each one drinks some juice (you can use one cup for all

or each can have his own juice). Grape juice stands for life, representing the life of the grape. To us it also pictures Jesus' blood shed to give us eternal life. Washing hands with the bowl and towel is done the same way, with the father saying: "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us through Your commandments and instructed us concerning the washing of hands." This is a way of dedicating our hands to God's service. Now each one, in turn, beginning with the father, blesses the bread (the meal to come): "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth."

Now the meal is eaten -- leisurely and in peace. You can eat a family favorite, or make something Jewish (such as we had at the Last Supper meal, or get recipes from the library, a Jewish friend, or me). Do try to make your own bread, especially matzo if possible. To the Jews it was the main staple of life, like manna, and reminds us that Jesus is the bread of life. It was present in the tabernacle on the Table of Showbread. When done the Jews always closed in prayer before leaving (Dt. 8:10), a practice that would be nice to use regularly! The father prays "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who provides the fruit of the earth for our use. We bless you for fulfilling continually Your promise that while the earth remains, seedtime and harvest shall not fail. Teach us to remember that it is not by bread alone that we live. Grant us ever more to feed on Him who is the true bread from heaven, even Jesus Christ our Lord. O God, our Heavenly Father, look in favor upon the homes of Your people. Defend them against evil and supply all their needs according to the riches of Your wonderful grace. Make them sanctuaries of peace, love, and joy. Help us to follow You every step of our daily lives. May we always abide under the safe shadow of Your love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Enjoy the rest of the evening together. Rest (Lk. 23:56) by doing something enjoyable as a family: sit and talk, play games, walk, read, visit with friends, etc. The Lord will bless this evening in a special way (Psalm 29:11).

**SABBATH SATURDAY** Start the day remembering it is the Lord's day and you are in God's presence (Psalm 32:11; I Corinthians. 10:31). God's Word should be the focus for this day. Read it, talk about it, think on it, sing it. This day should be free from work and filled with rest and doing enjoyable family activities. Keep food preparation to a minimum. Eat foods you have previously prepared for this day or eat light meals of fruit and bread. Include Bible verses, passages and stories in all you do. Read a passage and talk about it. Eat your normal meals, but include Bible reading as well as prayer before and after each meal.

As sundown approaches have the whole family go outside and look for the first three stars, signifying the end of the Sabbath. Help the younger children find them, too. Come inside for the ceremony closing the Sabbath. It is called Havdalah, which means separation, and concludes the Sabbath while introducing the new week. You will need two white candles, some fragrant spice (whole cloves are great), cup of grape juice and a bowl and a Bible. One of the children light the candles used last night. Another child holds the spice. Read together from the Bible a passage such as John 1:1-17; Luke 23:54-56; 24:1-8. The grape juice glass is filled to overflowing (a sign of the fullness and completion of the week (place the glass in a bowl to catch the overflow). As the juice overflows, Sabbath departs. With head bowed, Father leads the family in prayer, a benediction filled with thanksgiving to God. The candles are extinguished by dipping the flames in the spilled juice. The spice box is passed from person to person, signifying the fragrance of life which has just been experienced in the Sabbath. The intention is that this last fragrance will carry you through the pressures of the week until you are able, once again, to celebrate Sabbath. Repeat (or read) together the 23rd Psalm.

# Daily Life in Bible Times – IV. FEASTS & FESTIVALS

## 2. JESUS' LAST SUPPER

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### **1. PREPARATION**

House totally cleaned, NO food with leaven allowed to remain anywhere

Special set of dishes and cooking pans used only for Passover gotten out

First-born son fasted whole day before Passover meal

Rich would invite poor neighbors to share the meal, remembering they all were poor in Egypt

"Bedikath Chametz" - Previous evening the head of the family would search for and collect any leaven left in the house (Ex 12:19-20). Then they would burn it, after searching by candlelight (Zech 1:12).

- Reminds them of when God will search Jerusalem with a Candle (Zech 1:12)

- Pictures SIN being removed, as leaven is a picture of sin (I Corinthians. 5:6-9; 16:7-8; Galatians 5:9)

- Teaches us to have no sin when partaking of Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians. 11:28)

BEFORE the search:

"Blessed are you, O Lord our God, king of the universe, who has sanctified us with your commandments and have told us to remove the leaven."

AFTER the search:

"Whatever leaven remains in my possession which I cannot see, behold, it is null and accounted as the dust of the earth."

### **2. TABLE ARRANGEMENT**

Everyone wore their best garments (why Jesus had his best seamless robe on when crucified).

Reclined to eat (in Egypt were dressed with sandals and staff ready to go). This showed they were at peace & rest, FREE from Egypt.

Slaves stood to eat, but the Jews rested on left elbow. When tired they sat up for a while.

Table was LOW with rugs or mats or cushions on 3 sides to recline on. Purpose of the table was so things wouldn't spill and to keep away from bugs and dirt on floor.

Participants were Jesus and the 12 disciples. The owner of the home was not present (perhaps he or his servant served). None of the women were present, either. This was man/leadership business this night.

### **3. ON THE TABLE**

They did not use dishes to eat back then, there was only a serving dish when the time came to eat. Usually, one large dish was brought out at a time.

They had no knives, forks, spoons (a recent invention used by Western civilization). Food was eaten by the fingers, or a piece of bread used as a spoon/scoop.

Eating stood for fellowship, and those who shared the same bowl established a close bond of friendship forever, even on to their children.

All shared common drinking glass/cup.

Pitcher of grape juice was put on the table. Jews didn't use fermented grape juice at Passover.

