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# Bible Explorations Newsletter

November-December 2021 Issue

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## FEAST OF TABERNACLES 2021

We had a wonderful Feast of Tabernacles. Great talks. We had many speakers and you can find all the talks for the week on our YouTube [www.BibleExplorations.com/yt](http://www.BibleExplorations.com/yt).

This spring we will most likely have our Passover and Unleavened Bread again on zoom/Roku/YouTube, etc. We will keep you up on that. God is in control, this is His ministry.

We try to keep things updated on our facebook group. If you are not in our group, please go to facebook and look up Bible Explorations – Terra Bella and join. We will continue that no matter what happens. We will also continue to keep our studies going on Roku and YouTube, etc., too.

Keep Bible Explorations in prayer. This is November and I do not know what will be in 2022, less than 2 months from now. Our Father does though! The

world is in a very scary time for many. We need to continue to trust Him and keep studying and praying. Know that whether we are near the end or we have some time left, we need to share His word with the world. Help us continue to do this. People are afraid right now, their lives have been turned upside down. Many have lost their jobs, many their homes. Please keep them all in prayer and know heaven will be soon, and what a great reunion it will be!

You can email or call, or get on facebook and message us. We are here for you all and pray for God's protection for our Bible Explorations family!

## THE BLOODY CITY by Ted Schultz (Continued)

### Left without the seal of God

“The class who do not feel grieved over their own spiritual declension, nor mourn over the sins of others, will be left without the seal of God. The Lord commissions His messengers, the men with slaughter weapons in their hands: ‘Go ye after him through the [bloody Eze. 22:2] city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark [the seal of God]: and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house.’ [Eze. 9:5, 6] Here we see that the church – the Lord’s sanctuary – was the first to feel the stroke of the wrath

of God.” *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 5, p. 211.

“The leaven of godliness has not entirely lost its power. At the time when the danger and depression of the church are greatest, the little company who are standing in the light will be sighing and crying for the abominations that are done in the land. But more especially will their prayers arise in behalf of the church because its members are doing after the manner of the world.” *Ibid.* pp. 209, 210. The church in mimicking the world has been practicing the abominations of the world in a very singular manner – it has been killing innocent babies in the womb.

### **How did it come to this?**

How is it that a people that have taken ownership of the Scripture that says, “Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus,” (Rev. 14:12) present the fourth commandment as a testing truth to the whole world when they themselves are in gross violation of the sixth commandment? This deplorable condition stands as a witness against us both before believers and unbelievers. In November 1988 Pastor George Gainer gave a presentation at the Loma Linda Conference on abortion in which he stated, “We can no longer deny that there is a growing question among Adventists as to whether abortion can continue to be a neutral issue for a church that claims to ‘keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus.’ Perhaps a sign carried by a protestor in front of Sligo Seventh-day Adventist church on October 5, 1985 best summed up the significance of this issue for the Church. It read: ‘Adventists—Remember the 6<sup>th</sup> Commandment too!’” George B. Gainer, *The Wisdom of Solomon? Or The Politics of Pragmatism: The General Conference Abortion Decision 1970-71*. Indeed, we cannot keep the fourth commandment which calls us to remember that God created human life if we break the sixth commandment by destroying life which God created. How did the killing of unborn children in Adventism come about?

### **The *Ministry* magazine article**

George B. Gainer who at the time was chaplain of Columbia Union College made a presentation at the above mentioned conference on abortion held by Loma Linda University’s Center for Christian Bioethics in November 1988. Gainer’s presentation was one of thirty-six presentations made at the “Abortion: Ethical Issues and Options conference.” Out of the thirty-six presenters only four were pro-

life. Pastor Gainer was one of the four. Yet, as singularly significant as was his presentation it was not included in the book, *Abortion Ethical Issues & Options*, published by Loma Linda University’s Center for Christian Bioethics. Perhaps Loma Linda did not appreciate the fact that Gainer exposed Loma Linda as being one of the hospitals that performed abortions. However, a condensed version of that presentation was published in the August 1991 issue of *Ministry Magazine*. *Ministry* is a publication of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and has a monthly circulation of 18,000 to Seventh-day Adventist pastors, church leaders and local elders. Also, about 60,000 pastors of other denominations receive *Ministry* on a by-monthly gift subscription. The reader may want to access the *Ministry Magazine* archives and read the article by Gainer in its entirety. We will here make note of several facts that Gainer brought out. The article opens as follows:

