

When Did Jesus Speak John 7:37-39 ?

37 In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

The Church of God has always taught that Jesus spoke the above words on the 8th day of the annual “Feast of Tabernacles” which is commonly called the Last Great Day (LGD). Technically the LGD is not part of the Feast of Tabernacles but rather a separate festival that immediately follows it. Herbert W. Armstrong taught and had no doubt that Jesus spoke John 7:37-39 on the LGD. This biblical teaching has been challenged (UCG study paper: The Last Great Day, August 2002), but for those who wish to prove Bible truth from the Bible alone and let the Bible interpret itself, here are a few points to consider regarding arguments made in the paper.

1. **The Jews** – While this recent challenge claims to be based on the Bible, in fact it relies most heavily on human reasoning and what is believed to be Jewish tradition – the tradition of religious leaders who kept the Passover a day late and didn’t even recognize their own Messiah. This so-called “evidence” is irrelevant and cannot be used to establish Bible doctrine. It has no place in the main body of a doctrinal paper (see 6 below).
2. **The Talmud** – This is just written Jewish tradition and can have no bearing on establishing Bible doctrine. Talmudic quotes do not belong in the main body of a doctrinal paper (see 6 below).
3. **Commentaries** – Whether Jewish or gentile, commentaries can provide useful background information, but should not be used in determining Bible doctrine. Quotes from commentaries should only be used to establish technical but not interpretative facts. Few of these should appear in the main body of a doctrinal paper (see 6 below).
4. **Calendar Issues** – Although the Jewish calendar is required for us to know when the holy days occur, it is not scripture. While true Bible doctrine will not contradict the calendar’s requirements, the calendar cannot be used to force doctrine that is not first proved from the Bible alone.
5. **‘How to Study the Bible’** – This old WCG booklet provides the tried and true basic ground rules for studying the Bible and proving Bible truth. Proving Bible doctrine is usually simple and not complicated if these guidelines are followed, and the results are not easily challenged. The last rule is not to use “Bible Helps” such as commentaries to establish doctrine.
6. See the UCG study paper below in appendix A with the irrelevant material crossed out. With the superfluous arguments removed there’s really not much left, which is why no change to this doctrine should have been made in the first place.
7. “Although *we cannot say with absolute certainty* that John 7:37 is referring to the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles, the evidence presented above points to this conclusion.” (UCG study paper: The Last Great Day, August 2002, pg. 9). Why would one challenge the teaching of the man once acknowledged as being God’s apostle, without being *absolutely certain*?
8. “But in *interpreting* John 7:37, scriptural and historical evidence points to the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles as ‘the last day, that great day of the feast’ and not primarily to the eighth day.” (UCG study paper: The Last Great Day, August 2002, pg. 9) The problem is not letting the Bible alone do the *interpreting*.

9. ***“It is also unclear whether the timing was at the end of the seventh day or after sunset and the beginning of the eighth day.*** Therefore, while it appears that the term “last day of the feast, that great day” refers to the seventh day, ***it is also possible that by the time Christ spoke, the eighth day had arrived.*** (UCG study paper: The Last Great Day, August 2002, pg. 6) So if the beginning of the 8th day works, why not stick with that and be in agreement with the man once acknowledged as God’s apostle? – Was the real purpose to show that Herbert Armstrong could be doctrinally wrong?
10. Just as the Passover/Unleavened Bread whole 8-day period was referred to as “Unleavened Bread” (Lev.23:4-8; Antiquities of the Jews, Bk.II, Ch.15, Sec.1), so the Feast/Last Great Day whole 8-day period was referred to as the “Feast” (Lev.23:33-44; Antiquities of the Jews, Bk.III, Ch.10, Sec.4). Therefore John 7:37 is simply referring to the 8th, or Last Great Day of the “Feast.”
11. “great *day*” = high day (Strong’s 3173, see Jn.19:31). The last day of the Feast of Tabernacles is not a high day, but the LGD is. The Bible plainly says Jesus spoke on the high day, probably in the evening at the beginning of the LGD. Otherwise, what is “great” about the 7th day of the Feast of Tabernacles?
12. The content of Jesus’ message in Jn.7:37,38 fits with the meaning of the LGD. For instance, the term “last day” refers to the general resurrection at the end of the millennium (see Jn.11:24). And that is when the “water of life” is freely given to all who are athirst (Isa.44:3, 55:1; Rev.21:6, 22:17). If it were to be freely given during the entire millennium, would not Christ have made his statements on the first high day of the Feast of Tabernacles?
13. HWA quote from Pagan Holidays booklet pg. 54,55 (1974 ed.):
 “Did you notice that the Feast of Tabernacles is only the sixth festival? There is yet another - the seventh!
 The Feast of Tabernacles is, strictly speaking, seven days long - to picture the entire Millennium. Seven is God's number of completeness. Therefore, there must also be seven festivals. Let us notice where it is mentioned: ‘The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord ... On the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you ... it is a [day of] solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein’ (Lev.23:34,36).
This eighth day, technically a separate feast, is called ‘the last day, that great day of the feast’ (John 7:37).
 What does this final holy day represent?
Notice what Jesus preached about on that day: ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink ... out of his belly [innermost being] shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive ...)’ (John 7:37-39).
This was Jesus’ sermon giving the meaning of the last great day!
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This is precisely the salvation that Jesus mentioned in His sermon on that great day of the feast in the autumn of A.D. 30.
 This eighth day, which immediately follows the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles, pictures the completion of the plan of redemption. It is just prior to the new heaven and the new earth.”
14. The author of this (Aug.’02) poor study paper seems to have been paving the way for his later (Aug.’05) bad bible study on interracial marriage. Both cases contain flawed research and human reasoning which undo what HWA taught from the Bible.
15. The men who made this change had no authority to do so. Jesus said He would “restore all things” through Elijah whom He would send at the end-time (Mt.17:11). He did not say He would re-restore anything through a committee after He had already restored it through His apostle. Please read below in Appendix B the article, “How Christ Gives the Church its Beliefs” (GN Nov. 20, 1978).

Conclusion: This change set a dangerous precedent for future changes based on extra-biblical sources and flawed human reasoning. It contains a lot of irrelevant smoke and mirrors that look good to the intellectual mind, but the trunk of the tree argument is erroneous. This small change was a subtle undermining of God's end-time apostle and the method God uses to put doctrine into His Church. And was it not also a 'foot in the door' towards the real author's real goal – changing Christ's judgment through His apostle on interracial marriage, which did follow three years later by the same author using the same method (see Interracial Marriage article).

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Appendix A



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The Last Great Day

Doctrinal Paper

Approved by the Council of Elders
August 2002

All scriptures are quoted from *The Holy Bible, New King James Version* (© 1988 Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, Tennessee) unless otherwise noted.

