

# Focus on the Kingdom

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## Resting in Christ as More Than a Weekly Sabbath

Restoration Fellowship stands for the concept that Jesus (not a weekly Saturday/sabbath) is the New Covenant fulfillment of the Old Covenant command to cease from work, on pain of death, each Saturday (Sabbath). When we rest in Christ (as he invites us to: “Come to me, all who are carrying a heavy burden”), then we are perpetually in the Sabbath. We are likewise commanded to “be keeping festival” (1 Cor. 5:8) permanently, as the **Greek continuous present tense of the verb shows**. “Let us be continuously keeping festival,” not “Let us keep one OT feast.” To miss this point is to miss a large section of New Covenant writing dedicated to this major question.

It is also to risk falling into the trap so vigorously warned against by Paul in Galatians. One can retreat into Moses and away from the Messiah who is alive and active. All of us should be on the alert against that trend.

We need to know what obedience to God and Jesus in the New Covenant means. What does it mean to “do the will of God” in **Christ**? Obedience is all-important. Salvation is given to those who obey the Son (Heb. 5:9; John 3:36; 12:44ff). **But obedience can be wrongly defined**. When this happens then obedience becomes a form of disobedience! Zeal is fine, but it must be based on knowledge. Paul praised Jews for zeal and then went out to save them from their ignorance (Rom. 10:1-4).

To many committed **weekly** sabbath (Saturday) keepers, we ask: Are you telling us that out of the 64 times the Greek word *sabbaton* is used in the New Testament to designate “the sabbath” (or very occasionally, “week”), it means something entirely different **only in Colossians 2:16-17**? That sounds like a desperate cry to protect a precarious position. Does any lexicon support this exception, such that sabbath in Colossians 2:16 is not Saturday — is NOT the weekly sabbath?

Colossian 2:16-17 defines the status of the weekly Sabbath under the New Covenant, as a shadow eclipsed now and superseded by the mighty presence of the risen Christ presently at the right hand of the Father. He is “a life-imparting” immortal man (1 Cor. 15:45).

Colossians 2:16-17 lists a trio or triplet of calendar observances, echoing 10 such examples in the Old Testament. We have “annual feasts (*eorte*), monthly new

moons, and weekly sabbath.”<sup>1</sup> This is the complete calendar of Israel. And it is pronounced by Paul to be “a single shadow” (*skia*). It is then immediately *contrasted* with Christ to whom belongs the body or reality. The calendar is defined as a shadow “whereas” (*de*, by contrast) Jesus is the real thing. The same contrast exactly reappears in Hebrews 10:1: “The law has a shadow of the things which were to come.” The real item, the real fulfillment of the shadowy outlines, is Jesus and the New Covenant.

Why is this hard to grasp? Only the restricting and numbing force of a previous habit prevents a clear-minded approach to an important spiritual and practical issue.

My second point underlines the fact that **all the annual feast days are clearly covered in the Greek use of the term *eorte* (feast) in this same verse (Col. 2:16)**. Sabbatarians use Leviticus chapter 23 to back their position. All I am doing is pointing out that God used the Hebrew term *mo'ed* (“feast” in English) to cover all the annual feast days; *eorte* in Greek means exactly the same thing. It brings you to the inevitable conclusion that the Greek term *eorte* covers all those annual feast days in Colossians 2:16-17.

The weekly sabbath (Saturday) is a separate item. Again, we must conclude that “sabbath day” in Colossians 2:16 can mean nothing other than the 7th day sabbath. There is no way to avoid the obvious here.

John in 19:42 hardly commends a **Christian** weekly sabbath. He describes Friday as *the Jewish* preparation for the sabbath day following. A Jewish preparation implies, of course, a Jewish sabbath. REB renders nicely: “The **Jewish** eve of sabbath.” Mark calls that same Friday the *prosabbaton* (“pre-Sabbath day”) which means Friday before Saturday, and can you find any extant example of *prosabbaton* meaning other than Friday?

John refers a number of times to the “Jewish feasts.” This is hardly an Apostle whose agenda is to ensure that we never forget that these are really Christian festivals!

But then, as Mark later commented on a related topic, “Thus Jesus cleansed all foods” (Mk. 7:19). But don’t read the KJV of this verse, translated from inferior

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<sup>1</sup> The plural form of the noun appears often as a reference, even in the Ten Commandments, to a singular weekly Sabbath.

manuscripts on this point. Modern translations get it right based on clear manuscript evidence.

