

Latter Rain

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Faith gives Light



From the Inkhorn...

In this edition of Latter Rain we have tried to start at the beginning - Faith - and to show how our relationship with God starts with a gift of faith and develops as the fruit of faith as evidenced in our lives.

There is a developing hierarchy - faith, hope and charity and a need for faith to be manifest in actions - or in works of obedience to God's Laws and Commandments (James 1:3,4).

As God gives us more grace to increase our faith there will be a greater commitment to want to do His Will.

This year is also a Sabbatical year or 7th year for the Christian Israelite Church. We take a look at what the Sabbatical year is, and what it entails. We also look at the Jubilee year and its importance to Israel.

Again, on the concept of faith, we take a look at the life of John Mark (author of the Gospel of Mark) and reflect upon the trials of these early Christians to give us what we have today.

Most of us may have heard these words before, but as we read these articles may God reveal to our hearts a new perspective of faith and how "to turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just" Luke 1:17. For, remember, "The just shall live by faith" Romans 1:17.

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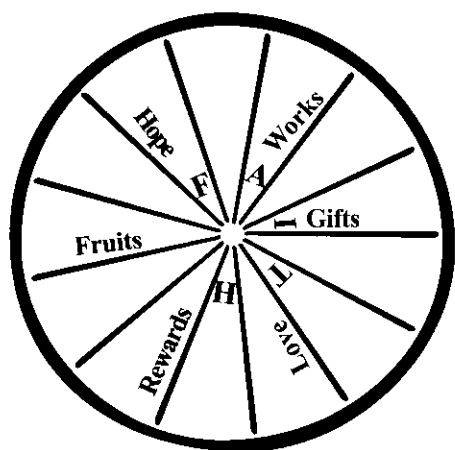
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"Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith" Habakkuk 2:4.

"For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them" Romans 1:17-19.

Faith, Works, Gifts, Fruits & Rewards!

In this article I would like to look at the topic of Faith, Faith with Works as an essential demonstration of your faith and the results of the effect of Faith in your lives. Faith is the hub of the wheel of any Christian's life, but in this article we will not only look at the hub, but also some of the spokes (ie. works, gifts, fruits, rewards, etc).



Faith

Possibly the greatest chapter in the Bible on faith would be Hebrews chapter 11. The chapter starts with a definition of faith, *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"* Hebrews 11:1. The NIV Bible is a little clearer, *"Now faith is the firm foundation of what we hope for; it is a conviction regarding things which are not seen"*.

What is meant by *'the substance of things hoped for'*? The Greek word for substance used here is *hupostasis* meaning a support; groundwork; confidence; subsistence; reality; essence. The root of all our hopes is faith, and alternatively faith

gives us hope. Faith is also believing in that which we have not seen. We believe Jesus Christ to be our Saviour and Redeemer but we have not physically seen Him. We read of His promises in the Bible and it is by faith that we live our lives according to the dictates of His Word that through faith we will receive our salvation.

We then are given Old Testament examples of men and women whose lives of faith were so outstanding that God has left them as standards for us to use as examples in our own lives of faith. God's testimonial of faithful followers starts at the very beginning with the sacrifice of Abel, and the fact that Abel's sacrifice was more excellent than Cain's. Abel's testimonial still speaks to us from the Scriptures, but Cain's rejection serves as a warning to all.

The cavalcade of faithfulness continues: Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthae, David, Samuel and the prophets, right down to New Testament times with the numerous martyrs that have died in the name of Christ. Lives whose basis was a deep faith in God's promises despite the circumstances that they faced.

The greatest testimonial, though, for Christian Israelites, was that of Enoch. *"By faith, Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him"*

Hebrews 11:5,6. Enoch did not see death, he was taken to God without going to the grave. This is the hope referred to in the Christian Israelite Church as the Hope of the Life of the Body. Enoch saw not physical corruption. How did Enoch get this reward – through faith. Firstly, as the passage states, you have to believe in God, pure and simple. You have to believe that “...he is...”. Secondly you have to have the faith that God will reward those people that keep their mind and eye focused on God.

Faith & Works

“Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” James 1:3,4. *“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works”* James 2:17,18. You cannot enter into relationship with Jesus Christ without the Spirit of Christ working renewal and regeneration within your heart, so you are led by the Spirit to live a wholesome and full life doing that which is right in God’s sight. When a person becomes a Christian they are given in this relationship, gifts and fruits from the Spirit to help them gain a right relationship with God. It is the use and development of these gifts and fruits of the Spirit within the life of the believer, that eventually gains them a reward in recognition of their good works, but not because of their good works. In other words the reason for the good works should never be the reward but because one wants to develop and live in a right relationship with his Creator, the believer does the good works and as a result of this heartfelt desire the Creator will reward the believer.

In 2nd Thessalonians 1:11, we have an interesting piece of text, *“Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power”*. Here we find faith described as a ‘work’. There are aspects of faith that do require work. It requires a form of work to change one’s thinking and one’s desires to consciously follow Christ, and amidst a world full of those ready to ridicule anything religious or Christian, we often adhere to our Christian commitment in the face of adversities of various types. Granted many of us do not have to face life-threatening decisions because of our faith, but all too often those that are close to us question our commitment and belief and try and bring doubt into our thinking. It requires work on our faith to keep our eye wholly trained upon God – and an important aspect of this work of faith is prayer.

Gifts and Fruits of the Spirit

There are Gifts of the Spirit and Fruits of the Spirit – both are based and grounded in faith, but they are essentially different in function and usage. Essentially the first is what is says, a gift, freely given just as we receive a present, you are given a talent or gift from the Spirit, showing how much the Spirit loves and appreciates you, and this gift is for use in the service and worship of God. Fruits of the Spirit, though, require growth leading to maturity, just as physical fruit on a tree starts as a flower, changes to a small fruit, and matures to come to ripeness, so Christians must develop the ‘fruits of the Spirit’ that through Christ these attributes will mature within them.

So what are the gifts of the Spirit? The **Gifts of the Spirit** can be found in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, and are:

- the word of wisdom;
- the word of knowledge;
- faith;
- the gifts of healing;
- the working of miracles;
- prophecy ;
- the discerning of spirits;
- divers kinds of tongues; and
- the interpretation of tongues.

The **Fruits of the Spirit** as detailed in Galatians chapter 5 are:

- love;
- joy;
- peace;
- longsuffering;
- gentleness;
- goodness;
- faith;
- meekness; and
- temperance

Interesting isn't it that the only one that both lists have in common is faith -- so faith is both a 'gift of the Spirit' given to us by grace, and a 'fruit of the Spirit' that will grow within our hearts to maturity and right relationship with our Creator. Christians will usually manifest a few of the Gifts of the Spirit, but not all. Christians though should attempt to manifest **all** of the Fruits of the Spirit for they are a direct result of our faith, and their growth and maturity depends upon ourselves.

Rewards

Faith and its natural by-product of good works (referred to in Christian circles as renewal and regeneration) is also acknowledged and responded to by the Father in the form of a reward. The difference between a gift and a reward? Just liken a gift to the gifts you give those that are dear to you. You give a gift to show your love and appreciation of the person you are giving the

gift to. So, too with the Father that He gives to His children that believe on Him, gifts to show His love and appreciation for them. A reward though is quite different.

Look at the example of finding a wallet and returning it to its rightful owner. You return the wallet because it is not yours and honesty compels you to return it, with its contents, to whomever owns it. The person who owns the wallet though is so appreciative of your good action that he gives you a reward for that action. So, too with the Father, in response to your good actions, the Father will reward you. Thus a reward is a show of appreciation for your action or deed. You do not do the act or deed to get the reward, but the reward is the acknowledgement of your good intent. Faith in the Word of God tells us that our good works will have their reward, *"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works"* Matthew 16:2,7. *"So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off"* Proverbs 24:15. *"Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ"* Colossians 3:24.

Just as with the wallet, the reward should not be the reason for doing the good works. *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting"* Galatians 6:7,8. *"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven"* Matthew 6:1. A timely warning. Don't live a righteous life to be seen of man, for then it is not from

the heart, but a manipulated control from the conscious mind. The sincere believer will feel compelled from the heart to renew their minds and bodies in the image of Christ and from henceforth allow the spirit of Christ to do the good works in them. It is never mankind that does the work, but the Spirit of Christ does the good works through man. Too often we pat ourselves on the back for some good action giving ourselves the credit, and how often do we find afterwards our lives are full of turmoil and confusion. What did we do wrong? We forgot to acknowledge who was really responsible.

