

THE CREATION

FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION?

"Behold, I make all things new"

Dan Cordoș

and

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The quotations from the Scripture are taken from the Cornilescu translation in the original Romanian version. In the English version, we used several translations, noted in parentheses each time.

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PREFACE

The desire to write this book arose from the belief and blatant fact that the Christianity of today is being fundamentally depreciated amidst an invasion of varied teachings or manifestations which have nothing to do with the truth of the Scriptures. Though such teachings may come out of good intentions, motivated by texts found in the Old or New Testament, they have misunderstood or twisted thus leading to wrong conclusions. Sometimes the teachings of the Scripture may be "updated" to suit the world as it spins along, with a need for relevancy on behalf of our current generation. At other times rituals practiced are a mixture of the Old Testament priesthood and the priesthood of Christ to which traditions and teachings not from the Scriptures are added. Some people are seekers of euphoric states, and when they experience them, they say they are filled with the Holy Spirit. Some say the Lord's Day is Saturday, others say it is Sunday, and the list of different understandings goes on. If we try to position ourselves as observers somewhere outside of these "scenes" on which Christianity is claimed to be practiced, we will be utterly shocked and confused by the multitude of these differences.

The most serious thing is that the teaching of the Scripture, which should be unifying because it is given by one Spirit, may differ in its most important aspects: these are differences of understanding about the nature and work of Christ, about prophecies and their fulfillment, even about God's creation. **What causes these different understandings? How do such divisions come about? Does Christ not have one Church guided by the same Spirit?**

Surely Christ has one Church, and it is not a particular Christian

denomination. All those born from the Spirit of God are children of God. It is not the belonging to a particular denomination that makes us Christians but being born from the Spirit. The causes of this division can be many, such as:

- Misunderstanding the Scriptures, or a superficial understanding;
- Accepting certain practices and teachings just because we were taught so; or out of respect, we choose to follow our parents way of thought, tradition etc.;
- Obedience to religious leaders, motivated by the idea that they were placed by God over us, so they will answer for us. They are taught in theological schools, we are not;
- With good or misguided intentions, religious leaders interpret the Scripture for us;
- Differences in interpretation of the Scripture texts: either in a literal or a spiritual sense.

So, we believe that the religious leaders, the "elites" of Christianity, or the so-called theologians, with their various interpretations, are the thorniest problem, responsible for much of the pain in our hearts and confusions in our minds. If we carefully read the explanations of the apostles of the first century Church, we will see that there is no contradiction in their teaching (of course, we are not referring to some who only claimed to be apostles, but were not), since they were guided by the same Spirit. Whether they are clarifying Old Testament teaching or giving teachings about the future of the Church, they have a unified teaching. To this unitary teaching nothing more can or should be added. We are not allowed to spoil the unity of the teaching with interpretations that are based on human logic, current events, writings or other alleged discoveries that are outside the Scriptures. The beauty and perfection of the Scripture, the Book of God lies precisely in the fact that it has within itself all the resources that reveal to us the whole plan of

God, from Genesis to Revelation. Any other sources external to the Scripture, if they do not merely confirm the teachings that are understood from the Scripture, but attach traditions and "helpful additions", only alter the teaching.

The Holy Spirit, who enlightens the minds of Christians to understand the teaching of the Scriptures, leads to unity, not division. In our understanding, the Scripture is not a book to philosophize about. It invites us to believe in God's word, in the light of the apostolic revelations and insights, written and explained by them in the New Testament. The Scriptures give life, not contradictions.

Under no circumstances can the explanations of so-called theologians who say that the apostles had a certain expectation, or a certain creed, which was not fulfilled as they believed, be accepted. With such explanations they deny the divine inspiration of the apostolic writings and nullify the apostolic authority. This makes the Scriptures look not trustable.

The Lord's apostles, called by Him to be apostles, taught by the Lord Himself, are the only ones who have been given the authority to explain and interpret the things that were hidden in the Old Testament, as well as to reveal future events concerning the Church.

Although we have tried to avoid quoting other authors in this study precisely because of the considerations described above, we will make an exception here with an example. C.S. Lewis is a well-known Christian author and defender of the Christian faith. He often engaged in dialogue with those around him who denied the existence of God and the meaning of the life of faith. In his essay "The World's Last Night," we find him responding to

atheists who questioned the apostolic faith regarding Jesus' words in Matthew 24:34 (NIV) (*Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.*):

"But there is worse to come. Say what you like," we shall be told, "the apocalyptic beliefs of the first Christians have been proved to be false. It is clear from the New Testament that they all expected the Second Coming in their own lifetime. And, worse still, they had a reason, and one which you will find very embarrassing. Their Master had told them so. He shared, and indeed created, their delusion. He said in so many words, 'this generation shall not pass till all these things be done.' And he was wrong. He clearly knew no more about the end of the world than anyone else."

C.S. Lewis answers:

"It is certainly the most embarrassing verse in the Bible. Yet how teasing, also, that within fourteen words of it should come the statement "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." The one exhibition of error and the one confession of ignorance grow side by side."¹

Atheists are claiming that Jesus deceived his disciples when he told them that he would return in their generation in Matthew 24:34. C.S. Lewis argued in this essay that the "deception" was not intentional, but that Jesus, in his humanity, simply did not know the time of his return and made an error. This implies that our Lord Jesus made a mistake in this case, like any other human. If the Lord was wrong in this instance, then how do we know that

¹ C.S. Lewis- The World's Last Night and Other Essays, 1952. Accessed at <https://archive.org/details/worldslastnighta012859mbp/page/n111/mode/2up>

he did not make other mistakes?! Here are some implications of such an understanding:

- Christianity would be based on the teaching of a man who could make mistakes just like any other human being;
- Jesus would have spoken from Himself, not from God, although He said,
"I speak what I have seen with My Father [...]" (John 8:38 KJV)
"Therefore, the things that I say, I say as the Father has told Me." (John 12:50 NIV)
"The words that I speak to you I do not speak from Me; but the Father, who dwells in Me, He does these works of His." (John 14:10 NIV)
- All the words of Jesus could be questioned;
- Salvation through Jesus' sacrifice would be uncertain.

There is no doubt that C.S. Lewis's mind was very academically and philosophically enlightened, being known as a great Christian thinker, yet he called *Matthew 24:34* an "*embarrassing*" verse because he did not grasp the spiritual meaning of the promise. C.S. Lewis questions God, expresses doubts, and narrates his own uncertainty. Yet one's intellectual capacity does not guarantee his/her correct understanding of the truth of the Scriptures, for truth is revealed only by God, to whom He wills and when He wills. Jesus said to Peter, "*Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven*" (*Matthew 16:17 NIV*). So, by "*flesh and blood*" God cannot be known. The natural man, however intellectually capable he may be, cannot know God by way of human logic, philosophy, etc., but only by grace,

only by revelation from God (see also *Matthew 11:27*). A simple fisherman, Peter, had the grace to know Jesus as the Christ, because God revealed this to him (see *Matthew 16:16-17*). The condition for man to have grace from God is shown in *James 4:6* (NKJV): "**God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.**" Peter was humble and wanted to truly receive and take in teaching from the Lord (see *John 6:68*). In contrast, the high priest Caiaphas who judged and put our Lord to death, did not have the grace to know Jesus as the Messiah. Although he was a learned man and knew the prophecies of the Scriptures concerning the Messiah, Caiaphas pride and wickedness stood in his way, preventing him from knowing the One who stood before him.

Secondly, C.S. Lewis may have assumed that the Scripture would speak of an end of the physical world (the title of his text suggests this). Many Christians perceive the end in this way, in a physical, material sense. Over the course of this study, we will see that in the Scripture we read of the end of the age, not the end of the physical world (perhaps he, like us, had heard sermons along these lines, or misunderstood *2 Peter 3*). A mistaken understanding and an expectation in the seen realm that has remained unfulfilled puts atheists and one of Christianity's most famous defenders in a very similar position: the former considering Christ "deceitful", and the latter admitting that Jesus was "ignorant" (in this particular case).

We also want to emphasize that this book is intended to be a simple aid in understanding the Scriptures. **Nothing can replace the Word of God.** We, therefore, urge the reader to check everything we claim against the teachings of the Scripture. We do not presume to be infallible and have nothing left to learn. The Scripture is the Book that has inexhaustible resources from which we can and should feed our souls and learn all our lives. However, we believe that the things we are explaining are in

harmony with the teaching of the Scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation.

Everything we have written is out of conviction, without seeking to be partisan to a particular Christian denomination. We have avoided the use of "theological terminology" because, in our opinion, they are man-made and of no use to Christians. Theological jargon causes a separation between the "average Christian", who is unfamiliar with the terms and those who have so-called "theological training". By this we do not mean to assert that, if someone has done or is doing work in a school of theology, they would not be a good Christian. We believe that most of those who study in such schools are sincere and desire to be of service to God's work. **But we also believe that the teaching of the Scripture is given by the Holy Spirit to be understood in the Body of Christ, which is the Church made up of living stones, not by "Christian specialists" trained in theory, theology, speech, and oral argumentations.**

All the explanations we give in this writing are a result of the revelation that God has given us, from His Word, in His Body of which we are a part. Only an attitude of careful inquiry, with an open heart, ready to change any belief that is proven not to be in accordance with the inspiration of apostolic teaching, has brought us, and can bring us even further to a fuller understanding of the truth of the Scriptures. Therefore, we urge the reader to be eager to understand the Word, so that he or she, may be ready to align faith according to the light of the Scripture, even if they have to pay a price for it. Let us not do as some have done of whom we are told in the following passage:

John 12:42-43 (NIV) *"Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in Him. But **because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved human praise more than***

praise from God."

So let us love the glory of God, not our acceptance by people, however important they may seem among Christians. Let's be ready to share with others the convictions and understandings we have from the Scriptures.

Everything we write in this book is based on the following facts:

- The Scripture is the Book of God given to us humans.
- God reveals Himself to us through the Scriptures.
- The revelation was progressive. It is perfect and complete only in Christ.
- The apostolic writings of the New Testament complete the revelation.
- The inspiration and interpretation of the Scriptures is given to the apostles by the Holy Spirit, so their writings have unquestionable authority, literally the authority of God Himself.
- The Scriptures can only be understood on the basis of apostolic explanations.
- As we read the New Testament passages, we consider what they meant, first of all, to the Christians of the apostolic generation, and then what they mean for us.
- Scripture has no contradictions in its original text and in the meaning of its message, which is spiritual (see 1 Corinthians 2).
- All the resources needed to understand the Scriptures are found within it. Through them the Holy Spirit enlightens our minds to understand them, if we desire it with all our heart.

In the original language of this book (Romanian), all the Scripture quotes are from the Dumitru Cornilescu translation; for the

English translation we used several translations, as indicated always next to the reference. They are written in italics, and the underlining or the **bolded** writing of some words are our own emphasis to make them stand out better. If there is anything in these quotations that is written in brackets without italics, these are small explanations that we have included directly in the text.

Before we embark on this study, we recall Paul's words, "*For from Him, and through Him, and for Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen.*" (*Romans 11:36 NIV*). These represent a fundamental principle by which we have been guided. The centrality of Christ in both, the New Testament and the Old Testament, is the perspective from which we research the Scriptures. It is our hope that, once the reader has gone through this study, a study which gives an overview of the Scripture, it will be much easier to understand other passages of the Scripture that are not covered in our study.

PART I - CREATION

"I MAKE KNOWN THE END FROM THE BEGINNING"

(ISAIAH 46:10 NIV)

INTRODUCTION: THINGS SEEN AND UNSEEN

For us Christians, God's creation is a cornerstone in our understanding of the Scriptures, and certainly most of us, when we refer to it, think of the first pages written in the Book of Creation - Genesis. The writer of the book is Moses, and he wrote it all based on the revelation he received from God. Moses is, in fact, a shadow of the Messiah in the Old Covenant; he is the one God calls to lead the people of Israel out of the bondage of Egypt. This event of the exodus from Egypt (see the book Exodus), takes place approximately 2772 years after the making of Adam - according to the calculation we have made based on the genealogy found in the Scripture. Since we are talking about almost three millennia after Adam's creation (not from the creation of the physical universe), surely Moses could not have written Genesis any other way than having it revealed to him by God: *Exodus 24:18* states that God spoke to Moses on Sinai during the 40 days and 40 nights. We have found no evidence in the Scripture to suggest that Noah would have taken writings from the pre-Flood world into the ark such that Moses could have used them as inspiration in writing the first chapters of Genesis. However, we cannot exclude the possibility that Noah and his descendants transmitted revelation from the first world by word of mouth. Regardless of how Moses was guided in the writing of Genesis, beginning with creation, we know that the One Who revealed all that is written in the Scripture is God:

2 Timothy 3:16 (KJV) "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*"

Moses writes the first five books of the Scripture at God's command; even though Moses is the writer, **God is the author**. The next passages prove that Moses wrote at the Lord's

command:

Exodus 17:14 (NKJV) *"Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven."*

Deuteronomy 17:18 (NKJV) *"Also it shall be, when He sits on the throne of His Kingdom, that He shall write for Himself a copy of this Law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites."*

Deuteronomy 31:9 (NKJV) *"So Moses wrote this Law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel."*

As for creation, which we will address next, we start from the premise and the truth that God, who is unseen, created all things: both, those that are seen and those that are unseen. We find this in the New Testament in the following words inspired by the Holy Spirit:

*"By faith we understand that **the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.**"* (Hebrews 11:3 NKJV)

So, according to this quote, unseen things existed before seen things. This leads us to understand without any hesitation that the unseen God, the One without beginning and without end, IS before there was this *"In the beginning"* that we find in Genesis 1:1. Does the Scripture reveal to us things that God did before the beginning?

Moses shows us all creation made by the Word of God, in Genesis 1. Apostle Paul on the other hand reveals **what was before creation**. The following quote highlights this:

Ephesians 1:3-10 (ESV) "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as **he chose us in him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love **he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ**, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight **making known to us the mystery of his will**, according to his purpose, which **he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.***"

The passage quoted from Ephesians is an amazing revelation of God, given through the apostle Paul, **showing us what was before the foundation of the world**. We see well that **God had A PLAN** "*he set forth in Christ*" before the beginning of creation. So, everything that was created had to fulfill GOD'S PLAN. The gathering together in one of all things, in the BODY of Christ, His Church, things in heaven and things on earth, was the goal of His plan. This does not refer to a supposed eternity in the Garden of Eden! God did not have a plan "B" in case Adam missed the mark! Such a teaching implies that Christ is plan "B", which we find unacceptable.

Although at the time of his creation Adam had not yet been touched by sin, God knew that he was created from the earth, earthly, having a living soul, received from His own breath, free to choose. God also created the setting, the Garden of Eden, in which Adam could express his choice. Following what he chose in Eden, God imprisoned all people in sin (see *Rom. 11:32, Gal.*

3:22). And the imprisonment of mankind in sin is part of God's plan made before the foundation of the world. God is love, and this can only be known if it is manifested. How could it have been possible that God's grace could be known without man's need for salvation? God created the premises for the manifestation of His love in the Garden of Eden. However, man is not absolved from the guilt of sin, because he chose freely despite being warned by God.

We count as wrong any analysis of the creation, if it is not centered on God's original and unique plan: the union in Christ of all things in heaven and on earth.

The knowledge of God revealed by Christ, which shows us what plan He had "*in Himself*", "*before the foundation of the world*" (see 1 Cor. 2:7 KJV), is the highest peak of revelation.

If we study the Scriptures without taking this fundamental fact (the eternal plan) into account, we will have only a human perspective, limited to things that are seen, transient, and then we will find reasons to judge God, or at least we will ask ourselves: is He really good and just?