Used boiled grape juice and mixed it so it was 2/3 water, wine/grape juice = picture of JOY, symbol of blood of grape.

Jews in wilderness had no door posts, so they substituted drinking grape juice for putting blood of lamb on the door posts. Juice poured stood for the blood shed, and juice drunk stood for the blood applied.

Four times cups filled and juice drunk, from 4 "I wills" in Exodus 6"6-7:

CUP OF SANCTIFICATION (start of service)

"I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians"

CUP OF JUDGMENT (before meal)

"I will rid you out of their bondage."

CUP OF REDEMPTION (after meal)

"I will redeem you with an outstretched arm."

CUP OF PRAISE (end of service)

"I will take you to me for a people."

#### **4. CANDLES LIT** ("Brechat Haner")

By lady of the house, because from the seed of woman the Messiah will come to bring light (Genesis. 3:14-15; Is. 7:14; Mt. 1:22-23; 4:16)

As she lights the candles she says:

"Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us by the commandments and has commanded us to kindle the Festival-light.

"Blessed are You O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has kept us in life, and has preserved us, and has enabled us to reach this season."



#### **5. CUP #1 - SANCTIFICATION** (Kiddush )

This first cup sanctifies the meal, sets it apart from common meals.

The Kiddush is said before the cup is drunk.

"Blessed are You, O Eternal, our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

"Blessed Are You, O Lord our God, Ruler of the world, Who chose us out of all the people and selected us over all of the nations, and made us holy through His commandments.,

Lovingly, O Lord our God, You have given us Sabbath days for rest and festival days for joy, this Sabbath day and this feast of Passover, anniversary of our freedom, honoring our departure from Egypt; for you have chosen us and made us holier than other peoples and caused us to inherit the Sabbath and Your holy festivals. Blessed are You, O Lord, Who made holy the Sabbath, the people of Israel and the festivals."

Cup 1 drunk while reclining on left elbow.

Luke 22:14-16 spoken by Christ at this time.

#### **6. HAND WASHING #1** (Urchatz )

Host washed own hands and then took bowl of water and towel around to all to symbolically act out their purification, too.

At this point Jesus washed the disciples' feet FOR them. (Luke 22:24-30; John 13:1-17)

#### **7. SEDER PLATE BROUGHT OUT**

Contained 2 bitter herbs (lettuce and salt water; and horseradish) as well as matzo.

#### **8. BITTER HERBS** (Karpas )

Bitter Herbs (lettuce or parsley) = bitterness of slavery in Egypt

Sweet to the taste at first, then becomes bitter = Egypt at first gave the Jews the best part of the land, then embittered them

Lettuce or parsley = picture of hyssop used to smear blood on doorposts

Saltwater = tears shed in Egypt

salty water of Red Sea (miraculous passage through it)

Greens dipped by all

Blessing given by head of the meal: "Blessed are You, O Eternal, our God, King of the Universe,  
Creator of the fruits of the earth."

Greens eaten by all

## **9. MAIN COURSE BROUGHT OUT**

LAMB: picture of the lamb's blood shed to protect them in Egypt (today have an old shank bone on the table as a reminder because they can't sacrifice any animals without a temple)

UNLEAVENED BREAD: since they had to leave Egypt quickly there was no time for it to rise ; this is a picture of no sin in life

CHAROSETH: picture of the clay used to make bricks

## **10. MIDDLE MATZO BROKEN** (Yachutz )

Matzo = unleavened bread, flat and round, picture of sinless Christ pierced in shape of cross

Three matzos (on Sabbath had 2 for the double manna on Sabbath, on Passover had one more than that!) Picture of the Trinity

Prayer given: "This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. All that are hungry come and eat. All that are in need, come and celebrate the Passover with us."

Middle Matzo taken = picture of Christ leaving God the Father and God the Spirit in heaven and coming to earth (Incarnation)

Middle Matzo broken = Christ's body broken for sin

1st Half back between other 2 matzos = death Jesus' soul/spirit went to heaven

2nd Half: (Afikomen = Greek "One Who Has Arrived") back into napkin, wrapped up and hidden until cup 3 = picture of Jesus' body wrapped in linen and buried until day 3.

## **11. STORY OF THE EXODUS** (Maggid )

Exodus 12:1-13 read or told, showing the necessity of shedding innocent blood, the innocent for the guilty. In Exodus it is a picture of physical deliverance, but it foreshadows the spiritual deliverance Christ will provide and shows that in picture form.

## **12. THE FOUR QUESTIONS**

By the youngest child (disciple John at the Lord's Last Supper)

Child: "Why is this night different from all other nights?"

Leader solemnly replies: "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord redeemed us with a mighty hand. If the Holy and Blessed One had not taken our fathers out of Egypt, then we, our children and our grandchildren, too, would be Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt. This is why, even though we might be wise and learned and experienced, though we might know the Torah well, it is our duty to tell the story of the outgoing from Egypt; and the more one tells of the outgoing from Egypt, the more praiseworthy he is."

The youngest child continues to ask:

1. "On all other nights we eat either leavened or unleavened bread; why on this night do we only eat matzo which is unleavened bread?"
2. "On all other nights we eat vegetables and herbs of all kinds; why on this night do we eat only bitter herbs?"

3. " On all other nights we never think of dipping herbs in water or in anything else; why on this night do we dip the lettuce in salt water and the bitter herbs in charoseth?"
4. "On all other nights we eat either sitting upright or reclining, why on this night do we all recline?"