Nebuchadnezzar fell into this trap in his famous "I" passages (Daniel chapters 3 and 4), where he accorded himself the acclaim for his conquests, not God, and as a result Nebuchadnezzar was plunged into 7 years of madness. When his sanity returned, though, he had learnt who was really in control and where the thanks really lay.

God does not only reward those that do good. Those that willingly do evil get their reward also, God warns that he will reward them that hate Him, *"If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me"* Deuteronomy 32:41 and *"...the Lord shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness"* 2 Samuel 3:39.

The assurance and encouragement then is to, *"Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded: 2 Chronicles 15:7.* This was the assurance given to Asa via Azariah the prophet that Asa should let his heart be his guide, for his heart would lead Israel back to God. For us today we must prayerfully allow

Christ to lead our hearts and minds to follow a life in service and humility to His wishes and example. It is through faith that we know our prayers will be answered and the help asked for will be received in His own time and at His own pleasure. We know through faith that this is possible and through faith we can become children of God through adoption (Romans 8:14-17).

In conclusion, we have read that faith is the basis of Christianity and that faith is a belief in something which cannot be physically seen or proved, but is accepted as fact and the promises given are looked forward to. Faith, though, needs works as a natural by-product to reflect the regenerating power of Christ and the Holy Spirit now that the Christian has prayerfully asked for that Spirit to dwell within them, working those good works which Jesus Christ showed us whilst He was on this earth. Our good works, though, are not our own, they are God's good works. *"So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you"* Romans 8:8-11. The sinful state of our mortal lives makes it impossible for us to do good works, but with the help of the Spirit of God the sinful nature can be removed, and these good works can be achieved, but the thanks must be given to Him.📖

F - WHAT IS IT, AND WHERE DO YOU GET IT!

What Is faith -

The aeroplane was returning to Australia. It had been flying for some 4 or 5 hours and all that could be seen out the window was the glitter of the moon on what appeared to be the Ocean some 30,000 feet (they still measure that in feet – but about 10 kilometers) below. How did I know we were on the right path, how could I be certain the plane was heading for the right destination? Could I be sure that the instruments were working correctly? The answer is I couldn't know – but based on the fact that it had happened many times before (even not necessarily to me), my faith in the pilot and “the system” made me certain of a reality that I personally could not prove.

Paul put it this way: *“And what is Faith? Faith gives substance to our hopes, and makes us certain of realities we do not see”* Hebrews 11:1 (NEB).

It is interesting that

we are all so happy to apply such illustrations to events in the world around us, but when the “reality” is from a world beyond ours the leap of faith seems so much harder – although just as proven when we look at the examples of Christian lives and God's actions in the world that support it. Even the Prophet Habakuk said in the Old Testament; “...*the just shall live by his faith*” Habakuk 2:4.

How Do You Get Faith -

In the article “Faith, Works, Gifts, Fruits & Rewards”, in this issue of Latter Rain, it is pointed out that Faith is both a ‘Gift of the Spirit’ and a ‘Fruit of the Spirit’. This means that it starts, like a seed, as a gift from God but then it is up to each individual to seek to God to nurture their faith and to help it to grow like a plant until it reaches maturity like fruit growing on a tree. In essence faith comes from God. We cannot generate it ourselves although it is our responsibility to help it to grow once we have it.

Does Faith Come By Degrees -

When we think of a concept like salvation, either you have it or you don't. You either believe in the sacrifice of Jesus to save you from your sins and have an assurance of eternal life, or you don't. If you only half believe, then you don't! You can't believe and not believe at the same time. But when you do believe, whilst you can be more strongly convicted of your belief, you still only believe! Your level of belief does not ‘save you more’!

However, because of its nature, faith

does grow, and thus does come by degrees. Jesus spoke about having faith “...as a grain of mustard seed” (see Matthew 17:20). The disciples said to Jesus on one occasion, “Lord increase our faith” Luke 17:5.

Yes, faith does come by degrees, and it is up to each one of us to constantly seek to God to keep increasing our faith through application of the Christian principles that we know and are taught.

Attributes of Faith

What are the attributes of faith – in other words, when we observe some one, how can we tell whether they have faith or not? Clearly there are many ways we would tell, but in summary these may revolve around three related responses to any situation. These are:

- Attitude
- Acceptance
- Actions.

If we have faith in God, and a belief that He is in control in our Universe, our attitude to everything is tempered by an acceptance that all that is happening is within God’s will (although maybe not His preference) and our actions will reflect this belief. If our attitude is based on a belief that we are in control ourselves, and that we determine the outcomes, we will find it difficult to accept many things that happen, and our actions may often represent a disappointment in situations, resulting in feelings of failure and personal dissatisfaction.

The Triumvirate – Faith, Hope and Charity

In 1 Corinthians chapter 13, Paul speaks about “...faith, hope, charity...” and concludes that the greatest of these is charity (a special application of love).

However, this was not in any way demeaning faith and hope, but in fact acknowledging a hierarchical relationship between them. Faith is the foundation on which we build hope, from which we develop charity. Without faith we would not have charity. Charity is the greatest of the three because it is at the top of the relationship, and is the manifestation of the other two.

How Do You Use Faith –

Faith is something that affects our whole being – it penetrates and influences everything we do. We use faith to develop our relationship with God. Faith could be likened to the ‘roots’ of trees, which grow under the ground, and manifest their results in what is seen above the ground.

Heading Upwards – Justification, Sanctification and Perfection

Again using the illustration of the growing tree, we see in the Christian life, a development which starts with justification (accepting the efficacy of Jesus’ sacrifice) growing through a process of sanctification (becoming more and more like Jesus in all we think, speak and do), until eventually we mature in perfection. To date only Jesus has arrived at the end of the journey, but He did exhort us all in Matthew 5: 48: “*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*”.

Paul spoke of two ways in which he could pursue this end: “*For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you*” Philippians 1:23,24. We can be content to leave this body, and receive a spiritual glory when Jesus returns, or we can take up the more arduous challenge to

fully follow Jesus' example of physical sanctification, or as we refer to it, redemption, and seek to be kept alive until Jesus returns.

Remember the dream that Jacob had, in which he saw the ladder leading up into heaven with God at the top. Our faith is like the ladder which sets a pathway that we can follow to lead us to God. The path of sanctification is like walking up the ladder one rung at a time. Many people see the climb as a 'spiritual' experience, based on attitude, state of mind and Christian works as detailed in the New Testament, whilst others see the ascent of the ladder as also comprising a component of obedience to God's instructions that He gave through the Prophets in the Old

Testament about how to live.

Paul, after extolling the greatness of those people of Faith in Hebrews chapter 11, finished by saying that "they without us should not be made perfect." Hebrews 11:40. We who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, and are changed and made like him, will not receive this great reward because of what we have done alone. This will be one component, but it will also represent the culmination of many generations of faith and expectation that has gone before in preparing us that we might be those who are their living representatives when Jesus Christ returns. This truly will be faith fulfilled in perfection.📖

Hymn No. 129

(Psalm 144; Ephesians 6:12; Romans 13:10)

Equip me for the war,
And teach my hands to fight;
My simple, upright heart prepare,
And guide my words aright.
Control my every thought;
My whole of sin remove;
Let all my works in Thee be wrought,
Let all be wrought in love.

O arm me with the mind,
Meek Lamb! Which was in Thee;
And let my knowing zeal be join'd
With perfect charity:
With calm and temper'd zeal
Let me enforce Thy call;
And vindicate Thy gracious will,
Which offers life to all.

O may I love like Thee!
In all Thy footsteps tread!
Thou hatest all iniquity,
But nothing Thou hast made.
O may I learn the art,
With meekness to reprove;
To hate the sin with all my heart,
But still the sinner love.

Recounting the Faith of Abraham

I would like to share with you a possible scenario about Abraham when he was called to offer Isaac as a sacrifice to God. Imagine the countryside to be somewhere in Israel, a picture you can generate from what you have seen in books and on television.

The man and his son plodded on. The boy was obviously excited to be traveling with his father and he looked around and took in all that passed by. The older man seemed deep in thought, as if something was worrying him. Their load was not heavy as they had a couple of donkeys to carry their stuff, wood, fire, bedding and food, plus some men-servants to help if needed. The steps of the older man were slow as he walked despondently; he didn't seem to be suffering any physical condition, but his steps were heavy and methodical, and his mind was obviously pondering some problem.

"What will I tell Sarah? How will I explain things to Ishmael? Will anyone trust me afterwards?"

The young boy spoke, "Father, how much farther do we need to go?"