THE LAST GREAT DAY

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In the Church of God, we have by tradition used the term “Last Great Day” to describe the “eighth day” festival of Leviticus 23:36. We see from this section of Scripture that the “eighth day” is a distinct festival and it is also a Sabbath. While it is connected with the Feast of Tabernacles, it is not specifically a part of this festival. Notice the instruction regarding this eighth day:

“For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. On the *eighth day* you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it” (Leviticus 23:36).

The final two festivals of the fall are the Feast of Tabernacles, for seven days, followed immediately by another festival, simply called the “eighth day” (Leviticus 23:34-36, 39). In the context of a seven-day feast, the term *last day* would be the seventh day of the Feast. However, in the combined context of eight consecutive days, the “eighth day” would be the *last day*.

The term “Last Great Day” does not appear anywhere in Scripture. The term “the last day, that great day of the feast” only appears in the book of John. There is no reference in the Old Testament to a “Last Great Day” festival. The reference in John is in the context of the Feast of Tabernacles. John 7 begins with a discussion of the Feast of Tabernacles and then proceeds to the statement “the last day, that great day of the feast...” Notice the full statement in John 7:37: “On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink’” (emphasis added throughout).

This leads to an obvious question. Does John 7:37 refer to the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles as the “last day” or does it refer to the separate festival, the eighth day? Scholars are divided in their opinions. Leon Morris in his commentary on John writes, “It is not quite clear whether it was the seventh day or this eighth day which was the climax of the whole celebration, and of which John speaks as ‘the great day of the feast.’”¹ Similarly, we find in *The Expositor’s Commentary on the Bible* under the explanation about John 7:37, “Whether the ‘last day’ of the feast was the seventh or the eighth day is not clear.”

One could certainly conclude that this reference in John was to the festival that occurred on the eighth day. On the other hand when the Bible speaks of the Feast of Tabernacles it always mentions seven days. In a seven-day festival, the last day would be the seventh day. Here is what the Bible has to say about the Feast of Tabernacles.

Leviticus 23:34-36 “The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the LORD.³⁵ On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it.³⁶ For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. On the *eighth day* you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it.”

Leviticus 23:39-43 “Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month...you shall keep the feast of the LORD for seven days; on the first day there shall be a sabbath-rest, and on the *eighth day* a sabbath-rest.⁴⁰ And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees,

¹Morris, Leon, *The New International Commentary of the New Testament, The Gospel According to John*, p. 422.

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branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall *rejoice* before the LORD your God *for seven days*.⁴¹ You shall keep it as a *feast* to the LORD *for seven days* in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations.⁴² *You shall dwell in booths for seven days*. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths,⁴³ that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.”

In the Old Testament, the “eighth day” is not given a specific *title* such as the “Last Great Day.” It is simply known as the “eighth day.” The biblical distinction between the seven-day observance of the Feast of Tabernacles and the observance of the eighth day continued during the days of Solomon.

1 Kings 8:65 “At that time Solomon held a *feast*, and all Israel with him, a great assembly from the entrance of Hamath to the Brook of Egypt, before the LORD our God, *seven days and seven more days—fourteen days*.”

The *last day* of Solomon’s seven-day feast for the altar was the *seventh day*. And the *last day* of the following seven-day feast, the Feast of Tabernacles, was the *seventh day*. The total of “fourteen days” clearly omits the eighth day from the number of days in the *literal* “feast.” Therefore, the eighth day was observed *after* the seventh and *last day* of the Feast of Tabernacles. Yet if the Feast of Tabernacles were *literally* an eight-day feast, then a total of “fifteen days” would have been given for the “feast” in *1 Kings 8:65-66*. This is also reflected in the parallel account in *2 Chronicles*.

2 Chronicles 7:8-9 “At that time Solomon kept *the feast seven days*, and all Israel with him, a very great assembly from the entrance of Hamath to the Brook of Egypt.⁹ *And on the eighth day they held a sacred assembly*, for they observed the dedication of the altar *seven days, and the feast seven days*.”

~~While the “Feast of Tabernacles” can be expanded to imply the eighth day, the Talmud records how the Jews literally understood this feast, “It really consists of two groups; the *first seven days, Tabernacles proper*; and the eighth day, ‘*Azereth*.’ The *seventh day* of Tabernacles became in later times *an echo of the Day of Atonement* and was known as *Hoshanah Rabbah*...” (*Shabbath*, Foreword, p. viii). The Talmud gives six reasons why the eighth day was considered to be a “*separate festival*.”²~~

- ~~1. “i.e. with regard to *balloting* it is a separate festival” (a ballot was necessary on the eighth day, only, to determine who would sacrifice the lone bull sacrifice),~~
- ~~2. “with regard to the *benediction* of the season it is a separate festival” (a separate festival benediction was given),~~
- ~~3. “with regard to the *nature* of the festival it is a separate festival” (on the eighth day the booth is viewed as an “ordinary hut,” not a *sukkah* of the Feast of Tabernacles),~~
- ~~4. “with regard to the *sacrifice* it is a separate festival” (only one bull was sacrificed on the eighth day. But on each of the seven days of the feast several were sacrificed),~~

² ~~*Sukkah 48a, Gemara (Tractates Sukkah/Moed Katan, Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylonian Talmud, London, The Soncino Press, 1990).*~~

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- ~~5. “with regard to its *psalm* it is a separate festival,”~~
- ~~6. “with regard to its *benediction* it is a separate festival” (on the eighth day one was not permitted to mention the “Feast of Tabernacles” during prayer).~~

~~The Jews during the time of Christ made a clearer distinction between the seventh and eighth day than we do today. These six points also amplify the fact that the seventh day is the *literal* last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. Therefore, if the eighth day is called the “last day,” then the *combined* context must imply that it is the last of *two separate festivals* or the last Holy Day of the year.³ (For additional information from the Talmud see *Appendix A.*)~~

Again, if the “feast” in John 7:37 indicates the “seven days” of the Feast of Tabernacles, then the “last day, that great day of the feast” is the seventh day of that festival followed by the holy convocation on the “eighth day.” But is it that simple? As with most things in the Bible, the context is often the determining factor. In the Old Testament, the only occurrence of “the last day” in association with the fall Holy Days is found in the book of Nehemiah.

Nehemiah 8:18 “Also day by day, from the first day *until the last day*, he read from the Book of the Law of God. And they kept *the feast seven days*; and on the *eighth day* there was a sacred assembly, according to the prescribed manner.”

Here the “last day” is not an official *title* of a Holy Day. Given that they “kept the feast seven days,” the last day of this feast could have been the seventh day. The public reading of the Law, before *all Israel*, was not as common as one might assume. Typically the males, only, were commanded to attend the feast—“all your males” (Deuteronomy 16:16). But in Nehemiah 8, the Law was read before the “men *and women*” (verse 2) along with the children, of course, who would have been in attendance with their parents. Deuteronomy 31 shows that this was not a common scenario.