The leader replies: "I am glad you asked these questions. This night is different from all other nights because on this night we celebrate the going forth of the Jewish people from slavery into freedom. Why do we eat only matzo tonight? When Pharaoh let our forefathers go from Egypt they were forced to flee in great haste. They had no time to bake their bread and could not wait for the yeast to rise. The sun which beat down on the dough as they carried it along naked it into unleavened bread called matzo

Why do we eat bitter herbs tonight? Because our forefathers were slaves in Egypt and their lives were made very bitter.

Why do we dip the herbs twice tonight? We dip lettuce in salt water because it reminds us of the green of springtime. We dip the herbs in sweet charoseth to remind us that our forefathers were able to withstand bitter slavery, because it was sweetened by the hope of freedom.

Why do we recline at table? Because reclining was a sign of a free man long ago, and since our forefathers were freed on this night, we recline at the table.



### **13. CUP #2 - JUDGMENT**

Leader pours 10 drops of juice into a container ("cup of iniquity") For the 10 plagues: Blood, Frogs, Lice, Swarms, Cattle diseased, Boils, Hail, Locusts, Darkness, Death of Firstborn.

When the Egyptians filled up their cup of iniquity the judgment of God fell on them and drowned them in the Red Sea, and this is the cup of Judgments.

DAYENU ("We would Have Been Satisfied")

"If He had merely rescued us from Egypt, but had not punished the Egyptians - DAYENU

"If He had merely punished the Egyptians, but had not destroyed their gods - DAYENU

"If He had merely destroyed their gods, but had not slain their first-born -DAYENU

"If He had merely slain their first-born, but had not given us their property -DAYENU

"If He had merely given us their property but had not brought us through on dry ground - DAYENU

"If He had merely brought us through on dry ground, but had not drowned our oppressors -DAYENU

"If He had merely drowned our oppressors, but had not supplied us in the desert for forty years - DAYENU

"If He had merely supplied us in the desert for forty years, but had not fed us with manna - DAYENU

"If He had merely fed us with manna, but had not given us the Sabbath - DAYENU

"If He had merely given us the Sabbath, but had not brought us to Mount Sinai - DAYENU

"If He had merely brought us to Mount Sinai, but had not given us the Torah - DAYENU

"If He had merely given us the Torah, but had not brought us to the land of Israel DAYENU

"If He had merely brought us to the land of Israel, but had not built us the Temple DAYENU.

The leader picks up and blessed the cup. "Blessed are You, Lord, our God, ruler of the Universe, creator of the fruit of the vine!"

All drink the cup and pass it around



#### **14. HALLEL (PSALM 113-114)** (Hallel )

"Hallel" is the name given to psalms of praise starting with "Hallelujah" (which means "Praise God.")

Here Psalm 113 and 114 are recited responsively.

Then the cups are again refilled.

#### **15. HAND WASHING #2** (Rachatz )

Hands are now washed to be clean to eat the meal

This blessing is given by the leader"

"Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Ruler of the world, who made us holy by His commandments and commanded us concerning the washing of hands."

#### **16. MATZO IS EATEN** (Matzo )

The matzo unity (the 3 standing for the Trinity) is brought out.

The blessing is said:

"Blessed are You, O Lord our God, Ruler of the world, King of the Universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth.

Leader breaks olive-size pieces off the middle (and, if necessary, the upper one too), and gives a piece to everyone.

Another blessing is given:

"Blessed Are You, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us concerning the eating of unleavened bread."

All eat their matzo together.

#### **17. BITTER HERBS (HORSERADISH)** (Maror )

Bottom matzo is broken into olive-size pieces and dipped into bitter herb

Horseradish = bitterness of Egyptian bondage, persecution, suffering

Blessing said by leader:

"Blessed are You, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, Who sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us concerning the eating of bitter herbs."

Everyone eats the herbs together.

#### **18. CHAROSETH** (Korekh )

Leader takes 2 olive-size pieces of matzo from the bottom and picks up charoseth between them, like a sandwich.

Charoseth: reddish-brown mixture of chopped apples, nuts, spices, etc. representing the clay from which the slaves made their bricks.

Sweet taste reminds them of servitude as prelude to sweetness of redemption.

In Jesus' day also mixed in figs, nuts, dates, pomegranates, almonds, and cinnamon bark or tube (to remind them of the straw they mixed with the clay bricks).

Matzo given out by leader, then dish of charoseth passed around.

Jesus made a special gesture of honor and love to Judas for He dipped and handed this to him (called the "sop"). This is where the account of Judas's betrayal and Peter's denials being predicted fit in (Mt. 26:15-21; 31-35; Mk. 14:18-21, 17-31; Lk. 22:21-23, 31-38; hn 13:18-38)

#### **19. MEAL IS EATEN** (Shulchan Orech )

Full course gourmet meal served; appetizer, soup, chicken/turkey/kid/lamb, etc. If lamb, it is partly boiled and partly roasted so it doesn't resemble the sacrificed lamb as they can no longer sacrifice. What they are thus eating, in effect, is the Feast of Unleavened Bread; for since

AD 70 it stopped being the Passover. Today they use an egg (roasted) which they cut and dipped in salt water to lament the fact they have no place to offer sacrifices.  
During the meal Jesus comforted the disciples (John 14:1-31a).  
After the meal the dishes were taken off the table.

## **20. AFIKOMEN EATEN** (Tzaphun )

This is the final food of the Passover meal, so, this will be the last taste left in the mouth (very significant to the Jews).

The hidden (buried) Afikomen (1/2 of the middle of the 3 matzos) is found and ransomed (redeemed) - (price paid to whoever finds it, like Jesus ransomed us with His blood).

Finding and unwrapping the Afikomen is a picture of Jesus resurrected (true Bread of Life, Manna of God)

With this Jesus instituted the bread of the Lord's Supper: "This is my body."