### The Resurrection Was on Sunday

Sunday is absolutely not “the third day” since Wednesday (Luke 24:21)! Nor is it the third day since Thursday. Sunday is the third day, counting inclusively as Luke does, from Friday.

Learn the math from Luke 13:32: “Jesus said to them, ‘Go, tell that fox, “Pay attention: today and tomorrow I am driving out demons and healing people, and on **the third day** I reach my goal.””

“Today, tomorrow and the third day.” The third day is the day on which Jesus was resurrected and that third day in Luke 24:21 is Sunday. Three days before, counting inclusively, is Friday.

The most frequent expression Jesus used in describing the resurrection was the “third day.” This occurs some 10 times in the gospels. Jesus knew well what day he would rise from death. He defended his repetition of the term on the basis of the Scriptures. “He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary that Christ suffer, and rise from the dead **the third day**” (Luke 24:46).

Jesus carefully and precisely defined the third day as the day of his resurrection when he uttered these words: “Nevertheless I must journey on today, tomorrow and the next day, for it cannot be that a prophet would perish outside Jerusalem” (Luke 13:33). He had just said that he would perform cures and cast out demons “today, tomorrow and the third day reach my goal” (13:32).

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus used the same expression when they spoke of the terrible event of the crucifixion. They did not know that they were talking to Jesus, who had been resurrected earlier that same day. One of them said, “**Today is the third day** since these things were done” (Luke 24:21). The day on which they spoke of this “**third day**” was Sunday, exactly the third day since Friday.

Clearly, those people understood how to count the days and to determine which was the third one. They knew because it was a common idiom of their language. But Jesus did not leave any question or room for doubt. It almost seems that he anticipated the perplexity of later Christians who might not know about inclusive reckoning. Jesus offered them a plain, conclusive explanation of how to locate the third day. This bears repetition: He put the subject beyond reasonable doubt. “I cast out demons and I do cures **today and tomorrow, and the third day** I shall be perfected. Nevertheless I must walk **today, and tomorrow, and the day following**” (Luke 13:32-33).

The third day will always be the day after tomorrow. The first day is counted in its entirety (no matter when it begins during that day), the whole of the second day, and

the third day in its entirety (no matter when it ends during that day).

Now we can understand the conversation Jesus had with the Jewish leaders and why they interpreted it as they did. He said, “Destroy this temple, and **in three days** I will raise it up” (John 2:19-21). Later, after the crucifixion, the chief priests said to Pilate, “Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, ‘**After three days** I will rise again.’ Command therefore that the sepulcher be made secure **until the third day**, so that his disciples do not come by night and steal the body” (Matt. 27:63-64).

With *Christ's definition* of time before us, the picture becomes crystal clear. Once again, speaking prophetically of his own death and resurrection, Jesus said in Luke's report: “**Today** [crucifixion] and **tomorrow** [in tomb], and **the third day** [resurrection] I shall be perfected” (Luke 13:32-33). There we have all three days in their sequence. Even though he died in the late afternoon, the entire day would be counted as the first day. The second day would span the Sabbath when Jesus slept the sleep of death in the tomb. Even though he was resurrected in the early hours on the third day, inclusive reckoning would make it one of the three days. Thus, Friday, Saturday and Sunday = three days.

Luke's testimony leaves no room for question. In Luke 24, firstly **the angels** report the resurrection as an event to occur “on the third day” (v. 7). On the first day of the week (v. 1) two of the disciples “on that **same day**” (v. 13) were walking to Emmaus. They meet Jesus and complain that “**today [the first day of the week, Sunday] is the third day**” since the crucifixion, which is the immediate subject under discussion (v. 21). **Jesus** is later recognized by them and he repeats the prophecy, now fulfilled, that the Christ was destined to be crucified and rise from the dead “**on the third day**” (Luke 24:46). Sunday is expressly said to be the third day in Luke 24:21, and that is the day when Jesus was to be brought back from death.

The point is a decisive one in conclusion: Sunday is the third day since the crucifixion (Luke 24:21). The resurrection was to be “on the third day.” Sunday is the third day (Luke 24:21). Therefore the resurrection was on Sunday, the first day of the week. The preparation day (what Mark calls the *prosabbaton* in Mark 15:42) is Friday. It occurs nowhere as a designation of another day than Friday and “sabbath” means Saturday in the NT (apart from the occasional meaning “week”).