"Look, over there Isaac, see that high mountain. That is Mount Moriah, and God told me to go there to make the sacrifice."

It doesn't look that far, but there are a couple of hills before there. "It is a three day journey from our home, and this is only the second day, so we should get there tomorrow."

Abraham started thinking and talking to God in his mind. He had often done this through the years and this would bring him peace and understanding. Abraham 'meditated' as he continued his walking. His

thoughts were not on the journey or the scenery, but on his life and where it was leading him. "I believed in God when he told me to leave my father's house and to journey to the land of Canaan; things have turned out different to what I had thought, but I have enjoyed the company of Lot and his children. The youngest one, I could get her laughing that hearty laugh at any time. Sarah likes to hear her laugh. But I did miss my father and the rest of the family and relations. I know they were not living the way that God wanted them to, but then often relations and friends do not understand God like you do yourself. But God, you are not always easy to understand, You say something, and it sounds quite clear and ordinary, but then things don't come out just that way and when I pray to You, You help me to see what has happened in the way you have permitted and it is not wrong, but different to what I thought. Do I go off on my own wavelength, instead of asking You for more detail?"

"Leaving Canaan was like that. I thought I would walk into empty fields and luscious plains, but no, I have had to live amongst other people. Then that drought we had, when I had to go down into Egypt, I was scared of all those people. Their dress and mannerisms made me afraid for my life and the lives of the whole camp. I suppose I was a bit "yellow", well I was scared. Maybe I did not show enough faith in you that you would protect everyone. It wasn't a lie to tell them that Sarah was my sister, even if it wasn't the absolute truth. I was sorry about it and accepted how everything worked out. I was scared for

Sarah's safety when they came and took her to the Palace. I didn't know what to do. I was thankful that You stepped in. It is like You say, you tell one little white lie then you have to cover it with another, and then another, until everything gets out of hand. I did talk to You about that, and say I was sorry and offered those animals for a sacrifice".

The younger boy had been watching his father and had started thinking himself, copying the pose and gait of the older man.

"Father, if we are going to make a sacrifice, what are we going to offer; we haven't got any sheep, so would we offer a donkey?"

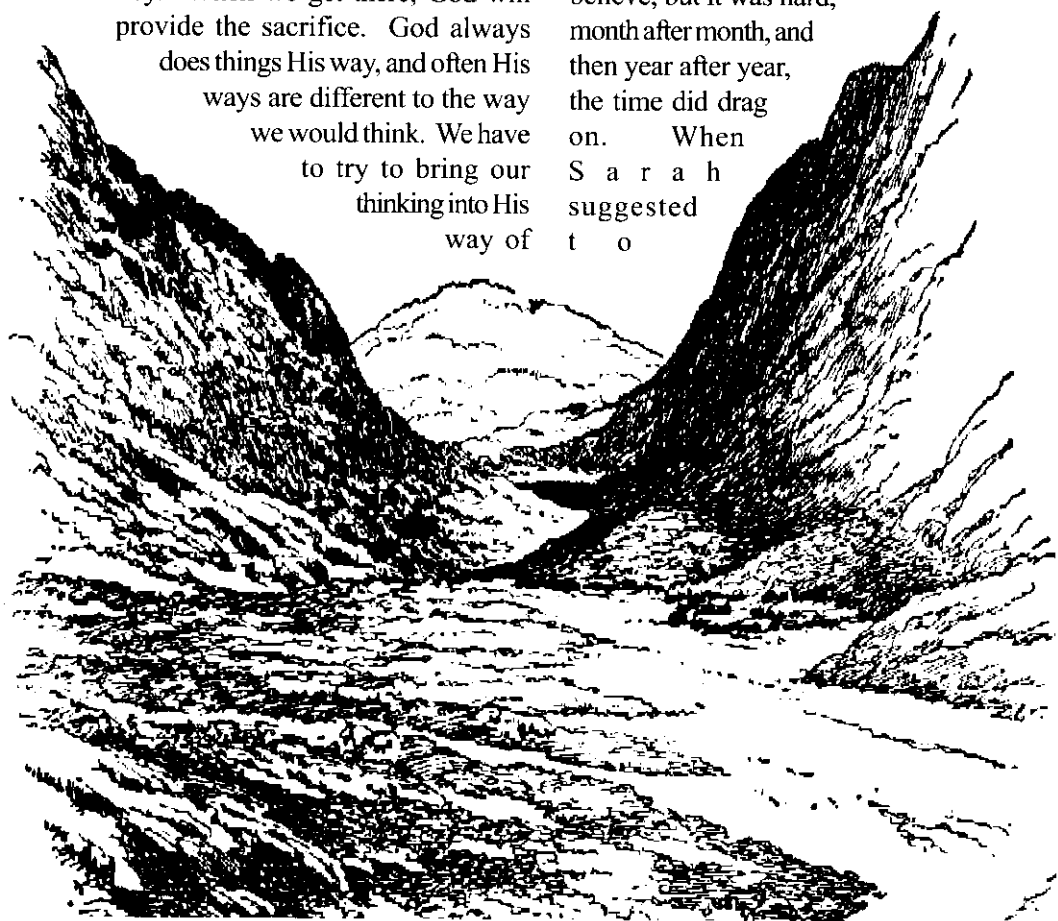
"No, we are not going to offer a donkey. When we get there, God will provide the sacrifice. God always does things His way, and often His ways are different to the way we would think. We have to try to bring our thinking into His way of

thinking and then we will be ready to live with Him."

"Well, I will try to look at things His way. After all, if He is as good and loving as you have told me, whatever He allows will be for our good."

The old man was happy and proud of the boy's attitude. Maybe he has listened to him more than he had realized. I suppose it is the younger generation that can do two things at once, so maybe he accepts more than I thought. They plodded on, their steps a bit lighter for the conversation which they had shared.

Abraham started thinking again. "I know you promised me descendants and I believed, well I tried to believe, but it was hard, month after month, and then year after year, the time did drag on. When Sarah suggested t o



have children with Hagar, I thought that was a good idea, and little Ishmael did bring me a lot of joy. Sarah and I had accepted the fact that this child was to be the heir of the household, especially when Sarah stopped having her monthly times. Well you could have knocked me down with a feather when those messengers came and told us that this time next Sarah would be nursing our own child. Well, I tried to believe, but it was hard. You know how I asked You to help me to believe, and You did, and so we tried again for Sarah to have a child, and You gave us Isaac. That was lovely, and Sarah was so thrilled and relieved. She had felt she had let me down, but see, Your ways are not man's ways and the both of us needed a lot of help to stay strong in the faith of the promise that You gave to me right back when I lived in my father's household.

"I found it hard accepting circumcision, but then You helped me to accept. I know I asked You to help me and You did help me to understand and accept. Then I had to explain it to my household, but You helped again giving them understanding.

"Sending Hagar and Ishmael away was hard on me. You know I cried when I talked to you about that, because I could not understand. I still find it hard to understand, but then I have accepted that You see a long way into the future, while I only see the immediate present. I know You have some sort of plan working out and in faith I accept this, but just now and again I start to hesitate and it is then that I need to plead with You to increase my faith. Lord, it is not that I don't believe, but that the faith gets a bit thin at times and so I have to ask for an extra portion to help me to accept what is happening".

The two travellers journeyed, and at nightfall they stopped and set up camp. The

next day they left the servants there and Isaac and Abraham continued on to make the sacrifice. Abraham was still heavy in spirit but set about to gather some stones and to prepare the wood for the sacrifice.

"When do you think God will provide the sacrifice?" asked Isaac.

"I reckon it won't be long and He will provide it, because He said so," replied Abraham. The calmness of the reply and the resolution of strength and faith in his voice reassured Isaac. Abraham talked. He talked about many topics, about how 318 men of his household had beaten the 4 kings and all their soldiers so that they could free his cousin Lot when he had been taken a prisoner. He told him again how they had waited so many years for him to be born and how the angels had come as earthly people to tell them that his mother would still have a child, and he would be born, even though they were both quite old at that time. Then He told Isaac of what God had asked him to do; to take him, by himself, to Mount Moriah and offer him, Isaac, as a sacrifice. Isaac was stunned but he had listened to the words Abraham had been speaking and he felt a calm reassurance through them. He sat for a moment and then said, "Father, if that is what God has asked you to do, I am prepared to accept it."

"But you are my lawful heir. If God is going to give me children numbering as the sand on the seashore, how will it happen? But, no, if God has told me to this, He must have a way to work it out." The both sat in silence for a long time, meditating and praying silently to give them strength to perform God's will. At last Isaac spoke, "I'm ready father. Go ahead and fulfill God's will."