(I recently listened to a public debate between a prominent atheist and a Christian. The atheist, a good connoisseur of the Scriptures, mockingly called God: "supernatural dictator". Of course, this was not unexpected, since all his reasoning was from the perspective of sight alone, strongly marked by his own arrogance born of supposed "scientific" knowledge. Nor did he realize that, in fact, he was also "worshipping" in his mind a god:

his logic, which he considered correct and true. Listening to him, I wondered: how can someone in his fifties claim to know what happened billions of years ago?)

Returning to the **passage** quoted from Paul's letter to the Ephesians, we see that it is centered in **the love of God revealed in Christ** by which everyone who believes in this boundless love is adopted (see also John 3:16). We will show during our study that **creation from Genesis 1 is completed only when all things in heaven and on earth are united in Christ**. The Scripture must be understood with the perspective of the end of creation in mind, an end that was determined, planned beforehand by God. If this was the plan, then the course of creation, with all the pain and suffering of people throughout history, takes on a different meaning and explanation. Suffering is part of the creation process, like the birth of a child and the growing process which follows that. **This creation process is not without cost and pain, but it extracts its power from love**. This perspective of understanding the problem of suffering as part of our creation in Christ, might give a better answer to one of the most difficult questions posed by Christians and others.

I still remember very well when our family left the village to live in the city. My parents bought a piece of land and **planned to build a house for our family**. I was about 10 years old. So, in the spring they built a shack as a temporary home. We all moved into this shack, 5 children and 2 parents, with very poor conditions. My father immediately started working on the future house. By the beginning of winter, he managed to make the two rooms we all moved into more or less habitable. Then in the following years the work continued until the house was finished. Although in the first phase things were temporary, with a lot of discomfort, we all looked forward to the end when the house was ready, looked ahead to the time when it would be good for living. Because we had our eye on the end, we were able to get through all the

difficulties.

In the same way, God made a plan from eternity to MAKE a "building" in which to dwell with His children born in Christ. And God dwelt with His people in a temporary dwelling, first in the Tabernacle of Moses, then in Solomon's Temple. Then He built the CITY with "*eternal foundations*" (see Hebrews 11:10 NLT), to dwell forever with His adopted sons in Christ.

As we have already said, in this study we will show that CREATION, seen from a human perspective, takes up an entire history. Throughout the Old Testament period there have been many pains waiting for the CREATION of the CITY which has eternal foundations. Peter, the Apostle, also speaks of this city, calling it a "SPIRITUAL HOUSE" (1 Peter 2:5 NKJV), in which Christians are built like living stones, with Christ, the living cornerstone of the building.

The Apostle Paul also tells us:

Colossians 1:16 KJV *"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him."*

From this verse we see that **all** creation, seen and unseen, is brought into existence through Him, through the Word of God. In the Christian mindset, the Word of God is the Scripture. Also, Jesus Christ is the living Word and through Him all things were created.

John 1:1-3 NKJV *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. **All things were made through Him**, and without Him nothing was made that was made."*

Revelation 19:13 NKJV *"He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His Name is called The Word of God."*

So, God created all things seen and all things unseen. Although He has revealed both aspects of creation in the Scriptures, the focus is on the **unseen creation**. Throughout this study of creation, we will see that the Scriptures tell us about these two aspects of created things and differentiate between them.

There are Christians who believe that the days of creation in Genesis 1 refer to the seen creation, and that the length of each day would be 24 hours. This interpretation presents various problems that Christians have struggled to explain for many centuries, while in the full mocking sights of varied sciences. For example, the order in which the light and the light bearers are presented, and the mention of *"there was evening, and then there was morning"* before the existence of the light bearers are difficult to explain if we consider them on the level of the seen. For many years we thought so, but God has gradually shown us that the meaning of this passage is spiritual and the key in which it is to be read is symbolic.

Using only what is written in the Scriptures, we want to prove throughout this study that in the first chapter of Genesis, beginning in verse 2, creation is not presented to us from a physical/seen perspective. Rather, the whole of creation is described to us, in a very concentrated and mysterious way, but in a spiritual sense.

We want to show that in Genesis 1 we are shown, beforehand, the path to the New Creation in Christ: all the way to His Rest on

the seventh day. Although the description of the days of creation is made through images of the seen world, these images are "shadows", patterns or symbols to describe spiritual realities that pertain to spiritual things.

An example of this is the tabernacle in the wilderness, which is the seen image of the unseen Tabernacle, the true Tabernacle in heaven. Moses is told to do everything according to the image shown on the mountain (Exod. 25:8,9 & 26:30). The whole system of the Old Covenant law, with the sacrifices and rituals ordained by God, is linked to Moses' tabernacle. And about the law system, the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us the following:

Hebrews 10:1 (NKJV) "*For **the Law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things**, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.*"

(See also Hebrews 8:5)

This passage proves that the Law is only a shadow, so even Moses' tent, though it was seen, is part of the shadow system.

The "shadows" were also made at God's command, but they were part of the elementary things that were to pass away.

They come in contrast to what does not pass. In John 1:17 we see that the un-transcending reality, that is, the Truth, or in other words, the true, eternal reality, came through Jesus Christ.

John 1:17 KJV "*For **the Law was given by Moses**, but **grace and truth came by Jesus Christ**.*"

Let us keep in mind, then, throughout this study that the Scripture speaks of creation through **things that were in the beginning and things from the end**. The things in the beginning are the things that were made ("old creation"), the shadows, which are transient and have symbolic value for the true reality, the New Creation that comes at the end. The things at the end are spiritual, perfect and eternal realities. They represent the ultimate goal of God's creation.

Here is a table that may clarify this Scriptural pattern.

THE OLD CREATION	THE NEW CREATION
SEEN= SHADOW	UNSEEN= REALITY
the seen - it is known through the natural eyes	Unseen - it is known through the eyes of faith
in the OLD TESTAMENT	in the NEW TESTAMENT
in THE FIRST ADAM (the first man)	in THE LAST ADAM (Jesus Christ)
MADE	CREATED
SHAKEN	UNSHAKEN
NATURAL	SPIRITUAL
Transient	Imperishable/ EVERLASTING

The first words of Scripture, "*In the beginning God made the heavens and the earth*", contain both aspects of creation: the seen and the unseen. As far as the physical creation is concerned, this verse is the introduction, and later in Genesis 2, beginning with verse 4, the "***history of the heavens and the earth, when they were made***" is presented. From here begins a more detailed account of the seen, material part of creation, including the creation of the first man, Adam.

Here is what Paul writes about the relationship between the things seen and the unseen reality:

2 Corinthians 4:18 (KJV) "***While we look not at the things which***

are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

The seen shadow is fleeting, while the unseen reality, the cause of all that is seen, remains eternal. Scripturally, we can say that things seen are only a "shadow of reality", not reality itself. Only from the human point of view, not from God's point of view, what is natural comes first, anchored in the things that are seen, transient, and then comes what is spiritual, imperishable, anchored in the unseen.

The Christian who looks only at the shadows does not understand the Scriptures well and does not get to enjoy **His rest** on the seventh day, at the end of the creation of the unseen reality, the new creation, which is a spiritual reality.

The shadow dimension contains fleeting situations, natural reasoning and the whole range of overwhelming feelings, like an inner death. The world of shadows is that soul state of which God spoke to Adam when He told him not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for it is the tree of the words of death. The Lord warned Adam that the fruit of that tree is a thought system that spreads an inward death, like a murderous poison.

The beautiful Garden of Eden of that time is also for us today THE place of choice. Each man and woman choose one of these directions: either they will use the knowledge of good and evil as a measure of weighing the situations in their lives, or they will feed on the tree of life as the only method of assessing true reality and knowing true identity. The voice from the tree of death is the voice of the seen, the voice of shadows, the voice that distorts reality, the voice that creates the illusion of many lies. But the tree of life brings to our attention different words,

words full of life, words that create eternal realities, spoken by the One Who is Himself the Word which became flesh.

So, when we look at shadows, we look at everything that is a distorted understanding of reality, things of illusion, of our involvement in trivial, fleeting, worthless things. When we look at spiritual realities and the meaning they give to the situations we go through, then we are fed from the tree of life that is in the heaven of God, and then rivers of living water spring from our hearts.

Let's take an example from the Scripture: the story of Joseph's life. When we read about Joseph, we find a series of events that our minds immediately categorize into "good" and "bad". Good that his father loved him dearly, bad that he didn't love his other brothers as much, which they sold him into slavery, which he was taken to a distant land, that his father knew nothing about him. It's good that he became a trusted man for Potiphar, it's bad that Potiphar's unfaithful wife sinned against this honest young man and so Joseph ended up in prison. It's good that God gave Joseph the words to give him passage before Pharaoh by revealing of the dream. It is good that he ended up in charge of all the granary of Egypt.

One thing is "right", something else is "wrong". But that means looking at "the seen", the shadows, the interpretation that our servile mind of the *right/wrong* system of thinking invents.

What would it mean to look at the unseen? How does Joseph's story translate from a spiritual, heavenly perspective, from the perspective of the tree of life? We find the answer in Psalm 105:17 (KJV) "*He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant.*" So, Joseph was not sold as a servant by the will of chance. Nothing takes place by chance. Everything was decided and planned by God before the foundation of the world

was laid down (see *Ephesians* 1:4-6). Feeding on the tree of life means looking to that good, pleasing and perfect will. It means quieting our hearts in every situation in our lives. It means believing that God's all-encompassing Wisdom has made a perfect plan, has pre-planned everything with a loving heart for us, and that nothing that comes into our lives is by chance but is, in a form perhaps not yet understood by us, the love and goodness of our Lord.

Our calling is not to look at what is seen, but in every situation to rely on God's intention to bless us and give us a future and a hope (see *Jeremiah* 29:11). This is the reality. This is the Truth about us and the situations we go through in our daily lives.

*"Be still, and know that **I am God!**"* (Psalm 46:10 NKJV)

"I am God" means that there are no more gods. That is, in the reality created by God for His children, there are not two powers, only one! The Lord our God is the only power. But in the shadow world, in the world of man's imagination that serves the *good/evil* system of thought, there is the illusion of two powers, and in this world the power of evil seems even greater. The voice of the natural always says so: "Can't you see that God doesn't care about you? Can't you see that he doesn't listen to your prayers? If he loved you, he would not let you suffer. Do you see that the power of evil is greater?" The voice from the tree of death's words urges man to believe that there are two powers, and the power of evil clearly appears to be greater because God cannot protect you from it.

To God a great injustice has been done in Eden. The father of lies deceived the two people God loved into believing that God had no good intentions towards them. The essence of demonic thinking is the division of "reality" into good and evil. This constitutes a lie. Reality has nothing to do with good and evil. It

has to do with God's unconditional love. Grace and Truth are not about shadows, but about true reality. The fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is this dual thinking by which we see ourselves as independent, separate from God. The tree of death contains not only evil, but also good alongside evil. The forbidden fruit was precisely this division into good/evil as the source of life. This thinking cuts us off from the tree of life. This thinking causes us to live now and here an inner death given by the removal of our only source of life: our Father, our Creator, the Eternal Love who called us into existence because He wanted us and loved us.

Let's go back to Joseph's story for a moment. Sitting there in the prison, Joseph was tempted to look at the shadows. He asked the one who was to become Pharaoh's servant to put in a good word for him and get him out of prison. What did Joseph do there? He divided everything into good and bad. He probably figured that staying in prison was bad and getting out was good. But God was working according to a perfect plan. On the day Joseph was taken out of prison and interpreted Pharaoh's dreams, Joseph didn't think so anymore. When Pharaoh praised him for his wisdom, he said that the Lord God was the source of his knowledge.

The invitation to us today is to stop living our lives according to the temporal and sinful knowledge of a fruit of the mind that divides everything into good and evil, but to feed on the only reality that matters - the immeasurable, unquenchable and overwhelming love of our heavenly Lord - every day, in every situation, in every thought.

THE BEGINNING AND END OF CREATION

From the first verse of Genesis chapter one to the beginning of chapter two, God's creation is shown as having:

- a **BEGINNING**,
- a six-day journey, in which God says: "*let it be...*",
- an **END**, which is completed with rest on the seventh day.

This is the framework within which we will explain creation throughout this study; all subsequent explanations of creation are made from this perspective.

The first verse of Scripture says: "*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*" (Genesis 1:1 ESV)

As we have already said, this verse contains within itself both aspects of creation: the seen and the unseen. This verse is like a subtitle of the Scripture, after which, in the continuation of chapter one, we have the "table of contents" (creation from a spiritual point of view). What follows in Scripture from Genesis 2:4 to Revelation is the unfolding in time of these things, both spiritual and physical things. The physical/seen things are man's perspective, and the spiritual things are God's perspective. God's creation from a physical point of view came to be in the beginning by the making of the cosmos, of which the earth was a part with the first man Adam, the living creatures and the vegetation. Spiritual creation, however, unfolds over six "days" (periods - not 24-hour days) in two major stages, and each stage has its own specificity:

I. The **first stage** of spiritual creation is that of the first things, i.e., things made, which are transient and pertain to the revelation of the first two worlds. It begins with the creation of the first man -

Adam - and his descendants on planet Earth. Adam was earthly, fell into sin and gave birth to a genealogy of men dead in sin, like him. The first **two worlds** are part of the first things: (1) the pre-Flood world and (2) the post-Flood world, the Old Covenant world. The essence of the first things resides in being earthly, fleshly and lost. All these first things, even if they have a spiritual side, fall under the things made which are transient, the things of the beginning.

II. The **second stage** of spiritual creation, at the end of the sixth day, is the creation of the things that are part of a **new creation**, the last things, in the "last Adam" (i.e., Christ), who "*became a life-giving spirit*" (1 Corinthians 15:45 NKJV). The spiritual descendants of the last Adam are those who escape the death of the first Adam by being born of God, being resurrected, brought to eternal life through faith in the Gospel. This creation is a spiritual **New Creation**, pertaining to things unseen, imperishable, enduring, and lasting. The last things are part of a new heaven and a new earth spiritual, not physical. The essence of the last things is spiritual, heavenly, and consists in man's salvation from the death caused by sin.

This, "*In the beginning*" in Genesis 1:1, has the same meaning as "*Alpha*" found in the Book of Revelation, and "*In the beginning*" found in John 1:1-3.

Revelation 1:8 (NKJV) "*I am the **Alpha** and the **Omega**, the **Beginning** and the **End**,*" says the Lord, [...]"

Revelation 22:13 (NKJV) "*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, **the First** and **the Last**.*"

John 1:1-3 (KJV) "***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.***"

Alpha	is	The Beginning
Omega	is	The End

(First and last letter of the Greek alphabet: α-alpha Ω-omega)

In our understanding, the beginning spoken of in these passages is a clear reference to the beginning of creation in Genesis 1. The end written about in Revelation is the end of creation in Genesis 2:1 (KJV): *"Thus, the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them."* The Scriptures tell us of a work begun and finished, in both its aspects - natural and spiritual, made and created. God the Father has given it to His Son to accomplish from its beginning in Genesis 1:1 to its end in Revelation 22.

So, the creation begun in Genesis 1 is completely finished, it is finished with nothing left to do, on the sixth day. And in Genesis 1:31 (KJV) we read that: *"And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was **very good**."* By this expression, *"it was very good,"* it is shown that creation reached completion only at the end. On all the other days, except the second day, God says of the things made, only that *"it was good"* (not very good), i.e., they were not yet perfect, but they were part of the journey to perfection. As for the exception on the second day, where it does not say they were good, this will be discussed when we study that specific day. From God's perspective, He completes Creation in Genesis Chapter 1, a chapter presented as a table of contents, after which the writers of Scripture describe the unfolding of what was created and completed in Genesis 1 from a linear (temporal), historical, human perspective, beginning in Genesis 2:4 (see the following graphic illustration).

GOD'S CREATION

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth

Genesis 1 contains
God's perspective
and the order in
which he creates:
creation is complete



Genesis 2:4 to
Revelation 22
contains the human
perspective: the days
of creation as they
unfold in time and
space



DAY 1: LIGHT

Let there be light!