Deuteronomy 31:10-12 “...At the end of *every seven years*, at the appointed time in the year of release, *at the Feast of Tabernacles*,¹¹ when *all Israel* comes to appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, *you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing*.¹² Gather the people together, *men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates*, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law.”

It is unclear whether Nehemiah 8 is a year of release; however there was something extra special about the Feast that year, a renewed enthusiasm. Nehemiah 8:18 shows the seventh day of the Feast being the “last,” followed by a *separate* holy convocation on the eighth day. Of course, every time the Feast of Tabernacles is mentioned, the “eighth day” does not have to be noted, as if it needs repeated validation. However, when “the last day” is noted, then one must decide which *last day* is being discussed.

Before taking a closer look at John 7:37, the following is a summary of some of the points noted from the Old Testament:

³*Sukka* 48a, Mishnah.

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1. The “seven days” refers to the Feast of Tabernacles, therefore the seventh day is *literally* the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles
2. The “eighth day” is not given the specific *title* of the “Last Great Day.”
3. Taken in context we see that the term “last day” may specify the “seventh day” of the Feast of Tabernacles or it may be the “eighth day,” a *separate* festival.

John 7:37 is the only New Testament scripture that mentions “the last day” in association with the fall Holy Days. As with Nehemiah 8:18, this phrase is not an official title for that day. As we have already seen in John 7:37, either the seventh or eighth day is indicated.

The term “the eighth day of the feast” appears nowhere in Scripture. Had this been stated in Leviticus 23, then the answer to this question might be simple. However, the qualifier “of the feast” may help us to understand John 7:37. It’s easy to assume that the “great day” is synonymous with “a high day.” The Greek word for “great” is *megale*, from *megas*, which means “great,” much in the same way that we use it in English. This same word is used in John 19:31 in reference to the First Day of Unleavened Bread—an annual Sabbath day. However, *megas* is not limited to things that are holy. It is used dozens of times in the New Testament. It describes evil things as well as good things. See Revelation 12:3; 17:5; 18:10; 18:23; 19:2; 20:12. It is also used in Revelation 16:14 in reference to the “great day of God Almighty.” While this refers to a special time of great importance, it does not indicate that it is holy time. In other words, *megas* indicates that the day in John 7:37 is special and it *may* indicate that it is a Holy Day, but the use of the word does not prove conclusively that this reference is to a Holy Day and therefore the eighth day.

~~But if the day referred to in John 7:37 is the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles, what’s so “great” about the seventh day of the Feast in comparison to the other days? To the Jews, the seventh day of the Feast depicts the time when all gentile nations will be granted salvation, thereby joining the Jews in God’s Kingdom. During the seven days of this festival, a total of 70 bulls were sacrificed (Numbers 29:12-34), which the rabbis associated with gentile nations. On the eighth day an additional bull was sacrificed but the Jews did not include this in the total number of 70 bulls that were sacrificed during the seven-day Feast. The Jewish New Testament Commentary states, “Rabbi El’azar said, ‘To what do these seventy bulls correspond? To the seventy nations’ (Sukkah 55b). In rabbinical tradition, the traditional number of Gentile nations is seventy; the seventy bulls are to make atonement for them.”⁴ Alfred Edersheim explains, “But, whereas the number of the rams and lambs remained the same on each day of the festival, that of the bullocks decreased every day by one—from thirteen on the first to seven bullocks on the last day, ‘that great day of the feast.’”⁵~~

~~The Jews taught a plan of salvation in accordance with their understanding of the Holy Days, where the seventh day of the Feast (called *Hoshanah Rabbah*) represents a final opportunity for salvation—“Hoshanah Rabbah was understood to be the absolutely final chance to have one’s sins for the year forgiven...in Jewish tradition there remained opportunity for~~

⁴Stern, David, *The Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 175, 1992.

⁵Edersheim, Alfred, *The Temple—Its Ministries and Services*, The Feast of Tabernacles, Chapter 14, 1999.

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~~forgiveness up to Hoshanah Rabbah.”⁶ However, the eighth day (called *Sh’mini Atzeret*) was more simple in its significance. “Whereas the other holidays celebrate specific events, Shmini Atzeret is a day when God in effect says to the Jewish people, ‘Stay with Me just one day more so that we can enjoy being together just for the sake of being together.’”⁷~~

~~These sources show that for the Jews the seventh day of the Feast had a special significance in terms of salvation. However, the Church of God appropriately understands that it is the “eighth day” that represents the ultimate last opportunity for everyone who has ever lived. Our application of the “Last Great Day” to the eighth day reflects our understanding of the plan of salvation as depicted in God’s Holy Days. Of course this does not prove that the “last day, that great day of the feast” in John 7:37 refers to the eighth day and not the seventh. We simply recognize that we have a different understanding of the festivals in view of the plan of salvation than the Jews have.~~

~~Other religious practices of Christ’s time reflect that the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles was a special day to the Jews. The *Jewish New Testament Commentary* notes that the Greek word for “great” corresponds to the Hebrew word *rabbah* and that the significance of the activities on the seventh day led to it being called “*Hoshanah Rabbah*, the Great Hosanna.”~~

~~“The seventh day, last day of Sukkoth was its climax. Throughout the seven days of the feast a special *Cohen* (priest) had carried water in a golden pitcher from the Pool of Shiloach (Siloam) to be poured into a basin at the foot of the altar.... It symbolized prayer for rain, which begins the next day...and it also pointed toward the outpouring of the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Holy Spirit) on the people of Israel.... On the seventh day, the water pouring was accompanied by *cohanim* (priests) blowing gold trumpets...singing sacred songs and ordinary people waving their *Lulavs* (palm leaf, myrtle and willow) and chanting the *Hallel* (Psalms 113–118).”⁸~~

~~“The words, ‘Please save us!’ (Ps. 118:25–27) led to the day’s being called *Hoshanah Rabbah*, the Great Hosanna.... *Hoshanah Rabbah* was understood to be the absolutely final chance to have one’s sins for the year forgiven...in Jewish tradition there remained opportunity for forgiveness up to *Hoshanah Rabbah*.”⁹~~

~~“A connection between the possession of religious joy is found in the ceremony of water drawing...(*feast of water-drawing*) on the festival of *Sukkoth*. The Mishna said that he who has never seen this ceremony, which was accompanied by *dancing, singing, and music* (*Sukkoth* 5:4), had never seen true joy (Jerusalem Talmud, *Sukkot* 5:1, 55a).”¹⁰~~

It is unclear whether Christ spoke during or after the water-pouring ceremony in John’s account. It is also unclear whether the timing was at the end of the seventh day or after sunset and the beginning of the eighth day. Therefore, while it appears that the term “last day of the feast, that great day” refers to the seventh day, it is also possible that by the time Christ spoke, the eighth day had arrived. ~~Stern describes below the water-pouring ceremony:~~

⁶Stern, David, *The Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 179, 1992.

