

THE REJECTION OF THE KINGDOM

Chapter 7

The Matthew Mysteries

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This chapter will cover Matthew's chapters eight through twelve and will show the deteriorating relationship between Israel and Jesus during His Galilean ministry. This relationship will be broken in the twelfth chapter of Matthew when Israel will obstinately refuse to repent and thus, will reject the preaching of the "gospel of the kingdom."

To teach the major truths of this section of scripture, the writer has chosen six topical subjects: (1) Israel's lack of faith; (2) the calling and instructing of the apostles; (3) the upbraiding of Israel; (4) the personal invitation of Jesus; (5) the unpardonable sin; and (6) the one sign of Jonah.

ISRAEL'S LACK OF FAITH

Israel's lack of faith is first seen in the eighth chapter of Matthew and is revealed in spite of the miracles that Jesus performed in their sight. Because of their lack of faith, Jesus began prophesying that they would be cast out of the kingdom.

The First Mention of Outer Darkness

"And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. (12) But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mart. 8:11-12).

Prior to this verse of scripture, a Gentile Roman centurion had demonstrated his faith in Jesus Christ by asking Him to heal his servant by long distance; i.e., without the necessity of Him coming to his house. His faith was so great that Jesus marveled and said, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

In comparing the faith of the centurion to Israel's lack of faith, Jesus informed that generation of Israel (the children [Gr. sons of the kingdom]) that they would not enter the kingdom of heaven. Instead, they would be cast into the darkness outside of the kingdom. We may liken the kingdom to a great banquet hall lit for the honored guests, those who were originally invited to the festivities (Israel) would not be allowed to enter, but would be cast out into the darkened rooms and halls outside. Other saints of Israel, however, would come from the east and the west and would be allowed to sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom.

This is the first time that the term *the outer darkness* appears in Matthew and the only time it is ever mentioned in connection with Israel. It is recorded two more times in later chapters in connection with the church. Contrary to popular teaching, the outer darkness is not the place of everlasting hell where the lost go, but a place of obscurity outside the kingdom where those who lose their inheritance will go for one thousand years.

To have a clear assessment of this, the reader must understand the scope of Jesus' ministry to Israel. The book of Matthew does not teach that He came to tell them how to be saved by the preaching of the cross, since He had not yet been rejected and crucified; the scope of His message to Israel was the kingdom. Seemingly, Gentile believers have a hard time understanding that Israel, as a nation, already belonged to God, though individually they had to believe. In the Old Testament, God calls them His "firstborn son" (Ex. 4:22). Therefore, being the national seed of Abraham and, as such, under the Abrahamic covenant (salvation by grace, see Rom. 4:1-4), the scope of Jesus' message was not how to be saved from eternal death, but how to be saved into the "kingdom of heaven." Those who repented and followed Him (brought forth fruit) would be in the kingdom; but those who failed to repent would be cast out into the darkness, i.e., obscurity outside of the kingdom, for one thousand years.

Nevertheless, a new dispensation would begin after the cross, making it necessary for the Jews to repent for their crucifixion of Jesus (under Judaism) and to believe that He was their Messiah (the Son of God) to be saved. Under this new dispensation of grace, believing Jews would be members of the early church; a new people; a new creation of God. Moreover, under the teaching of the New Testament to the church, all believers (Jew and Gentile) who would fail to have their souls (Gr. *psuche*, meaning life) saved at the judgment seat of Christ, would be cast out into the outer darkness (outside of the kingdom) in total ruin for one thousand years. See the parables of the "wedding feast" and the "talents" (Matt. 22:1-14; 25:14-30).

Israel's Birthright in the Kingdom

"And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. (16) No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. (17) Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved" (Matt. 9:15-17).

This passage informs us of Israel's right to the kingdom as the "children (Gr. *huios*, meaning sons) of the bridal chamber." The revelation of this truth comes to us in response to Jesus' answer to the Pharisees who wanted to know why His disciples did not fast. He informed them that there was no reason to fast when there was no mourning. Jesus had come to Israel and all who would recognize Him as the Messiah (the Bridegroom) would be counted as the children (sons) of the bridal chamber; i.e. the wedding guests. This new relationship could be nothing but joy. However, one day He would be taken away (crucified). Then, the children (sons) of the bridal chamber would mourn. The sons of the bridal chamber are not the church (at this time), but clearly the believers of Israel. As a believing people under a covenant relationship with God, they were to be the "wedding guests" (Matt. 22:2-7), while the prophets of Israel were to be the "friends of the bridegroom" (John 3:29).