“My question about abortion and the Seventh-day Adventist Church began on a cold day in January 1985. A ‘chance’ encounter with a pastor while searching for parking at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. had led to an invitation to worship with his church some time. The following Sunday I dropped in to hear him preach. Arriving late, I sat, unnoticed, in the back. When the pastor stood to preach, he announced to the congregation that it was Sanctity of Life Sunday. After spending some time on the biblical basis for the sanctity of life position, he told the following story: ‘During my wife’s pregnancy with our son Seth, we decided to look for a Christian doctor who shared our sanctity of life convictions. So we drove to Takoma Park, Maryland, to the office of Dr. \_\_\_\_\_, a Seventh-day Adventist.

Following the test and examination that confirmed that she was pregnant, the very first question she was asked was “‘Do you want this baby, or do you want an abortion?’” We looked at each other in shock and disbelief. We then turned and said, ‘We are sorry. We must be in the wrong place.’ We got up and left.

“At the close of his sermon this pastor invited questions and comments from the congregation. One lady asked, ‘Are you sure that what you said about the Seventh-day Adventists is true? I always thought that they were Bible-believing Christians.’ He answered, ‘I am sorry to tell you that the Seventh-day Adventists are aborting hundreds of babies in their

hospitals.’

“While they sang a hymn I went out...unseen but not unshaken. What was the truth regarding Adventism and abortion? I remembered seeing an editorial in the *Adventist Review* that stated, ‘The Adventist Church has no official position on abortion.’ (*Adventist Review*, Sept. 1, 1983, p. 14). But what did that mean? Did it mean that the church saw no moral implications surrounding the practice of abortion? Did it really not incline in either direction? What did the lack of an official position mean in the actual day-to-day practice of the hospitals of the Adventist Health System? A search for answers to these questions led me to survey the history of our church’s position on abortion.” *Ministry Magazine*, George B. Gainer, Article, Abortion: History of Adventist Guidelines, August, 1991.

### **Adventist hospitals providing abortion**

By the time Gainer’s research on the history of abortion in the Adventist Church’s hospitals had appeared in the *Ministry Magazine*, Adventist hospitals had been providing abortions for over twenty years.

“The years 1970 and 1971 proved pivotal for the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s stance on abortion. In January 1970, a bill was introduced in Hawaii’s state legislature to repeal that state’s abortion laws. Three weeks later the bill was law. Castle Memorial, an Adventist institution, suddenly found itself needing to establish a position regarding abortion.” *Ibid*. Needing to establish a position on abortion? Is it not already established in the word of God? “For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.” Psalm 119:89. If God’s word is already settled for ever, perhaps it is time for God’s people to become settled into the truths of His word. If ever there is a class of people that need to be settled in the word of God it is the leaders of our institutions. “Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads – it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved – just as soon as God’s people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come.” *The Faith I Live By*, p. 287. Should it not be the first work and responsibility of leaders to know what the Bible says and follow the guidance found therein? The world is ever working to press God’s people into its mold. “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with

God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” James 4:4.

Previous to the new law passed by the state legislature of Hawaii, Castle Memorial had already been providing so-called “therapeutic abortions – those done to save the life of the mother, or in the case of rape or incest, or even for severe mental anxiety in the mother.” *Ibid*. Castle Memorial was already a considerable distance down the road of compromise when pressure began to mount to provide abortion on demand. At its opening, Castle Memorial had advertised itself as a FULL-SERVICE HOSPITAL to which the community had responded with financial assistance. Now it was time for the Hospital to prove true to its promises to the community. Since Castle Memorial had received funds not only from the community but from federal and state sources as well, it was considered by many that the hospital was for all practical purposes a community hospital and therefore should fulfill the wishes of the community. Like the old saying goes, just follow the money if you want to know where real control resides.