⁷Freedman, Rabbi E.B.; Greenberg, Jan; Katz, Karen A., *What Does Being Jewish Mean?*, pp. 93–94, 1992.

⁸Stern, David, *The Jewish New Testament Commentary*, pp. 178–179, 1992.

⁹Stern, David, *The Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 179, 1992.

¹⁰*Encyclopedia Judaica* 14:365.

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~~“It was in the midst of this water pouring, trumpet blasting, palm waving, psalm chanting and ecstatic joy...that Yeshua cried out in the temple courts, ‘If anyone is thirsty. Let him keep coming to me and drinking!’”~~

~~“...there were four golden menorahs with four golden bowls at the top of each.... Four young cohanim (priests) would climb up with pitchers of 9 liters of oil...and there was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that was not lit up with the light of the [festivities]. Pious men and men of good deeds would dance around [the menorahs] with lit torches in their hands, singing songs and praises, while the Levites played harps, lyres, cymbals, trumpets and innumerable other musical instruments’ (Sukkah 5:2-4).”¹¹~~

~~So what was so great about the seventh day of the Feast? Everything, according to the Jewish festival practices during the time of Christ. To them, the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles was *Hoshanah Rabbah* the Great Hosanna portraying salvation for Jews and gentiles.~~

~~Alfred Edersheim writes the following in his book regarding John 7:37:~~

~~“It was ‘the last, the great day of the Feast,’ and Jesus was once more in the Temple. We can scarcely doubt that it was the concluding day of the Feast [feasts], and not, as most modern writers suppose, its Octave, which, in Rabbinic language, was regarded as ‘a festival by itself.’”~~

~~“...Only during the first two, and on the last festive day (as also on the Octave of the Feast), was strict Sabbatic rest enjoined.... But ‘the last, the Great Day of the Feast,’ was marked by special observances....”~~

~~“...on ‘the last, the Great Day of the Feast,’ this procession of Priests made the circuit of the altar, not only once, but seven times.... Hence the seventh or last day of the Feast was also called that of ‘the Great Hosannah.’ As the people left the Temple, they saluted the altar with words of thanks (g Sukk 4:5) and on the last day of the Feast they shook off the leaves on the willow-branches round the altar, and beat their palm-branches to pieces (au.s.1 and 6). On the same afternoon the ‘booths’ were dismantled, and the Feast ended (bu.s.8).”~~

~~“We can have little difficulty in determining at what part of the services of ‘the last, the Great Day of the Feast,’ Jesus stood and cried, ‘If any one thirst let Him come unto Me and drink!’ It must have been with special reference to the ceremony of the outpouring of the water, which, as we have seen, was considered the central part of the service.... The forthpouring of the water was immediately followed by the chanting of the Hallel. But after that there must have been a short pause to prepare for the festive sacrifices (the Musaph). It was then, immediately after the symbolic rite of water-pouring, immediately after the people had responded by repeating those lines from Ps. 118...that there rose, so loud as to be heard throughout the Temple, the Voice of Jesus. He interrupted not the services, for they had for the moment ceased: He interpreted, and He fulfilled them.”¹²~~

¹¹Stern, David, *The Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 181.

¹²Edersheim, Alfred, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Volume 2, Chapter 7, 1999.

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~~It's significant to note that the Jews did not live in booths during the eighth day: "On the afternoon of the seventh day of the feast the people began to remove from the 'booths.' For at the Octave, on the 22nd of Tishri, they lived no longer in booths.... But it was observed as 'a holy convocation'" (Edersheim, *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services*, 1999, Chapter 14, "The Six Minor Days"). The afternoon of the seventh day was a significant time period. The Talmudic "twilight" was defined as 3 p.m. in the afternoon at which time the "evening sacrifice" occurred. The moving out of their booths during the afternoon heightens the view of the seventh day as the last day of the Feast: "You shall dwell in booths for seven days" (Leviticus 23:42). The booths were commonly built on rooftops, or near housing that was be used on the eighth day. For additional information on whether Jews can eat in their sukkah on the eighth day, see Appendix B.~~

When we read beyond John 7:37, the scriptures shed light on the distinction between the seventh and eighth day. After Christ finished speaking, the people expressed their opinions (verses 40-44). Then the Pharisees expressed their opinions and Nicodemus reasoned with them, "Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?" (verses 45-52). The last verse in this chapter says, "And everyone went to his own house" (verse 53). ~~This return to their homes is consistent with what is noted by Edersheim and the Talmud regarding the activities during the late afternoon of the seventh day of the Feast.~~ Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. On the next day everyone returned to the temple for the holy convocation on the eighth day. John 8:1 says, "...early in the morning He came again into the temple...." Under this scenario, the story of the woman caught in adultery would have occurred on the eighth day (verses 3-11).

The Pharisees evidently heeded the advice of Nicodemus as they strategically confronted Christ on the eighth day. The record of the eighth day continues in John 8:12, "Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, 'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.'"

The scenario above is consistent with our understanding that the eighth day fell on a weekly Sabbath in A.D. 30 (the last fall festival season prior to the crucifixion, which occurred in the spring of A.D. 31), during which Jesus healed a blind man (John 9:14-16). This healing of one who was "blind from birth" ties in with the message of the second resurrection when Christ will suddenly offer "light" (verse 5) and give "sight" to the majority of mankind. These will have been spiritually blind from birth, unlike those who were "once enlightened" and then fell away (Hebrews 6:4-6). They will suddenly be transmitted from the darkness of death to the light of life, physically and spiritually.

The distinct observance of the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles and the "eighth day" is well documented, and is not affected by one's view of the day on which Christ was speaking in John 7:37. Additionally, the spiritual significance of the fall Holy Days in God's plan of salvation for all mankind remains unchanged. The Feast of Tabernacles represents the millennial reign of Jesus Christ on this earth, and the eighth day represents the period of the Great White Throne Judgment.

THE LAST GREAT DAY

Doctrinal Paper

Although we cannot say with absolute certainty that John 7:37 is referring to the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles, the evidence presented above points to this conclusion. That being the case, is it wrong to continue to call the eighth day the Last Great Day? ~~First of all, the phrase “that great day” as applied by the Jews in the time of Christ to the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles is not an Old Testament term, as we have seen. It is a term which they used to denote the last day of that festival. There is nothing wrong in doing this as they also used the Greek word Pentecost to denote the festival called in the Old Testament the Feast of Weeks. The Church’s decision to use the term “last great day” to denote the eighth day festival is certainly not wrong given the precedent we see in Scripture.~~

Furthermore, the term “last great day” can appropriately be applied to the eighth day when one understands its meaning in the plan of salvation. Jude 6 states, “And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for *the judgment of the great day.*” The eighth day represents the last Day of Judgment for mankind and angels. Certainly, some of the prophecies concerning the “last days” apply to the eighth day. After the Millennium the *last* judgment period for mankind will begin: “Then I saw a *great* white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away.... And *the dead were judged* according to their works, by the things which were written in the books” (Revelation 20:11-12).