Another reason why the believers of Israel were not the bride is that the Bridegroom does not come to earth to choose His bride and then, afterward, leave them. Instead, the bride will be taken from the earth and chosen at the judgment seat of Christ and thereafter will always be with Christ.

Who, then, is the bride? The answer is the church; a new nation of people made up of Jews and Gentiles; a body of baptized believers who are bringing forth *much*

spiritual fruit. In Old Testament typology, the bride of Christ is always a Gentile bride, thus speaking of the mostly Gentile church. By comparing the brides of Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses (types of Christ), the reader will quickly recognize that these brides were not Jewish, but Gentile.

In Matt 9:15-17, Jesus continues to inform the Pharisees, through a parable, that the dispensation of law had ended. This was evidenced by the fact that the Bridegroom, i.e., the Promised Seed of Gal. 3:19, had come, and a new dispensation would begin that would be different. He illustrated this by saying that you would not sew a new patch of cloth to an old garment that is tearing with age, because it would make it tear more. Hence, the church (the new dispensation of grace) would not be united with Judaism.

This cloth is clearly a type of the righteous acts of Christ that would be produced through the lives of believers totally yielded to Him during the church period. It would be sewed to other pieces of new cloth and would constitute the wedding garments of the bride and the wedding guests, at the judgment seat of Christ (Matt. 22:11-13; Rev. 19:7-8). It is inconceivable that the old garments of Israel (a type of the law) could become the wedding garments for the bride of Christ, or even that pieces of the wedding garment could be sewed to them.

Jesus also told the Pharisees that you would not put new wine (a type of the joy experienced at weddings) into old wineskins (a type of bondage under law), for the two are incompatible and the wineskins would break. New wine is to be placed in the skins of grace and preserved (aged as wine is aged) until that day of great joy when the wedding guests, the friends of the bridegroom and the bride will all sit down together in the heavenly wedding feast at the end of this age.

Despite these teachings, the Pharisees could not understand this parable, since its meaning could only be revealed by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 13:10-11). Therefore, all parables spoken to Israel in the New Testament are, in reality, spoken to the church and for the church.

THE CALLING AND INSTRUCTING OF THE APOSTLES

The tenth chapter of Matthew concerns itself with Jesus selecting His apostles out from among His disciples and instructing them in their mission. They were to go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel to preach the gospel of the kingdom. They were given the power to perform signs and wonders as credentials of their authority. Most of this chapter will be easily understood by the reader as long as he keeps in mind to whom the apostles were to go and what they were to preach. The reader must also remember that it is erroneous teaching if any one attempts to make the instructions of this chapter (under the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom) speak to the pastors and evangelists of the church age (under the preaching of the gospel of grace). The only exception to this is the faithfulness and obedience that Christ expects from all whom He sends to preach either gospel.

As examples of error that can be taught, preachers today are not instructed anywhere in the epistles of the New Testament to go from city to city preaching the gospel without shoes, or two coats, or without money. Neither are they instructed to shake the dust off their feet when they depart from those who would not receive them.

The Warning of Gehenna

“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28).

In the continuing instructions to the apostles given in this chapter, we encounter another mystery verse like that of Matt. 5:29. The difficulty, here, is that Jesus is instructing His apostles, who are saved and cannot lose their salvation. Yet, He warns them of the possibility of having their soul and body destroyed in hell (Gehenna) if they fail to preach (because of fear) the message He has given to them. The word *hell* in this verse is not everlasting hell as some preach, but “Gehenna”; a special place of punishment for God’s own people who fall away (apostatize) from him.