In response to the mounting pressure to perform abortions on demand both from the community and doctors within the hospital itself, the hospital administrator asked the president of the Pacific Union Conference for guidance from the church as to what course he was to pursue. When the P.U.C. president informed the General Conference of the situation he was informed that “no one knows of any position the church has taken on it [abortion].” *Ibid*. Lacking the guidance of the church on the matter Castle Memorial set an interim policy which allowed for abortion for other than therapeutic reason through the first trimester of pregnancy. It was stressed that this was only a “temporary” policy. What testimony did this give to the community? It was as if it were being said to the community that Seventh-day Adventists do not use the Bible as their rule of faith and practice and therefore await a final ruling from some source other than the Bible. The action of certain leadership was as if the Bible was completely silent on the issue that was pressing so forcefully upon them. Yet the Bible so simply and beautifully provides answers to our questions. Too often, however, human beings seek complex answers to the problems that perplex them. On March 11, 1970 a committee was formed by the General Conference to construct a document that would serve to guide Adventist hospitals on abortion. It was planned that the abortion issue would be

considered at the upcoming General Conference session in June in Atlantic City.

### **Abortion helps control population**

Just six days after the committee had been appointed, Neal C. Wilson, president of the North American Division made a statement which was carried by the Religious News Service. In part this is what he said. "Though we walk the fence, Adventists lean toward abortion rather than against it. Because we realize we are confronted by big problems of hunger and overpopulation, we do not oppose family planning and **appropriate endeavors to control population.**" *Ibid.*

One can only wonder how many faithful church members were saying to themselves, "speak for yourself because you most assuredly are not speaking for me." Oh how glibly the words roll out, "We walk the fence." But in those words is the approval for the death of tens of thousands of unborn children. And because "**we are confronted by big problems of hunger**" it apparently becomes appropriate to offer children up to death. This idea is as if it were torn out of the pages of ancient pagan idol worship when children were offered as sacrifices to cause the gods to favor them with rain causing the crops to grow so that they would not go hungry. Further, the problem of "over- population" was mentioned and the need "to control population." Once again it seems that the unborn children must shoulder all the responsibility to "control population." The North American Division president had volunteered others other than himself for what? We suggest that, as a leader, he should have led by example. Population control was one of the reasons that one of the largest abortionists in the United States provided abortions. "Population control is too important to be stopped by some right-wing pro-life types..." *San Diego Union*, October 12, 1980, pages A-3 and A-14. (Quoting Edward C. Allred, a Seventh-day Adventist physician). It seems, that if abortion is done for population control, then abortion may be seen as an "appropriate endeavor" as the North American Division President called it. The pagans scorched and burned their children to death. The shrieks and screams of countless children being burned alive have all but been forgotten with the passing of the millennia, but it is not forgotten by the Creator. We moderns, however, are much more refined. We offer up sacrifices without fire, therefore there is no smell of searing flesh and no sound of the screams of the tortured and dying. No, there is just

the silent screams of the innocents as they are being torn to pieces in the abortion process and in very many instances selected body parts being sold for various purposes to the enriching of those directly and indirectly involved in this abominable work.

Ancient Israel, to their everlasting shame, came to such a depraved state in how they treated the weak, innocent, and vulnerable members of society that God said He would burn the bloody city. And He did. Know this of a certainty: that which God witnessed in His people anciently he witnesses in His church today. Do we as a people think for one moment that God is in the abortion business? "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." Deuteronomy 30:19. Our Creator calls upon us to choose life. If we have the mind of Christ will we not choose life also for others? Jesus came that we might have life and that we may have it abundantly. This life we are called to share with all the nations of the earth in the proclamation of the everlasting gospel. "Wilson stated that because the denomination was active in 220 different countries, it would have a difficult time taking a hard and fast position on the abortion question." *Religious News Service*, March 11, 1970. In turn we ask, do the truths of the Bible change as we pass from one culture to another, or cross the border from one country to another? On the contrary, the Scriptures say, "Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country: for I am the LORD your God." Leviticus 24:22. ....*to be continued.*

### **ONLY HOLY PEOPLE CAN KEEP HOLY THINGS HOLY**

The apostle Paul stressed how essential holiness of life is to salvation. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Hebrews 12:14. "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." 2 Thess. 2:13. The apostle emphasizes that our being holy is the will of God. "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." 1 Thess. 4:3. The words holiness and sanctification in these texts come from the same Greek word and therefore mean the same thing. The testimony of the apostles is the same as that of the law and the prophets of the Old Testament. God is calling His covenant people to be holy. God called Israel out

of Egypt and promised them that if they would obey His voice and keep His covenant they would be a holy people. Exodus 19:5. This holy calling is now extended to God's end time remnant people. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." 1 Peter 2:9.