Abraham was stunned. Did this child, who is only a boy, have sufficient faith at his age to accept the Will of God like this?

Where had he gained this faith? What had given him the strength in his faith? He thought these thoughts as he paused. No doubt he muttered a silent prayer, "Lord give me strength to believe in You and to fulfill Your Will." He then set about to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, binding him to the altar as commanded.

Abraham was cold. He was coming out in a sweat all over his body, but his resolution was firm. He had given his word to God that he would slay Isaac and now was the moment. He lifted the knife and just as he was about to bring it down he heard his name being called, "Abraham, Abraham".

"Here I am."

Then the voice, which had come from an angel spoke, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me."

Abraham lifted his eyes and his soul rejoiced as he heard these words. There, behind him was a ram, caught by its horns in the bushes. He released Isaac and the two of them embraced each other with a great sense of relief and excitement. God had been testing the two of them, but especially Abraham, to see who was to be first in his life. They then proceeded, the two of them together, to offer the lamb as a sacrifice.

The angel then gave the wonderful promise to Abraham and his descendants. *"That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice"* Genesis 22:17,18.

There is no doubt that their steps on the homeward journey were more joyful

and sprightly as they joined the other group and thence returned to Sarah at their home.

Faith is something that is fundamental, through our heritage, but it is something that we can lose if we do not develop and cultivate it by reading our Bible and renewing the promises within ourselves, within our minds. We need to spend time meditating and praying to God. Under these conditions our faith will remain strong and secure because our loving father will answer our silent prayer to strengthen and keep us strong.

Abraham was called the friend of God (James 2:23) yet when we consider his life he may well have displayed times of high and low in regards to faith in God. We should not be discouraged if we have trials in our own faith because it is the trial of our faith that develops our character (James 1:2-4).

The Bible teaches us that there are many levels of faith - perhaps as many as there are individuals - but that our faith is tied to the vision that we hold from the Scriptures. We are composed of three parts: a spirit, a soul, and a body, all of which can be redeemed to go into the Kingdom of God. In Proverbs 12:28 God says, *"In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death."* Do you limit this word of God to mean after the resurrection, the corruptible putting on incorruption, or do you accept that it can mean that we can be changed and go from mortal to immortal – that physical death is not necessary (read 1st Corinthians 15:51-57)?

Let us reconsider the promises in the Bible, about mortal becoming immortal without seeing physical death, and let us claim them as our vision, our faith, for presenting ourselves to God to do His whole will, which is our reasonable service (Romans 12:1-3).📖

AN EVER GROWING RELATIONSHIP - Culminating in Life Without Physical Death

The book of James contains many challenging statements but the statement in verse seventeen of chapter two is worthy of extra consideration if we wish to grow in our relationship with God; *"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works; shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works"*.

Jesus made the simple statement, *"If ye love me keep my commandments"* John 14:15, but our following of this, and how we understand, accept and actually respond to it, is affected by how we understand the statement.

In Proverbs 12:28 is recorded the positive statement, *"In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death"*. That is a good positive statement regarding works and faith and it would indicate that righteous acts from a believing heart are able to overcome both physical and spiritual death. Moses had declared to Israel, *"See, I have set before thee this day life and good and death and evil...therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live"* Deuteronomy 30:15,19, and he also said, *"Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations"* Deuteronomy 7:9.

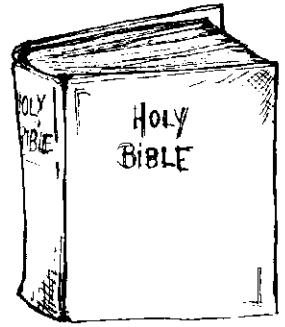
What is this covenant? It is the Covenant of life – to reverse the curse which resulted from the original sin of mankind. It is the reversal of the curse *"...for dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return"* Genesis 3:19, and is based on obedience. See Exodus 19:5. This would mean that we would not need to see physical death. Through obedience to the Old and New Testament teachings, as exemplified by Jesus, and through the help of the promised Comforter (John 14:26) we can seek to God to increase our faith and associated works, so that we may arrive at the standard of true righteousness as Jesus did.

Do we value our physical body, as part of our tri-partite nature given us from God, enough to want to seek to redeem it from physical death? There are many Scriptures that God has kept hidden for Israel in this period of time known as the Latter Days. For example do we believe the Scripture, *"Your covenant with death shall be disannulled"* Isaiah 28:10,13,18? We must ask God that the evil and all its associated temptations to be driven out of our earthly house, ready to have the change Paul spoke of so that we may enter the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 15:51-53). Eventually we will think only good and right thoughts, and do only good and right things – thus showing perfection in faith and works.

The Scriptures exhort us to *"present your body a living sacrifice unto God,"* Romans 12:1, and *"may the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"* 1 Thessalonians 5:23. ☐

Debug Your Bible:

Sabbatical & Jubilee Years



The Seventh Year or Sabbatical Year - *Shemitah*

The Sabbatical or Seventh Year is called *Shemitah* in the Jewish faith. We first read of the introduction of the 7th year in Exodus 23:10-11 where we find the following commandment given to Israel, *"And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof: but the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy olive yard"*. God decreed, through his servant Moses, as part of the Levitical law, that every 7th year was to be kept as a Sabbath year, just as every 7th day was a Sabbath to the Lord for mankind.

The **first aspect** of the Seventh year was agricultural rest for the fields of Israel. For six years Israel could sow and reap of the ground, but in the seventh year, the land was to rest. Israel could eat of what grew of itself in the untended fields and vineyards, and this produce was also to be shared with the poor. This aspect of the commandment is made clearer when the ordinance was renewed in Leviticus 25:2-4, *"Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a Sabbath unto the Lord. Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; but in the seventh year shall be a Sabbath of rest unto the land, a Sabbath for the Lord: thou shalt neither*

sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard." During the 7th year fields could not be ploughed or sown and vines and olives could not be attended (ie. pruning, etc.), but what came from God (or was yielded spontaneously) was not to be garnered, but was to be left in the fields for the use of everybody (see Leviticus 25:6.) What the people did not use was to be left for the livestock (cattle) and wild animals. This was a Sabbath-rest for the land, not for mankind, thus Israel would have continued with their normal duties other than agricultural duties, and maintenance of property could still be done, ie., fence building, damming, well digging, etc.

The **second aspect** of the Sabbatical year was that of 'debt release'. *"At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the Lord's release. Of a foreigner thou mayest exact it again: but that which is thine with thy brother thine hand shall release"* Deuteronomy 15:1-3. Thus those loans made between fellow Israelites were to undergo a 'debt release' in the 7th year – this could mean either one of 2 things:

1. The debt was cancelled entirely with no obligation during and after the 7th year – Talmudists understand the law to mean remission of the debt.

2. The repayments for the debt

were cancelled just for the period of the 7th year – farmers and people reliant upon the land for income would have no income in a 7th year, thus how would they repay their debts. Debts owed by strangers to Israelites, though, could still be exacted as usual.

The **third aspect** of the Sabbatical year was the renewal of the law to Israel, *“And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: and that their children, which have not known anything, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it”* Deuteronomy 31:10-13. So the Law was to be read before all of Israel, but, and this happened rarely, this was one of the few opportunities when the women, children and strangers could gather together and hear the Law of Israel.

At the time of its implementation, the Sabbath or Seventh year would have been in alignment with the Jewish agricultural year which incorporated six sowings and six harvests. This agricultural started in Tishri (September-October).

Before the Captivity we find scant evidence of Israel keeping the 7th year, but after the return, the people of Israel covenanted to let the land lie fallow and to exact no debt in the 7th year, and from hereon in the 7th year was regularly kept. *“He made peace with the men of Bethzur,*

and they evacuated the city, because they had no provisions there to withstand a siege, since it was a sabbatical year for the land...But they had no food in storage, because it was the seventh year” 1st Maccabees 6:49,53.

So what was the point of the 7th or Sabbatical year? Firstly it would bring home to the people of Israel that the land was the Lord’s and that Israel were merely His tenants and only there by His Will. It was a reminder to Israel that God is in charge and in memory of that Israel was commanded to rely on Him every 7th year, through faith, to provide. Secondly, it was used as a year of reminding the people of the Law as given to Moses and through faith, turn to God to provide and succour them.