As previously stated about Matt. 5:29, Gehenna gets its name from its earthly counterpart in the “valley of the son of Hinnom,” located south of Jerusalem. It was there that the sons of Judah worshiped another god and sacrificed their children in the practice of this idolatry. As a result, God swore that He would call that valley the “valley of slaughter,” where He would bury the bodies of His own apostate (fallen away) people of Israel (Jer. 7:32-34; 19:6-15). Historically, this likely occurred when God allowed Israel to be invaded by the Chaldeans in about 606 BC and taken into captivity and, again, when the Romans decimated Jerusalem in AD. 70. Many were slain and their bodies probably thrown into this valley south of Jerusalem. It is important to notice that God never slew or buried any lost person there — only His own apostate people of Israel. Even the lost nations, who will be slain by the Lord Himself at His second coming, will not be slain or buried in this valley, but in the valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3: 12-16). This makes the valley of the son of Hinnom (Heb. *ge Hinnom*, short for *ge ben Hinnom*, translated Gehenna) a type of the spiritual place where God will judge His own apostate believers of the church period for one thousand years.

This punishment will be for all pastors and teachers who willfully and deliberately fall away from the revealed truth that they are to preach (in many cases commercializing their ministry), and stubbornly remain in the sins of the flesh and of the world unto the coming of the Lord (Matt. 24:48-51). Gehenna will also be for all Christians (not necessarily teachers or leaders) who willfully and obstinately refuse the Lordship of Christ over their lives and knowingly fall back into the sins of the flesh and of the world, becoming enemies of Christ unto the end (the rapture) (Luke 19:14,27). According to scripture, this punishment, i.e., the slaying of the apostates, will occur at the judgment seat of Christ where the apostates will lose their redeemed bodies to Gehenna and their souls to the blackness of darkness (Psa. 88) during the kingdom age. This blackness of darkness is described in Jude 1:13 as lasting one thousand years (note: the Greek word *aion* in this verse, translated *forever* in the KJV, should have been translated *for the age*, i.e., the millennial age).

The reader may ask, “How can a spiritual body be slain?” The scripture answers this by inferring that the believers at the judgment seat of Christ will not have spiritual bodies, but will have redeemed bodies; for they must first (before receiving their spiritual bodies) be judged for the things done in their earthly bodies (2 Cor. 5:10). The term *redemption of the body* (Rom. 8:23b) means a body has been purchased back by the redemptive work of Christ on the cross and restored at the time of the rapture to the same state that it was in Adam before Adam sinned.

At the judgment seat of Christ, all believers, in their redeemed bodies, will be judged according to the things done in their bodies, whether good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10). As a result of this judgment, many will either be cast into the outer darkness or slain and cast into Gehenna. The "overcomers," however, will receive their spiritual bodies (bodies animated by the Spirit) through the out-resurrection (a higher resurrection) (Phil. 3:11). and will inherit the kingdom. They will have bodies of the resurrection, likened unto our Lord's body. Notwithstanding, after one thousand years have passed, all those who have been punished in the outer darkness and Gehenna will be resurrected into their spiritual bodies at the close of the kingdom age (1 Cor. 15:51-58) and will live forever in heaven, but without the inheritance. They will have eternal salvation through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on the cross; yet, they will have lost all rewards during the kingdom age and for the ages to follow.

The doctrine of Gehenna has not been seen by modern or traditional theology. To the writer's knowledge, only three other expositors have ever mentioned punishment of a believer in Gehenna during the kingdom age; Robert Govett, G.H. Pember and Watchman Nee. A profound message of warning is given through this doctrine to all Christian teachers and preachers who fail (through fear) to preach what Christ has commissioned them to teach, preach, or write. (In *Shock and Surprise Beyond the Rapture*, the writer has devoted an entire chapter to teach its details).

In summary to the doctrine of losing the inheritance of the kingdom, the apostles were not only instructed not to fear what men would do to them, but also to confess Christ in their lifestyle. These same instructions are valid for all Christians as a condition for entrance into the kingdom. If a believer confesses Christ in his life here, Christ will confess him before His Father in heaven. If he denies Him here, Christ will deny him before His Father in heaven (Matt. 10:32-33). This will occur at the judgment seat of Christ.

One's love for Christ must be greater than his love for any earthly possession, including father or mother, to gain the inheritance. This is the quality of love that motivates the believer to follow Christ no matter what the world may do to him; a love that demands that he carry his own cross; a devotion that requires him to lose his life here for Christ's sake, so that he may find it there (inherit the kingdom). If a believer seeks to gain his life here (loving the world), the scriptures declare that he will lose his life there for one thousand years and ultimately lose the inheritance forever (Matt. 10:32,33,37-39).