The discussion in Luke 24 is about the crucifixion, certainly not about the day on which the tomb was finally sealed! Sunday is the third day since Friday and so Friday is the day of the crucifixion. Luke 24:21 merely confirms all the evidence.

Scripture speaks of several remarkable third days: Genesis 22:4 tells of Abraham seeing a shrine in the distance. Scripture speaks of the third day when Joseph spoke to the sons of Israel (Gen. 42:18), of the giving of the law (Ex. 19:16), the third day for the resurrection of Israel (Hos. 6:2) and of the third day when Esther appeared before the king (Esth. 5:1).

There is no reason at all to interfere with Colossians 2:16-17 as plain evidence for **the Sabbath as a shadow** of the Christ who came. Jesus “is our Passover” (1 Cor. 5:7) and the unleavened bread in that passage is not for Christians understood literally, but figuratively of “genuineness and truth.” “The unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor. 5:8) is the New Covenant spiritualized meaning of the Old Covenant literal leaven.

The importance of this subject must be underlined. Christianity is a faith which demands our activity “in newness of the spirit and not in the oldness of the letter” Rom. 7:6). Jesus is that “Lord who is the spirit” (2 Cor. 3:17-18) and that risen Lord Jesus asks us to serve him and God in the spirit of the law, not the literal law of physical circumcision or the literal law of weekly Sabbath, annual holy days and monthly new moons, which belong to the times prior to coming of the Son of God, Jesus. Why live in the shadows when the light has come?

A giant muddle has been introduced by a failure to grasp basic distinctions between the two covenant arrangements provided by God. The Old must not be confused with the New. One can indeed claim that the Bible says, Keep the weekly Sabbath. Tithe precisely a tenth of all your earnings (Mal. 3). Circumcise all males, Jews and Gentiles (Gen. 17). Don’t ever eat shrimp or pork! (Lev. 11).

But those laws were binding on *ancient Israel*, not on the new Israel of God’s international church (Gal. 6:16; Phil. 3:3). See also 1 Corinthians 10:18, “the Israel of the flesh,” implying the present Israel of the spirit who are to walk by the Torah of Messiah (Gal. 6:2; 1 Cor. 9:21), not the Torah of Moses but the new law of love and adherence to the freedom of the Sarah/Isaac promise, not the bondage of the letter of the Mosaic ten commandments! Hagar, the slave-girl, is starkly contrasted with Sarah. Read it in Galatians 4 and learn the lesson. 2 Corinthians 3 is equally powerful. It is just those passages — 2 Corinthians 3, the whole book of Galatians, and Colossians 2 — which certain “gurus” deftly withheld from their people and thus gained a large following by pointing people away from the spiritual law of Christ and back into the shadow of the Mosaic law. Colossians 2:16-17 is decisive.

Paul certainly did not enforce Leviticus 11 food laws when he wrote, “As a Jew in Christ I am convinced that nothing is unclean of itself, unless you think it is...All

things are clean” (Rom. 14:14, 20). He is contradicting the food laws of Leviticus 11 as Mark also notes Jesus had implied (Mark 7:19).

It is sheer nonsense to say that Paul in Romans 14:14, 20 was ensuring that his readers comply strictly with Leviticus 11. This shocking new truth about freedom in the New Covenant needed to be absorbed by the NT church. Resistance was fierce and Paul did his utmost to get the truth clear to all. So it is today. People are much more than they realize enslaved to former associations, often from sources which have in other ways proven to be far from reliable in matters of sexual conduct! Here are the telling and true words of commentator Henry Alford:

“We may observe that if the ordinance of the Sabbath had been, *in any form*, of lasting obligation on the Christian Church it would have been quite impossible for the Apostle to have spoken thus [Col. 2:16-17]. The fact of **an obligatory rest of one day, whether the seventh or the first**, would have been directly in the teeth of his assertion here: the holding of such would have been still to **retain the shadow, while we possess the substance**. And no answer can be given to this by the transparent special pleading, that he was speaking only of that which was Jewish in such observances: the whole argument being general and **the axiom of verse 17 universally applicable.**”

The freedom gained for us by Jesus and his Gospel of the Kingdom and his death should be enjoyed and celebrated. The mixing of Moses and Jesus in terms of calendar and food laws misrepresents the pure faith of the New Covenant.