Israel is often referred to in Scripture as the *“vineyard of the Lord”* (Isaiah 5:7) so for Israel of today there is still a special message. In the Christian Israelite Church we hold a feast to the Lord every 7th year as a 7th year feast and during this time members cannot take the covenant (or sign as a full member). When looked at in light of the original ordinances, this makes perfect sense, for Israel being the vineyard of the Lord, no new vines could be planted and no pruning done during a 7th or Sabbatical year. It is also a time for us today to reflect on the Law as given to Moses in the light of the commandments as laid down by Jesus Christ, and understand that love is the key, and that through love the keeping of God’s law is done through the heart with the assistance of the Spirit of Christ.

Biblical evidence suggests that Israel kept all seventy Sabbatical years in the pre-exilic period, *“Then shall the land enjoy her Sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies’ land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her Sabbaths”*

Leviticus 26:34. *"To fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years"* 2 Chronicles 36:21. Thus, this makes up the first 800 years in the promised land, before Israel was finally exiled to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar in 586BC. In the post-exilic restoration, distinct attention was paid to observing the Sabbatical or 7th years, *"And if the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the Sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the Sabbath, or on the holy day: and that we would leave the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt"* Nehemiah 10:31.

Jubilee Years – Yovel

After understanding the meaning behind the 7th or Sabbatical year, the next commandment we are going to look at is tied in with the Sabbatical years and is known as the Jubilee Year, Year of Jubilee or Year of Release (Ezekiel 46:17). After seven Sabbaths or Sabbaticals had passed (a period of 49 years incorporating 7 Sabbath years), the Lord required a further observance in the following 50th year. *"And thou shalt number seven Sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven Sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years. Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubile to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every*

man unto his family" Leviticus 25:8-10.

The Jubilee Year was to be celebrated every 50 years at the start of the agricultural season, the same as in a 7th or Sabbatical year – marked by the sowings and harvests of the crops. Thus on the Day of Atonement, which was the tenth day of the seventh month, the Jubilee year was brought in by the blowing of trumpets. The Hebrew word for Jubilee is *yobel* or *yovel* meaning literally 'time of shouting'.

The Jubilee Year had some special laws:

1. **all slaves were to be set free** in the Jubilee year. There were times when Israelites who had fallen on hard times, would sell themselves as slaves to fellow Israelites or to foreigners who lived among them, and who at the time of the Jubilee year would have neither completed their 6 years of servitude, nor redeemed themselves, nor been redeemed by their relatives, and these people would be set free in the Jubilee year to return with their children to their families. Some slaves, though, may not have wanted to be made free (some became exceptionally fond of the families they were enslaved to, some had little to go back to), thus in this case they were allowed to stay as slaves forever, and in order to indicate their consent to this, they were required to submit to the boring of their ears (Exodus 21:6). Perhaps this is the reason so many people loathe ear piercing!
2. **all sales of land were returned to the original owners** in the 50th year. Leases on property would have only been up to 49 years in duration; there were no sales in perpetuity of land in Israel. This further enforces the Levitical guideline that *"...the land is mine; for ye are strangers and*

sojourners with me" (Leviticus 25:23). There was an exception to this law and that was for real estate in walled towns. The owner who had sold in this situation, was permitted to redeem his property provided he did so within a year, but no later. Levitical cities, though, came under the general law, and ownership reverted back in the Jubilee Year. If a man dedicated property to the Lord, he was permitted to redeem it provided he added one fifth of its value as reckoned by the number of crops it would produce before the year of Jubilee, and provided he also redeemed it before that period. If not reclaimed then or before that period, it was understood to be dedicated forever. Josephus informs us that the temporary proprietor of a piece of land made a settlement with its owner at the year of Jubilee on the following terms: after making a statement of the value of the crops he had obtained from the land, and of what he had expended upon it, if his receipts exceeded the expenses, the owner got nothing; but if the reverse was true, the latter was expected to make good the loss. Thus a totally equitable system of distribution that eradicates greed and avarice because the property is at all times the Lord's and Israel are only tenants.

3. **the soil was to rest** as with the 7th year, thus every 49th year would be a Sabbatical or 7th year and the 50th year a Jubilee, making 2 years that the ground was not sown or ploughed, pruned, etc. And for two years, what the land yielded on itself belonged to, and was for the use of, everybody including livestock and wild animals. Thus with these instructions we see a

system of legislation whereby the poor are always looked after – those that have fallen on hard times, and do not actually own any land (generally the widowed and childless) were provided for, not just every 7th year but also every 50th as well.

Thus, we find the Jubilee year has some similarities to the 7th or Sabbatical year in that the land is to lie fallow and the poor have the same rights as everybody else. This is repeated in the Sabbatical and the Jubilee years. It is a society system based upon forgiveness and faith in the Lord and his Promises. The aim of the Jubilee is the preservation of the theocracy as established by God and to the eventual aim of there being no poor amongst the house of Israel (Deuteronomy 15:4). To Israel the institution of the Jubilee had many moral and social advantages to the community, such as:

1. it prevented the accumulation of land on the part of the few to the detriment of the many
2. it would make it virtually impossible for any member of Israel to be born to absolute poverty, since everyone in Israel had their hereditary entitlement to certain land
3. the social division caused by extremes of riches and poverty would be eradicated, putting all men on the same social footing
4. slavery would be totally done away with
5. it gives people a fresh start whereby those who through adverse circumstances had fallen on hard times, were able to start again with their families – slavery not being forever
6. it would rectify disorders which creep into any state over the course of time, and preclude the division of people

- into nobility and plebeians
7. most importantly it would preserve the Theocracy as God originally ordained it.

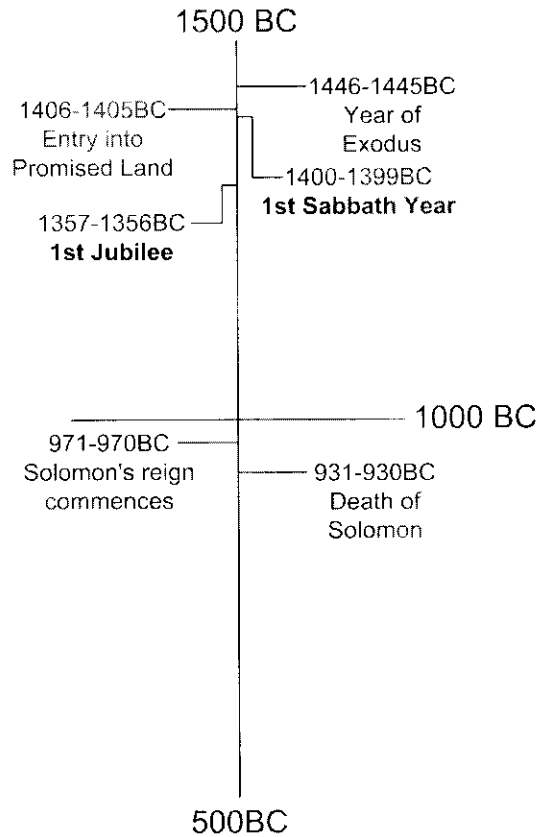
Unfortunately, though, with all the advantages shown above, the Bible has no record of Israel ever having observed Jubilee years – this does not, however, mean that they didn't; but it is just unusual that it is not mentioned.

In summary, Sabbath or 7th years and Jubilee Years are divinely instituted and should be observed by Israel. An understanding of Sabbatical years also helps one gain an understanding of the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks in Daniel (9:24-27).

Please note that this article has not considered the theological implications for us today which include such issues as an analogy to the Day of Rest or Millennium which we believe is soon to come. This may be presented in another article.

Timing

So when are the Sabbatical or 7th years and Jubilee years. In the Christian Israelite Church, this year 2001 is a 7th year, so it was quite an exercise to do the history and see whether we are in alignment with the Old Testament commandments regarding the same. Historians and Theologians agree that Solomon died in 931-930BC and this was when the unified monarchy of Israel was divided into the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah. We use the form 931-930 because the Jewish calendar is not in alignment with the Western January – December calendar. The Jewish year began with the month of *Abib* which later became known as *Nisan*. *Abib* corresponds to March – April in our calendar. A Jewish year therefore began



in one of our years and ended early in the next. So when we say that Solomon died in 931-930 BC it means that he died sometime between March-April 931 and February-March 930BC – this is the Jewish civil year as opposed to the Jewish agrarian year which began September-October in our calendar.

With the date for the death of Solomon being 931-930BC and we know that Solomon ruled for 40 years (1 Kings 11:42) he must have begun his reign in 971-970BC. In 1 Kings 6:1 we read that Solomon began to build the Lord's temple in the 480th year after the Exodus, during the 4th year of his reign. With the dates we already have we can fix the date of Solomon's 4th year at 967-966BC.