## **21. CUP # 3 - REDEMPTION** (Boraych )

The cup is filled again.

Number 3 stands for deity (3 days in the grave until resurrected, like Afikomen found)



Blessing is given: "Blessed are You, O Eternal, our God, King of the Universe, Who created the fruit of the vine."

This is where Jesus instituted the cup of the Lord's Supper: "This is my blood."

This act ended the Old Testament, and the rule of the law.

This act started the New Testament, and the rule of grace.

Up to now the Passover stood for physical deliverance from Egypt, from now on it was replaced by the Lord's Supper which stands for spiritual deliverance from sin.

## **22. ELIJAH'S PLACE**

The Jews believed that when the Messiah comes He will come during the Feast of Passover, and he will be preceded by Elijah (Malachi 4:5). This prophecy was fulfilled by John the Baptizer. Throughout the Passover meal a place at one end of the table is vacant, and the front door slightly open. The best cup is set by this place.

At the end of the service someone is sent to the door and the sad report comes back, "I don't see him tonight, He's not coming. Perhaps he will come next year."

There is no mention of this at Jesus' last supper. Christ may have occupied the place the disciples set for Elijah and drunk that cup, further showing He IS the longed-for Messiah!

## **23. CUP # 4 - PRAISE**

This cup stands for when Jesus returns to regather Israel.

Blessing by the leader: Blessed are You, O Eternal, our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine." Then all drank this fourth cup.

It was NOT drunk by Christ that evening.



## **24. HALLEL (Psalm 115-118)** (Hallel )

Then they sung all or part of Psalm 115-118 (especially 118), which would have been very meaningful to Christ at this time).

## **25. CONCLUSION**

Today the Jews conclude with all saying, "Next Year In Jerusalem!"

## Daily Life in Bible Times – IV. FEASTS & FESTIVALS

### 3. SFIRAT HAOMER (First Fruits)

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**THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND** Sfirat Haomer is the first part of the feast we know as First Fruits, done in early spring (Leviticus. 23:9-14). Also called Yom HaBikkurim, it follows closely after Passover. "Sfirat Haomer" literally means "the Counting of the Sheaf." It speaks of the earliest harvest that takes place in Israel, the barley harvest. The very first batch of the very crop harvested in spring (barley) was to be brought to the priest in the Tabernacle/Temple. One omer (a half gallon) was the amount required. This is done in thanksgiving to God for what is to come.

From this day, probably the Monday after Passover, the Jews counted the days and exactly seven weeks later the final First Fruits offering was given. It was of wheat, the last grain to ripen. It was exactly seven weeks from the day the Jews celebrated the Passover and left Egypt until God gave them the law to live by at Mt. Sinai.

In the Old Testament times a priest would meet the Jewish pilgrims outside Jerusalem and usher them to the temple. As they carried their offerings, the priest would lead a praise service with dance, music and praise psalms. At the altar the priest took the sheaves, wove them in the air in every direction, acknowledging God's provision and sovereignty over all the earth. (For more details see Edersheim, *The Temple*, p. 256ff.)

**NEW TESTAMENT TIE-IN** Jesus came back to life on the day after Passover, the first day of the week, the same day as Sfirat Haomer. He is the first-fruits, the first one back to life, a promise of all those coming afterwards (I Corinthians. 15:20). Paul clearly sees Jesus' resurrection as the fulfillment of Sfirat Haomer. Just as the grain is lifted up for all to see, so Jesus, who died as a grain of wheat, was lifted up for all to see (John 12:23-24, 32). Fifty days later Shavuoth, the final harvest of First-Fruits was observed. We call it Pentecost. It was the day God gave the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). Unfortunately, this beautiful teaching has been lost to us because the council of Nicea (325 AD) forbid the observance of Passover (Jesus' death) and Sfirat Haomer (Jesus' resurrection). In its place 'Good Friday' and 'Easter' were established. Even the date was changed from the Passover of the Jewish calendar to the Sunday after the Spring Equinox. All of this was strongly influenced by pagan fertility worship and really had nothing to do with Jesus and the resurrection. It was a reaction against anything Jewish, but what a great loss of a fine, meaningful holy day it was for Christianity!

**TRADITIONAL JEWISH OBSERVANCE** After the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD the loss of the temple as a place of sacrifice, the observance of Sfirat Haomer consisted primarily of prayers and blessings. The fifty days between the barley and wheat offerings were counted by the Jews.

**CELEBRATING SFIRIT HAOMER TODAY** Starting the day after the Jewish Passover (or the Christian 'Easter' if you would rather do it that way) count fifty days until Shavuot (Pentecost). Make this a time of anticipation as if you are waiting for a visit of your very best friend. Celebrate it with joy, remembering the first day you met that friend! The Friend, by the way, is the Holy Spirit who came on Shavuot/Pentecost. Count down by using a calendar or making a calendar with 50 squares. Each day glue a little barley (it is very inexpensive) on each day. Our Christmas Advent calendars where a window is opened each day is similar to this. By the way, use some of the barley to make barley soup, identifying with the Jews and what they ate at that time of the year.

Find a time during the day when your family can regularly do this as part of their devotions. First of all, the father reads: "Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the LORD." Leviticus 23:16) Then the whole family says: "This is the (first, second, third, or whatever) day of the Omer." Then read a portion from the Psalms. Record another day on your chart (glue down barley or however you are going to do it). Close with a prayer of your choosing or use this that Jews still use: "Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has given us commandments to obey. It is our desire to be obedient to Your laws, knowing that they will enable us to live in a right relationship with you and with each other."