### WHY DID ISRAEL FAIL?

So why did Israel fail of being that holy nation that God wanted them to be? The apostle Paul tells us exactly on what point they failed and gives a warning not to repeat their failure. "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Hebrews 4:1, 2. It was not because God's promises to Israel failed, but because they did not have faith in Jesus to fulfill His promises to them. "But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? [Why?'] Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." Romans 9:31, 32.

### ONLY HOLY PEOPLE KEEP HOLY SABBATHS HOLY

"No other institution which was committed to the Jews tended so fully to distinguish them from surrounding nations as did the Sabbath. God designed that its observance should designate them as His worshipers. It was to be a token of their separation from idolatry, and their connection with the true God. But in order to keep the Sabbath holy, men must themselves be holy. Through faith they must become partakers of the righteousness of Christ. When the command was given to Israel, 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,' the Lord said also to them, 'Ye shall be holy men unto Me.' Ex. 20:8; 22:31. Only thus could the Sabbath distinguish Israel as the worshipers of God." *The Desire of Ages*, p. 283.

### VICTORY OVER THE BEAST AND OVER HIS IMAGE Elder John VanDenburgh

Please notice the following text closely. For in this setting we see the modern end-time courageous saints in heaven at last. Try to see the particulars of their dual belief system. The text is found in Revelation 15:2, 3.

"And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark and, over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

"And they **sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb**, saying, 'Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, thou King of saints.'"

Who gets the victory over the beast and his image? ANS: Those who sing both the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. Is that what you are doing? Is that not what Bible Explorations is encouraging all to do?

This scene is a prophetic picture of end-time saints. They are the only ones who will face the "beast's" army of deceived henchmen. They will be the ones who will stick by heaven's seal and resist the Mark of the beast.

That is why the final angel's message is brought home to the hearts of so many of you.

For years we have been taught to sing of the Lamb who was wounded for our transgressions; was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Father hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all," therefore we sing of His love to us:

"Greater love hath no man than this, that He lay down His life for His brethren."

But only recently have folk scattered over the world begun to take the song of Moses to heart.

"Thou shalt keep therefore His statutes and His commandments which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the LORD [Yehweh] thy God [Elohim] giveth thee forever".

"And Moses came and spake all the words of this song in the ears of the people, he, and Hoshea the son of Nun.

"And Moses made an end of speaking all these words to all Israel:

"And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law." Deut, 32:44-46.

*Strong's #8451 Torah, Decalogue. Pentateuch.*

And so, in obedience to His calling, we will "Remember the Law of Moses with the statutes and judgments" that we might receive the power of Elijah to resist and even

witness against, the beast and His image.

Yes, those who end up victorious over the beast and his image will sing both songs, and in no way do these two songs conflict with each other. One song does not nail the other one out of existence.

One of my favorite quotes regarding faithful saints goes like this: “And they shall be mine sayeth the Lord of hosts in the day that I make up my Jewels.” I believe my prayer is being answered that His precious jewels are beginning to sparkle and will shine faithfully to the end.

Yes, you can be faithful unto the end of this world and therefore you can sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb who paid the price for our sins.



### WHOSE CHILD IS THIS?

I do not know the author of the following article, but since it has a lot to say about heaven’s Feast of Tabernacles versus Christmas I believe it merits a reprint.

#### The Witness of Ron Cantrell

The time of year of Christ’s birth is an interesting issue. Some think it to have been in the fall season, according to the courses of the priests who ministered in the Temple. Indeed, coupled with the priestly duties of Elizabeth’s husband Zechariah, and the gestation period of Mary, this is probably true. The issue of whether or not we should celebrate Christmas at all is a question I have been challenged with in varying degrees both by Christians and by Jewish believers, and I feel it needs to be addressed briefly. Throughout the scriptures there are records of angelic visitations. In Luke chapter 2, we have a singularly notable event where a “great company of the heavenly host” appeared with the angelic messenger who came to proclaim the birth of the Messiah. There on the hills outside Bethlehem, they proclaimed the event which would split the earthly calendar. Their presence terrified the shepherds who had to be told “fear not.”