DAY 2: HEAVEN

Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water. God called the vault "heaven".

DAY 3: LAND & VEGETATION

...let dry ground appear (...) Let the land produce vegetation...

DAY 4: LIGHTS

Let there be lights in the vault of the sky

DAY 5: SEA CREATURES & BIRDS

Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly across the vault of the sky

DAY 6: LAND CREATURES. MAN

Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds; (...) Let Us make man in Our image

DAY 7: GOD'S REST

On the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested from all his work which he had made.

- creation of the first Adam
- garden of Eden/ the Fall/ promise of salvation
- the first world, the ten patriarchs
- Noah, the flood
- the end of the first world
- the covenants with Abram/ Abraham
- slavery in Egypt
- The Law/ Old Testament/ election of Israel
- David
- slavery in Babylon
- return from slavery
- Christ's birth, Messiah
- New Covenant in His blood
- Christ's death and resurrection
- the Great Commission
- Christ's Ascension
- pouring of the Holy Spirit
- the Gospel is told to everyone
- the 1000-year Kingdom
- the Great Tribulation
- judgement and Christ's return
- end of the second world
- end of creation in Christ (day 6)
- Day seven- eternal rest

The fact that the Scripture tells beforehand, hidden and concealed in Genesis 1 what is to happen throughout the millennia of human history is strong, indisputable proof that the **Author of the Scripture is God**, and **strong proof of His existence**. This we find expressed by the prophet Isaiah as follows:

Isaiah 44:6-7 (NIV): *"This is what the LORD says— Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: **I am the first and I am the last**; apart from Me there is no God. Who then is like Me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and lay out before Me what has happened **since I established My ancient people**, and what is yet to come— yes, let them foretell what will come."*

And in Isaiah 46:10 (KJV) *"**Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times** the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure."*

In our understanding these passages are a direct reference to Genesis 1, expressed in the words, *"since I established my ancient people,"* that is, from the creation of *"ancient"*. The Lord has foretold the future and what is to come, **announcing the end with the very good things followed by His Rest** right *"from the beginning"*- that is, from creation. Who is this "First and Last", Alpha and Omega, the Redeemer, the King of Israel, if not Christ, Who foretold the future from ancient times, as a "table of contents" of the Scripture, as a prophecy of what was to come?

Again, the passage in Matthew 13:34-35 (NIV) is remarkable:

*"Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; He did not say anything to them without using a parable. So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: **'I will open My mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world.'**"*

After reading in Matthew chapter 13 some of the parables of the kingdom (the parable of the - - sower, the - - tares, the mustard seed, and the - - leaven), from the above quotation we see that through these parables the words of the prophet are fulfilled, saying, "***I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world.***" So, it means, that in the description of the creation of the world in Genesis 1 there are hidden things concerning the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, any attempt to understand Genesis 1 literally, is wrong, since such an understanding would not highlight the hidden things mentioned earlier. Also, in the following quote, Jesus tells us that the Kingdom has already been prepared since the foundation of the world.

Matthew 25:34 NIV *"Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'"*

The foundation of the world was completed only when God finished the work he had "*created and made*" (Gen. 2:3).

In Genesis 1 we can say that the whole history is concentrated, from the FALL to the Salvation of man and his bringing to glory.

Next, we will briefly present the beginning of creation, and then clarify what is meant by the end of creation.

The beginning of creation

Let's read again the first words written in Genesis 1, verse 1:

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

To understand the physical, seen part, contained in this verse and what was created, we need to go to the next chapter, Genesis 2 beginning with verse 4 where the making from the beginning, Genesis 1:1, is retaken up as a story, as a description of what was made.

Let's read the passage mentioned:

Genesis 2:4-8 (NKJV) *"This is **the history** of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the **day** that the LORD God **made the earth and the heavens**, before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground. And the LORD God formed **man** of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed."*

The above quote is a brief history of what things looked like after the creation of the heavens and the earth, revealing a little of their physical appearance. The earth was originally without vegetation and without life on it. Man's body was later made from the dust of the earth.

One thing that should not be overlooked in this section is that the Scripture says, *"In the **day** that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens"*, making it clear that it is not speaking of or

referring to several days, but of the **day**. The heaven and earth described in Genesis 2 were made on the same day, called "THE DAY", not a literal day, different from the heaven made on the **second day** and the earth that appeared from waters on the **third day** of Genesis 1. It seems that **the days** of Genesis 1 and **the day** of Gen 2:4 are not the same, and likewise the heavens and earth of Genesis 1:8;10 are not the same as those of Genesis 2.

The earth of Genesis 1:2 (NKJV) was "*without form, and void,*" covered with **deep, dark waters**. On the third day of creation, God tells the dry land to reveal from the waters. He calls the dry land earth, and the waters He calls seas. **Then** God says that the land coming out of the waters shall give greenery, trees, etc. By contrast, the land in Genesis 2:4 was not covered with deep waters, and we are not told that it was dark, as Genesis 1:2 says, but only that a mist rose from the earth and watered the face of the land. So, we are talking about a different earth. Out of the dust of this earth God makes the physical body of the first man, into whose nostrils breathes the breath of life, and man becomes a living soul. This is the **physical earth** to which man's body returns when he dies physically, since it was taken from it (see Genesis 3:19).

Even more curious is the fact that man was created from the dust of the earth **before** there were vegetation and animals (see Genesis 2:9; 19) whereas the vegetation in the Garden of Eden, and subsequently the animals, are created **after** man was made. In Genesis 1 the order is reversed: man is created on the sixth day, after the "vegetation" made on the third day. So, if we take both chapters literally, we have an obvious contradiction.

Let's look at other examples that show that the literal meaning is unacceptable and cannot fit:

- In Genesis 1:3, on the first day, God says "*let there be light.*" If this is physical light, where does it come from without the lights that are not created until the fourth day? Some teachers say that God (who is Spirit) radiated physical light, but this is just speculation.
- At the end of the first day God says there was an evening and then a morning. How could there be alternating physical day and night without a physical sun?
- On the third day God makes "vegetation". How can there be vegetation without the heat and light of the sun that was created later?

The following table summarizes the above:

Genesis 1	Genesis 2
the "days" of creation	the "day" of creation
desolate and empty land, covered by deep waters, darkness	ground watered by a mist
Vegetation created before man was made	The vegetation of Eden created after man was made
Animals created before man was made	Animals created after man was made
The heavens of day 2 and the earth of day 3 are made after the heavens and earth of verse 1	The heavens and the earth are made on the same day

If we take the two chapters literally, we are dealing with more contradictions and nonsense. The words point to a spiritual meaning of the six days described in Genesis 1. They do not refer to a physical creation, but to a spiritual one, closely linked to salvation history and the relationship between God and man. The spiritual meaning is essential for understanding the

Scriptures, as Paul the Apostle tells us:

1 Corinthians 2:11-13 (NIV) *"For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. What **we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand** what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, **explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.**"*

So, according to the Apostle Paul's teaching, the knowledge of the things of God cannot take place apart from the revelation that the Holy Spirit makes, and the Spirit makes this revelation by "Spirit-taught words" (not a literal meaning).

In our understanding, the passage describing the days of creation, beginning with Genesis 1:2, can only have a spiritual meaning (similar to the symbolic meaning). The speech in this passage is spiritual speech, not literal. God first speaks of creation from a spiritual perspective (in Genesis 1), and then He also speaks very briefly of the physical aspect of creation (in Genesis 2:4). Why so? Because everything that is seen is made of things that are not seen (see Hebrews 11:3). Whoever does not read the Scripture with this perspective in mind will think that things seen are the reality, instead of seeing them as a shadow of the spiritual reality (see Hebrews 10:1).

If the seen realm is the shadow of the spiritual reality, then we should relate to God with this unseen reality in mind.

For example, who would think of picking apples from the shadow of an apple tree? Although it is impossible and foolish, yet we

often relate to God in this way, ignoring the spiritual reality in which He invites us to live by faith and focusing instead on "the seen", on the "shadows".

The end of creation

The word "end" often has apocalyptic connotations in Christian circles. It's a term and concept surrounded by graphic images of fear, natural disasters and overwhelming of life by terrible things, the so-called "end of the world". We do not subscribe to this interpretation, but rather believe that there is another meaning to this word.

When we speak of the end of creation, we mean the end on the sixth day, after which follows God's rest on the seventh day. Until this rest is reached, God creates for six days. He does so by means of His Word. By His word God says: "*let there be*". In order to know what this rest consists of it is first necessary to clarify the meaning of *Genesis 1:2* (KJV):

"And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

If we consider the physical meaning of the words earth and waters, then it is necessary to ask: for what purpose did the Spirit of God move in the darkness of the face of the physical waters? We cannot go forward with explanations without understanding what the purpose of this movement of the Spirit was.

In the New Testament we learn what the work of the Spirit of God is. Jesus Christ Himself clarifies and teaches us here:

John 6:63 (NIV) "*It is **the Spirit** who gives life [...]*".

John 14:17 (NIV) "*the Spirit of truth. **The world cannot accept Him [...]***"

John 14:26 (NKJV) "*But the Helper, **the Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in My name, He **will teach you all things** [...]*"

From these verses we see that the work of the Spirit of God is in reference to life, truth and teaching, and in verse 17 we are told that "*the world cannot accept him.*" This shows us that the Spirit is accepted or rejected by **people**. In the case of physical water there can be no question of receiving or rejecting the Spirit. In conclusion, it would be nonsense for the Spirit to move over physical waters. Does the Scripture show us another meaning, different from the literal one, regarding waters and earth?

Let us note the following passage:

Isaiah 8:6-8 (NIV) "*Because this people have rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah and rejoices over Rezin and the son of Remaliah, therefore **the Lord is about to bring against them the mighty floodwaters of the Euphrates—the king of Assyria with all his pomp. It will overflow all its channels, run over all its banks and sweep on into Judah, swirling over it, passing through it and reaching up to the neck. Its outspread wings will cover the breadth of your land, Immanuel!***"

In this passage, the Lord speaks of the punishment of Judah by the armed army of the king of Assyria, which He calls "*the mighty floodwaters of the Euphrates.*" Assyria was inhabited by pagan people. The Lord was not known as their God, and those who were part of Assyria's army are represented here by the waters. We will see throughout the study that the "waters" in the **spiritual** sense represent the people who do not know God, who are not his people, and the earth represents the people he chooses.

We quote two other passages where we are shown that the waters represent people:

Revelation 17:15 (NIV) "*Then the angel said to me, 'The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages.'*"

Daniel 7:3, 17 (KJV) "*And four great **beasts** came out of the sea, diverse one from the other. [...] These great beasts which are four in number, are four **kings** who will rise on the earth.*"

Four kings (men) → four beasts → **from the sea** → so the sea is a sea of men, not waters in the literal sense.

Based on what has been shown so far, we can understand that Genesis 1:2 also speaks of humans. The Spirit of God was there precisely to shed light, shine into the darkness and limitations in the minds of humans, and here they are called waters and earth. Enlightenment of the mind comes through the revelation of God, through His Spirit. Adam and his descendants in the first world before the flood had revelation, that is, discoveries by a straightforward **light of God's Word**. And because the waters and the earth of Genesis 1:2 actually represent humans, we are strengthened in our belief that the making of the physical universe as well as the making of Adam is included in Genesis 1:1. So Genesis 2:4-8 is included in Genesis 1:1. Whom would the Spirit of God enlighten by the light of Gen. 1 if humans did not yet exist? Or, for example, how did Cain and Abel know how to offer sacrifices to God if there had not been a revelation beforehand, no enlightenment of humans by the Spirit of God? Where could this enlightenment have come from, if not through the light of Genesis 1, verse 3?

We have already mentioned that the six days of creation are not calendar days (24 hours), as some teachers or commentators of Scripture claim without proving it by Scripture. In our understanding they are **periods** in which God progressively revealed Himself to humans through His Word throughout the

history of the Scripture. The fact that "the day" is seen as a period of spiritual light is shown by Jesus in the following passage:

John 9:4-5 (NKJV) "*I must work the works of Him who sent Me **while it is day**; the night is coming when no one can work. **As long as I am in the world, I am the Light of the world.***"

So, during the time Jesus was in the world it was "daytime" because of His presence and ministry of proclaiming and teaching the Gospel. It is clear from the passage that He is not talking about physical light. The light of Christ's presence makes the night into day, illuminates the mind and soul of the human who hears Him.

Revelation 21:25 (KJV) "*And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: **for there shall be no night there.***"

Revelation 22:5 (KJV) "*And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, nor the light of the sun; **for the Lord God gives them light**: and they shall reign for ever and ever.*"

These verses make very clear the spiritual meaning of the words for day, night and light.

Another thing worth noting is that a day of creation always begins in the evening and then comes the morning, and this is not by chance. This sequence is a pattern which shows us, that all people have a natural, sinful, unenlightened beginning; then, only by obedience to the Word of God who speaks to them do they become spiritual, thus becoming sons of light and day. Paul explains this pattern in the following quote:

1 Corinthians 15:46 (KJV) "*But however, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual.*"

If we read this verse in its context, we see that the "*first Adam*" is set against the "*last Adam*" - that is, the Lord Jesus Christ - and the apostle also refers to the **descendants of** the first Adam (verse 48), that is, to all of us born after Adam.

Even in the lives of Christians who become spiritual through obedience to the Gospel, we have beginnings and endings. The first is spiritual childhood, when the food is the "*spiritual milk*" of God's Word, and maturity comes later through growth given by the hard food of God's Word (see Hebrews 5:12-13).

Let's talk briefly about the seventh-day rest.

Genesis 2:3 KJV "*And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it: because that **in it he had rested from all his work** which God created and made.*"

To think that God, who is Spirit, labored and needed rest in the physical sense is an aberration. This "Rest" during the "Day" is not a rest from fatigue, but is the joy, gladness and delight at the end of the great work of His perfect creation. God rests from all His work on the seventh day with His redeemed of all generations: past, present and future. The Lord speaks of this joy through Isaiah in the context of the promise of the new heaven and the new earth:

Isaiah 65:19 (KJV) "***And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people:** and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.*"

If we look at the whole context of chapter 65 of Isaiah's prophecy, the joy and gladness in this passage are in reference to the "new Jerusalem" coming down from heaven and the new people represented by Christ's Church after all things are made new (read Isaiah 65:17-25 and Revelation 21:1-4 in parallel). This

was to be accomplished only after the destruction of the unfaithful people of 1st century Israel ("*the Lord God will slay you*" - Isaiah 65:15 KJV) who had forsaken Jesus and asked Pilate to crucify Him on the cross (Paul tells us that only a faithful remnant of Israel was saved - Romans 9:27, 11:5).

Also, regarding God's rest at the end of creation, let us note that He rested on the 7th **day** from all His work, and this day does not end. It was not "*evening and then morning*," which is very important. It is understood that this day is without end and that it refers to the "Day" in which there is eternal spiritual Light, because "[...] *God is Light*" (see 1 John 1:5). The natural man, made from the dust of the earth, rests from his work every **night** with his eyes closed, in the absence of physical light. The difference between the physical rest of the natural man, which takes place in the darkness of night, and the spiritual rest of God in the Light of His Day is great. Even in this example we can see a pattern of the things of the beginning and the end.

In the view of those who interpret the days of creation literally, God rests at the end of the creation of the cosmos, the material world, at the end of the first chapter of Genesis. Although prophesied a few verses later (Genesis 3:15), the saving work of Jesus Christ does not begin until thousands of years have passed.

Therefore, should God the Father have "rested" before the incarnation of His Son, before His work of saving mankind?

Could God have been more concerned, more "preoccupied" with the visible, material creation, than with the redemptive sacrifice of His Son?! Hard to believe! The realities of the end are spiritual in nature, and the rest of God (who is Spirit, see John 4:24) on the seventh day cannot be limited only to the sense of

completion of the physical universe. We are confident that the rest at the end of creation includes the victory of the Son. Therefore, we will show in the continuation of our study that:

The Scriptures prove that the work of the Son is included in the description of creation in the first chapter of Genesis.