To help make the 50 day wait more memorable plant some seeds on the first day and watch them grow. Beans are especially good. Have the children print John 12:24 on a piece of paper and talk about it. Memorizing it would be good, too. Keep the soil moist (not too wet and not too dry).

## Daily Life in Bible Times – IV. FEASTS & FESTIVALS

### 4. SHAVUOTH (Pentecost)

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**THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND** Fifty days after Sfirat Haomer (First Fruits) comes the Jewish festival Shavuoth (Pentecost, or Feast of Weeks). In fact, Shavuoth" means "weeks" (it is 7 weeks after Sfirat Haomer). "Pentecost:" is a Greek word meaning "fiftieth day" ('penta' means five). Jews would bring an omer (1/2 gallon) of their first-ripening spring crop (barley) to the Temple the day after Passover. From that day on they would begin counting the days until they got to 50 (7 weeks later) when they celebrated Shavuoth (Pentecost, Weeks). Leviticus 23:15-21 describe the feast. It was a very important feast, one of the three that all men within traveling distance of Jerusalem were required to attend (Dt. 16:16).

This feast is also a memorial to the giving of the Law on Mt Sinai (Exodus 19), for that was 50 days after they left Egypt (on the day after the first Passover). It was on this day, 50 days after the resurrection, that the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

To the Jews this was a special time of thanksgiving for the spring harvest. God's faithfulness being shown here gave hope for an abundant fall harvest (Sukkoth). Giving thanks for present provision leads to faith for future addition. What a wonderful God we have! He provides all our needs through His riches in glory in Messiah (Philippians 4:19).

**TRADITIONAL JEWISH OBSERVANCE** The Jews would bake part of the wheat offering into two loaves of leavened bread. They were brought to the tabernacle/temple with great ceremony and waved in every direction before the Lord as a public statement of God's provision for all His people.

Animal sacrifices accompanied the wheat offering, showing the vicarious offering of the lambs to symbolize the need for an innocent victim to remove sin from the people (Leviticus. 17:11). As seen with the Passover, animal sacrifices foreshadow the ultimate Sacrifice - Jesus.

**NEW TESTAMENT TIE-IN** This feast is mentioned several times in the New Testament. Not only did the Holy Spirit come on this day, but Paul planned his travels in correlation with Shavuoth (I Corinthians. 16:8). The significance of Acts 2 is clear. Jews had just left the Temple, having heard Ezekiel 1 read about God's glory like fire, when they encountered Peter and the apostles showing God's glory the same way. It was the first God's glory was seen in 600 years!

Shavuoth was thankfulness for the spring harvest, trusting that the later harvest (fall would naturally follow). While many Jews were 'harvested' by Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost, the final and full harvest is still to come (James 1:18). This will be a full-scale revival among the Jews. The spring harvest guaranteed the fall harvest. The ingathering of Jews at Pentecost guarantees a time to come when all of Jews will be gathered (Zech. 12:10).

**JEWISH OBSERVANCE TODAY** Since Rome destroyed Jerusalem and the Jews lost the use of the temple mount, there can be no animal sacrifices offered so this is no longer any part of the celebration today.

Today Jews decorate their synagogue in greenery, flowers and baskets of fruit to symbolize the harvest aspect of Shavuoth (similar to what we do at our thanksgiving). The Scripture reading is Exodus 19-20, the giving of the law (which was given 50 days after Sfirat Haomer). Also, Ezekiel 1 and Ruth (which took place during the spring harvest) is read. Many synagogues customarily hold

their confirmation services for teens at this time to recognize their culminated childhood studies of the Law.

Home celebration for Jews today is similar to their other holidays. As Shavuoth gets near, the holiday table is set with the best linen and dishes. The holiday candles are lit by the women of the house. After the traditional blessings and prayer, blessings are said over the cup of drink. The challah bread is then blessed and shared by all. The meal includes lots of milk products because the Scriptures are described as "the milk of the word" (1 Pt. 2:2).

**CELEBRATING SHAVUOTH TODAY** Fifty days after Sfirat Haomer, when your calendar has been completely checked off, celebrate Shavuoth. Decorate the house with greens, flowers -- anything reminding you of spring. Set the table with your best linens and dishes. Celebrate after Sunday, when the Jewish day started. The holiday candles are lit and the following blessing recited: "Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us by your commandments and commanded us to be a light unto the nations and have given us Jesus, our Messiah, the Light of the World." \_ Grape juice and specially made or bought bread (with leaven) is present. These are blessed, then the holiday dinner is served. The meal should include lots of milk and milk products (cheese) to commemorate the milk of the Word of God. Talk about God's Bible and how special it is to us today. Read or tell the story of Ruth, a spring harvest book. Thank Him for it. Close in prayer asking God to send His revival among His people, the Jews.

*Shavuoth is the last of the cluster of spring festivals consisting of Passover (redemption by blood), Unleavened Bread), Sfirat Haomer (resurrection of Jesus, promise of our resurrection) and Shavuoth (Holy Spirit's coming, promise of future greater ingathering). These have already been fulfilled, and anticipate the final fulfillment in the fall feasts (Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles). Historically, we are living in the 'summer,' the gap between the spring feasts (fulfilled in the First Coming) and fall feasts (fulfilled at the Second Coming).*

## Daily Life in Bible Times – IV. FEASTS & FESTIVALS

### 5. ROSH HASHANAH (New Year)

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**THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND** "Happy New Year!" That's what Rosh Hashanah is! "Rosh" means 'head,' or 'beginning.' "Hashanah" means 'the year' (Ezekiel 40:1). It is better known to us as the Feast of Trumpets. While the actual calendar of the Jews started with God's instructions about the Passover (Nisan - Exodus 12:1-2), this stands for their "spiritual" new year, a special time set apart for a new beginning with the Lord. It was so important they saw it as a new start with God, and thus the start of a new spiritual year. Today they send New Year's cards to each other commemorating this special time. To the Jews, who date their calendar years from the year of creation, this is also the birthday of the world. The Jews use this as a time to celebrate the King of creation.