When Solomon began to build his

temple, Israel was in its 480th year of freedom from Egypt. Therefore, the year of the Exodus would have been 1446-1445BC. The Exodus occurred in the 1st month of the Jewish year, so we can date it positively in the month Abib, 1446BC. After 40 years in the wilderness Israel would have entered the Promised Land in 1406-1405 BC. It is from this date forward that God required the land to observe Sabbaths and Jubilees in the 7th and 50th years respectively (Leviticus 25:2-4, 8-10). Therefore the 7th full agricultural year after

Abib 1406BC was the agrarian or agricultural year defined by October 1400 to October 1399BC. Using the start year, in this case 1400BC, we find successive Sabbath or 7th years in 1393, 1386, 1379, 1372, 1365 and 1358BC (this last being the 7th Sabbath). The 50th agricultural year after Abib 1406BC was the year between October 1357 to October 1356BC. This would have been the first Jubilee year. Using this information a table can be collated bringing us to the present day. 📖

Table showing Jubilee and Sabbath Years since their Inception

Jubilee Years	Sabbath Years	Jubilee Years	Sabbath Years	Jubilee Years	Sabbath Years	Jubilee Years	Sabbath Years	Jubilee Years	Sabbath Years
1357 BC	1350 1343 1336 1329 1322 1315 1308	1307 BC	1300 1293 1286 1279 1272 1265 1258	1257 BC	1250 1243 1236 1229 1222 1215 1208	1207 BC	1200 1193 1186 1179 1172 1165 1158	1157 BC	1150 1143 1136 1129 1122 1115 1108
and so on to 357 BC	350 343 336 329 322 315 308	307 BC	300 293 286 279 272 265 258	257 BC	250 243 236 229 222 215 208	207 BC	200 193 186 179 172 165 158	157 BC	150 143 136 129 122 115 108
107 BC	100 93 86 79 72 65 58	57 BC	50 43 36 29 22 15 8	7 BC	1 8 15 22 29 36 43	44 AD	51 58 65 72 79 86 93	94 AD	101 108 115 122 129 136 143
144 AD	151 158 165 172 179 186 193	194 AD	201 208 215 222 229 236 243	244 AD	251 258 265 272 279 286 293	294 AD	301 308 315 322 329 336 343	344 AD	351 358 365 372 379 386 393
and so on to 1794 AD	1801 1808 1815 1822 1829 1836 1843	1844 AD	1851 1858 1865 1872 1879 1886 1893	1894 AD	1901 1908 1915 1922 1929 1936 1943	1944 AD	1951 1958 1965 1972 1979 1986 1993	1994 AD	2001 2008 2015 2022 2029 2036 2043
2044 AD next Jubilee Year									

Statement of Belief

The Christian Israelite Church beliefs can be fully supported by the Scriptures. Here is an outline:

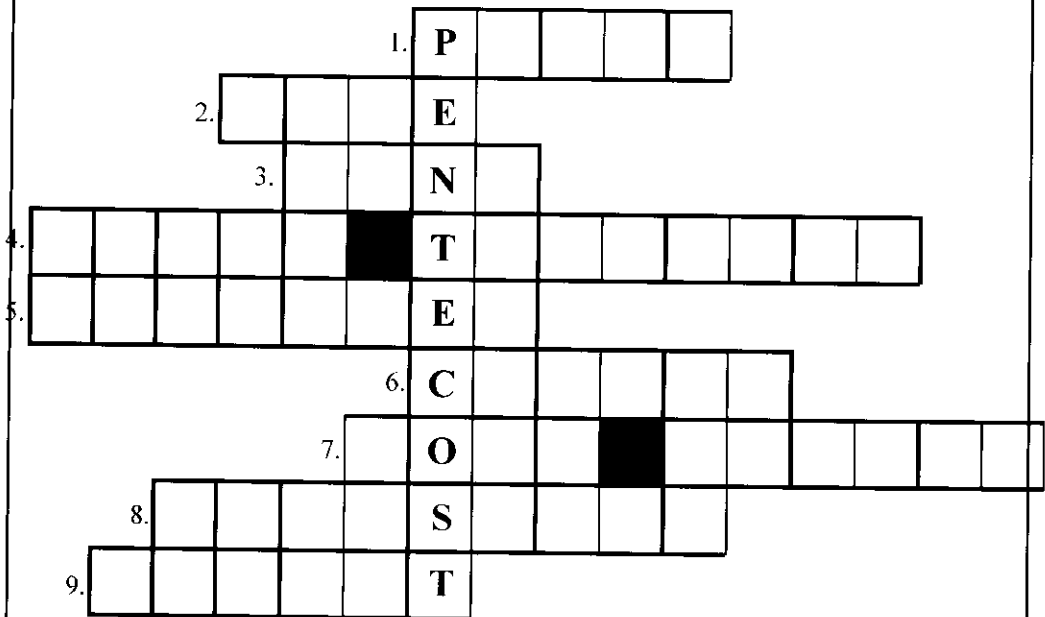
We Believe

- * In God Almighty creator of all things (Genesis 1:1).
- * In the existence of Satan, the Devil, in whom God allowed iniquity to be placed (James 2:19; Ezekiel 28:14,15).
- * That God created a spirit-existence in which the devil manifested evil and caused some of the spirits to rebel against God (Isaiah 14:12-14; Jude 6)
- * That God created our physical world, to which each person comes with a body and a soul made alive by a spirit from the spiritual creation (Luke 9:55; Genesis 2:7).
- * That God gave His people instructions on the way they should live, which instructions were "for their good always" (Deuteronomy 6:24).
- * That all have sinned and come "short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23; 2 Corinthians 5:19).
- * That God has reconciled the (whole) world to Himself through the sacrifice of Jesus (John 3:16,17).
- * That through belief in the sacrifice of Jesus believers are counted as righteous before God, and can be assured of the resurrection of their souls (a Spiritual body) at Jesus' return (1 Timothy 4:10; 1 Corinthians 15:44).
- * That there will be a small number who will fully prove their faith by a work of true obedience to God's instructions and will thereby receive the prize of the highest calling of God, the redemption of spirit and soul and body - this living mortal Body made Immortal without seeing death (1 Thessalonians 5:23; Revelation 14:1-5; Hebrews 11:39,40).
- * That Jesus Christ will return to this earth again, subdue the power of Satan and reign forever and ever (Revelation chapters 19 and 20)
- * That the return of Jesus Christ is near and we are living in the period described in Scripture as the latter days (Matthew chapter 24; Mark chapter 13 and Luke chapter 21)
- * That there are promises in the Scriptures especially to Israel - God's chosen people (1 Peter 2:9).
- * That although Israel of old did not accept the challenge of spiritually being God's peculiar people, a remnant of their descendants will come forward in the latter days to fulfill the obligations and receive the promises (Revelation 7:1-8).
- * That the Mission of the Christian Israelite Church is to awaken the lost ten tribes of Israel to this special inheritance to be the physical Immortal "Bride of the Lamb" and to be the vehicle for the task of bringing them all together at God's appointed time (Matthew 10:5,6; Revelation chapter 19).

We believe that God is the absolute Judge and Arbiter and that we as His servants have an obligation to respond to what He puts in each heart, and that whilst we seek to proclaim and discuss our beliefs, we have no right to contend with other people about them.

PENTECOST

The word "Pentecost" means "the fiftieth day". Pentecost was fifty days after the Feast of Passover. Read Acts chapter 2. Fill in the acrostic using the clues below.



1. On Pentecost day the apostles were together in a house.
2. Suddenly there was a noise like a blowing (3). (v2)
3. They saw little tongues of (2) resting on each of them. (v3)
4. They were all filled with the (7). (v4)
5. Then the apostle (1) stood up and spoke to the people in the city of (8). (v14)
6. He told them about Jesus (6) who had died on the cross for their sins. (vs 36,38)
7. The people believed the message. They said, "What shall we do?"
8. Peter answered, "(9) and be (5), every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ". (v38)
9. That day about (4) people believed and were added to the church. (v41)

Trust

Are you obedient? Do you always do as your Mum and Dad tell you? Our parents try to bring us up to be the people God wants us to be, that is, obeying the laws of our country and the laws of God. The Bible tells us of those who did obey God and were blessed because they did. Elijah was one such man.