Like God, the spiritual man also rests spiritually in the light of the presence of God and of Christ, in the eternity of **the Day of God**. This rest comes when we understand His love and when the Holy Spirit reveals to us that we are children of God.

Consider the process of adopting a child who has been waiting a long time to be adopted. Adoption means that there is documentation and a clear decision by the adoptive parents to adopt the child. But on the side of the adopted child there are a lot of questions and a lot of uncertainty and fear. Great and magnificent is the day when the child realizes that it is the light of his adoptive parents' eyes, that they love the child beyond merits and that their love is unconditional and that nothing will ever make them abandon him or her. The day of this revelation repairs and heals absolutely everything that the child's heart has ever suffered. The knowledge that he is loved fills his life with indescribable happiness. When that child realizes that his parents' love does not come to him/her as a result of something he/she does or does not do, but is their gift, all the hell of abandonment disappears. And in its place comes the rest given by the fact that he/she belongs to someone and will belong forever.

In the same way we rest when we realize that our acceptance into God's family is not just a document signed with Christ's own blood at the cross of Calvary, but a continuous and overwhelming spoiling, a delight, a gentle manifestation of God's love. His love talks to us like the lover in the Song of Songs to his beloved, "*You have stolen my heart with one glance of your eyes*" (Song of Songs 4:9 NIV). We are truly loved. We can rest in this everlasting love. We are loved by the One Who Himself is Love. Why did His wonderful heart desire us? We do not fully understand. But we do know that He can no longer not love us. This is rest! Let us therefore believe this declaration of love and thus enter His rest.

In the Scriptures we find passages that speak in a mysterious way about this day of His rest. One example is Psalm 118 in which we are invited to a day of joy and gladness.

Psalm 118:24 (NKJV) "*This is **the day** the LORD has **made**; we will **rejoice** and **be glad** in it*"

From this passage we see that after it says: "**this is the day**" (present tense), we are told that the Lord **has** already **made it** (past tense) and the rejoicing will come in King David's future. What day is this? The answer can only be one: the seventh day after the end of creation. From this Psalm we also note that the day was made **after** the "*cornerstone*" (i.e., Christ) rejected by the builders had been placed at the head of the building. The joy and gladness of the day are in the Lord Jesus Christ, who has come to be placed at the head of the corner of the spiritual building of God, that is, the Church. If this day were only a natural, 24-hour day, would not this promise be a very small one?

The message of the six days of creation, which have an evening and a morning, says each time: '**there was** [...]'. On the seventh day it is no longer said: 'there was the seventh day', but only that:

'**on the seventh [...] day He rested**', or as we have already pointed out in Psalm 118: '**This is the day** [...]'. So, creation reaches its completion on the seventh day, when it is fully finished. The seventh day is God's Day, "**D A Y**", singular! This is not a day repeated weekly but is the last day of the "week" of creation. It would be absurd to imagine that God rests weekly on a 24-hour day! The Apostle Paul speaks of the passing of the night and the approach of day in Romans 13:12(NASB) thus:

*"**The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore, let's rid ourselves of the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.**"*

Paul is certainly not talking about a 24-hour day. He is talking about the seventh day, the day of rest at the end of creation. God, who is not limited by time, has made it since the foundation of the world, but for mankind it was to come, and it was very near at the end of the apostolic generation.

The end of creation, with the seventh-day rest, is also explained by the Spirit-inspired apostle in his letter to Hebrews 4:3-4 (NKJV):

*"For we who have believed do **enter that rest**, as He has said: "So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest,'" **although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.** For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: "And **God rested on the seventh day from all His work**";"*

The apostle writing to the Hebrews states that the rest on the seventh day, in which God rested after He had finished all His work at the foundation of the world (from Genesis 1), had not yet come for the Christians of the apostolic generation, but was soon to come (see Hebrews 4). And the place to enter in order to experience "His Rest" is the city of New Jerusalem, where

God's presence is (see Revelation 21). In the Scriptures we find the promise of eternal rest expressed in various ways, but it is fulfilled by this entry into "His Rest" at the end of creation. The spiritually complete creation is finished only at the second coming of Jesus Christ, after the renewal of all things.

DAY ONE: THE LIGHT

In general, when we talk about light, we think about the fact that it helps us see what is around us: people, animals, plants, other life forms, objects, moving things, etc. Another thing we know about natural light is that it supports our biological life. It is generated by the sun, and without it our life could not exist. We will note that in Scripture light is mostly spoken of from a spiritual perspective. To this end we seek to understand the nature of light and its importance to man, starting from the passage in Genesis 1:3. This speaks of light for the first time in Scripture, without telling us the nature of this light. Therefore, we will look at the Scriptures more thoroughly so that we can find a sound conclusion.

The texts of the Scripture present light from two perspectives:

- one refers to the physical, natural one, such as that radiated by the sun and stars,
- the other refers to light for the human mind, that is, of a different nature, it is the spiritual light.

Our aim is to distinguish when the Scripture speaks of natural light and when it speaks of spiritual light. We will see that very little is said about natural light in the Scripture. A quest here is relevant, we look more, we look deeper, we look closer at light in its spiritual meaning.

All the passages we are about to highlight are primarily aimed at identifying the nature of light on the first day of creation, without limiting the study of light to the light of the first day. Then, following the clarifications that these passages give, we will be able to draw a sound, proven conclusion without resorting to speculation or unscriptural teachings. As a preview we recall that

the Scripture that makes God known to us tells us that "*God is light*" (see 1 John 1:5).

Now let's look at the quote that tells us about the light on the first day:

Genesis 1:2-5 (NASB) "*And the earth was a formless and desolate emptiness, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. Then **God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness He called "night." And there was evening and there was morning, one day.***"

From this passage we note that:

- the earth was a formless and desolate emptiness, covered with deep waters (it only emerges from the waters on the third day),
- darkness was over the face of the deep, so the earth was still in darkness,
- The Spirit of God was moving over the dark waters,
- God said, "*Let there be light*," or in other words, "*Let light shine out of darkness*." (see 2 Corinthians 4:6 ESV),
- God **has separated** the light from the darkness,
- God called **light day** and **darkness night**,
- It was one evening and then one morning. (Note that: first it's night, then comes day),
- This was day one.

Before we move on, we want to point out that light is not said to have been made, as it is said of heaven in verse 7: "**God made the expanse** [...]" (NASB), or as it is said in verse 16 of the lights: "**God made the two great lights** [...]" (NASB). So, the light of *Genesis* 1:3 is not part of the things made, it was revealed when God commanded it.

Light in the natural sense

Let's look shortly at some passages where it talks about natural light:

Acts 16:29 (NKJV) "*Then **he called for a light**, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas*"

The light the Philippian jailer asked for was the light of a candle, because it was night and he needed it to see with his physical eyes.

Matthew 6:22-23 (NKJV) "***The lamp of the body is the eye.** If therefore, your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore, the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!*"

Jesus gives the example of the natural light, which is for the eyes of the body, and then we see that he uses it as a metaphor describing the spiritual meaning.

Matthew 28:1 (NKJV) "*Now after the Sabbath, as **the first day of the week began to dawn**, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.*"

The light of which the above passage speaks is a reference to the

light of the natural day, at the beginning of the first day, when Jesus was resurrected. Although the light referred to was the natural light, we note the "coincidence" between the Lord's resurrection on the first day of the week and the light of the first day of creation.

Light in a spiritual sense

The following are several passages that speak of light in a spiritual sense.

Proverbs 6:23 (NASB) *"For the commandment is a lamp and **the teaching is light**; and rebukes for discipline are the way of life."*

The light in this passage refers to teaching for life.

Isaiah 60:20 (NASB) *"Your sun will no longer set, nor will your moon wane; for **you will have the LORD as an everlasting light**, and the days of your mourning will be over."*

The promise of the Holy Spirit in Isaiah 60:20 concerning the eternal illumination of the New Jerusalem (see Isaiah 60:11 and Revelation 21:23-26) refers to the spiritual light which is the Lord himself.

The Apostle Paul unquestionably supports the spiritual meaning of light in Genesis 1:3 as follows:

2 Corinthians 4:6 BSB *"For God, who said, **Let light shine out of darkness**," made **His light shine in our hearts** to give us **the light of the knowledge of the glory of God** in the face of Jesus Christ."*

In this verse, the light is the Gospel of Christ, which is spoken of in context (see 2 Corinthians 4). This light is for the "heart", that

is, for the mind we make choices with. Paul uses the designated heart here without any reference to it as a biological organ. The heart of flesh is merely a pump for the blood that nourishes and sustains the life of the physical body. In the spiritual sense, the heart represents what we love, what we live for, what our motivation for life is, what our values are, etc. The Gospel is for the "heart of the mind", through which the life of our spiritual body, brought to life by Christ, is nourished. This bringing to life can only be accomplished by hearing, understanding and receiving the teaching of the Gospel of Christ.

Let's read some other texts that talk about light.

John 1:4-10 (NKJV) *"In Him was life, and **the life was the light of men**. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light but was sent to bear witness to that Light. **That was the true Light** which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.*
"

John 8:12 (NKJV) *"Then Jesus spoke to them again saying: **"I am the Light of the world**. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness but have **the light of life**."*

In these passages we are told that Jesus is "*the true Light*"; "*the Light of the world*" in the spiritual sense. This light is for the life of the spiritual man, not for physical eyes. It comes through the Word of Christ and enlightens the mind of man; therefore, the meaning is spiritual. And the understanding of the Word comes only through the revelation of the Holy Spirit.

We note that before the coming of the Light into the world, that is, before the incarnation of Jesus, people walked in the darkness of night. Israel's only light was the Law, which **reflected** the "*true Light*" as the moon reflects the light of the sun. The Law, which shone (or reflected) during the spiritual night of the Old Covenant, spoke to us through its "shadow of light" about the "*true Light*" of the daytime, that is, about Christ. So did John the Baptist, who was the last prophet of the Law period. He was sent to make the Lord Jesus Christ known to Israel.

Just as the second world of the Old Covenant had light from the revelation of the Law, so the first world before the flood had light from the beginning, coming through the Word that was revealed when God said, "*Let there be light.*" This light in Genesis 1:3 is the Word from the beginning, who was God - Christ not yet incarnate - as the following quote shows:

John 1:1-3 (NKJV) "***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.***"

John 1:14 (NKJV) "***And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.***"

The light that shone in the beginning in the first world before the flood had the same purpose as the light of the Law in the second world, namely: to point to the "*true Light*" at the end (the third world).

We are fully confident, based on the passages already listed, that

the light of Genesis 1:3 is a reference to the light of Christ,

who was present from the beginning of creation, because all things exist through Him. Even though the light of Genesis 1 was part of the revelation of the first things (beginning things) and was to be made perfect only at the end, it is an integral part of the full revelation of Christ, who is also Alpha and Omega.

So, if the light of Genesis 1 is not physical, solar light, but a reference to Christ, the question arises: what are the "*dark waters*" and the "*desolate emptiness of the earth*"? The key to understanding these elements is also spiritual. The dark waters cannot be a reference to physical water, nor the earth to the globe. Why would Christ need to illuminate water molecules and grains of sand? For what purpose would the Spirit have moved in the physical darkness on the surface of physical waters? Jesus teaches that "*It is the Spirit that gives life*", it is light for life, so what life should the Spirit give in the darkness of physical water? This assumption would be nonsensical, downright dark, like the waters and the earth in the beginning.

We have already seen that the Scripture speaks of the waters as the multitudes, the nations, and of the earth as the people to whom God is revealed (see Revelation 17:15; Isaiah 8:7). We will see throughout this study that the Land and Sea of Revelation refer to the people of Israel and the Gentiles, i.e. the other nations.

The following passage reinforces the above statements.

Colossians 1:15-17 (NKJV) "***He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.***"

Paul tells the Colossians that Jesus Christ is "*the firstborn over all creation*". "*He is BEFORE all things!*" That means, He is at the origin of all creation, existing before all that was created. Christ is not the First only in God's New Creation at the end, but He is the First in the Old Creation as well. Jesus Christ is the **BEGINNING** by which all the first things of creation in Genesis were made, and the **END** in Revelation chapter 22. From man's perspective, creation begins with the old, natural creation in the first Adam, and ends with the new, spiritual creation in the last Adam, that is, in the glorified Christ. We experience time in a linear fashion and might tend to think that Jesus was not present in Genesis 1 because He does not appear incarnate on the scene of history until some four millennia after what is described in Genesis. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit together are an eternally present Trinity. Christ was present at the beginning of the Old Creation in Genesis 1, for He was the Light and He is the Son of MAN who died for the sins of mankind, the **first resurrected in spirit** (not in body is He the first resurrected). He is also the First in the spiritual New Creation and was made by God a "*Life-giving Spirit*" (see 1 Peter 3:18; Acts 26:23; 1 Corinthians 15:45).

The first things mentioned in the previous chapter of this study, those pertaining to the two-worlds (the one before the flood and the second after the flood) represent the **old creation** that has passed away. The latter things belonging to the spiritual world begin with Christ's resurrection and are fully renewed and fulfilled at His return. These new things belonging to the New Covenant are the **New Creation**, which is eternal.

Revelation 21:4 (NKJV) "*And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for **the former things have passed away.***"

Revelation 21:5 (NKJV) "*Then He who sat on the throne said,*

*"Behold, I **make all things new.**" And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." "*

The following table shows the complete creation as having two parts.

THE OLD CREATION	THE NEW CREATION
First world, before the flood (passed)	The third world , after the world of the Old Covenant: the world of the New Covenant in the Blood of Christ. (is present and imperishable / eternal)
The second world , after the flood - the world of the Old Covenant (passed)	

As we have seen, on the first day of creation the separation of light and darkness also takes place, and God gives them names: day and night. But as we have shown, light has a spiritual meaning, it is the light of Christ in the beginning. So the meaning of day and night is also spiritual. Through the spiritual light of the first day of creation, God separates day and night, spiritually, not physically or naturally.

If anyone tries to claim that because "*God is light*", God radiates, emits or replaces physical light, we believe that is a forced interpretation, unsupported by the Scripture. God is Spirit, and the light of the Spirit is spiritual, thereby bringing to man **the knowledge** of the unseen God, not of things seen. And if the light of Genesis 1:3 was a natural light, "emanating" from God, it means that on the fourth day when the light-givers were made (assuming them to be natural), the light of God in verse three would have ceased, now emanating from the sun. Then, after a break of millennia, in Revelation 21, the sun disappears, and God again illuminates, with natural light, the city of New Jerusalem

(also natural, in that sense), which descends from heaven. Let us be reasonable! The explanation that God radiates physical light is speculation.

Let's see the following text:

Acts 26:23 (NKJV) "[...] *that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead and **would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.***"

In this passage, Paul, the apostle, speaking to Agrippa, says that the Christ, after being the first to rise, proclaims light to the people and to the Gentiles (the light of the Gospel). Therefore, resurrection and light are very closely related. The light proclaimed after the Lord's resurrection, through the Lord's apostles, is that which completes revelation, brings it to completeness, perfects it.

We know from the New Testament accounts that **the resurrection occurs on the first day of the week, like the light on the first day of Genesis chapter 1**. This is not by chance but has great symbolic value: the light of the first day of creation, which was the light of the Christ not yet incarnate, points to the Incarnate Christ, risen on the first day of the week.

Any attempt to physically explain the light of Genesis 1:3 is not possible with sound arguments. Nor can the length of a creation day be 24 hours. An approach that claims that light is physical, and that the day is 24 hours long is totally unscriptural. The Apostle Paul proves this to us by saying in his epistle to Romans 13:12 (NASB) the following:

"The night is almost gone, and the day is near. Therefore, let's rid ourselves of the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light."