So there’s no need to change the Church’s traditional expression of “the Last Great Day,” in association with the eighth day. But in interpreting John 7:37, scriptural and historical evidence points to the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles as “the last day, that great day of the feast” and not primarily to the eighth day.

Appendix A

~~The Talmud includes the Mishnah (the first writing of the oral law) and the Gemara (rabbinical discussion of the Mishnah). The traditions of the Talmud are not required for Christians. Therefore we are not commanded to have a water-pouring ceremony on the seventh day of the Feast. Yet Christ attended the “Jews’ Feast of Tabernacles” (or Judean Feast of Tabernacles), which included the Talmudic traditions. Therefore the Talmud can help us to understand which day the Jews viewed as the “last day, that great day of the feast” (John 7:37).~~

~~The festival rejoicing *began* during the *daytime* on each of the seven days of the Feast. This was done according to Leviticus 23:40, “...you shall *rejoice* before the LORD your God *for seven days.*” The daytime rejoicing spilled over into the evening. Consequently, the rejoicing on the seventh day continued into the evening of the eighth day, or “last night” (*Sukkah* 48a, Gemara). Though the eighth night is called the “last night,” this section also refers to the seventh day as, “the *concluding day*” (footnote b1). The seventh day was the literal “concluding day” of Tabernacles proper. The rejoicing was not done on a weekly Sabbath, upon which the eighth day fell in A.D. 30 (John 8-9). Therefore if John 7:37 is linked to the upbeat rejoicing and water ceremony, then this points to the seventh day of the Feast.~~

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~~The Talmud says, “When a man has finished his [last] meal, he may not dismantle his Sukkah. He may, however, remove its furniture from the afternoon onwards in honor of the last day of the Festival” (Sukkah 48a, Mishnah). This last meal was eaten, “on the seventh day” (Gemara, footnote b2). Obviously, they didn’t fast on the eighth day. However, the meal on the seventh day was his last meal in that it was literally his last meal of the Feast of Tabernacles. Therefore, we should not assume that “last” always refers to the eighth day. On the seventh day a man was to move his furniture “from the Sukkah into the house where he is to have his meals in the evening and the following day” (footnote b4). But by the time the eighth day had arrived, the booth had been altered in some way (e.g., “four handbreadths” of the roof were removed) to indicate “it is no longer in use as a Sukkah but as an ordinary hut” (footnotes b8-11).~~

~~Regarding the festival offerings, “the time for offerings is the day-time” (footnote a8). The “water-libation and wine-libation, and the burnt-offering” occurred during the daytime (Sukkah 48b, Gemara). Therefore when John 7:37 is associated with the water ceremony, then this emphasizes the “day-time” of the seventh day.~~

~~On the first day 13 bulls were sacrificed and, each day, one less bull was sacrificed ending with seven bulls on the seventh day. Regarding the lone sacrificial bull on the eighth day, Sukkah 48a states, “The number of bullocks offered is not six as might have been expected if the sixth (eighth) day had been regarded as the eighth of the days of Tabernacles on each of which the number of bullocks was reduced by one” (footnote a4).~~

Appendix B

~~The Jews in Israel observe the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) for seven days followed by a separate Holy Day observance on the eighth day (Shemini Atzeret). However, years ago the Jews outside of Israel began the practice of adding an extra day to the annual Holy Days, just in case their calculation of the new moon was a day off. If so, then they might have begun an observance one day too soon. Consequently many Jews outside of Israel keep the Feast of Tabernacles for eight days to cover any doubt (safek) that the eighth day is really the seventh day of the Feast. However they do not believe that the eighth day is literally the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles.~~

~~This extra day led to questions regarding how the booth should be used on the eighth day. The Jews decided that one could sit or eat in the booth, just in case it was really the seventh day. But one could not mention the “Feast of Tabernacles” (“Sukkot”) in his benediction (berakha), just in case it was really the eighth day. Therefore, despite the added day, they maintain that the seventh day is the literal last day of the Feast.~~

~~This subject is discussed in an article titled, “Eating in the Sukka on Shemini Atzeret.” Here the interpretations of the Talmud are derived from some of the most reputable Jewish authorities in their history, e.g. the “Rif” (born A.D. 1013, author of an abridged version of the~~

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Talmud),¹³ the “Rambam” (born A.D. 1135, considered to be one of the greatest Jewish scholars in history),¹⁴ the “Chazal” (meaning “our sages of blessed memory,” an authoritative opinion of the Talmud),¹⁵ the Book of the Chinukh (*Sefer Ha-chinukh*) and the “Bach” (a major Jewish commentary written in the 17th century).¹⁶ Below are excerpts from this article written by Rabbi Elyakim Krumbein:

~~“The explanation of the Rif is adopted by the Sefer Ha-chinukh (chapter 323), who explains it in greater detail. According to the Chinukh, the reason we make no berakha on sitting in the sukka on Shemini Atzeret relates to the essence of Shemini Atzeret itself. While the gemara (*Sukka* 47a) lists various ways in which Shemini Atzeret is considered a holiday in and of itself, it nonetheless refers to the day as ‘the closing yom tov of Sukkot’ (*Sukka* 48a). The question which naturally arises is, *should Shemini Atzeret be viewed fundamentally as an independent chag, or rather as the end of Sukkot?* This question could lie at the heart of the debate among poskim regarding the proper reference to Shemini Atzeret in Ya’aleh Ve-yavo: should one say ‘chag ha-atzeret,’ *festival of closing*, or ‘atzeret ha-chag,’ *closing of the festival* (the latter suggesting that the day is the conclusion of the ‘chag,’ namely Sukkot)? *The Chinukh opts for the first formulation, thus emphasizing the independent character of the day: ‘There is no reference made to Sukkot in this formulation at all.’* Why, then, do we sit in the sukka on Shemini Atzeret? The Chinukh continues:~~

~~“Chazal commanded us to sit in the sukka to fulfill the obligation [of Jews outside Israel] to add one day to every holiday; hence, we add a day to Sukkot and make it eight days, but we don’t make a berakha on the sukka on that day because it is really a different holiday altogether. Since nowadays we know the calculation of the calendar and hence the true date, it is more appropriate to make berakhot relating to the true character of the day rather than to the aspect of the day instituted by Chazal. Although one may ask: *why do we not mention both Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret in our blessings*, as we do with regard to Shabbat and Yom Tov when they coincide? [The answer is] we find that it is possible for Shabbat and Yom Tov to occur on the same day, but **TWO DIFFERENT HOLIDAYS CANNOT OCCUR AT THE SAME TIME**, and hence we should not recite such a berakha. But it is perfectly appropriate to sit in the sukka on Shemini Atzeret, **SINCE THIS DOES NOT DETRACT FROM THE HOLIDAY OF SHEMINI ATZERET AT ALL.**”~~