“A few years ago, many of us here in Jerusalem were invited to form a choir and go to Bethlehem on

Christmas Eve. Several hours of music in Praise of that wonderful event almost 2,000 years ago had been planned, rehearsed and polished for the event.

“It was cold, ‘see your breath’ weather. Rain had blown sideways for hours most of the afternoon of Christmas Eve. The choirs invited to sing knew the stage had been set up in the outside courtyard of the Church of the Nativity in Manger Square. Some were worried about being rained on.

“The Israeli government takes all precautions against potential terrorist attempts aimed at pilgrims. A half-way checkpoint at Jerusalem’s southern most bus station had been set up and all busses were to stop there for inspection before proceeding the few minutes on down the road to Bethlehem. All travelers knew that passports and other identification were a must.

“In the cold rain we disembarked from the bus and stood in line to pass through the main building which had been set up efficiently as a checkpoint. Those in line around me were grumbling about having to go through a checkpoint. In the mess of a cold rainy night in December in Jerusalem, I could understand the discomfort.” – Ron Cantrell, *The Feasts of the Lord*, pp. 103-104.

#### The Witness of Amram Elofer

“People are often surprised to hear that *Yeshua* was in Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of Chanukah. Most Christians, even those who have read the Gospel of John many times, do not see Chanukah mentioned in this text. [John 10:22, 23]. This is not because they would disagree with such an interpretation, but because they do not ask themselves any questions about this text and do not know the Jewish background of the Gospel. Reading this text, Christians understand it as if there were a special celebration for the dedication of the first Temple built by Solomon or after the renovation of the second Temple by Herod the Great.

“Anyone who lives in Israel and reads the text in Hebrew has no doubt about the meaning of these verses. The text refers to Chanukah, which is the specific designation for the Feast of Dedication or

Festival of Lights which was instituted by the Jews after the purification of the Temple which was desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes around 165 B.C.E.

“To appreciate the full meaning of this text we should first understand what John intended to say. The text gives us two statements: ‘Then came the Feast of Dedication,’ and ‘It was winter.’ Why did John feel the need to specify further that ‘it was winter’? “Indeed the dedication feast identified here, Chanukah, is a winter feast. Chanukah occurred on the 25<sup>th</sup> of the Jewish month of Kislev, often taking place at the same time as Christmas.

“The statement, ‘it was winter’ implied that it was difficult for *Yeshua* to be there in Jerusalem for Chanukah. I am living in Jerusalem. I like the climate of Israel very much. For much of the year it is hot and quite dry. However, the most difficult season in Israel, especially in Jerusalem, is winter, from December to March. Jerusalem is built on the mountain, so it is often rainy, windy, and cold. *Yeshua* was not living in Jerusalem. He lived in the Galilean town of Capernaum near the Kinnereth. Galilee is the best place to live during the winter in Israel. The temperature never goes below about 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Even though it was winter, *Yeshua* and his disciples walked more than 140 miles to go to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of Chanukah.

“Thus Chanukah must have been important for *Yeshua*. The Jewish calendar is full of feasts; the most important of them are the feasts commanded by God in the Torah. The second category of feasts are those celebrations that were instituted by the Jewish people during their history. These are called ‘minor feasts.’ Everybody who knows the Jewish calendar knows that of all the Biblical feasts and sacred assemblies, the holiest and most important day for the Jewish people is *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement. Yet nowhere do the gospels tell us that *Yeshua* was in Jerusalem during *Yom Kippur*, though He was there for the Feast of Tabernacles which is only five days after *Yom Kippur*. This point gives even more importance to Chanukah...

“We understand the importance of this celebration and why *Yeshua* wanted to be in Jerusalem for the celebration of Chanukah. If the Jewish people had accepted the rule of the Greeks and not revolted against this attempt to destroy Judaism, the temple of

Jerusalem at the time of *Yeshua* would have been a pagan temple and many prophecies in relation to the *Mashiach* could not have been fulfilled by *Yeshua* who is the *Mashiach* of Israel. That is why *Yeshua* wanted to be in Jerusalem for the celebration of Chanukah and even used the symbol of Chanukah, the light, to teach many spiritual lessons to His listeners...