Is this a 24-hour night and day? Are the darkness and light of which Paul speaks physical? Certainly not!

The "night" of the people of the Old Covenant and of the Law was at an end

and the "DAY" of the Kingdom coming to power, in the fullness of the New Covenant, would be revealed. This was to be fulfilled when Christ took His Kingdom, before some of the apostles had physically died, in the first century, as Mark 9:1 shows us:

*"And He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that **there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the Kingdom of God present with power.**"(NKJV)*

(This passage does not refer to the distant future, but to the apostolic generation.)

Jacob's wrestling with God during the night at Peniel (see Genesis 32:24-32) when he asked Him to bless him was nearing its end in the first century. God blessed him before the dawn of the Day, sending His Son into the world, that He might truly see His face (see John 14:9) in the **daylight** of His **presence**. A faithful remnant of Jacob's genealogy has been given a new name: Israel - one who wrestles with God, becoming the Israel of God, victorious by faith and being called, determined, and appointed by God to light the way of salvation:

Isaiah 49:6 (NKJV) *"He says: "Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; **I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth**'. " "*

The first world had the light of Christ from the beginning **to the extent of the revelation God established for that world**. The light of the first world, like the light of the Law in the second world, pointed to the true light, which is the Lord Jesus Christ. The perfect revelation, complete and finished came only through HIM: incarnate, sacrificed, risen from the dead, exalted, and returned to His spiritual kingdom. The Kingdom of Christ, of His New Covenant, came powerfully at the end of the apostolic period as an eternal spiritual reality, for each generation.

DAY TWO: THE HEAVEN

In this chapter we want to show that the heaven of the second day is not physical, but spiritual, and its purpose to "separate" is given by the light of the first day. Along the way we will see that the angels of heaven, who are ministering spirits created by God, are meant to do this separation. As for the fact that the expanse is called heaven, we will show that it is not a spatial expanse, but a temporal one in a "spiritual space".

The passage describing the making of heaven is as follows:

Genesis 1:6-8 (NASB) *"Then God said, **‘Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters’**. **God made the expanse**, and separated the waters that were below the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse; and it was so. **God called the expanse ‘heaven’**. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day."*

If we study the Scripture carefully, we will notice that it divides the heavens into "transient" and "imperishable" heavens (see Matthew 24:35, Isaiah 66:22). We also find in the Scriptures some references to the physical heaven and many others to the heaven that pertains to a spiritual creation. The Scripture speaks of many worlds created by God, and each is assigned a heaven specific to it, because the heavens from a spiritual point of view represent the GOVERNMENT that God establishes and assigns to each world, as we will see later in this chapter. The question that arises is: how can we tell them apart? How can we know which of these heavens it is?

So, let's look at several texts that tell us about these heavens:

2 Peter 3:5-7 (NASB) *"For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God **the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed** out of water and by water (first heaven / first world), through which the world at that time was destroyed by being flooded with water. But by His word **the present heavens and earth** (second heaven / second world) are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly people."*

2 Corinthians 12:2 (NKJV) *"I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to **the third heaven** [...]" (third heaven)*

2 Peter 3:13 (NASB) *"But according to His promise we are looking for **new heavens and a new earth**, in which righteousness dwells."* (third heaven / third world)

As we read, the Scripture speaks of three heavens. Each of these heavens corresponds to a different world, respectively:

- THE FIRST HEAVEN → THE FIRST WORLD, the world before the flood
- THE SECOND HEAVEN → THE SECOND WORLD, the world of the Old Covenant
- THE THIRD HEAVEN → THE THIRD WORLD, the world of the New Covenant in which righteousness reigns through the eternal love of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In what follows we will look at them one by one to understand what God's Word teaches us about each.

Even though the creation of the first heaven in Genesis 1:6-8 has a very succinct description, we can still see that **the heaven was made as an expanse**

↗ waters that are above the expanse
to separate from
↘ waters that are below the expanse.

Could this be about the physical sky? Does it represent the vault of the sky under which we have the waters below, i.e. the seas, and the waters above, i.e. the clouds? In our understanding, certainly not! Although the image described appears to be physical, the seen image of the expanse of sky separating the waters below from the clouds above, this image in the seen is actually the shadow of a spiritual reality. The proof of this statement we will see from the texts of the Scriptures that we will recall throughout the study.

We are told very little about the first heaven in the Scripture, so we will consider passages that tell us about the second heaven, from the Old Covenant period. These passages will help us, by analogy, to understand much better what the first heaven is. For this reason, we will look at things related to the second heaven, and only then will we consider what we have learned from them about the first heaven. We will also look very carefully at what Jesus and the apostles say about heaven.

In Isaiah 66:1 (NKJV) we are told: *"Thus says the LORD: **Heaven is My throne**, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest?"* (see also Matthew 5:34-35)

If we were to take these words literally, we should see God seated on the expanse of the physical sky, on a great seat, with

His feet placed on the globe. Of course, such an understanding would be absurd and unscriptural. In fact, through this passage, Isaiah tells us, in a spiritual sense, the following:

- God is on His throne in heaven - where He rules,
- the earth is his footstool - representing the chosen people over whom he rules (see Isaiah 1:2-4),
- God does not live in a house made by human hands (as was the Temple in Jerusalem - see Acts 7:48). He dwells in the Temple made by His hands (see Exodus 15:17-18).

Let's look at another passage in Isaiah where we are told about heaven. In the context, the journey of the people of Israel through the Red Sea on their way to Sinai is mentioned.

Isaiah 51:15-16 (NASB) *"For I am the LORD your God, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar (the LORD of armies is His name). And I have put My words in your mouth and have covered you with the shadow of My hand, **to establish the heavens, to found the earth**, and to say to Zion, 'You are My people'."*

In the passage from Isaiah 51, the prophet reminds us that after crossing the Red Sea the people of Israel reached Sinai. When Moses asked to see the glory of God, he was placed in the cleft of the rock and covered by the shadow of God's hand (see Exodus 33:19-22). The next day Moses went up mount Sinai (see Exodus 34) and received the new tablets on which the Law (the 10 commandments) was written. Israel's election as a people - **"You are my people"** - is based on the covenant of the Law received through Moses. It is essential to note the order mentioned in the verse: first the **"heavens"** are established, then the **"earth"** is founded and then comes the declaration of belonging. **The heavens** were represented by the Law system and the **earth** was the chosen people, i.e. Israel (the angels through whom the Law was given (see Galatians 3:19) belonged to the heavens of the Old Covenant Law and were the ministering spirits of the Law

period (see Hebrews 1:14)).

There is something special in this passage that we want to point out because there is a possibility that when we read it, we may not even notice it. It is shown by the phrase:

"I have put My words in your mouth [...],"

then says:

"[...] to establish the heavens, to found the earth [...]"

Notice?! The words of God given to the people were those based on which the heavens were "*established*" and the earth was "*founded*". So, the heavens spoken of here in the Scripture are not physical but are "*established*" by the words revealed to the people of Israel, i.e. the Law given at Sinai. Likewise, the third heaven - God's heaven - into which the apostle Paul was caught up is a place where God's Words are heard, described thus: "*I know **a man in Christ** who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one **was caught up to the third heaven**. And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—**how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.**" (2 Corinthians 12:2-4 NKJV)*

It is now clear that Isaiah is not referring to the heaven and earth of the second and third day of Genesis chapter 1. They were part of the first world that passed away in the flood. And from the context of Isaiah chapter 51, it is understood, without any doubt that it refers to Old Covenant Israel. So even in this case it cannot be a physical heaven and earth. Again, the key to understanding must be spiritual because the speech is a spiritual one; only in this way is the meaning clarified.

From the passage describing the second day of creation we see

that heaven is meant to make the separation between the waters. And on the first day of creation there was a separation. God separated light from darkness. So, we see that the things done in the first two days are notable for **their purpose of separation**. Why was it necessary for heaven to separate the waters from the waters? What kind of waters are those below the expanse? What kind of waters are the waters above the expanse? To answer these questions, let's see what we learn from the book of Job:

Job 26:10 (NKJV) "*He drew **a circular horizon on the face of the waters, at the boundary of light and darkness.***"

Although in the context of this quotation Job speaks of God from a spiritual perspective, he symbolically uses images of God's creation from a physical point of view. The sky is seen as a circular horizon stretched over the waters, representing a boundary separating light from darkness. Sunlight comes from beyond this vault, and when the sky is clouded the earth darkens. The purpose of heaven (sky) as a divider is highlighted in this verse by the word '*boundary*'. Based on the text of the making of the first heaven in Genesis 1:6-8, coupled with the previous text, we can deduce that:

The waters above have full light and represent people who are in the Light and have the glory of God, and the waters below represent people who do not have the Light of God, and are in spiritual darkness.

Psalms 8:1 (NKJV) "*O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is Your Name in all the earth, **Who have set Your glory above the heavens!***"

Psalms 148:4 (NKJV) "***Praise Him, you heavens of heavens and you waters above the heavens!***"

Hebrews 7:26 (NASB) "*For it was fitting for us to have such **a high priest**, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and **exalted above the heavens**;*"

We note that:

His Glory	rises	above the heavens
Waters	are	above the heavens
High Priest	is exalted	above the heavens

So, the "*waters above*" are in the same place (above the heavens) where the Glory of God is and where the High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, ascended. About Him, in Ephesians 4:10, we are told that He "*[...] **ascended far above all the heavens** [...]*" and in 1 Peter 2:9 the believers are told that they are "***a royal priesthood***". From a spiritual point of view, we can say that the priests are where the High Priest is.

If waters referred to physical water (H₂O), and the heavens were understood to be physical as well, how could waters be above the heavens? Where? In outer space? Beyond it...? Or how do physical waters praise God? All these questions only show us how meaningless the literal or natural understanding is.

Let's look at a few more passages on this "**above**":

John 8:23 (NASB) "*And He was saying to them, "You are from below, **I am from above**; you are of this world, **I am not of this world**."*"

From the words of the Lord Jesus, we understand that:

Being from above = Not to be of this world

John 17:14 (NKJV) "*I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because **they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.***"

So, the disciples too, by receiving His Word, **are not of the world, therefore the disciples are also from above.** To be from above, or to be from below, is determined by the receiving or not of His Word, it means to be or not to be of God, spiritual.

Here are a few more verses that speak to us of things above:

Galatians 4:26 (NASB) "*But the **Jerusalem above** is free; she is our mother.*"

Colossians 3:1 (NASB) "*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those **things which are above**, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.*"

Colossians (NASB) 3:2 "*Set your mind **on things above**, not on things on the earth.*"

Another passage that proves the spiritual meaning of heaven is Deuteronomy 31:30-32:1 (NASB).

*"Then **Moses spoke in the hearing of all the assembly of Israel** the words of this song, until they were complete: "**Listen, you heavens, and I will speak; and let the earth hear the words of My mouth!**"*

Moses was speaking to the assembly of the people of Israel, addressing them with the words, "*Listen, you heavens [...] earth hear the words [...]*". Moses was speaking neither to the cosmos nor to the agricultural land, but to the nation of Israel (here called "*the earth*"). He spoke also to the angels, i.e. to those who "governed" the earth and who were the representatives of the reign of heaven during the period of the Law. The angels were

assigned to watch over the fulfillment of the Law. So, when we speak of angels, we implicitly refer to heaven - since they are the angels of heaven.

Let's look at some other quotes that talk about heaven:

Genesis 28:12 (NKJV) *"Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there **the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.**"*

John 1:51 (NKJV) *"And He said to him, **Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.**"*

Matthew 24:36 (NKJV) *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even **the angels of heaven**, but My Father only."*

From these passages, we see that God's angels have their place in heaven, where they ascend and descend, to fulfill the ministry God has given them. This heaven cannot represent the physical sky because ascending or descending a ladder cannot be accomplished in the physical heaven, and angels, who are spirits, do not need a material ladder anyway. This reinforces our understanding that

the Heaven of the Old Covenant world was a SPIRITUAL place where ministering spirits, i.e. angels, dwelt.

Let us now see what we are told about the angels of the first heaven.

In the account of the first world in the book of Genesis, we are not told about angels. The only reference we find is to the

cherubim who were appointed by God to stop sinful man's access to the tree of life. Angels are spirits created by God and have existed since the first world. The most relevant passage about angels in the first world is found in the New Testament, in the second epistle of Peter.

2 Peter 2:4-6 (NKJV) "*For if **God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes [...]***"

Apostle Peter **presents chronologically some of the most significant events**, beginning with the fall of the angels and continuing with the punishment of the first world by the flood. Then in the rest of the text we are presented with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in the second world. Being a chronological presentation, it is shown that the first world also had a heaven with angels, but many fell, and they "*did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling*," as we read in Jude verse 6. **The fallen angels** were cast down from heaven into the Deep, being kept in chains for "***the judgment of the great day***," as it also says in Jude 6. They were ministering spirits for the salvation of the people of the first world, but they sinned by "*leaving their proper dwelling*" and following the Devil, the father of lies and sin. The consequence of this fall of the angels who left their God-given ministry, coupled with the sin of the people of the first world – led to the (almost total) destruction of the first world. The flood was a **judgment and punishment** for the first world, but the "***judgment of the great day***", the **final judgment**, was to come for the first world as well, and it was almost during the period when the apostle Jude writes. This judgment was to take place at Christ's

return, when all angels and all people who had sinned in the first world and the second world of the Old Covenant were judged. This does not mean that there were no holy people in the first world as well. An example would be the patriarchs (e.g. Enoch and Noah) whom we find in the genealogy of Jesus.

Day two is different from the others in one respect. In the case of five of the days of creation, God says at the end of each that "*it was good*", and on the sixth day He says, "*it was very good*". There is an exception on the second day when this remark is not made. In our opinion, this has an important significance. To understand well the things written in the Scriptures it is necessary to notice not only what **is said**, but also what **is not said**. Why isn't it said, after the creation of heaven, that God saw, that this was good? Based on what the apostle Peter and Jude say about the angels of the first world, we also have a clearer picture of God's government in the first heaven. Peter and Jude, inspired by the Holy Spirit, show us that there was a great falling away of the angels of the first heaven. They "*left their proper place*," that is, they did not fulfill their God-given mission of watching over the salvation of the people of the first world but followed the Devil. This may be an explanation for the lack of the claim, that the heaven made on the second day was good, because following the fall of the angels, that world was destroyed by the flood.

Another passage, found in Luke 8, shows us that **the demons** (fallen angels) **of the second world of the Old Covenant** were not yet cast into the deep, as those of the first world had been.

Luke 8:31 (NKJV) "*And they begged Him that He would not command them **to go out into the abyss.***"

The Abyss was the place where the demons were bound, i.e. stripped of power. They could no longer deceive or harm people.

For them, all that was left was the final judgment of the "*great day*".

In the Gospel of Matthew, in which the same event as in Luke 8 is described, we find the following written:

Matthew 8:29 (NKJV) "*And suddenly they cried out, saying, "What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? **Have You come here to torment us before the time?**"*"

The demons already knew their final destiny. They knew they had little time left and were terrified at the prospect. The Abyss was where the demons were stripped of the power to deceive. This is clear from the next passage, where we see that the devil's deception ceased while he was cast into the Deep:

Revelation 20:2-3 (NKJV) "***He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.***"

In the Scripture we are also told of good angels who fulfilled their God-given service to the end. Let's see next what Jesus teaches us about the good angels of the Old Covenant period:

Matthew 13:49 (NKJV) "*So it will be at the end of the age. The **angels will come forth, separate** the wicked from among the just.*"

So, the angels who had their place in heaven were to come out of the second heaven (of the Old Covenant) to separate the wicked from the good. Let us remember that the first heaven of the old world was also meant to separate, although we are not

given details of how. By analogy with the second world, we can deduce that the separation in the first world was also to be carried out by angels who were to keep the heavenly order (ordinance) that God established for the old world before the flood, an order that was revealed by God through the "Light" of the first day. Even if we are not told in detail what the heavenly order was for the first world, it did exist, and the punishment of the old world by the flood was the consequence of its transgression. Evidence that this order existed is found in Genesis 6.