THE UPBRAIDING OF ISRAEL

"Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not" (Matt 11:20).

In chapter eleven, we begin to see a marked difference in the relationship between Jesus and Israel. The cities of Galilee would not repent despite all the mighty works that Jesus did. For this reason our Lord begins to pronounce woes (judgments) on them.

First, He upbraids Chorazin and Bethsaida by telling them that if He had done the same wonderful works in Tyre and Sidon (pagan cities of Phoenicia), they would have repented. Then speaking to Capernaum, He informs them that if these same mighty works that were done in Capernaum had been done in Sodom, Sodom would have repented and not been destroyed (vs. 21-24). In both cases, Jesus says that the punishment for those cities of Israel, in the day of judgment, will be much greater than for those cities of the pagans.

It is difficult to understand why the people of Israel, who belonged to God and saw the great miracles of healing by Jesus, rejected Him and His message. According to our text, Jesus' mighty works (miracles) must have been awe-inspiring. The scriptures tell us that His fame for healing people spread throughout the land. This was especially true in Capernaum, the headquarters for His ministry, where the people lined up to be healed. Yet, they refused to repent. Their idea of the coming kingdom was that their Messiah would come from heaven in a flame of fire and cast out their Roman masters. Even those who submitted to the idea that Jesus could be the Messiah wanted Him to first raise up an army and overthrow the Romans. They had no concept of His first coming as the suffering servant who would be their sin offering. They had a mind-set.

John tells of the occasion when Jesus fed five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes. This miracle of multiplication only made the people more determined to make Him a "bread king"; one who could give them welfare by magically making bread appear for them every day. Jesus later explained to them in John, chapter six, that He was not sent to be a welfare king and there would be no more bread given except the bread of life (Himself), who had come down from heaven (antitype of the manna in the wilderness). He explained that for a man to be saved, he must eat of this bread, i.e., spiritually appropriate (take to and for oneself) His flesh and His blood (meaning to believe on Him). But when many heard that, they went back and followed Him no more (John 6:66).

Before we leave this section of scripture, it is important to notice the difference in the scope of Jesus' message in John and that in Matthew. In Matthew, the message was on the national level; in John, it is on the personal level. In Matthew, the message was to Israel, as a nation, to "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17); in John, it was to the individual who thirsted to "come unto me and drink [Gr. perfect tense denoting salvation of the spirit]" (John 7:37b).

In John 7:38, Jesus said, "He that believeth [Gr. present continuous tense, denoting salvation of the soul] on me as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." It is clear that the book of John was written to all men who would form the church; for the next verse (John 7:39) explains that the water that would flow out of the belly (innermost part) of the believers who would continue to believe would be the Holy Spirit in power. And this could not occur until the day of Pentecost (the beginning of the church), after Jesus had ascended and was glorified in heaven. The entrance at Pentecost of the Holy Spirit into the church was for the purpose of giving power to all believers of the church period to produce spiritual fruit; fruit that would be necessary to pass the fiery tests of the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:11-15).

THE PERSONAL INVITATION

“Come unto me, all {ye} that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (29) Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. (30) For my yoke {is} easy, and my burden is light” (Man. 11:28-30).

At the close of the eleventh chapter of Matthew, the message of Jesus began to change. Instead of preaching exclusively to the lost sheep of the house of Israel to **“repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,”** He began preaching to the individual lost sheep of Israel who would believe and become the first members of the early church. This message, then, is to the church and for the church, which would soon be revealed in the sixteenth chapter of Matthew.

The Two Rests

The message of Christ in our text is comprised of two rests; one given and one found. The first rest is given by Christ to all those who labor and are heavy laden (recognizing their need for Christ) and accept His invitation to come to Him. This is the salvation of the spirit of man, which gives eternal life.

The second rest is found by the believer when he yields his life to the Holy Spirit so that Christ may live through him. This Christ-controlled life then willingly takes on the yoke (work and commandments) of Christ and grows spiritually by learning of Him through the Word. Hence, with Christ in control of every surrendered aspect of the believer's life, he will find (experience) the second rest. The second rest is the continuing salvation of the soul.