“Chanukah commemorates the re-dedication of the Temple, and it serves as a reminder that we too must rededicate our lives to the Lord. We must be dedicated to serving Him, letting our ‘light shine before men’ (Matt 5:16).” Amram Elofer, “*Yeshua* and the Feast of Chanukah” in *Shabbat Shalom*, pp 26, 27 Vol. 52, No. 1, 2005.

Here we have two “eye witness” accounts regarding winter weather in the Judean hills near Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Both accounts state that winter weather near Jerusalem and Bethlehem is often “cold, rainy and windy.”

### [The Witness of the Gospel of Luke](#)

“Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloth, lying in a manger.’” (Luke 2:8-12).

Here it is plainly stated that on the night Jesus Christ was born, the shepherds were out in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night. This does not “match” the weather reports of December near Jerusalem and Bethlehem given by Ron Cantrell and Amram Elofer, both residents of Jerusalem for many years. In fact, “The *Mishna* [rabbinic commentary] states that because of winter weather, the flocks around Bethlehem were normally brought into a

protective corral called a 'sheepfold' from November through February. Hence the December date seems unlikely." - Barney Kasdan *God's Appointed Times*, pp. 96-97 with reference to "Luke," *Adam Clark's Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 370.

### [The Witness of the Cross](#)

We know that Jesus was crucified at Passover, which comes around April. From Daniel 9:26, 27 we find that the Messiah would be "cut off" in the "middle of the week" or 3 ½ years into the last 7-year period of the 70-week prophecy. In Luke 3:23 we read, "Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age." "Since we know He died on Passover, by backtracking we arrive much closer to Sukkot (September/October) than to December 25." – Barney Kasdan, *God's Appointed Times*, P. 96 with reference to A.T. Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels*, p. 267.

### [The Service of Zacharias, the priest](#)

Luke 1:5 tells us some interesting information about the father of John the Baptist. "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth." Then we are referred to I Chronicles 24 to explain what the "division of Abijah" is all about. I Chronicles 24:3 tells us, "Then David with Zadok of the sons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, divided them [the sons of Aaron (vs. 1) or the Levitical priests] according to the schedule of their service." In verse 10 we find that the eighth slot of service went to the division of Abijah. Each slot of service was for two weeks at the Jerusalem temple. The entire schedule began each year with the month of Passover.

Given this schedule, we find that Zacharias the priest would have been serving in the temple during the middle of the month *Tammuz* corresponding with our month of July. Baby John would have been born near the end of our month of April, with Jesus being born about six months later in the middle of the month of *Tishri*, in late September or early October. This is the precise time of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Why did Luke include this information? Was it not to establish the connection between Christ's birth in the autumn of the year and both Christ's baptism and also

the Feast of Tabernacles? By establishing Christ's birth and baptism in autumn, Luke shows how Christ fulfilled the prophecy that Messiah was to be "cut off" in the middle of the week (Daniel 9:26, 27) or 3 ½ years after His anointing at His baptism. By showing that Christ was born around the Feast of Tabernacles, Luke like John connects Jesus Christ to the theme of the Feast of Tabernacles: "Immanuel, God with us."

Here we see that Jesus was *not* born in the bad weather of winter. Rather, the testimony of Scripture places His birth at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, in the autumn of the year.

So where did December 25 come from? In ancient times December 25 was a pagan feast day known to the Romans as "Saturnalia." It was celebrated as the birth day of the sun-god and was a day of drunkenness and debauchery. Not until the fourth century did Constantine and the Bishop of Rome bring December 25 into the religious calendar of the western Christian church. Prior to that time, December 25 was *unknown* among faithful Christians.

December 25 is unrecognized by Scripture. December 25 was not observed by the disciples nor the apostles. The early Christians knew December 25 only as a pagan day of revelry and debauchery dedicated to the pagan sun-god. To associate such a day with Christ the Lord would have been unthinkable. What would they say about Christians today connecting December 25 with Jesus Christ and incorporating it into the Christian calendar



May we all BE ready for His soon return!! Pray for each other. God is in control and deeply loves each and every one of us!