Genesis 6:11-12 (NKJV) *"The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So, **God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.**"*

The order we are talking about is this "their way", the order that they have transgressed.

In the expanse of the heaven as time, not as space, God places on the fourth day the lights: the sun, the moon, and the stars (see Genesis 1:14 NASB). The lights have the same purpose as light: "[...] *to separate the day from the night; **let them be signs that show the times, days and years.***" And when we come to the fourth day, we will see that these lights do not refer to the heavenly stars.

Another text with reference to the heaven that needs to be highlighted is the following:

Revelation 6:14 (KJV) *"And the **heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together;** and every mountain and island were moved out of their places."*

From these two passages (Genesis 1:14, Revelation 6:14), it can

be understood that heaven is like a scroll (in ancient times books were scroll-shaped), where times, days and years are "written". The lights in the expanse of heaven, by their light, fulfill their task of separating "day" from "night", i.e. people who walk in the light of the lights, from people who walk in darkness. For a scroll-shaped book to be read, the scroll must first be stretched out. When the reading is finished, the scroll is gathered up again. Likewise, it is in heaven. The book scroll is stretched out and the times, days and years are read, i.e. the things proclaimed in the expanse of heaven by the lights of that "*expanse*" (we shall see that the lights are persons, not stars). When all is fulfilled, heaven is rolled up like a book scroll that closes, since all that is written and proclaimed on the "*expanse of that heaven*", has been fulfilled.

It would be impossible to understand the first world heaven without the clarifications of Jesus and the apostles. Therefore, let's take another look at some passages from the New Testament.

Matthew 5:17-19 (NKJV) *"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, **till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled**. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least **in the kingdom of heaven**; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."*

If we read this passage carefully, we see that the coming of the kingdom of heaven is conditional upon the fulfillment of all things written/prophesied in the Law and the Prophets: "**till all is fulfilled**" (written in the Old Testament).

This fulfillment was to take place before the passing of heaven and earth of the Law.

Jesus says that He came to fulfill what is written in the Law and the Prophets. In other words, He is putting an end to the expanse of heaven and earth of the Old Covenant Law period, for the time has come for it to be fulfilled, completed by Him. So, from this quote we see that

The Lord Jesus makes the passage of heaven conditional upon the fulfillment of all that is written in the Law and the Prophets.

The next verse also tells us about the fulfillment of what is written in the Law and the Prophets.

Luke 21:22 (KJV) "*For these be the **days of vengeance**, that **all things which are written** may be fulfilled.*"

The words of Luke 21 are also spoken by Jesus in the context of his prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem. The days of vengeance are in reference to God's unfaithful Israel, and to the Jerusalem that killed God's prophets throughout Old Covenant history, culminating in Jesus' crucifixion. In these "**days of vengeance**", that were foretold in the prophecy of Deuteronomy chapter 32, "**all things which are written**" (in the Old Testament) **were fulfilled**. Therefore,

if at the destruction of Jerusalem everything written in the Law and the Prophets was fulfilled, then we can no longer say that after the destruction of Jerusalem (in the 1st century) there are still unfulfilled prophecies.

Likewise, in Matthew chapter 24 we are told of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, the coming of the Son of Man and the end of the age (not the physical world, but the **Old Covenant age**). Let's see what Jesus says about heaven in this passage:

Matthew 24:29 (NKJV) *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days **the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.**"*

This "*the powers of the heavens*" with the darkening lights takes place before Christ's return, as Matthew 24:30 goes on to say. This is a reference to the **passing of the Old Covenant spiritual heavens, not the cosmos**, as some Christians still understand. According to God's promise, given in Isaiah 65:17, God was to make new heavens and a new earth; not physical, but spiritual (see also 2 Peter 3:13). Based on the passages quoted so far concerning the heavens, by analogy we can say that the heaven created on the second day of Genesis 1 does not refer to the physical heavenly vault either. In other words, heaven is generally defined in Scripture as follows:

Heaven is an expanse in time, in "spiritual space" (not physical space) of "heavenly government", of God's reign over the earth. The earth (i.e. people) is under the authority of heaven, based on the order or Law that God has established for that time through His revelation.

In the Old Covenant period God's established order was the Law given through Moses. This was to cease with the passing of heaven which was "stretched out" at the giving of the Law (see Isaiah 51:15-16 NKJV). And this passage determined the termination of the reign under the Law.

So, also by analogy, we can consider that in the first world there was a heavenly order of God, similar to that of the period of the Law. Even if we are not told much about the pre-Flood order, there was nevertheless a heavenly order then too, whereby the first world was under the authority of heaven stretched-out on the second day of creation. The order of the first heaven was replaced by the order of the second heaven, i.e. the order of the Old Covenant Law received at Sinai.

Among Christians there are different interpretations and opinions about heaven (and beyond), surely there can't be multiple differing opinions, all accepted as truth. We cannot claim to be guided by the Spirit of God in the understanding we have, and have it led us to contradictory conclusions, not just some in comparison to others, but especially to the teaching and/or conclusions of the apostles (Paul, Peter, James etc.).

Although the subject of apostolic teaching and revelation is a vast subject, which needs to be dealt with much more extensively, nevertheless, to clarify some things, we want to deal with it, very briefly, now.

Our lack of unity in understanding (about heaven/earth and beyond) comes about because we do not take good heed of the apostles' and Jesus' teaching. They did not contradict themselves, as we still do. After the ascension of Jesus and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon them, they, the APOSTLES, were given by the Lord (it is not given to us!) to interpret the revelation of the Scriptures and how should be understood.

We are to follow them, not only as an example of life, but especially in their teaching of the Scriptures. The Apostle Paul says boldly:

1 Corinthians 11:1 (NIV) "***Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.***"

This following in the footsteps of the apostles is not to be seen merely as an example in reference to good works, but primarily regarding their teaching and understanding it. If the understanding is wrong, then the deeds follow that wrong understanding. Timothy is a very good example of following in the footsteps of the apostle Paul by following the "good doctrine".

1 Timothy 4:6 (NKJV) "***If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed.***"

The teaching of Jesus and the apostles also brings understanding of the truth about the three heavens in the Scriptures. To this end, the apostles were given the task of bringing revelation to completeness, ending it in the first century through their writings. This revelation is written, it is completed, on the pages of the New Testament, where we find no contradiction of interpretation of the Scriptures. This is, of course, referring only to the spiritual meaning. In support of the claim that revelation has been completed, concluded by the apostles, let us next see what the apostle Paul tells the Colossians about the Church:

Colossians 1:25-27 (NKJV) "[...] ***I became a minister according to the stewardship from God, which was given to me for you, to fulfill the Word of God, the mystery which has been hidden***

from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

We can see that Paul is the steward of the hidden mystery of the salvation of the Gentiles through the Gospel. Through the revelation received from God, Paul **completes the Word of God**. Of course, not only he, but also the other apostles of Christ (Peter, James, John, etc.) to whom God has given revelations about what was previously hidden, undiscovered in the Scriptures. Things or events that were to happen in their near future, not ours (Paul writes to first century Christians), were also revealed to them! This "*fulfilment*" is **the complete revelation** we mentioned above. In other words,

The New Testament writings reveal the complete Word of God hidden before in the Old Testament.

And if it is complete, then nothing more can be added, **no "revelation"** (or rather, **no imagination**) that can cross one's mind.

The end of the revelation mentioned above does not also refer to that enlightenment of the minds of believers that the Spirit of God is still giving us today for the knowledge and understanding of His Word already revealed in the Scriptures. The reference is to those situations in which "revelations" or interpretations are added, claimed to be from the Lord, while things that are already revealed, explained in the Word of God by the Lord Jesus and the apostles, are ignored or twisted, partially or totally. The New Testament revelation also clarifies the theme of heaven in the Scriptures, as we shall see below.

Having shown that the revelation is complete, let us continue with the explanation of the first world heaven. To this end we must listen to the revelation of the Spirit given to the apostle Peter:

2 Peter 3:5-7 (NKJV) *"For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God **the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water**, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.*

*But **the heavens and the earth which are now** preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the Day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men."*

The Apostle Peter refers to the heavens and the earth before the flood **in the past tense**, and in the next verse (7) he speaks of *"the heavens and the earth which are now"* **in the present tense** ("now" meaning the first century). From this we infer that there was another heaven and earth in Peter's lifetime, not the pre-flood ones. Consequently, it is out of the question to think of it as a reference to physical heaven and earth. These were the same, for nowhere in Scripture is there any mention of another physical creation made by God after the flood. And as we said earlier with reference to other passages, in this one, only the spiritual meaning makes sense.

Based on the texts quoted from the Old Testament and those quoted from the New Testament concerning the heavens, we can say about the heaven of the first world:

The pre-Flood heaven is represented by the angels of that heaven and the order that God, through His revelation, has placed for the people who lived in the first world.

About the earth before the flood, we will speak on when discussing the third day.

Peter is also the apostle who clarifies some things that happened in the first world.

1 Peter 3:18-20 (NASB) *"For Christ also suffered for sins once for all time, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, **having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which He also went and made proclamation to the spirits in prison, who once were disobedient when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water."***

We see that one consequence of the **punishment of the first world** was the "imprisonment" of **rebellious spirits in prison**. This is a clear reference to the people who lived in the first world. They rebelled, sinned, and were sent to the Sheol. Only eight souls escaped from the first world. If there was rebellion, it means there was also order. The rebellion of the spirits/souls of the first world who ended up in the "prison" was directed against the order of heaven that was "expanded" on the second day of creation. And this is inferred from the following passage:

Luke 15:21 (NKJV) *"And the son said to him, 'Father, **I have sinned against heaven** and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son'."*

From Jesus' account we see that the prodigal son realizes that he has sinned against heaven in the first place. None of us considers that the prodigal son **sinned against the vault of physical sky**. His sin was precisely that **he transgressed the Law** given through the angels of heaven at Sinai, which was the **order** established by God for the second world, the world of the Old Covenant. In the Law given on Sinai we find written:

Exodus 20:14 (NKJV) *"You shall not commit adultery."*

The prodigal son sinned in many ways, one of them was that he *"ate his wealth with harlot women"*, and so he sinned against heaven by **breaking the** commandment of the Law.

As we continue our study of heaven, let's consider a few more very relevant passages.

Psalms 102:25-27 (NASB) *"In time of old You founded the earth, and **the heavens are the work of Your hands**. Even they will perish, but You endure; all of them will wear out like a garment; like clothing You change them and they will pass away. But You are the same, and Your years will not come to an end."*

This does not teach us about the aging and perishing of the physical universe, as it might seem at first glance, but teaches us about the earth and heaven that existed when the Psalmist writes, and which had been established in ancient times. This is a reference to the giving of the Old Covenant Law when the heavens were *"established"* and the earth was *"founded"* (the earth = the people of Israel. Its establishment refers to God choosing the people in the covenant at Sinai - see Isaiah 51:15-16). They were old and meant to perish, much like the heavens and earth of the first world before the flood. The physical universe does not age like a garment, but the "garment of the law" with which the Old Covenant people "clothed" themselves to hide the sins nakedness (as Adam clothed himself with the fig leaves) was indeed changed by Christ. God, the Maker of heaven, remains the same, unchanged, unchanging and without end.

In Psalm 97, the Holy Spirit prophesies about Christ as follows:

Psalms 97:6-7 (NKJV) ***"The heavens declare His righteousness, and all the peoples see His glory. Let all be put to shame who***

*serve carved images, who boast of idols. **Worship Him, all you gods.***"

Proof that this Psalm speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ is found in Hebrews 1:5-6: "*To which of the angels did He ever say: **'You are My Son; today I have begotten you?'** And again, **'I will be his Father, and he shall be My Son?'** And when he again brings the firstborn into the world, he says: **'Let all the angels of God worship Him!'***"

So, the One Who receives the worship of the gods (angels) is the Son. This means that the heavens of Psalm 97 proclaim the righteousness of the Son of God. It is not the vault of physical sky that proclaims the righteousness of the Son (righteousness also given to His elect, as we read in Luke 18:7), but the words Scripture that foretells what was to happen. Also, the fact that the heavens refer to Scripture, where it is written about Him, is shown by the following passage:

Hebrews 10:5-7 (NKJV) "*Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: 'Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come— **in the volume of the book it is written of Me—** to do Your will, O God.'*" (see also Psalm 40:6-8)

The "**volume of the book**" represents the heavens that foretell His righteousness. The entire Old Testament has at the center of its message the proclamation of the Son of God. He was proclaimed, in a "hidden" way, in the "*mystery of God*" throughout the ages (see also Colossians 1:26; 2:2).

Psalm 150:1-2 (NASB) "*Praise the LORD! Praise God in His sanctuary; **praise Him in His mighty expanse. Praise Him for His mighty deeds; praise Him according to His excellent greatness.***"

The Lord is praised in the **expanse of heaven**; this "*expanse*" shows His boundless power and greatness, His mighty deeds. These mighty works cannot be only a reference to the impressive physical universe, which was also created by God, but are the great and wonderful works that God has done throughout human history. They are written on the pages of Scripture and proclaimed long before they were fulfilled. An example of this is the passage that has already been quoted, from Isaiah 44:6-7 (NIV), where God says:

*"This is what **the LORD says— Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last**; apart from Me there is no God. **Who then is like Me?** Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and lay out before Me what has happened **since I established My ancient people, and what is yet to come— yes, let them foretell what will come.**"*

and

Deuteronomy 4:32 (NIV) *"**Ask now about the former days, long before your time, from the day God created human beings on the earth; ask from one end of the heavens to the other**. Has anything as great as this ever happened, or **has anything like it ever been heard of?**"*

In the Isaiah passage, the Lord, who is the first and the last, refers to Christ, whose Spirit was present throughout the heavens, throughout human history, even before His incarnation. The things foretold by the Lord, of old, from the creation, chapter 1 of Genesis onwards, were fulfilled or were to be fulfilled, each in its own time. These are *his "great deeds"*, worthy of praise, to which the Psalmist refers.

Particularly remarkable is the passage in Deuteronomy where it says, "**ask from one end of the heavens to the other**", and then

follows the question, "***has anything like it ever been heard of?***" So, across the expanse of the spiritual heavens (not the sky) there are historical accounts describing events, deeds, etc. Surely this passage refers to the history of mankind, beginning at creation, which we find recorded in the Scriptures.

In Psalm 102 the psalmist says that heaven and earth are the **work of God's hands, but from the past**, and they were to perish. But in Psalm 19 David tells us of the **work of God's hands, the work that was to be done in the future** (David's future), in a splendid and very revealing way:

Psalm 19:1-6 NASB ***"The heavens tell of the glory of God; and their expanse declares the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them He has placed a tent for the sun, which is like a groom coming out of his chamber; it rejoices like a strong person to run his course. Its rising is from one end of the heavens, and its circuit to the other end of them; And there is nothing hidden from its heat."***

If we look at the physical sky, of course it too 'speaks' to us of a great work, done by a Great Creator. But if the reference were only to the physical and the seen, then what would happen, for example, to Christians who were born without physical sight and remain so until the end of their lives? Are they deprived of "seeing" the glory of God in the heavens? Certainly not, for the words of the prophet David quoted above have a deeply **spiritual** meaning. Let us remember that the expanse of heaven is not an expanse of physical space, as we are tempted to think, but an expanse in time in a spiritual space. On this expanse throughout Old Testament history the **"work of His hands"** is proclaimed to come in the future of David. This is heralded, recounted, made

known, from day to day, from night to night. The fact that it is said, "*There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard*" makes us think of something written. Has anyone written in the Scriptures about His work? Of course! After the end of creation in Genesis chapter 1 we read:

Genesis 2:2-3 (NASB) "*By the seventh day **God completed His work** which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because on it He rested from **all His work** which God had **created and made**.*"

From the next verse (Genesis 2:4 NKJV) we learn that from God's perspective, His work is "history," but from man's perspective, it was news that was proclaimed from day to day, from night to night, across the "*expanse of heaven*" (i.e. across time). For man, things unfold linearly, in time, and the "**work of His hands**" in Psalm 19 was news for the future of those people at that time (of David). This is also proclaimed by Moses in his song of praise:

Exodus 15:17-18 (NKJV) "*You will bring them in and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, in **the place**, O LORD, which **You have made** for Your own dwelling, **the sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established**. The LORD shall reign forever and ever.*"

Moses foreshadows the work of the Lord Jesus Christ incarnate (Who was to come in his future), which is the **Sanctuary already established by His hands** ("*the place [...] You have made*" – so this in the past, at the end of 6th day of creation – see Rev. 13:8 KJV "*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*"). This leads us to think of the hands of Jesus Christ stretched out and pierced on the cross of Calvary. He also referred to this Temple when He said He would raise it up in three days (see *John* 2:19).