Before leaving this invitation of Christ to all men, we must recognize in scripture a third rest found in Heb. 3:18. This is called “His rest” and represents the millennial rest in the coming kingdom for one thousand years. Our Lord teaches of this rest by referring to Israel as a type of the Christian. During Israel's wilderness wanderings after they left Egypt, many lacked faith and, consequently, failed to enter the promised land (a type of the coming kingdom). Our Lord warns the Christian through this type to: (1) hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end, and (2) not to harden his heart by unbelief departing from the living God (Heb. 3:6-19). Notice that this generation of Israelites did not lose their salvation, but their reward. They had already been saved out of Egypt (type of salvation of the spirit) through faith in the blood of the Passover lamb (type of Jesus Christ) and had been baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea (1 Cor. 10:2). However, in the wilderness (a type of where the Christian is now), they failed to continue to believe to the saving of their lives (souls) and, consequently, failed to enter the promised land (type of the kingdom); because of their lack of faith, they could not enter in (Heb. 3:19).

Summarily, this type (foreshadow) in Hebrews teaches that those of the church period who will be allowed to enter the third rest must have the first rest of Matt. 11:28 (salvation of the spirit) and continue to experience the second rest of Matt. 11:29 (salvation of the soul).

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

"But when the Pharisees heard {it}, they said, This {fellow} doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils... (32) And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the {world} to come" (Matt. 12:24,32).

These verses are among the most misunderstood verses in the New Testament. Pastors and teachers alike have done irrevocable damage to the saints of the church by their misinterpretation of them. Unlike what they have taught, our text does not declare that a believer of the church period will go to eternal hell, without any hope, if he utters a word against the Holy Ghost. If this were true, then it would be necessary to do away with many other verses of the Bible that teach the opposite; verses that assert that a believer cannot lose his salvation. Jesus said, "**All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out**" (John 6:37). John said, "**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness**" (1 John 1:9).

What does the scripture say the unpardonable sin is? It is a sin that Israel could commit only while Jesus was here in His earthly body. Notice that the leaders of Israel said, "This fellow," i.e., this man, Jesus, "**doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils [Satan].**" Hence, no one of the church age can commit this sin. The "whosoever" in verse 32, then, speaks of the whosoever of Israel who committed this sin. Since only the leaders of national Israel committed this sin, only national Israel (represented by its leaders) would have to suffer its consequences, *which would be the loss of God's favor for one age and the loss of the kingdom for the second A' the Greek, Jesus did not say that they would not be forgiven forever, but that they would not be forgiven in this world (Or age) or in the world (age) to come. This means that Israel would not be forgiven in that age (the present age) or in the age to come (the millennial age).* After that, they would bring forth fruit.

In closing this chapter, we see Israel rejecting Christ and thus rejecting the kingdom. Because of this willful rejection of Jesus as the Christ, verses 43 through 45 liken Israel to a house that has a demon. When the demon goes out of the house to find rest, Israel cleans itself (through reformation; i.e., works of the law). When the demon returns and finds the house empty (Christ not living in it) and it swept and garnished (under legalism), he goes out and invites seven more demons worse than himself to come and live with him. The result is that the house (Israel) was much worse in the last state than it was in the first. So it was with the house of Israel at the close of the twelfth chapter of Matthew.

ONLY ONE SIGN

Isa 53:1 asks the question, "Who **hath believed our report [message]? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?**" Jesus had come "**to his own and his own received him not**" (John 1:11). Jesus the Christ, who was the arm of God, had been personally and bodily present with Israel; yet, they had refused to believe in Him. Instead, Israel was looking for a Messiah to accomplish their own agenda; to cast out the Romans and return them to the golden days of David. They expected a great sign from God to authenticate these expectations; perhaps, the sign of a fiery entrance of the

Messiah from heaven; or, maybe, the sign of an immediate and miraculous raising up of an invincible army of Jews. With this in mind, they asked Jesus to show them a sign.

"But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: (40) For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:39-40).