Actually, Rosh Hashanah is in the seventh month of the year (Tishri). To them, the seventh month is holy, just like the seventh day is holy. Just as the day before, Friday, becomes a time of preparation for the seventh day, so the month before, Elul, becomes a month of preparation for the seventh month. There are forty days from the first of Elul until the end of Rosh Hashanah (called Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement), called the Forty Days of Preparation. This is a time of soul-searching and preparation, the same as Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness before His ministry (Mt. 4:1-2). Forty as a time of preparation is common in the Bible (Exodus 24:18; 34:28; Numbers. 13:25; I Kings. 19:8; Jonah 3:4-5).

This is also called the Feast of Trumpets (Yom Teruah - Leviticus. 23:23-25) because it was commemorated by trumpet blasts. For the next ten days repentance and returning to God were to take place. It is a time to take stock of their spiritual condition and make whatever changes are necessary to make sure they will be pleasing to God in the coming spiritual year. These are called the "High Holy Days." They culminate with Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement). The Jews believed Moses ascended Mt. Sinai to receive the second set of the Tablets of the law and descended on Yom Kippur.

Actually, three strands are braided together to make Rosh Hashanah. First, it honors the KINGSHIP OF GOD and His authority over creation (Psalm 19:1-3, 7-11; 150:1-3; 33:13-15; Rom. 3:23). Secondly, it is a day of REMEMBRANCE, of one's place in god's plan. The third thread refers to the REVELATION of God. The sounding of the trumpet is a call to spiritual awakening.

The trumpet was a "Shofar," the Hebrew word for trumpet or horn, specifically a ram's horn (which what was used to produce the sound). In fact, many Orthodox men take a special water immersion to symbolize their cleansing at this time. Many rabbis see in this a glimpse of the future regathering of Israel by the Messiah (Mt. 24:29-31).

**NEW TESTAMENT TIE-IN** This feast becomes even more special when seen in light of the life of Jesus, who came to be the Messiah to regather Israel (except they rejected Him). Many scholars believe Jesus was born in the fall, and began His public ministry in the fall (Lk. 3:23). Could John's call to baptism, and Jesus' response to it, have been at the time of the preparation for Rosh Hashanah? Then the 40 days of Jesus' testing in the wilderness (corresponding to the forty days of the Shofar and repentance), followed by Jesus' message to repent and turn to God (as John was preaching). What better time could there have been for the Messiah to start His earthly ministry than during Rosh Hashanah? The Jews rejected and didn't respond, but will one day when He returns to the sound of the trumpet and regather Israel and then totally fulfill Rosh Hashanah (Isaiah 27:12-13; Mt. 24:31). Consider more: it was a trumpet that was blown each morning calling the Jews to regather and hail their king. When we hear a trumpet we as believers will be regathered to meet our King (the Rapture - I Thes. 4:16-18). Just think! Any time the Shofar could sound for us, calling us to be with Him (Titus 2:13).

**CELEBRATING ROSH HASHANAH TODAY** Rosh Hashanah is not just another day! Set your table with your best. Take a little extra time and make some family memories. Blown the horn before the meal, if you've been doing it each day for the last 30 or not.


The Shofar (a horn, trumpet, or anything you can blow to make noise) is blown each day from the first of Elul until Yom Kippur - 40 days, except for Sabbath. In ancient times this was used to hail a king, and it speaks of the Jews appearing before their King of Kings in anticipation of personal judgment. It is a reminder to prepare one's self for God. After the horn is blown the following is said: "Awake, you that are sleepy, and ponder your deeds; remember your Creator and go to Him for forgiveness. Don't be like those who miss reality in their hunt after shadows, and waste your years in seeking after vain things which can neither profit nor deliver. Look well to your souls and consider your deeds; let each one of you forsake his evil ways and thoughts, and return to the Lord, so that He may have mercy on you."

Mother lights the candles and prays. Dad leads in prayer for the drink (grape juice) and bread. Pass a dish with apple slices around a dish of honey. This symbolizes the hope that the year will be a sweet one. The father gives a special prayer of thankfulness.

It is traditional to place a cooked fish with its head in front of the father, showing he is the head of the family and will fulfill his duties in that regard for the coming year. Carrots are eaten in abundance (raw and cooked) for the Hebrew word for carrots means "to increase" symbolizing that God will increase our blessings as we walk with Him. Another tradition is tasting the first fruits from a new harvest. Pick a favorite fruit and don't eat it for several weeks until this time. Waiting for it makes it especially good and makes us more thankful to God for it. A round, full loaf of bread is also eaten, symbolic of our desire for a full and round year. You can save some dough and make a ladder on the top of the bread, signifying our prayers are directed to God on high. Read and talk about Genesis 22:1-14, God's provision of a ram to be sacrificed in Isaac's place, a living picture of what was to come in His greater gift of Jesus.

You can celebrate the birthday of the world by making a cake and putting candles on it. After singing happy birthday to the world, and while eating it, talk about all the different parts of the world that are in the cake (milk from cows, eggs from chickens, both of which eat green leaves; candle light like stars in sky, etc.). Thank God for His wonderful world!