~~“While the Rif’s language is terse, the Chinukh provides an explanation. According to the Chinukh, the entire problem would not have arisen *had Shemini Atzeret not been an independent holiday. Had the eighth day been part of Sukkot, we would have been able to sit in the sukka and even make a berakha, and there would have been no conflict between Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret.* The problem lies not in the fact that there is no OBLIGATION to sit in the sukka on the Shemini Atzeret, but in the fact that Shemini Atzeret **IN ITS ESSENCE is a holiday separate and different from Sukkot....** Thus, for instance, we have no problem making a berakha of ‘al akhilat matza’ on the second night of Pesach outside Israel, despite the fact that there is no obligation from the Torah to eat matza then; this is because the second night of Pesach is part of the holiday of Pesach, *while Shemini Atzeret itself is detached from and independent of Sukkot.* The Chinukh~~

¹³ 9th Through 11th Century Gedolim (Torah Giants), <http://pages.nyu.edu/~asr209/rif>

¹⁴ Judaism 101, A Glossary of Basic Jewish Terms and Concepts, <http://www.ou.org/about/judaism/r.htm#rambam>

¹⁵ Judaism 101, A Glossary of Basic Jewish Terms and Concepts, <http://www.ou.org/about/judaism/bc.htm#chazal>

¹⁶ 16th Century Gedolim, <http://pages.nyu.edu/~asr209/16cent.html>

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~~believes that we need be concerned about the problem of *mutual exclusion* only with regard to *two entirely different and conflicting characteristics* which we attempt to impose on the same one day.”~~

~~(<http://vbm-torah.org/sukkot/sk60-ek.htm>).~~

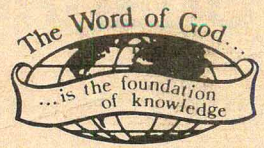
~~The Jews *outside Israel* also observe the *ninth day* as *Shemini Atzeret* (or *Simchas Torah*), just in case this is really the eighth day. However in this case the rules of *mutual exclusion* are not applicable because neither the eighth nor the ninth day is *literally* part of the Feast of Tabernacles. Therefore the eighth and ninth day do not concern *two different holidays* that cannot occur at the same time. It’s conceivable that a Jew outside Israel might loosely refer to the *ninth day* as the *last day*. But this wouldn’t change his understanding of the *literal* last day of the Feast, the seventh day, followed by a separate festival, the eighth day.~~

~~Likewise, the Jews’ “great day of the feast” on the seventh day (John 7:37) doesn’t change the Church’s understanding of the Last Great Day on the eighth day (Revelation 20:11-12).~~

Appendix B

The Good News

PASADENA, CALIF.



A PUBLICATION FOR MEMBERS OF THE WORLDWIDE CHURCH OF GOD

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HOW CHRIST GIVES THE CHURCH ITS BELIEFS

By Herbert W. Armstrong

I SAID to my wife, 52 years ago, "All these churches can't be wrong. That's how I know the Bible says, 'Thou shalt observe Sunday.'"

But on intensive indepth study of the Bible, I found "all these churches" were wrong, and that they did not obtain their beliefs from God's Word, but rather that they believed doctrines and practiced customs that are contrary to biblical teaching.

I wanted to find God's teachings, doctrines, customs and practices. I found them! I found them in the same way the apostle Paul did.

An eye-opener!

And, to one steeped in the practices and doctrines of today's "Christianity" — both Protestant and Catholic — it is, indeed, an eye-opener.

But I followed Paul's example.

And I can say with him, "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ . . . But when it pleased God, who . . . called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood [neither went I to a biblical seminary, but I went into night-and-day study of the Word of God, mostly on my knees] . . ." (paraphrased from Galatians 1:11-17).

The apostle Paul says, verse 17, that instead of going to other MEN, he went into Arabia. Apparently Jesus Christ, IN PERSON, manifested Himself and taught Paul there. For Paul said later, ". . . Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? . . ." (1 Corinthians 9:1), and: ". . . that he [Jesus] rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve . . . And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time (1 Corinthians 15:4-6, 8).

The 12 original apostles received their teaching direct from Jesus IN PERSON. The apostle Paul spent some three years in Arabia, and apparently that was the time when he saw JESUS IN PERSON and was taught directly by Jesus Christ. But as Jesus is the Word in Person, so the Bible is the Word of God IN PRINT.

Did Jesus appoint a "Doctrinal Committee?" The Roman Catholic Church has a Curia, which examines and passes on all doctrines and practices before the pope makes them official. How did CHRIST organize God's Church?

Now back to Galatians 1: "Then after three years [in Arabia] I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother" (Galatians 1:18-19). Continue on, "Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain . . . But . . . when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision [to the gentiles] was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision [Israel] was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles" (Galatians 2:1-8).

One sent forth

The word *apostle* means "one sent forth."

The meaning here is unmistakable — as Peter was the *chief apostle* to Israel and Judah, so Paul was chief apostle to the gentiles.

Nevertheless, when ALL of the scriptures on this subject are put together, it becomes certain that Peter, in fact, was the overall chief apostle.

The New Testament Church of God received all its teachings, practices, customs, FROM THE APOSTLES, with Peter chief over all the others.

I know well that, in view of Roman Catholic teachings regarding Peter being the first pope, this statement will be challenged by many — but it is TRUE, nevertheless!

Peter did have primacy as chief apostle! I shall amply prove that. YET PETER WAS NOT A POPE! There is a vast DIFFERENCE!

Remember, an apostle is "ONE

SENT FORTH WITH THE GOSPEL." The Roman Catholic pope sits permanently (unless, as some few have done, he takes a trip to some other place — not as carrying the Gospel, but as a POLITICAL HEAD OF STATE).

Yet the apostles were the teachers, who instilled in the Church the BELIEFS, TEACHINGS, PRACTICES AND CUSTOMS of the Church. And all members of the Church were required by God to BELIEVE AND SPEAK THE SAME THING!

In the Church at Corinth, Paul began his letter, INSPIRED as part of GOD'S WORD, by saying, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you . . ." (1 Corinthians 1:10).

Paul's letter to the Corinthians was CORRECTIVE, as were his letters to other churches, and he was inspired to speak in the name of — and AUTHORITY OF — Jesus Christ, for, he said, (verses 11-12): ". . . there are contentions [divisions] among you . . . that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ." THEY WERE BEGINNING TO FOLLOW INDIVIDUAL LEADERS. They supposed those leaders differed in their teaching, though in fact those mentioned did all speak and teach THE SAME THING as CHRIST had instructed.