Lest any doubt remains, take a long look at this chart which shows how the trio of observances is repeated by Paul in Colossians 2:16-17 based on a pattern of the same trio in the Hebrew Bible:

**Yearly, monthly, weekly pattern proves it is the weekly sabbath**

	<b>Yearly</b>	<b>monthly</b>	<b>weekly</b>
1 Chronicles 23:31	fixed festivals	new moons	Sabbaths
2 Chronicles 2:4	appointed feasts	new moons	Sabbaths
2 Chronicles 8:13	annual feasts	new moons	Sabbaths
2 Chronicles 31:3	fixed festivals	new moons	Sabbaths
Nehemiah 10:33	appointed times	new moon	Sabbaths

Isaiah 1:13-14	appointed feasts	new moon	Sabbath
Ezekiel 45:17	appointed feasts	new moons	Sabbaths
Ezekiel 46:1-11	appointed feasts	new moons	Sabbath
Hosea 2:11	festal assemblies	new moons	Sabbaths
Galatians 4:10	years	months	days
Colossians 2:16	festival	new moon	Sabbath day

## Speaking of Tongues (= Languages)

It is only fair that Christians exercise their right to “test all things carefully.” A public not well educated in the text of Scripture can be misled by passages pulled out of context. When Paul said, “I wish that you all speak in languages” (*glossa* in Greek means language, 1 Cor. 14:5), he cannot have contradicted himself. In an earlier chapter (chapter 12 is to be read *before* chapter 14, as is only common sense!) Paul expressly explained that *different believers in the united body of Christ have different gifts (charismata)*. They do not all have the same gift, any more than in an orchestra everyone plays the flute.

To say that every believer should or could exercise the gift of languages is a contradiction of Paul. It would make as much sense that everyone is supposed to “speak in [other] languages” as to say that all are Apostles. Paul’s easy words in 1 Corinthians 12 have been manipulated to cause an unnecessary confusion and division.

“Do all speak in languages?” Positively not, Paul said (1 Cor. 12:30). This did not prevent certain unscrupulous commentators from mangling the teaching of Paul and insisting that all Christians should exercise a gift of languages, allegedly supernaturally spoken. Many then were persuaded to open their mouths and let sounds come out. The trick convinced them indeed that they had got “it” — the ability to carry out the biblical capacity to speak in other languages.

Those so taught were not deterred for a moment by the fact that speakers in “tongues” could be found across the denominational board. Indeed Tibetan monks, Mormons, Roman Catholics and Buddhists have been tape recorded as capable of having the same “gift.”

Ignored, I suggest, was the injunction that we are to “prove all things.” Firstly it did not occur to those swept off their feet by some questionable practitioners to

investigate the fruits of their instructors. One such group was adamantly *against* water baptism and strongly in favor of a universal gifting in language — adamantly, that is, opposed to Jesus and the Apostolic command that believers are to submit to baptism in water as a publicly recognized marker for becoming part of the body (Acts 10:48, etc.).

Paul in his wisdom, having explained that not everyone has the same gift, went on to instruct the language gifted that they are “to pray that they can translate (interpret) what they say” so that the church can be edified and instructed. After all, intelligible “prophesying,” which is edifying and instructional, is a far superior gift to the language gift, unless the latter is made clear by translation.

Try this out: Ask those who claim the gift of languages to translate for the public good. Or ask them to say what language they are speaking. This appeal to 1 Corinthians 14:13 may cause perplexity. Their “language” has never been verified nor translated for the church public.

Paul gives a foundational definition of “speaking in languages”: **Languages** spoken supernaturally are a sign to unbelievers (1 Cor. 14:22). But how would this apply to a language spoken always privately and never in public?

Paul has a clever way here of bringing the “language” out of the prayer closet into public view, for purposes of verification and intelligibility. Otherwise, might one not fall prey to an imagined experience, powerful, no doubt, but not genuine?

As a powerful sign to unbelievers, how beautifully the amazing event in Acts 2 seems to fit. Here there were gathered a crowd of potential believers in Messiah, representing some 15 different native languages. The Apostles then began, following a mighty rushing sound of wind and a visible manifestation of tongues of fire, to speak forth in other languages. This was a sheer miracle of language unlearned.