Taking a ritual bath or shower can be done to symbolize cleansing from God (as some Jews today still do). This is even more meaningful when you go to a body of water (lake, river, pool, etc.). After immersing in it, throw a stone in it as far as you can, showing our sins are as far as the east is from the west, as deep as in the depths of the sea.

The first letter of the Hebrew alphabet is Resh Hebrew  is read from right to left, so the letter starts closed and opens. The past is closed, but the new year is an open future. Also, you could say the Resh looks like a Shofar! Let the children learn to make this letter.



## Daily Life in Bible Times – IV. FEASTS & FESTIVALS

### 6. YOM KIPPUR (Day of Atonement))

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**THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND** Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, has long been considered the most holy day in the Jewish biblical calendar. As the name implies, on this very day, once a year, the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies to make atonement for the nation (Leviticus. 23:26-32). It was the only time all year anyone entered there. Before entering, one goat (the *Chatat*) was slain as a blood sacrifice, symbolizing the innocent blood that must be shed to cover sin (Leviticus. 16). A second goat (the *Azazel*), the Scapegoat, would be brought to the priest who would lay his hands on it and confess the sins of the people, transferring them symbolically to the goat. This goat was then sent into the wilderness, a picture of sins being carried away. This was the culmination of the 40 days of preparation from Elul first, and especially the 10 days of repentance starting at Rosh Hashanah. Atonement follows repentance. What greater theme is there in the Bible?

When the High Priest enters God's presence He represents all the people, coming asking for mercy and forgiveness based on the innocent blood that was shed. Man cannot justify himself (James 2:10; I John 1:8,10; Job 9:32-33; Lev. 16:29-34). All this was clearly fulfilled and finished by Jesus, for it all pointed to Him (Heb. 7:26-28; 8:7-8; 10:1-22; Jeremiah. 31:31-34). Any who reject this way are condemned for eternity (Jeremiah. 23:39; Revelation 20:15; Psalm 145:18).

**NEW TESTAMENT TIE-IN** Paul talks about Yom Kippur in Romans 3:23-26. "Propitiation" refers to atonement, a term any Jew of the first century who read Paul's letter would understand. On the cross Jesus was displayed as our atonement, our sacrifice, the fulfillment of what Yom Kippur was all about! Paul refers to Yom Kippur (Acts 27:9). Some feel that when Jesus read from Isaiah 61 about Himself in the Nazareth synagogue and was rejected (Lk. 4:16-22) it was in the season of repentance, near or on Yom Kippur. This would make this passage and claim by Jesus take on special significance. Unfortunately, the Jews rejected their sacrifice for sin, but will accept Him when He returns (Zech. 13:1; Rom. 11:25-27).

**TRADITIONAL JEWISH OBSERVANCE** When the temple was destroyed in 70 AD the Jews were no longer able to offer animal sacrifices. They replaced it with *Tefilah* (prayer), *Teshuvah* (repentance), and *Tzedakah* (charity). Thus, the observance today is very different than in Old Testament times. There is a movement among Jews to day to return to animal sacrifices and they are actively reproducing the holy vessels and priestly garments in anticipation of when they will again be in possession of the Temple mount.

The Jews fast on Yom Kippur (Isaiah 58:5; Lev. 23). This is to picture mourning for sin. Before sundown the evening before Yom Kippur (remember, the Jewish day goes from sundown to sundown) the Jews have a holiday meal. Then they fast. When they fast, they really fast! There is nothing to eat or drink -- nothing. No unnecessary bathing, entertainment or anything is allowed. (Exceptions are made for children under 13, sick adults and pregnant or nursing mothers.) A special synagogue service is held the evening that Yom Kippur starts, perhaps the most special of the whole year.

The next morning Yom Kippur continues. It is treated like a very special Sabbath. They attend synagogue services all day. All focuses on the need for atonement for sins. Services last all

day, for the Jews believe judgment will come at the close of Yom Kippur if God doesn't show mercy and forgive.

After sundown, when judgment does not come, a special break-the-fast meal is served. Tasted first is sweet wine or grape juice, then sweet honey cake is eaten. This is all in anticipation of a sweet new year.

**CELEBRATING YOM KIPPUR TODAY** The meal before sundown down when Yom Kippur starts is to be a special meal, the last for 24 hours. Just like on the other holy days, the table is set with the best dishes and linens. White is used for table linens and clothing for it symbolizes what the holy day is all about: cleansing from sin (Isaiah 1:18). Also, two candles are lit and blessings said over the grape juice and bread. Plan foods for this meal that will not make your fasting harder (no spicy foods, etc.). It should be similar to your meal for Rosh Hashanah and the Sabbath. After eating read the story of Jonah about God's judgment on sin.

After sundown the celebration starts with a blessing on the children. Lay your hands on each one and bless them, as Jesus did ((Mt. 19:13; Lk. 18:15). then a candle is lit in remembrance of a loved one who has died (Exodus 20:12).

The next 24 hours are for fasting and prayer. The days up to this time are spent in repentance and soul-searching, resolving personal problems and settling disputes with others (Mt. 6:14-15). Remember, fasting alone gains nothing, it is merely an outward way of showing what is going on inwardly (repentance, putting God before anything - Mt. 6:16-18). If a complete fast is too much for you or your children, have a partial fast (drink but no food, food but no desert or no meat, just plain basic food, or however you want to do it). Hunger pains remind us that this is a serious time of mourning and repentance, of self-denial and serious calling on God, of giving up any fleshly appetite to be right with God. As you fast and pray this day pray for millions of Jews around the world, packed into synagogues and also fasting, that they would open their hearts to Jesus their Messiah (Rom. 10:1)!