The "*work of His hands*" proclaimed in the expanse of Heaven was to come in David's future, and it refers to the Temple of the Body of Christ, the Church.

This is a work of spiritual creation, of the unseen dimension, which reaches completion only at the end. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Beginning and the End, Alpha and Omega, is the creator of this work. It is a spiritual New Creation, in which all things are made new, being in fact the goal and the burning desire of God's heart. This is the true reality in which the life and love of Christ reigns, these are things that physical eyes cannot see. The seen world and His work is like the first nine months in which the baby lives in a place of shadows, but the unseen world and His spiritual ministry is in fact the aim and desire of God's heart, it is the full life, lived in the light of God's family love, just as we see this symbol after the birth of the baby (see *John 16:21 NKJV*).

The work of His hands, proclaimed in the expanse of heaven, is also shown and identified by the Apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians:

Ephesians 2:10 (NKJV) "***For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.***"

Paul says this referring to the Church, that is, the Temple of His Body, in which the Lord Jesus reigns forever and ever. The "***work of His hands***" declared on the "*expanse of heaven*" in Psalm 19 refers to a spiritual house, the **Temple built of living stones**, people brought to life through faith in the Gospel. This teaching is also reinforced by Peter in his first epistle (see 1 Peter 2:5).

Psalms 19 goes on to say that "***in them*** (the heavens) ***He has placed a tent for the sun***".

This reference cannot be to the physical sun; we cannot think of it as having a tent. But the Sun that is rising from heaven (see *Luke 1:77-78 ESV*), i.e. Jesus Christ has a "tent" made by his hands stretched out on the cross, in which he dwells with his people forever. We are told about this tent in *Revelation 21:3 (NASB)*:

"[...] Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself will be with them and be their God".

Christ is also referred to in the following verse:

"[...] the sun, which is like a groom coming out of his chamber; it rejoices like a strong person to run his course. Its rising is from one end of the heavens, and its circuit to the other end of them [...]" (Psalms 19: 4-6 NASB).

We have clear references in the New Testament where Jesus is spoken of as the bridegroom in the wedding feast (see *Matthew 22:10; 25:10*). The height from which the "Sun" rises to illuminate the "earth" with the warmth of His love, is His Glory which He left for a time until He redeemed His Bride through His sacrifice.

Next David tells us that the "Sun" rises at "***one end of the heavens***", that is, at "***the beginning***", or "ALPHA" (in *Genesis 1:1, 3*), and makes its way ***to the other end of the heavens***, that is, "***at the end***", or "OMEGA" (*Rev. 22:13*). Note that it does not say "sets at the other end", as we would say of the physical sun. Even this detail strengthens our conviction that "*The Sun*" is actually a reference to Christ, who has finished all His work announced previously on the "*expanse of heaven*". All of these passages

define and reinforce the idea that the "*work of His hands*" proclaimed on the expanse of heaven (i.e. on the pages of Scripture) is the Church, the Body of Christ, the New Jerusalem that is coming down from heaven (see Revelation 21).

Since Psalm 19 states that: "*their line has gone out into all the earth, and **their words to the end of the world***", we want to show that this is said about the Gospel proclaimed to the ends of the world.

In the Scriptures heaven and the proclamation of the Gospel are very closely related. Let us remember the words of the Lord Jesus: "*Repent and believe in the Gospel*" in the context of the proclamation of **the kingdom of heaven**.

The argument here is about the heavens, but before we end this topic, we want to answer several questions.

HAS THE GOSPEL BEEN PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD?

To give an answer we must note that David makes a prophecy in Psalm 19, long before it happened, about the proclamation of the Gospel by the Lord's apostles. Confirmation of the fulfillment of this prophecy is made by the apostle Paul, who shows us that the Gospel reached the ends of the earth in the first century.

Romans 10:18 (NKJV) "*But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: "**Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.**"*"

The text in Romans 10:18 quotes from Psalm 19, as shown in the table below. Note carefully the tense of the verbs:

Psalm 19 (NASB)	Romans 10:18 (NKJV)
<i>Their line has gone out into all the earth</i>	<i>Their sound has gone out to all the earth</i>
<i>Their words to the end of the world</i>	<i>Their words to the ends of the world.</i>

The next passage confirms the same thing, that the Gospel was proclaimed in the first century "*to every creature under heaven.*"

Colossians 1:23 (NKJV) "[...] *if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, **and are not moved away from the hope of the Gospel** which you heard, **which was preached to every creature under heaven**, of which I, Paul, became a minister.*"

The apostles were sent by Jesus to preach the good news of the gospel to the ends of the earth (see Acts 1:8). The texts of Romans 10:18 and Colossians 1:23, in the context of which we are told of the preaching of the gospel to the whole "world", confirm that this was accomplished in the apostolic period. The gospel was proclaimed in the first century to the ends of the earth (not physical earth, people of Israel spread among the nations around *The Great/Mediterranean Sea*), **to every creature under the Old Covenant heaven**, not under the physical sky. The earth, heaven and world in these passages belong to the Old Covenant world. This world was earthly, fleshy, "*lying in the evil one*" (see 1 John 5:19), and was to pass away very soon, in the first century.

Concerning the relationship between the salvation of Israel and the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles, we would like to point out that during the apostolic period only a faithful

remnant of Israel was saved, and the Gentiles were saved in their full number, as the apostle Paul proclaimed in Romans 11:25-26 (NKJV) *"For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, **that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.** And so, **all Israel will be saved**, as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.'"*

To avoid any confusion about the above passage, we emphasize that the words *"all Israel will be saved"*, do not refer to Israel nationally/genealogically, but spiritually, following the example of their father Abraham's faith. This is proven by Paul's words in Romans 9:6 (NASB) *"For **they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel.**"* So not all (genealogically speaking) were to be saved (as some still claim), but only the faithful remnant from the first century to the end of the apostolic period, of whom the prophet Isaiah also speaks (see Romans 9:27). As for *"the fullness of the Gentiles"*, this is the number of the saved among the Gentiles (in the first century) in relation to the end of the Old Covenant, before the coming in power of the New Covenant Kingdom (see Mark 9:1), marked by the first century destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem (see Matthew 24, Luke 21). For almost two thousand years these things have been fulfilled, yet there are still many Christians who await a future imagined fulfillment, untaught by Scripture, that will never come to pass. **We Christians are already living SPIRITUALLY in the Kingdom of Christ**, in His New Covenant age which is spiritual in nature (see Luke 17:21).

Why it is still claimed that the so-called "great commission" given to the disciples for the preaching of the Gospel to the whole world is addressed to us? It was addressed to the Apostolic Church of the first century, at the end of the second

world of the Old Covenant. Just as Noah was a "*preacher of righteousness*" (see 2 Peter 2:5) before the end of the first world, so the apostles were preachers of righteousness of the Gospel of Christ at the end of the second world.

Of course, by addressing their "great commission", we do not mean that Christ's Church today is not called to proclaim the Gospel. On the contrary, we believe that the Gospel is to be proclaimed from generation to generation by the Church (see Ephesians 3:21). This proclamation, however, belongs to a world in which things are already made new spiritually (see Revelation 21). It is a new world of a New Covenant, **in whose heaven the love of Christ reigns**, (not the Law) and this Covenant is eternal. How good is this news of the Gospel, which is preached from generation to generation!?

Since there is a very close connection between salvation, punishment by judgment and the passing of the heaven of the Old Covenant, we still want to answer three more questions.

IS THERE SALVATION AFTER THE JUDGMENT OF THE GREAT DAY?

Salvation is linked to the completion of the way to the expanse of heaven spoken of in Psalm 19, and to what Jesus said on the cross, "*It is finished*" (John 19:30). Also, after the judgment of the "*great day*", in Revelation 20, we go on to see that after in Revelation 21, **the New Heaven**, the New Earth and the Tabernacle are revealed.

Revelation 21:6 (NLT) "*And he also said, "It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life."*"

As we have already seen from Psalm 19, the Lord Jesus Christ is the "Sun" who has **made his way** across the expanse of heaven from beginning to end. In Revelation 21:6, after it says, **"It is finished"** we see that the Lord Jesus Christ continues to give eternal life even after the *"judgment of the great day"* (described in Revelation 20). Whoever is thirsty receives the water of life without payment.

The condition for having the *"water of life"* is to be **"thirsty"**. If we are not *"thirsty"*, that is, if we do not desire God in our heart and do not take heed to the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus for our sins, we cannot receive the gift of eternal life that only the Lord Jesus Christ gives. Therefore, **there is salvation, by faith, even after the "judgment of the great day", since this judgment is at the conclusion of the Old Covenant and the judgment of the chosen people under that covenant, not at a supposed end of the physical world** (see Deut. 32:35-36 and Luke 21:20-22).

IS THERE PUNISHMENT AFTER THE JUDGMENT OF THE GREAT DAY?

Whoever does not desire the water from the *"spring of the water of life"*, choosing to live in sin even after the *"judgment of the great day"*, and after the New Heaven and the New Earth have been revealed, endures the second death, that is eternal separation from the presence of God. There is punishment even after judgment and this is proven by the following passage:

Revelation 21:8 (NASB) *"But for the cowardly, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and sexually immoral persons, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, **their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which***

is the second death."

The lake of fire has to be understood symbolically not literally.

DO HEAVEN AND EARTH PHYSICALLY PASS ON JUDGMENT DAY?

We have already shown that the offer of eternal life remains valid after the judgment of Revelation 20. The fact that after the final judgment, at the end of the Old Covenant, there is still the offer of grace to receive eternal life, is very evident, since in Revelation 21:1 (NASB) the first word we read is "***Then***", i.e. what is described next (the New Heaven, the New Earth, the spring of the water of life) follows chronologically ***after the*** judgment of chapter 20. Then we ask: why is it still claimed among Christians that with the judgment comes the passing of heaven and earth in a physical sense? If the seen existence was to pass away at the judgment, then the grace of salvation would cease at the judgment, since all men perished with the burning of heaven and earth. The continuity of the quenching of thirst from the "*the springs of the water of life*", even after judgment, shown in Revelation 21:6, proves that the physical heaven and earth do not pass away at judgment, but what has passed away at judgment is the heaven and earth of the Old Covenant. If after the judgement people would not continue to exist on the physical earth, than there would be no continuity of the "quenching of thirst". The misunderstanding that physical heaven and earth will pass away is based primarily on the following passage:

2 Peter 3:10 (NKJV) "*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which **the heavens will pass away** with a great noise, and **the elements will melt with fervent heat**; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*"

Many Christians interpret this passage literally, which leads them to a very wrong conclusion. In fact, Peter tells us that just as heaven and earth passed away in the days of Noah, so heaven and earth were to pass away in the second world, the world of the Old Covenant. This time the punishment was not to be by flood, but by the Roman army that destroyed the Temple and Jerusalem in the first century (the fourth kingdom of Daniel - according to history - in the AD70).

Luke 21:20-22 (NKJV) *"But when you see **Jerusalem surrounded by armies**, then know that **its desolation is near**. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. **Because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which have been written will be fulfilled.**"*

Vengeance was directed against the unbelievers in the people of Israel, the land of the Old Covenant, who were to perish together with the heaven of the Old Covenant law system.

The work of salvation from generation to generation through the Church, united with Christ (see Ephesians 3:21), was just beginning in all power with the revelation of the New Heaven and the New Earth. Under the New Heaven in which Christ reigns on the basis of His New Covenant, whoever "thirsts" after God, receives the gift of eternal life. This good news of the everlasting Gospel (see Revelation 14:6) is also for us, and for our children, and for our children's children, from generation to generation, *"as many as the Lord our God shall call"* (see Acts 2: 39 NKJV).

Since we have already discussed several passages in which Jesus speaks of the passing of heaven and earth, let us now note what is also written in the epistle to the Hebrews (see also Exodus 19:18):

Hebrews 12:25-28 (NKJV) "*See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. [...] **Whose voice then shook the earth**; but now He has promised, saying, “**Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.**” Now this, “Yet once more,” indicates **the removal of those things** that are being shaken, as of things **that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.** Therefore, since we are receiving **a kingdom which cannot be shaken**, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.*"

This passage recalls the shaking of the earth at Mount Sinai (in the physical sense, there was an earthquake) at the giving of the Law, after which **a new shaking of** not only the earth but also of heaven (in the spiritual sense, this time) is said to take place. This was to be the last shaking (at the passing of heaven and earth of the Old Covenant), for after this shaking **only the things that cannot be shaken were to follow**. And by the fact that the apostle links the things that do not shake to **a kingdom that cannot shake**, that never changes, this reference can only be to the Kingdom of Heaven preached by Jesus and the apostles. The change takes place at the fulfillment of the words written in Revelation 21:1 (NKJV):

"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also, there was no more sea."

The things that are shaken have perished (the heaven and earth of the Old Covenant world), and the things that do not shake, that do not change, have been revealed: a new heaven and a new earth of the New Covenant, the eternal Kingdom of God and of Christ. This is the third heaven, the eternal heaven.

2 Corinthians 12:1-4 (NKJV) "*It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. **I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord:***

*I know **a man in Christ** who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one **was caught up to the third heaven**. And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— how **he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words**, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."*

So, the last heaven is the third heaven, in which the presence of God dwells, and where the Words of God are heard. This is the New Heaven in which Christ reigns together with His Bride - the Church - with whom He is united by the blood of the New Covenant.

In conclusion, let us summarize the main ideas of this chapter:

- The heaven of the first world was not an expanse in physical space, but an expanse in time, in a spiritual space,
- The heaven of the first world was meant to separate the good people from the bad based on the order of that heaven,
- The governing of the heaven of the first world over men was done through the angels of heaven,
- The pre-flood heaven perished at the flood and the fallen angels of the first heaven were cast into the Abyss,
- The heaven of the second world, the world of the Old Covenant, perished with the destruction of the Old Covenant people (in the first century, at the destruction of Jerusalem-AD 70),
- The heaven of the third world, the New Covenant world, is present now through the spiritual reign of Christ, and will never pass away.

DAY 3: THE EARTH AND IT'S VEGETATION

In this chapter we want to show that the earth on the third day of creation is not the planet we live on, but the people God revealed Himself to in the first world. In the same way, the vegetation of the earth does not refer to plants, but also to people. We will show this with passages of Scripture that express this truth.

Let's begin with the passage describing the third day:

Genesis 1:9-13 (NKJV) *"Then God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and **let the dry land appear**"; and it was so. And **God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas**. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so. And **the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind**. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a third day."*

The Earth of the First World

From the passage that describes the creation of the third day, we see that the earth was completely covered with water; then, at God's command, the waters gathered, and the earth appeared out of the waters. This image would seem to depict the globe as we know it today. But as we saw in the explanation about heaven, we will see that the verses which describe the third day also have a **spiritual** meaning. We can't take the literal meaning, even if it is tempting. It is necessary to look at several texts in the

Scripture where we are told about the earth, looking carefully at their contextual meaning, to come to a sound conclusion. To this end, we will study passages from the New and Old Testaments that will help us, by analogy, to understand what the earth and vegetation of the third day of creation represent.