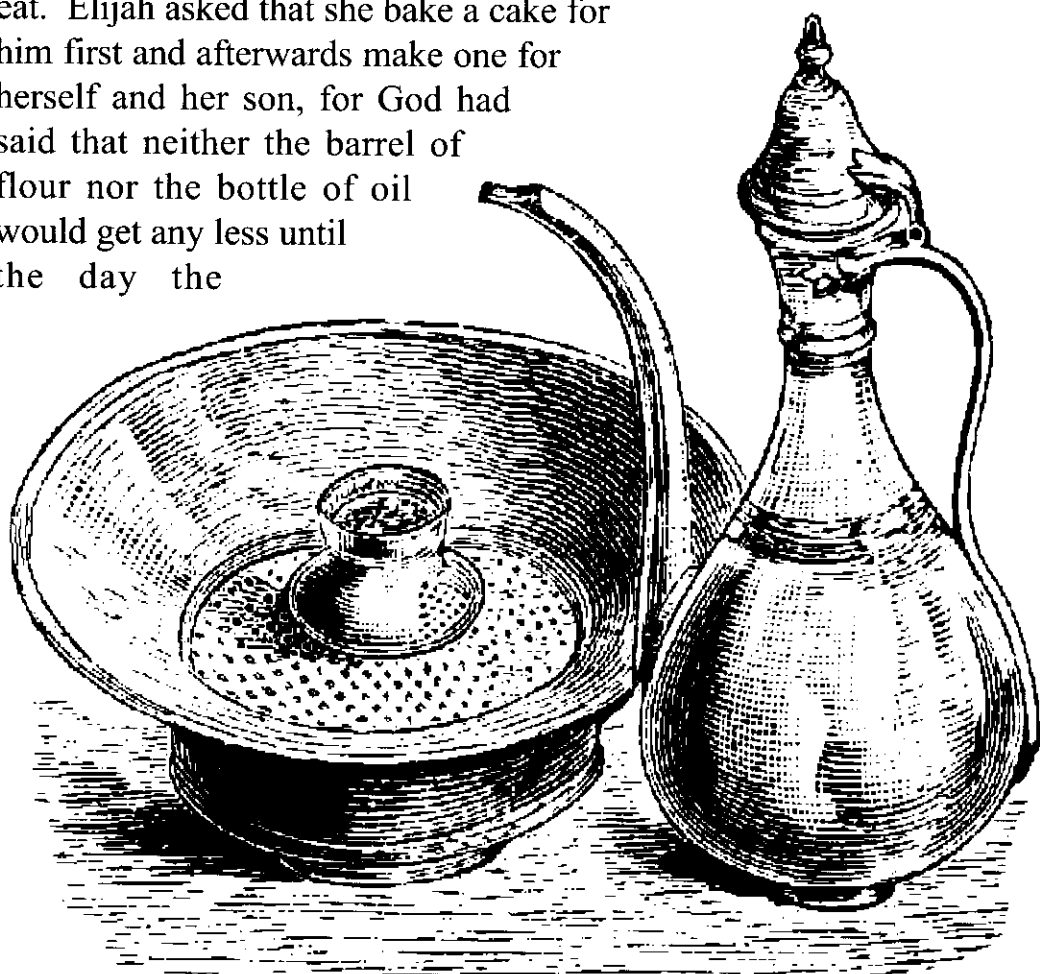
Elijah was a prophet who lived in the time when Ahab ruled Israel. Ahab did far more wicked things than any King of Israel who lived before him and he worshipped Baal. Of course we know there is only one God - He who made the sun, moon and stars, the earth and all that is in it, He made the animals and birds - He created the people - yes, we know this, but Ahab was bad, he did everything against God's wishes.

God told Elijah to speak to Ahab - to tell him there would be no rain or dew on the earth for years unless He, God allowed it. This was punishment for Ahab because he had turned away from God and so, there was a famine in the land, a shortage of food and water. However, God told Elijah to go to the Brook Sherith where he would have water to drink and He said, "*I have commanded the ravens to feed you there*". Elijah went and the birds brought him bread and meat twice each day! Did you notice that Elijah did as God said and so God took care of him? Again did you notice that even the birds did as God commanded? Isn't that really wonderful?

After a time, the brook dried up and God told Elijah to go to Zarephath to a widow lady whom God had commanded to look after him. Elijah went and found the lady at the city gate gathering wood

Obey

for her fire and he asked her for some water and a little bread. However, the lady said she only had a handful of flour and a little oil left, that she was going to bake a cake for herself and her son, after which, they would die, as they had nothing else to eat. Elijah asked that she bake a cake for him first and afterwards make one for herself and her son, for God had said that neither the barrel of flour nor the bottle of oil would get any less until the day the



Lord sends rain on the earth. The widow did as Elijah said for she trusted God and it happened just as Elijah had told her - the lady, her son and Elijah had enough to eat. Now, did you notice again, how the lady obeyed the word she believed came from God, through Elijah?

Obedience to God is always rewarded - He takes care of those who obey Him. Elijah received a very wonderful reward, for he was taken up to heaven without dying, to live with God! 📖

Expand Your Bible:

Faith - A Stranger Believes



Deep in thought Rahab sat in her tent in the Israelite camp.

Tramp! Tramp! Tramp! Went the sound of marching feet. This sound brought back many thoughts to her mind – especially those of the last few weeks. In her mind's eye she could still see the events as they took place.

What a strange procession!

Each day for the last seven days the Israelites had marched in this way around the city of Jericho. At the front were seven priests carrying ram's horn trumpets, then came the Ark of God, again carried by priests and after this the armed men. The only sound was from the trumpets – not a word spoken by any of the marchers – not even an insult or a threat called out to the people watching in bemusement from the walls of the city. It was certainly strange to say the least of it – and those ram's horn trumpets – everyone knew they were special

trumpets used for signalling in war and religious festivals. What were they signalling now?

Every day this had happened - march around, go back to camp. But on the seventh day they had marched around seven times and then as a man a terrific shout went up from the marchers.

And then – and this was the incredible part of the event that still was hard to believe – the walls of the city – those strong thick walls which had encompassed and protected the city for so many years – just fell down. Not a bit here and a bit there, but completely and utterly fell down. And then the Israelites marched straight in.

Rahab usually referred to as the 'harlot' had been ready and waiting for this day when the Israelites would enter the city. Some time earlier she had been going about her normal business as an innkeeper when two foreigners had come to her house. No



doubt they thought that they would not be singled out or noticed as many different types of people came and went from this house. But, no. Someone had identified them as Israelites, spies no doubt, who had come to check out the city and its defenses. It wasn't long and there was a knock on the door and the local 'police' were demanding that she hand over the men who had recently arrived.

Rahab trembled as she thought back to that time. She had followed her instinct that trouble was brewing and had hidden the men on the rooftop of her house under some flax stalks that she had drying there. Luckily they hadn't been found. She then told the soldiers that the men had left earlier intending to go back a certain way. Rahab told the fugitives that she had hidden them because she said, *"I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you...for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath. Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord, since I have shewed you kindness, that you will also shew kindness unto my father's house, and give unto me a true token: and that ye will save alive my father, and my mother and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death"*.

And so an agreement was made. Later that night she let them down from a window of her house (the house was on the city wall) using a scarlet cord. This scarlet cord they had said was to be her passport to safety. She was to hang this out of the window of the house where she and her family were. All who were there would be saved. If they were not in this place their safety could not be guaranteed.

Yes, Rahab remembered, it had been a bit tricky to convince the members of her family to gather with her in the home when

the Israelites marched around the city. All arrangements had to be made secretly and without drawing attention to the family. But the plan had worked. When the Israelites came to the city they first found the house with the scarlet cord and saved Rahab's family before destroying the city and its inhabitants.

Tradition reports that the walls of Jericho actually fell in – not out as would normally be expected, as that would have fallen on the Israelites encircling the City. Also Rahab's house was left standing whilst the rest of the wall fell down. This gave safety to Rahab and protected her from her own people who would have considered her a traitor. How did God do that?


In the 'Faith' chapter of the book of Hebrews (chapter 11) Rahab is cited as one who showed great faith – she believed in the promise made to her in the name of God. What fear and trepidation she must have felt as she saw the Israelites marching around Jericho! Would they remember the promise made by the spies?

Not only was Rahab's faith rewarded by her life and that of her family being saved, her name is also recorded in Matthew 1:5 in Jesus' lineage – what a reward! It would appear that she became an Israelite by adoption. There is also a story that Rahab married Joshua which would make a good ending to the story.

In this story we have concentrated on the faith of Rahab – but what of the faith of those who marched around the city? What of the faith of the general leading the marchers? What of the faith the spies had that Rahab would not betray them?

This whole story abounds in faith.

Do we have such faith – believing that the promises of God are true and to be fulfilled?