SOURCE of Church beliefs

LET'S GET THIS STRAIGHT, once and for all! THE SOURCE of the beliefs, teachings, customs and practices in the Church of God is GOD HIMSELF! Not any man. Jesus said, "I have spoken nothing of myself" — the FATHER had instructed Him! Jesus, in turn, taught His apostles in Person!

THERE WAS NO DOCTRINAL BOARD! The teachings of the Church did not come from a COUNCIL of ministers and/or lay

members, who voted on what to believe.

Right here, SOME are going to ask, "WHAT ABOUT ACTS 15? Wasn't that the first Church Council at Jerusalem, to settle points of doctrine?" THE ANSWER IS NO! And I intend to devote enough space in this article to clear up that point!

So far, I have shown you from Galatians 1 and 2 that Peter was the chief apostle to the house of Israel and Paul to the gentiles. Now I will show you that Peter actually had PRIMACY OVER ALL.

At the very founding of the New Testament Church of God, it was PETER who stood up and explained what had occurred — preaching the first sermon in the Church that led to 3,000 converts (Acts 2:14-39).

A day of two later, the number became 5,000. It was PETER who said to the cripple, ". . . In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6). It was PETER who preached the sermon to the crowd thus attracted that converted 2,000 more.

Next came the incident of Ananias and Sapphira stealing and lying. It was PETER who spoke and caused them to drop dead.

Next, when signs and wonders were performed by the apostles, it was PETER'S SHADOW, as he passed by, that healed the sick.

Next the apostles were brought before the high priest and the council, and the spokesman for the apostles was PETER, who said, ". . . We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Coming to Acts 8, when Philip, then a deacon, went to Samaria, and when the people believed Philip preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God, they were baptized. It was Peter and John who went down to Samaria, laid hands on the newly baptized (gentiles) and prayed for the Holy Spirit to be given to

them. This is the first example of the Church of God's custom of laying hands on the baptized for receiving the Holy Spirit — and PETER was the leader, for when Simon the sorcerer tried to buy an apostleship with money, it was PETER who said to him (the first pope), ". . . Thy money perish with thee . . . for I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity" (Acts 8:20-23). He was the pater or peter — papa — pope of the Babylonian Mystery religion. Paul writes (II Thessalonians 2:7), "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work . . ." That religion, having without authority appropriated the name "Christianity," is named in Revelation 17:5, "MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT."

Is it not ironic that the one who rebuked and condemned the first pope was Cephas, whom Christ had called PETER?

But continue on. We come to Acts 10. Although Paul was later to be made apostle to the gentiles, the time had come to first open salvation to the gentiles officially. And this was done by PETER, not Paul. It was PETER whom God sent to the house of the gentile Cornelius, to teach him. It was PETER who convinced the others at Jerusalem that God had opened salvation to the gentiles (Acts 11).

Peter not a pope

UNDERSTAND THIS about PETER. HE WAS NOT A PROUD RULING POPE. He was a humble man, strong in Christ's Gospel and faith, but he did not try to lord it over others or always take the top seat, unless his position required. He was HUMAN, still, though since the day of Pentecost he had the Holy Spirit. When Peter came to Antioch, more than 14 years after the founding of the Church, his human nature showed, when he withdrew from the gentiles after some Jewish converts arrived from Jerusalem. Paul rebuked Peter publicly for this. But then, we might well remember that Paul was also human. This event occurred in the chief gentile church, and Paul was a little nettled at seeing Peter withdraw from eating with gentiles because some had arrived from Jerusalem. This incident reflects the humanity of both Peter and Paul — and demonstrates, also, that Peter was not a pope, else Paul would never have dared rebuke him.

Now we come to that crucial 15th chapter of Acts.

(See HOW CHRIST, page 14)

HOW CHRIST GIVES THE CHURCH ITS BELIEFS

(Continued from page 1)

Few in God's Church have fully understood this chapter. I shall go into sufficient detail to MAKE IT CLEAR!

Unauthorized teachers

Notice, verse 1: "... certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." Who were these men? NOT apostles, or they would have been named.

Right here, MARK WELL THIS POINT: GOD PUT HIS TRUTH INTO HIS CHURCH THROUGH CHRIST AND THROUGH THE APOSTLES! These men were NOT apostles. What they taught was NOT FROM JESUS!

The apostle Paul KNEW WELL that God gave His Church its teachings only through Christ and the apostles. Immediately Paul understood these unauthorized teachers.

Verse 2: "When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they [probably the local members, not fully realizing that Paul, being apostle to the gentiles, had authority to settle it] determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question."

These men from Judaea were undoubtedly Jewish Christians who had not received authentic teaching through the apostles — nor did they recognize Paul's authority as an apostle, or they would not have entered into such disputation with him.

Undoubtedly, being Jewish converts, without full apostolic teaching, they looked on the Church as merely an extension of Judaism. Incidentally, the Judaism of that time was NOT Mosaic teaching. But after the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, the only organized Jewish religion was among the descendants of the contingent of Jews sent back to Jerusalem from Persian captivity (see Ezra 1:1-3) 70 years after the destruction of Solomon's temple, to build the second temple — to which Jesus later came. After Ezra and Nehemiah, the rabbis gradually made a considerable change in the old covenant religion given Israel by Moses.

World cut off from God

Their Israelite ancestors had always wanted to be more like the world around them. In I Samuel 8 you will read of how they wanted a king and government more like the other nations of the world. Now the WORLD, except for Israel, which was specially called by God, was CUT OFF from God. Remember, all those centuries and millenniums, the Chinese, Japanese, people of India, Southeast Asia, Africa, the Roman Empire, knew little or nothing about GOD. They all had their own religions, and most were derived, with some changes, from that established by Semiramis the mother-wife of Nimrod (Genesis 10).

Now these pagan religions — of Egypt, Greece, Babylon, Rome — had known nothing of

God's GRACE — unmerited, undeserved PARDON, forgiveness of past sins on repentance. Instead, their religions had adopted a system of self-inflicted punishment, ordeal or torture, to justify past sins.

Israel given laws through Moses

Moses had been used of God to give Israel certain laws. First, there was the overall spiritual law of LOVE; or the Ten Commandments — although Israel without the Holy Spirit could keep that law only in the strictness of the letter (in the New Testament it must be according to the Spirit — or the obvious intent). This is called in the Bible the Law of God.

Then, through Moses, God gave them the "law of Moses" — a sacrificial law of animal sacrifices, which could not justify sin, but was a reminder of sin, and was a physical substitute for the sacrifice of Christ. When Christ died on the cross, animal sacrifices ceased.

There also was a ceremonial law — of physical rituals, carnal ordinances, meat and drink offerings, etc. — to teach them the HABIT of obedience — things to do repeatedly morning, noon and night. The law of rituals, including circumcision, was PHYSICAL, and a substitute until the Holy Spirit should be given, to teach them the HABIT of obedience.