It was certainly not just a miracle of hearing. Luke says the opposite. “They began to speak in other languages as the spirit provided them with utterance” (Acts 2:4). Various foreigners, whose homes were in different lands, understood what was being said. It was certainly a sure and verifiable miracle. But what goes under the name of “tongues” (really “languages”) seems to be a far cry from the biblical phenomenon. We should be cautious about the risk of falling for a form of self-deception. ✧

## Speaking to Your Friends About God

Think about this for a moment, and try it out on your friends who are eager for a Bible discussion: “Jesus is God. God is our Heavenly Father. Jesus is not our Heavenly Father. There are not two Gods.”

Most churchgoers hold these four propositions in their minds without pondering carefully and prayerfully whether they are true! They conclude that “there are not two Gods.” But observe that they have already said that “Jesus is God,” and “God is our Heavenly Father.” That makes, of course, two who are God, and in our common language that is “two Gods.” This is unavoidable and when clarified in open discussion, a person may be driven to rethink. After all, knowing and defining God is the Bible’s first consideration. Idolatry means having false ideas about God, and 1 John 5:21, his last words in that epistle, gives a fair warning: “Little children, keep yourselves clear of idols.” Avoid like the plague false ideas about who God is.

Another useful approach is this: “How many YHVH’s are you proposing?” “One,” will probably be the answer. “OK,” you say, “you are telling me that the Father is YHVH and now that Jesus is YHVH. That sounds very much like two YHVH’s.” You may be given various foggy replies which complicate and confuse, but the easy fact remains that Paul summed up the whole issue with this: “There is one God, the Father, and one mediator, the man Messiah Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). Don’t let your friends blow smoke in your eyes!

Summaries like 1 Timothy 2:5 ought to be and must be decisive. They are succinct and precise **summaries** of the core of true religion. These verses allow us to rest peacefully at night. They are beyond argument. They are the verses which settle issues, like Jesus’ wonderful words in John 17:3 defining the Father as “the only one who is true God.” Is that so hard? Jesus is the perfect, sinless, uniquely begotten, fathered *Son* and this happened according to Luke 1:35 and Matthew 1:18, 20. The spirit is the very personal (but not a *third* Person) operational presence and power of God or Jesus, who is the comforter according to 1 John 2:1. ✧

## The Power of the Seed

Jesus was a brilliant observer of the creation, rejoicing in the beauty of the lily: “Even King Solomon in all his royal glory was not arrayed like one of those lilies” (Lk. 12:27). Just today a flawless yellow and black swallowtail butterfly alighted on a rock just in front of me and displayed its magnificent mathematically perfect design and beauty. These are common in Georgia, USA and rare in the UK. They speak of the Creator’s amazing mind displayed in creation.

We live in a sort of laboratory and we are to learn spiritual lessons from our surroundings. No one can live long without knowing that seed time and harvest are part of the irremovable “furniture” of our lives. We all know this. A seed is planted in the ground and eventually fruit is born. We human beings are all originally seeds! This is part of our shared common knowledge with which no one can argue!

Think of this then: How is immortality to be gained? We are here to realize under God and Jesus our God-given potential and destiny, which is to gain indestructible life, more precisely the life of the future age of the Kingdom (vaguely translated as “eternal life”). That life in the spirit begins *now* when we are “born again,” or “born from above.” There is no difference in meaning.

Jesus got right to the point with scholar-leader Nicodemus who, showing the fear of a prominent person shy of associating with the rabbi-carpenter, came by night and wanted to know how to gain immortality in the Kingdom. “You must get born again,” Jesus said. With typical obtuseness (he should have known better!) Nicodemus was thinking of a physical re-entry into the womb! But Jesus explained that a spiritual rebirth was necessary. The parable of the sower, using an agricultural picture rather than a biological picture, speaks of seed as the vital agent of rebirth (Luke 8:11; Matt. 13:19).

After all, think of this: Jesus in John 3 says that rebirth is indispensable for immortality. Are we to imagine that in Matthew, Mark and Luke no mention at all is made of this essential rebirth? Of course not. Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us about conversion, repentance and rebirth in terms of one of Jesus’ favorite pictures and parables, the story of the sower sowing his seed. Peter in 1 Peter 1:23 puts together the two ideas of being born again and receiving the seed. We are to be born again now from the seed, Gospel message preached to us (1:25). At that point we become newborn babes, certainly not fetuses in the womb as falsely taught by some groups.