The story of Rahab is recorded in Joshua chapter 2 and 6:23. 

John Mark

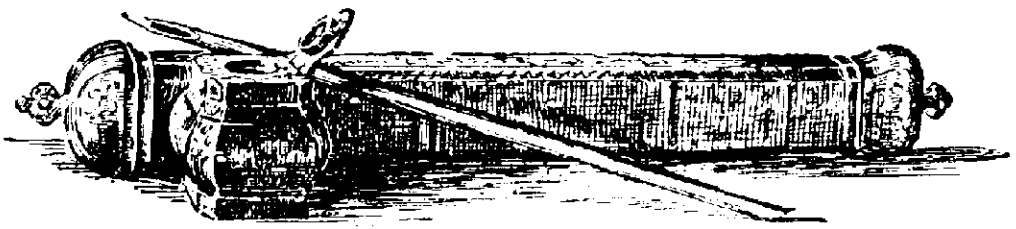
John Mark was the author of the Gospel of Mark (The Gospel of Matthew was the first of the gospels written, the Gospel of the Mark, the second). He is also known as Marcus (Roman form of Mark) and Mark. We know from the Scriptures that John Mark was the son of Mary, who was a sister to the apostle Barnabas, *"And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying"* Acts 12:12, thus making him a nephew to the disciple Barnabas, with whom he would do invaluable mission work, *"Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas..."* Colossians 4:10.

John Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their 1st Mission Journey (Acts 13). Unfortunately this experience was not a positive one, and impaired Paul's judgment of John Mark for some time afterwards. We read of the departure of John Mark from the group in Perga in Pamphylia (Acts 13:13) at which stage John Mark returned to Jerusalem. We aren't given a reason for John Mark leaving but later references hint at some animosity on the part of Paul. When Paul suggests to Barnabas that they partake of a second mission trip, Barnabas

is determined to take John Mark with them. In Acts 15:38-40 we are told that *"...Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder, one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God"*. The disagreement over John Mark was enough to divide these 2 great Christian missionaries, and as a result of it Paul chose Silas, and Barnabas taking John Mark went to Cyprus.

It is generally accepted that the man mentioned in Mark 14:51,52 is John Mark: *"And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked"*. As can be seen this is a record of an eye witness, and perhaps as tradition believes, a description of John Mark's own experience after Jesus' arrest.

Tradition tells us that the Gospel of Mark was written by John Mark from the mouth of the Apostle Peter – written



Scribe's Ink Pen

somewhere between 57 and 63 AD. Peter and John Mark were very close, *"The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son"*. 1 Peter 5:13. Eusebius tells us that Papias, a student of the presbyter John, used to say, "Mark, who had been Peter's interpreter, wrote down carefully, but not in order, all that he remembered of the Lord's sayings and doings. For he had not heard the Lord or been one of His followers, but later, as I said, one of Peter's. Peter used to adapt his teachings to the occasion, without making a systematic arrangement of the Lord's sayings, so that Mark was quite justified in writing down some things just as he remembered them. For he had one purpose only – to leave out nothing that he had heard, and to make no mis-statement about it".

Peter, of all people, would have identified with John Mark's period of indecision and hesitation as outlined above on Paul's 1st Mission trip. Reflection upon his own period of doubt in Mark 14:66-72 would have given him the understanding to give John Mark a second chance, just as Jesus Christ had given Peter (Mark 16:7). Peter went on to achieve amazing things (Mark 14:66-72, Acts 2; 4:5-13; 5:29) with the help of the Spirit of Christ, so why couldn't John Mark achieve the same, given a chance?

Paul got over his prejudice against John Mark, for we find in 2 Timothy 4:11, Paul requesting that John Mark join him, *"Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for ministry"* and in Philemon 24, Paul salutes John Mark (here called by his

Roman name of Marcus) as *"...my fellowlabourers"*. What an about face!

Barnabas was martyred doing mission work in Cyprus. Barnabas was stoned to death and buried by John Mark, his kinsman, outside the city. The record says that, as he laid Barnabas in his grave, John Mark placed on his breast a copy of the newly finished Gospel of Matthew.

Bishop Eusebius accords Mark with bringing Christianity to Egypt and that he was the first to establish the Christian church in Alexandria. His success there was amazing for we are told in Eusebius that "so large was the body of believers, men and women alike, built up there at the first attempt, with an extremely severe rule of life, that Philo decided that he must record in writing their activities, gatherings, meals, and everything else about their way of living". With regard to the Alexandrian church we are told that "In the eighth year of Nero's reign Annianus was the first after Mark the evangelist to take charge of the see of Alexandria". John Mark was not actually accorded the title of Bishop of Alexandria, but Bishops of Alexandria were rarely known by that name.

So just as Peter had done before him, John Mark, with an initial hesitation, went on to achieve great things in the name of Jesus Christ. These men from humble origins are enduring examples to all believers that through faith major things can be achieved through Jesus Christ.

Mark died c 75AD. In the 9th century his body was translated to Venice and is enshrined in a magnificent cathedral dedicated to him. 📖

Bibliography:

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King James Version Bible
The History of the Church, Eusebius.

Vegetarian Recipes

Mixed Vegetable Patties

1 tablespoon olive oil
2 onions, very finely diced
6 celery stalks, very finely diced
2 carrots, grated
175g/6oz mushrooms, very finely chopped
1 tablespoon smooth peanut butter
75g/3oz unsalted peanuts, ground or very finely chopped

75g/3oz fresh breadcrumbs, wholemeal
Pinch of dried mixed herbs
Salt and pepper
2 eggs, beaten
75g/3oz dried breadcrumbs
Olive oil for deep frying.

Heat the oil in a large saucepan, add the onions and celery and fry gently for 5 minutes. Do not allow the vegetables to brown. Add the carrots and mushrooms to the pan and continue cooking for a further 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Remove from the heat, then stir in the peanut butter until well combined. Add the peanuts, fresh breadcrumbs, herbs and salt and pepper to taste. Mix well and bind with half the beaten eggs. Leave until cool.

Meanwhile, pour the remaining beaten eggs into a shallow bowl or on to a plate. Place the dried breadcrumbs on a separate plate, ready to coat the patties. When the mixture is cool, divide it into patty or croquette size portions. Dip each patty in the beaten eggs, then roll in the dried breadcrumbs until thoroughly coated. Pour enough olive oil into a deep fry pan to come to a depth of 1 1/2 inches. Heat oil until a bread cube browns in 60 seconds. Lower in the patties and deep fry for 3 minutes, until golden brown. Drain the croquettes very thoroughly on absorbent paper and serve at once.

The vegetables in this recipe may be varied to suit what you have on hand, eg. shallots, lentils, etc.

Makes approximately 16 large patties or croquettes.

Rosti - Potato Cake

500g/1lb potatoes, parboiled whole, cooled and skinned
1 large onion
Salt and pepper
50g/2oz butter

Grate the potatoes and onion, season generously with salt and pepper and mix well. Melt half the butter in a shallow frying pan and add the potato mixture. Flatten it down with a wooden spoon or spatula and cook over moderate heat for about 5 minutes until lightly browned.

Put a plate on top of the pan and turn the pan over so that the potato mixture falls on to the plate. Melt the remaining butter. Slide the potato back into the pan so that the underside cooks. Cook for a further 5 minutes or so. Slide on to a warmed serving plate. Serve at once.

Serves 4

If you will be visiting one of these areas over the next few months or would like to contact our group, please feel free to attend one of the following meetings at the church addresses shown. All are welcome.

- Melbourne** Regular service held each Sunday afternoon at 2:30pm.
Singleton Regular discussions each week at 11:30am with the exception of the first Sunday of the month when there is a service at 11:30am.
Terrigal Special services and studies as advertised. Sunday morning discussion groups held at 11.15am when possible.
Sydney Services/discussions every second Sunday at 6:30pm. Bible studies monthly - please ring. Please call to confirm Meeting Sundays.

For further information please ring or write to one of the following contacts:

AUSTRALIA

Melbourne

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Fitzroy, Victoria. 3065
Ph: 03 9416 0807
Write: 193 Fitzroy Street,
Fitzroy, Victoria. 3065

Terrigal

Church: Cnr Terrigal Drive & Serpentine Rd,
Terrigal, NSW. 2260
Write: 31 Bembooka Road,
Greenpoint. NSW. 2251
02 4365 1974

Singleton

Church: Cnr Bishopgate Street and
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Singleton. NSW. 2330
Ph: 02 6571 1269
Write: PO Box 127,
Singleton. NSW. 2330
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