In Galatians 3:19, this law was ADDED, because of transgressions. That is, transgressions of the spiritual law. In Galatians 3:24, this ritual law is called a "schoolmaster" to bring them to Christ. In Romans and Galatians, the terms "works of the law" always refers to these PHYSICAL laws, which were TEMPORARY until Christ. Sometimes the single word works means "good works," in accord with the spiritual law, and sometimes the "works of the law" when mentioned in the context will for brev-

Now back to Acts 15.

These Jews who had come down to Antioch thought this system of PENANCE was still in effect. In Galatians 5:3, Paul shows that if a man was circumcised as a legal ritual, he became a debtor to do the WHOLE RITUAL LAW — and the context is speaking of the RITUAL LAW, though this verse does not use "works of the law."

Paul was quite willing to take this to Jerusalem, BECAUSE PETER WAS THERE AT THE TIME.

This visit of Paul to Jerusalem is undoubtedly the one mentioned in Galatians 2. Apparently, according to Galatians 2:9, the only apostles at Jerusalem at that time were Peter, James and John.

But in Acts 15:4, it is stated: "And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders . . ."

Then, verse 6, "And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter." All ordained ministers are called elders in the Bible. This means the lay members were excluded, but the apostles and ordained ministers ranked lower than apostles came together in this council.

Peter settles the question

Now we see that even these elders were not clear on this matter of circumcision. For, verse 7, "And when there had been much disputing, PETER rose up . . . and settled the matter!"

Continue, verses 7-11: ". . . PETER rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bear them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us: And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt

in other words, acting as chairman of the meeting, James in effect started by saying, "PETER has declared!" — Peter has settled it — ". . . how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name." Again affirming Peter's primacy — for when God decided to open salvation to the gentiles — to CALL some of them to salvation, whereas heretofore God had called only Israelites (and even then NOT to salvation, except the prophets) — when God opened salvation to the gentiles, He used Peter to do it! Now continue James' speech:

"And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things."

This was quoted from Amos 9:11-12.

NOTE THIS! The Church of God is built on the FOUNDATION of the apostles and the prophets — Old Testament prophets as well as the VERY FEW prophets of the New Testament. And James was here quoting from the prophet Amos, to add his own approval to Peter's DECISION. James is not making the decision — he is making official Peter's decision!

Continue: "Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood" (verses 19-20). Pollutions of idols was related to idolatry, and idolatry and fornication were violations of the SPIRITUAL law, eternally binding. Eating blood or things

is OFFICIAL, inspired by the HOLY SPIRIT.

Jesus gave Peter primacy

In all these successive instances, I have shown you, step by step, that Peter was LEADER of the apostles — and that the Church received its teachings and doctrines FROM THE APOSTLES!

But God has ALWAYS worked primarily through ONE MAN at a time — as Abraham, then Isaac, then Jacob, then Joseph — later Moses, then Joshua, later Samuel, then David — and, in the New Testament Church, PETER. But Peter was an apostle — one sent forth proclaiming the message — not a resident pope over a political hierarchy.

Now notice how JESUS gave Peter primacy over apostles!

Jesus had asked His apostles-to-be whom they said Jesus really was. "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus said unto him [UNTO PETER] Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee [UNTO PETER], That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell [the grave] shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee [PETER, not the Church] the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou [PETER] shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou [PETER] shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:16-19).

There has been much discussion at Pasadena between certain ministers of lower than apostle rank, as to the CHURCH binding and loosing.

So now let it be MADE OFFICIAL — by Christ's present-day apostle — that this binding and loosing PLAINLY, CLEARLY, WAS given to Christ's chief APOSTLE — not to lower-rank ministers ordained by his authority — not by the CHURCH as a body — but by the APOSTLE!

When men who held office under the apostle, and by his appointment or approval, took it into their own hands, in his absence — stealthily KEEPING IT FROM HIM — to water down God's TRUTH, alter His doctrines, assume unauthorized authority, then the living CHRIST moves His apostle to ACT SWIFTLY, to PUT OUT the prime mover in this conspiracy, and, under Christ, set God's Church and Work BACK ON GOD'S TRACK!

PRaise THE ETERNAL GOD! He has not left nor forsaken HIS CHURCH! Jesus Christ still REIGNS SUPREME in God's Church, as He shall, very soon, reign over all the earth!

Many harmful errors in the STP still remain to be PUT STRAIGHT — and it shall be done by JESUS CHRIST, through His apostle, as rapidly as is humanly possible!

JESUS CHRIST is the living HEAD of this Church! He built it through His apostle. And He, CHRIST, still rules SUPREME in the one and only area on earth where the GOVERNMENT OF GOD is being administered today!

"Let's GET THIS STRAIGHT, once and for all! The SOURCE of the beliefs, teachings, customs and practices in the Church of God is GOD HIMSELF! Not any man."

ity speak of just "the law," but the context will make it plain the subject is the RITUALS. The Greek for "works" of the law is *ergon*, which means physical effort.

Beside these temporary physical rituals and sacrifices, God gave them, through Moses, statutes and judgments — the CIVIL LAWS of their nation. They were not necessarily temporary or substitutional, but were to last as long as the NATIONAL GOVERNMENT was administered over the nation Israel.

Dos and don'ts added

Now the rabbis, after Ezra and Nehemiah, added some 65 dos and don'ts even to the keeping of the Sabbath. They adopted the PAGAN PENANCE — self-inflicted punishment — and construed the physical rituals as a means of justification of past sins. THIS WAS JUDAISM — something really quite different from the religion of Moses.

ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the GRACE [not ritual penance] of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they."

Verse 12, "Then all the multitude kept silence . . ." PETER had settled the question!

Right here, NOTE CAREFULLY! Peter was an apostle — ONE SENT FORTH proclaiming the Gospel, not a resident pastor of a church. James was pastor of the Jerusalem church at the time, though also an apostle. Therefore James acted as chairman of the meeting — even though PETER gave the DECISION. As a matter of protocol, as chairman (as we would call it today), we come now to verse 13:

James speaks as chairman

"And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me. Simeon [Peter] hath declared

strangled was NO PART of the ceremonial law, but a law of health that was not substitutional.

OBSERVE SPECIALLY: This was not a matter, as did happen at Pasadena, of one of lower rank appointed by an apostle, while the apostle was in another part of the world, calling together a conference of ministers of various ranks — all under that apostle — and determining or changing doctrine — watering down God's TRUTH — and sending it out, as the Systematic Theology Project (STP) was, claiming falsely and without authority that it was an authoritative doctrinal pronouncement!

In this case, it was PETER, chief apostle, who set the decision. The letter they then sent to the church at Antioch specified that this decision was inspired by the HOLY SPIRIT. PETER set it, James, local pastor acting as chairman of the meeting, confirmed Peter's decision, making