In the case of Jesus, he needed no rebirth. From the moment of the beginning of his existence as Son of God, he was also filled with the spirit. God performed a biological miracle in the Virgin Mary (Matt. 1:18: “begotten in her”). The character and quality of God the Father formed part of the character of Jesus from the moment of his begetting=beginning to exist, in Mary. There is a direct parallel between the virginal begetting in the case of Jesus and our conversion and rebirth. We too must receive the vital seed of the character and mind of God. This happens when we respond with openness and honesty to the vital, seed message/Gospel about the Kingdom (Matt. 13:19; Luke 8:12). That seed is just as creative as any seed. It contains within itself the powerful

life, character and energy of God Himself. It is actually called God's seed in 1 John 3:9.

The phenomenon of plants developing from seed and human persons originating from seed stares us in the face as the most basic fact of life. So it is that God teaches us to think of His seed/message of the Kingdom as the essential generating power of the new life, the new creation. Human beings are procreated in the womb, and we are procreated by the powerful word-Gospel of the Kingdom. That Gospel when allowed to take root in us, when believed and accepted in our minds, has the transforming effect on us which God and Jesus desire.

Think then of a direct parallel between the virginal begetting of Jesus and our being born anew, fathered anew by the Gospel of the Kingdom. Satan knows this theology better than many churchgoers, and Luke has a brilliant report for us, recalling the words of Jesus himself: "When anyone hears the seed message of the kingdom, the Devil is ready to snatch away what has been sown in his heart, so that he may not believe it and be saved" (Luke 8:12). An intelligent reception of the Gospel, seed message of the Kingdom is a prerequisite for salvation. Note how this has been parodied by some unscrupulous preaching. The seed is nothing to do with finances sown into the wallets of the preacher.

In 1 John there are several verses hiding from you, which bear on our subject. In 1 John 5:1 the Father is designated "the begetter," "the one who begets." God here is said to be the active parent or "begetter" of sons and daughters including of course Jesus, as described in Luke 1:35 and Matthew 1:18, 20. In 1 John 5:18 the King James Version has obscured a monumentally important truth. Translating from a corrupted Greek text at this point it does not let you hear that Jesus is "the one begotten," a reference of course to his begetting in Mary. The King James Version makes you think of a Christian keeping himself! This is a strange idea. The actual truth is different. It is the Son of God, defined here as "the one begotten" in the past, who keeps the Christian believer safe and the Devil does not touch him. The King James Version loses this precious truth by having the believer "keep himself." The difference is small but highly significant — the difference between *auton* ("him") and *eauton* ("himself") in Greek.

So John is keen to remind us of the virginal begetting of Jesus and the parallel recreation which happens when individual believers come to faith in the Gospel of the Kingdom and in Jesus.

The great facts of our human experience, seed as the originating power of life are reflected in the even greater facts of the seed power of the life which leads to immortality. Indeed we are living in a perfect laboratory. It is our job to observe our surroundings and to pay attention to Jesus' exposition of the wonderful

environment we have been placed in. Otherwise we risk missing out on the seed which originates immortality. Indestructible life — are you interested in that project?✧

## An Amazing Number, 666

I found this fascinating observation about the number of the antichrist who will arise just before the return of Jesus in power and glory to establish the Kingdom of God on the earth. "The number 666 has the unusual characteristics of being not only what the ancients called a triangular number (it is the sum of all the numbers up to 36), but also a doubly triangular number (36 is the sum of all the numbers up to eight). It is the eighth such number in the series 1, 6, 21, 55, 120, 231, 400, 666" (*Oxford Bible Commentary*, p 1298). For those familiar with ancient numerology, this number will identify the final Antichrist. You may know that the value of "Jesus" in the Greek language is 888. That is superabundance, one over the perfect seven. 666 falls short of perfection and will mark the excessively evil person who will dominate the world as the man of sin, the abomination of desolation "standing where **he** [note the masculine 'he' here] ought not to" (NAB, NLT, ERV, ASV).