The leaders of Israel had apparently been studying only the portions of the Old Testament that prophesied of the signs of His second coming, the same signs they had been seeking after. When they asked Jesus for a sign of this nature (possibly a great celestial sign), Jesus told them that because of their unbelief, there would be no sign given except the sign of Jonah; a sign that speaks of His death, burial and resurrection. **"For as Jonas [Jonah] was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."**

The Ridicule of the Book of Jonah

There are three books of the Bible that are persistently attacked by Satan more than any of the others; Genesis (especially the first three chapters), Revelation and Jonah. Satan's hatred for the first two books comes from the fact that while the book of Genesis teaches the Christian that Satan will be destroyed by the Seed of the woman (Jesus Christ), Revelation clearly shows him the details of this coming destruction. As a result, Satan has been trying to discredit these two books by convincing the world's liberal theologians to teach and preach that Genesis is mostly a collection of myths, while Revelation is a book of confusion that no one can understand.

Along with this deception, Satan has also been quick to attack the book of Jonah in an attempt to discredit it on the basis that it is unscientific. Satan knows that Jonah is an accurate prophecy of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; the one act that he hates the most, the one act that sounded the death knell for his coming complete destruction.

Satan's attempt to discredit Jonah has been carried out by a two-pronged attack upon its accuracy. First, he has used the skeptics and infidels to make sport of its literality; to laugh at the notion that a man could be swallowed by a whale and live in its belly for three days. Second, he has used the liberal theologians of the early Roman church to show that Jesus had to be wrong about Jonah being in the belly of the whale for three days and three nights. They have taught instead that His death occurred on Friday afternoon, which caused Him to be in the tomb only one day and two nights. This false teaching has so permeated the entire Christian church that even many fundamental Bible scholars of today readily accept it and stand ready to defend it against anyone who would teach otherwise. To make this sound more palatable, the proponents of this false doctrine have asserted that the ancient rabbis counted part of a day as a whole day. This would have made us have a couple of hours on Friday (possibly only one hour or a part of one), all day Saturday, and a few hours on Sunday, and that is supposed to be three days and three nights.

Jonah's Death

To thwart Satan's attack upon Jonah that says it is unscientific for a man to remain alive in the belly of a whale (actually a great fish) for three days and three nights, we would ask, "Who said that Jonah remained alive in the belly of the whale?" We must not forget that Jonah is a type of the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, as Jonah's body went into the whale's belly, so Jesus' body went into the tomb. As Jonah died and went to sheol, so Jesus died and went to the heart of the earth (paradise section of sheol). As Jonah was resurrected into his body and spit up by the whale onto dry ground, so Jesus was resurrected into His body and came out of the tomb.

The Bible is very clear that Jonah died in the belly of the whale; for he **"prayed unto the Lord out of the fish's belly,"** and then, after he died, **"...he heard me; out of the belly of hell [sheol]"** (Jonah 2:1-2).

In verse one, Jonah is in the belly of the fish; but in verse two, he is in the belly of hell. The two Hebrew words for "belly" are different. In verse one (belly of the fish), it is *me-a.4* which literally means "an abdomen"; in verse two (belly of hell), it is *me-ah*, which means a "hollow place." This tells us that in verse one, Jonah cried out of the abdomen of the fish; but in verse two, he cried out and was heard in a hollow place of the heart of the earth (hell; *sheol*).

"When the prophet Jonah was cast into the sea and was swallowed by the great fish, he became a clear type of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The miracle in Jonah is not that he remained alive in the belly of the fish for three days, but the miracle in Jonah is far greater; namely, that Jonah died and after three days and three nights arose from his grave in the belly of the fish, and became preacher of the gospel to the Gentiles. All of the efforts, therefore, to prove the possibility of a man surviving Jonah's ordeal without dying are entirely without point or purpose, and a waste of valuable time and effort. There is not one single hint in the entire record that Jonah remained alive in the belly of the fish. This has been carried over by sheer tradition" (M.R. De Haan, *Jonah* p. 80, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1961).

The Friday Crucifixion Myth

To thwart the second attack of Satan on the book of Jonah, we assert that Jesus did not die on Friday afternoon as most of the Christian church believes and celebrates, but on Wednesday afternoon. Here are the scriptural reasons why:

- (1) It is impossible to have three complete days without having three complete nights. Our text says, "...three days and three nights." This immediately rules out the partial day theory.
- (2) It is a fact that a day in scripture (the light portion of a day) is counted by God as being twelve hours long, as the night (the dark portion of a day) is twelve hours long (John 11:9; EL 13:21). When placed together they make one twenty-four hour period of time, or one complete day. In view of scripture, the Jews always began their new day (a twenty four hour period of time) at sundown (6:00 P.M.); for Gen. 1:5 tells us,

"....the evening and the morning were the first day." Hence, each of the Jewish days began with the evening.