When the sun again sets at the end of Yom Kippur a light meal (similar to breakfast) is eaten to break the fast and the day closes with words from the Psalm (107:8-9). Divide up the amount of money you would have spent on groceries during Yom Kippur and put a portion on each person's plate after the meal. Let each one use it to help needy people in any way they choose. Now it's time to start planning Sukkoth. You have 5 days to build it, don't put it off!

## Daily Life in Bible Times – IV. FEASTS & FESTIVALS

### 7. SUKKOTH (Tabernacles)

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**THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND** Sukkoth is the third major holiday in the Jewish month of Tishri (Sept.-Oct.). They are Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and five days afterwards Sukkoth (which lasts 8 days). Sukkoth is a time of bringing in the fall harvest. It is the Jewish "Thanksgiving." In fact, the Pilgrims, who were well versed in the Old Testament, probably based the first American Thanksgiving on Sukkoth. "Sukkoth" means "huts" (Genesis 33:17). That's why this feast is also called the Feast of Tabernacles (a tabernacle is a tent or a hut), or the Feast of Booths (also a hut, tent). This is one of the three feasts when all Jewish men who possibly could were to travel to Jerusalem (Leviticus. 23:39-43).

This feast was celebrated by building tents/booths as a reminder of the 40 years wandering when their forefathers left Egypt. God's Presence was with them in a special tent/booth which we call the 'Tabernacle.'

**NEW TESTAMENT TIE-IN** John uses the same word 'tent/booth' to describe Jesus' coming to earth (John 1:14). In fact, some Bible scholars make a good argument showing that Jesus was actually born on Sukkoth.

An important part of the celebration of Sukkoth was when a priest would take a pitcher of water from the Pool of Siloam and carry it to the temple. Crowds of people would follow: dancing and singing the Hallel Psalms (113-118). They would do this once a day for the first 6 days of Sukkoth and on the 8th do it 7 times showing the great joy they had in God. The highlight of this ceremony came when the priest would pour the water at the altar. This brought such a response from the people the rabbis said it was the most joyous time of the year for a Jew. Pouring the water was a picture of the Holy Spirit being poured out on all, bringing great joy (Isaiah 12:3). It speaks of the coming time when God/Messiah will dwell ('sukkoth') with His people. When this happened while Jesus was in Jerusalem He clearly pointed out that HE was the water (John 7:14-39) poured out to bring blessing to all. Jesus was saying that if they truly desired what Sukkoth was all about they had to come to Him (John 7:40-41).

While Jesus claimed to fulfill this, He was rejected so it never found fulfillment in His day. There is a future day coming when Messiah will 'sukkoth' with His people forever (Revelation 21:1-3; Amos 9:13-15; Zech. 14:16-21). This is called the Millennium, and God's Presence dwelling with His people will continue for eternity! Then the final fulfillment of Sukkoth will be celebrated (Zech. 14:16-17).

**TRADITIONAL JEWISH OBSERVANCE** Sukkoth is a joyous celebration. The torah is celebrated and paraded, children carry flags and banners decorated with appropriate symbols, and apples bearing lighted candles flicker brightly from the tops of poles. The light from the candles shows we are enlightened because we know God's Word (Psalm 119:105). The apple is to remind us to keep God's Word as the apple of our eye (Prov. 7:2). Children are given candy, showing God's Word is sweet (Psalm 19:8-10). Refreshments and house-to-house round off Sukkoth celebrations today. Each family returns to its home for the final feast which closes the festival.

**CELEBRATING SUKKOTH TODAY** This can be a very rewarding family time if you have a little space and a little time. Build your own booth/tabernacle in your yard. To make it really challenging,

try doing it like the Jews did -- without nails. Use some poles for a frame and lay large grass, sticks, weeds, etc. over it. Start it right after you finish Rosh Hashanah. This will be the center of your activities, your new 'home,' as the Jews lived in the wilderness. At the very least, put up a camping tent or use some large pieces of cardboard to make a temporary structure. It reminds us that any abode we make on this earth is temporary (I Chronicles. 29:15; Heb. 11:8-10; 2 Corinthians. 5:1). Also, living closer to nature and the land makes it easier to praise God for the abundance it provides for us (Thanksgiving).

For eight days do something special in your Sukkoth: a meal, devotions, schooling, Bible study, rest time, games or whatever you choose. The first time you use it pray and dedicate it to God. Mother lights the traditional blessing candles (watch you don't start a fire!). Use grape juice and bread, as with the other feasts. Eat a special, favorite meal. Read and talk about John 1 in connection with a pitcher of water. It speaks of Jesus as the Living Water (Isaiah 55:1; 58:11; 44:3). Also read and talk about Hebrews 13:14 (we are pilgrims in temporary homes) and John 14:1-7 (Jesus is making a permanent home for us in heaven). These can be done the first day or any of the other days.

The eighth and last evening of your feast should also be around a special meal together. Use water again. Pour some on the ground, a picture of the coming day when God will pour out His Spirit on all mankind. Close in prayer -- one-word prayers from each one present. Father starts with "Heavenly Father, we are each one thankful for ALL of the blessings you shower upon us ....." Each one name something they are thankful for. Close with "Help us to remember that You have invited us to come to You whenever we are thirsty and that You are the one who offers us the living water of life that gives us lasting peace through Jesus. Amen."

Have the children organize a parade one of the days of Sukkoth. Let them make banners, each with a different letter of the alphabet and something from God it stands for (B= Bible, c= Creation, etc.). Let the children be creative in how they want to use their tent/booth and what they want to do in it. Remember, it is a time of JOY for all!