Jesus advised his followers to flee if they happen to be in Judea at that time. Certainly he promised no pre-tribulation rapture, which is a pleasant illusion. When it does not happen many will be disappointed and possibly derailed in their faith. The Olivet discourse is quite clear that Jesus is going to return once only in the future and this will be in power and glory *after* the future great tribulation (Matt. 24:29-31). None of this is difficult if one is prepared to accept the teachings of Jesus as essential instruction for us as believers. A considerable falsehood was launched on an unsuspecting churchgoing public when it was proposed that the teaching of Jesus is really for Jews and not for Christians! This amazing sleight-of-hand has been responsible for a great deal of confusion amongst Bible readers. Mark 13:14 read with careful attention to the detail of the language speaks of the abomination of desolation standing where *he* ought not to. That is the sign, Jesus said, for flight, certainly not for lift-off to heaven! Tell your friends about this important truth. ✧

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## Comments

“Thanks for spending a night (or a very long time!) on the phone with me. The conversation was very encouraging! I am blessed we have crossed paths. I almost feel like an Ethiopian on a journey through the wilderness, and I’m glad our Father had you run by. Your writings and videos have opened the Scriptures and made them easy to understand. The only biblical unitarians I know of in my area are people who have changed their minds after talking with me. Maybe the future might bring a fellowship of unitarians together?” — *South Dakota*

*Editor: Why does the NT make no effort at all to produce the name YHVH in Hebrew? The kurios of the NT (the Lord) is mostly Jesus and kurios (no article, LORD) is often YHVH. Yes, YHVH is there 7000 times in the OT. But why is it never in the Greek manuscripts? Jesus (Yeesous) is the Greek name. No fuss over Hebrew words in the NT Scripture. “Father” is the dominant title for God in the NT as we know.*

“Your reply started me thinking and my sister researched this, and we now understand about using God’s name and also Jesus’ name, and it all makes sense. We are so thankful to be learning what the Bible says and not the traditions of men.” — *Arizona*

So yesterday my wife tells me she overheard the following question from our 4-year-old granddaughter (who this year has been tutored in the Short Catechism of the Westminster Confession) after our daughter read John 20:17 to her:

“Does Jesus have a God?”

4 years old and she’s asking: “Does God [a member of the Trinity] have a God?”!

Of course the *precise* Chalcedonian answer is: Jesus the God-Person does not have a God, but Jesus the Man-imperson has one.

Rather perplexing to that age (and my age). ☺

“Thank you very much for all your kindness and thoughtfulness with the helpful *Focus on the Kingdom* articles and the helpful book sent. About 13 people have borrowed to read the book. It was a great eye-opener to them all. But it is getting worn-out due to the many hands. I cannot really say to what extent you have made a huge impact on my understanding of Bible truths on the nature of God and the message of the Gospel of the Kingdom and support in this narrow way into the kingdom with all your contribution with the sent literature. All I can say is thank you from the depth of my heart.” — *Nigeria*

“Keep on keeping on! I’m sure that your efforts will ultimately prove hugely successful...if not in our generation, in the generations that follow! As you rightly say, we live in hope!” — *Zimbabwe*

“Again we have been built up in faith. Thank you for the June 2012 *Focus on the Kingdom* as also the previous issues. They are always most valuable.” — *Australia*

Some thoughts about someone who loves you more than anyone else:

In Chemistry, he turned water into wine.

In Biology, he was born without normal conception.

In Physics, he overcame the Law of Gravity when he ascended into heaven.

He exceeded the Law of Probability when he fed more than 5000 from two fish and 5 loaves of bread.

In Medicine, he cured the sick, gave sight to the blind, and raised the dead without administering a single drug.

In History he is the beginning and the end of God’s Plan.

In Government, he is called wonderful counselor, prince of peace.

In Religion, he is acknowledged to be the only way to gain access to God the Father. “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me.”

Amidst the deepest of human misery, disbelief and shame, he is called Savior.

The greatest human in history, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, had no servants, yet many of the Jews called him Master;

He had no degree, yet even Jewish leaders called him Teacher/Rabbi;

He had no medicines, yet he was observed to be a Healer;

He had no army, yet kings feared him;

He won no military battles, yet he has conquered the world, and will yet subdue it;

He committed no crime, yet his own people demanded his crucifixion;

With only purity and no guilt of his own, he willingly surrendered his life as payment for the sins of us all.

Because he loves you more than your father and mother, he is offering you forgiveness, health and life that extends to immortality. For the greatest birthday ever, receive the Giver and his gifts, and you will receive his endless favor. Receive him by believing and obeying his teachings.