In keeping with this, the body of Jesus was placed in the tomb on Wednesday afternoon of the passion week, sometime after He died (3:00 P.M.) and before the beginning of a new day at sundown (6:00 P.M.). Scripturally speaking then, He was in the tomb for three days (three light portions of twelve hours each) and three nights (three dark portions of twelve hours each) and arose sometime after sundown Saturday (the beginning of the Jews' Sunday). In summation to these truths, we have no authority from the Word of God to make a portion of a day a whole day.

- (3) The error of the Friday crucifixion began by a misunderstanding of the Sabbath. As an example, Mark 15:42 tells us that the day after the crucifixion was the Sabbath. By using scripture, it was easy for Satan to convince people to believe that the next day had to be Saturday. But this is not so, as we will see, for the Jews had more than one Sabbath. There were weekly Sabbaths, which always fell on Saturday, and there were ceremonial Sabbaths, which fell on set calendar days. This is borne out in Leviticus 23, which teaches of the "Passover Sabbath," which always fell on the 14th day of the Hebrew month *Abib* (approximating our March) (verse 5), and, the "unleavened bread Sabbath," which always began on the day following the Passover, the 15th day of the same month (verse 6). Then there was the "feast of the first fruits Sabbath" and the "feast of Pentecost Sabbath." Every one of these are Sabbaths of rest and are called so in the Bible.

Which Sabbath, then, was on the next day after the crucifixion? John informs us that it was the Passover Sabbath, for it was called a "high" Sabbath day (John 19:31). John, apparently, used this term to show us that this Sabbath was not a normal weekly one, but one that was special. This Sabbath just happened to fall on Thursday that year, with its preparation day on Wednesday (day of the crucifixion). Having this information, we can now know that on the day after the Passover, there was still another Sabbath day of rest called the "feast of unleavened bread." This Sabbath always followed the Passover Sabbath and, thus fell on Friday of that week. On the next day, Saturday, came the regular weekly Sabbath. Hence, there were three Sabbath days, one after the other. There was the Passover Sabbath on Thursday, the feast of unleavened bread Sabbath on Friday, and the weekly Sabbath on Saturday.

Jesus' body, then, was resting in the tomb during three Sabbaths and did not arise until after sundown on Saturday. This is proven in Matt. 28:1, where the word *Sabbath* in the Greek text is plural (*sabbaton*): **"In the end of the sabbath [sabbath days; i.e., three of them, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week [Sunday] came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre..."**

- (4) Finally, Satan has convinced many in the Christian world to believe that Jesus arose from the grave at sunrise on Sunday morning. This is in contrast to scripture, which teaches that Jesus arose sometime after sundown on Saturday (Sunday evening for the Jews) and before sunrise the next day. For John tells us that Mary Magdalene first came to the tomb while it was "yet dark" (before sunrise) and discovered that the stone had already been rolled away from the tomb (John 20:1).

Someone may ask, "What about those scriptures that say He arose the third day?" Does this not suggest that Jesus arose on the third day rather than after the third day? Scripture seems to tell us that the expression *the third day* is synonymous with *after the third day*. A good example of this is found in John 2:1: "**And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there...**" Here, scripture records "the third day" as being the day of the marriage; yet, all Jewish marriages took place on a Wednesday (counting three days from the first day), which was a custom of the Jews. How, then, can one be married on Wednesday and call it the third day? The answer must be that the expression "the third day" in this verse means "after the third day."

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Someone may ask, "Does it make any difference which day we accept as the crucifixion day?" Yes! If Jesus was not in the tomb for three whole days and three whole nights, then He cannot be the infallible Son of God, for His authority must rest on His Word. He told the Pharisees that they would not be given any signs except one: **as Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights, so would the Son of man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.** How can we accept any day but Wednesday as the day of His crucifixion?

In closing this chapter, we see the Jews of Judaism refusing to repent and rejecting Jesus as the Messiah. In the next section, we will see Jesus ministering to the Jews who believed and who would become the first members of a new assembly; an assembly that Jesus would later call the church.

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