To begin with, let us remember that Jesus tells us in the Parable of the Sower, in Matthew 13, that the seed fell into four kinds of soils. The good soil, into which the seed fell and bore fruit, represents the people who hear the Gospel, understand it, receive it, and bear fruit. So, we see that the soil in this parable does not represent agricultural soil, but people.

Apostle Peter writes:

2 Peter 3:5-6 (NKJV) *"For this they willfully forget: that by the Word of God **the heavens were of old, and the earth** standing out of water and in the water, by which **the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.**"*

We have already shown that this word - earth - found on the pages of Scripture does not refer only to the globe. The quotation from 2 Peter refers to the world before the flood. We are told that **there was** once a heaven and an earth in the old days. The next verse begins like this: **"But the heavens and the earth which are now [...]"** ("now" being the time when Peter writes, i.e., 1st century), so, Peter makes it obvious that there was another heaven and earth in the first century. This means that the heaven of the second day and the earth of the third day, to which he refers, passed at the flood. It was **not the physical heaven and the physical earth that passed away at the flood, but ungodly men**. They transgressed what God commanded; through the heavenly order He gave to the people of the pre-flood world. So, the **"earth" that perished in the flood represents the people of the first world.**

To understand who the people were, who represented the "earth" of the first world, we will look to the second world - the Old Covenant world - to see how God chose his "earth" in this world. Then we will be able to have a much clearer understanding of the "earth" of the first world as well.

We have already mentioned on day two, that in the Old Covenant period the "earth" was represented by the people of Israel (see Isaiah 51:15-16, Deut. 31:30-32:1). The "*present earth*", of which the apostle Peter speaks, is the same "earth" as the one mentioned by the prophets, i.e. the people of the Old Covenant: Israel. If we were to try to define the word "earth" in the Scriptures, we could say that,

the earth, in the spiritual sense, is the people to whom God reveals Himself, at His initiative, making Himself known by the commandments and promises He gives.

There are two reasons for which God chooses Israel as His own "earth":

1. Israel becomes God's "earth" due to the fact that He appeared to their father Abraham, from whom the people of Israel are genealogically derived. Abram receives from the Lord the promise of the land for his seed, after which he calls the Name of the Lord (Gen. 12:7). Calling on the Lord's Name is fundamental to the fulfillment of the promise.

2. After four hundred and thirty years (the time the Jewish people were in Egypt), on the way that Israel travels from Egypt to the promised land, the giving of the Law takes place at Mount

Sinai. By the covenant made, based on the Law, Israel is chosen as the people of the Old Covenant.

Let's read two passages that highlight this argument:

Genesis 12:7-8 (NKJV) "*Then **the LORD appeared to Abram** and said, **“To your descendants I will give this land.”** And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; there he built an altar to the LORD **and called on the name of the LORD.***"

Exodus 19:5-6 (NKJV) "*Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then **you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.***"

(please note the future tense of the promise)

In other words, of all people, on "the earth", I have chosen you, and you will be Mine, "**a special treasure to Me above all people,**" if you will keep My Covenant. So the choosing of Israel as His people was conditioned by keeping the covenant. The voice they were to listen to and the covenant they were to keep was not just the "shadows of the law" at Sinai, but the Voice of Christ and the New Covenant made in His blood.

This is the meaning of the passage: first there are shadows, and in the future the true, spiritual reality which was to come, "*a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession*" (1Pet . 2:9).

Next, in Exodus chapter 20, we read that Moses together with the people of Israel receives the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai. Then, beginning in chapter 21, the Lord commands many other laws that the people were to fulfill. So, the choosing of Israel as a people, as the Old Covenant "earth", was made based on the covenant at Sinai, through the giving of the Law.

By analogy, we can understand that even in the pre-Flood world, God, in a similar way, chose an "earth", a people to be His. We can be sure that God also revealed Himself in the first world even though we have very little written about it. God's revelation for the first world is not presented to us as thoroughly as we see it, in detail, in the second world, through the Law.

Before entering the ark, Noah receives the following commandment from the Lord:

Genesis 7:2 (NKJV) "*You shall take with you **seven each of every clean animal**, a male and his female; **two each of animals that are unclean**, a male and his female;*"

This proves that in the first world there was also a revelation of what was clean or unclean, for it is seen that Noah had this knowledge. We also have a very brief account of what God commanded Adam in the Garden of Eden, commandments that represent an ordinance, a reflection of God's will. Then, the fact that Abel and Cain offered sacrifices to the Lord shows that a system of sacrifices, similar to that of the Old Covenant, already existed in the first world, and that they could only know it through revelation from God.

Although the history of the first world is contained only in the first seven chapters of Genesis, in chapter 4, verse 26, we see that **at the birth of Enosh, people began to call upon the Name of the Lord**. This emphasis of the Scripture is very important. Similarly, in the second world we saw that Abram also called on the name of the Lord after He appeared to him. This eventually led to his tribe being chosen as God's people. The fact that the people began to call on the name of the Lord, at the birth of Enosh, leads us to understand, implicitly, that God revealed Himself to them before. This enlightenment was possible because God said in the first day, "*Let there be light.*"

No one can call on God's Name unless He reveals Himself to him first, and no one can know God without His revelation.

As we have shown, Israel was the "earth" over which God reigned during the period of the Law. God's covenant with Israel was made based on the Law of Sinai which was given through angels (see *Galatians* 3:19, *Acts* 7:53) by the hand of the mediator. Angels are heavenly beings (ministering spirits, see *Hebrews* 1:14) who watched over the people of the Old Covenant. They gave God's blessing upon those who fulfilled the Law, and severely punished any transgression of God's Law (see *Hebrews* 2:2). God had exercised his dominion over "the earth" in the time of the Law through the angels of heaven. The Old Testament abounds with the work of angels. Here are a few examples:

Daniel 3:28 (NKJV) "*Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, **who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God!**"*"

Psalms 78:49 (NKJV) "*He cast on them the fierceness of His anger, wrath, indignation, and trouble, **by sending angels of destruction among them.***"

God's choosing of His "earth" for the Law period occurs when He reveals Himself to Israel at Sinai. Today, we have also His revelation through the Lord Jesus Christ, based on a New Covenant. Since God revealed Himself before the incarnation of

Jesus, the following question arises:

What the revelation was like before Christ came into the world?

The answer can be given without any doubt: incipient, unfinished and incomplete. Revelation in the Old Testament was limited, being given progressively, as is shown in the opening words of *Hebrews 1:1-4* (NKJV):

"God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; **who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person**, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, **having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.**"

We see that the revelation was progressive, "*at various times and in various ways*", but in the end it reaches completion through the Son, being far superior to the revelation of the Law given through angels. The Son, "*who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person*", inherited from God "*the name which is above every name*" (see *Philippians 2:9* NKJV). There is no greater revelation than that which was given through His Son, and through Him it was being brought to completion. The New Testament, with the last book Revelation, brings the revelation to an end, because it is complete, perfected, concluded. To the "earth" of the first and second world, the Lord's name was proclaimed **through angels** (the Law was given through angels - *Hebrews 2:2*, *Galatians 3:19*) **being an elementary revelation** (see *Galatians 4:3; 4:9*), but in the end, the Lord became human to reveal Himself fully to us.

The knowledge of God - the revelation - is complete, made perfect in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the first two worlds, each with its "*earth*", had only a beginning revelation. The earth of each world is represented by the people who have experienced God's revelation. And their history in the Scriptures is presented through genealogy. So, let's spend some time looking at genealogies.

Genealogies of the First World

In the first world, called by the apostle Peter the "*ancient world*" (see 2 *Peter* 2:5 ESV), Scripture presents two genealogies:

- **The first genealogy**, from Genesis chapter 4, is of Cain. It was the genealogy of a **man** who was cursed by God (Genesis 4:11), of a murderer (it was from the evil one - see 1 John 3:12), who killed the one who was to be the "**seed**" for that world, the righteous Abel. Here is what Eve says at the birth of Seth in Genesis 4:25 (NKJV) "[...] *she bore a son and named him Seth, "For God has appointed **another seed for me instead of Abel**, whom Cain killed.*"
- **The second genealogy** is presented in Genesis 5. This is the genealogy **of the patriarchs of the first world**, through the son Seth who replaced the "seed" of Abel. From the genealogical line of Seth was to come the "**SEED**", the Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of the seed through Seth was to take place only at the end of the second world, the world of the Old Covenant.

Although in this chapter we are primarily talking about the earth

of the first world, we need to see two passages that clarify Abel's importance to the first world.

Matthew 23:35 (NKJV) "[...] *that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, **from the blood of righteous Abel** to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.*"

Hebrews 12:24 (NASB) "[...] *and to Jesus, the mediator of a New Covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, **which speaks better than the blood of Abel***".

First, we see that Jesus calls Abel righteous. Then in the text from Hebrews we are shown that Abel's blood is placed alongside and, in some way, compared to the blood of the New Covenant of the Lord Jesus Christ. This reinforces the above statement about Abel's being the "**seed**" for the pre-Flood world. The stopping of the first world's "seed" by the murderer Cain has a very important significance. Through Cain's iniquity, the "*ancient world*" was left without "*righteous Abel*," and the crushing of the serpent's head, promised by God in Genesis 3:15, did not occur during the first world. God decided to destroy in the first world everything that was alive. Every creature had spoiled its way on earth, including "*the earth*," i.e., those who descended from the patriarchs.

Having seen what Abel's purpose was for the first world, let's see what else we are told about the "earth" of the first world in the following passages:

Genesis 6:6 (NKJV) "*And **the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth**, and He was grieved in His heart*".

Genesis 6:13 (NASB) "*Then God said to Noah, **“The end of humanity has come before Me; for the earth is filled with***

***violence because of people; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.*"**

Luke 17:26-27 (NKJV) "*And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: **They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage**, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.*"

In the first passage we note that God was sorry that He had made man on earth. Of course, such a statement surprises us. How could the Lord be sorry that He made Seth who is in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus? The Lord's sorrow may have referred to people outside the genealogy of the patriarchs, such as Cain, of whom Eve said, "*I have gotten **a man** with the help of the Lord*" (see *Genesis 4:2* ESV). The devil, through the **man** Cain, shed the blood of righteous Abel, trying to stop the seed. He knew that the "*Seed of the woman*" (see *Genesis 3:15*) would crush his head. Sometime after Cain's killing of Abel, we see the end of the first world take place through (almost) complete destruction. Victory in the first world was on the side of the devil. He is the one that "*defeated the nations*", as said in the prophecy of Isaiah:

Isaiah 14:12 (NASB) "***How you have fallen from heaven, you star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to earth, you who defeated the nations!***"

The one who was to be cast out of heaven - Lucifer, the old serpent, the Devil, Satan - "*defeated the nations*" and ruled over a world conquered by the word of his murderous lie (see *Genesis 3:1-5*). The salvation of the world was to come only when the head of the "Serpent" was crushed, i.e. when the lie, of which he is the father, is no longer believed by men. **The place where the head of the "Serpent" is crushed is the mind of man**, after it is

enlightened by the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Through the Gospel, the lie by which the Serpent discredited God before man in Eden, by casting doubt on His Word, saying these words: "**Has God really said [...]?"**, is overcome. Man's fall came as a result of his belief in the Serpent's lie.

In the passage from Genesis 6:13, we saw that God decided to destroy everything living, together "*with the earth.*" The earth of the first world could be none other than the genealogy of the ten patriarchs who bore "*sons and daughters*" (see Genesis 5). Unlike the genealogy of the patriarchs, when the genealogy of Cain is presented, the name son or daughter is never used in the birth of his descendants, but only: he begat Enoch (not the patriarch Enoch), Enoch was the father of Irad, etc. This was a bad genealogy, coming out of a murderer who was cursed by the Lord.

In Genesis 6:2 (NKJV) we are told that "*the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.*" The name "*sons of God*" is a reference to the genealogy of the ten patriarchs. They took wives from outside their genealogy, and through this union the "earth" of the first world was corrupted. A similar example is in the people of Israel - the "earth" of the second world – who, through their union with pagan women, fell into the sin of idolatry. Then let us not forget that Cain is said to be "*a man*", so the phrase "*daughters of men*" may refer to women in his genealogy, not daughters in the genealogy of the patriarchs.

There is speculation among Christians that the "*sons of God*" were fallen angels. But angels are spirits, so they could not have had wives. A fallen angel does not become a man with a physical body, but a demon, who is also a spirit.

The fact that the Serpent prevailed in the first world, follows the

Scriptural pattern that teaches, that first comes what is carnal, earthly, fallen and dead in sin. This happened in abundance in the first world, which was a fallen world, dead in sin, lost, left without salvation and without a savior. Death overcame the first world and the world remained in this state until its destruction by the flood, with no resurrection from death during this world. The resurrection was to come only at the end of the second world, through Christ.

The righteous Noah, who "*found grace in the eyes of the Lord*", was chosen by God to make the transition to the second world. Through him and his family, God established a new world at the end of which the Savior Jesus Christ would come. What is spiritual comes last and is represented by the gift of eternal life that believers in Jesus receive, having been raised from the dead. The LIE of the Serpent gave death, the TRUTH of God, which consists in the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, shown by the fact that He sacrificed Himself on the cross for the sins of the world, gives eternal life. The "*good wine*" is left to the last, another symbol for what is spiritual, another symbol pointing to Christ (see Wedding at Cana - John 2:10).

Now let's see how the "earth" of the first world was taken out of the water. To this end let us note what the following quote says:

Genesis 4:26 (NASB) "*To Seth also **a son was born**; and he named him **Enosh**. Then people began to call upon the name of the LORD.*"

What this passage reveals is very important. The moment when people began to call on the Name of the Lord brought a great change in the first world. After God had previously revealed Himself through the Light and the stretching of the first Heaven, He was first called by men at the birth of Enosh. This was in fact the beginning of the emergence of the "earth" from the waters

of a world, which did not know God, lying in the darkness of "*the face of the deep*" waters.

We have already mentioned that Abram also called upon the Name of the Lord in the second world, and this had a consequence. Let's quote the passage again:

Genesis 12:6-8 (NKJV) "*Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land. Then **the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land."** And there **he built an altar to the LORD**, who had appeared to him. And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; **there he built an altar to the LORD and called on the Name of the LORD.**"*

Having seen that the **Name of the Lord** has been **called** in each world, we want to highlight the similarity of the bringing out of the waters of the "earths" corresponding to the first two worlds. To begin with, let us remember that God makes a covenant in *Genesis* 15 with Abram, and then in *Genesis* 17 makes a covenant with Abraham (receiving a new name), so there are **two covenants** (see the evidence in *Galatians* 4:21-24). Abram's descendants through Isaac and then through Jacob with his twelve sons (which are the twelve tribes of Israel), finally give "birth" to the "earth" of the Old Covenant, i.e. the people of Israel.

The similarity of the two "earths" corresponding to the first two worlds (before the flood and after the flood) coming out of the waters is impressive. Just as the first earth was brought out of the waters, by the Word of God (see 2 Peter 3:5), so was the second earth. Let's now look at the texts that support this fact:

Exodus 2:10 (KJV) "*And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses (meaning, **draw out/pull out**): and she said, because I drew him out of the water.*"

These prophetic words spoken by Pharaoh's daughter show us, long before, that Moses was chosen by God to carry out His plan, for His people, who were then in the bondage of Egypt.

Exodus 13:17-18 (NKJV) "*Then it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that **God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near**; for God said, "Lest perhaps the people change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt. So, **God led the people around by way of the wilderness of the Red Sea**. And the children of Israel went up in orderly ranks out of the land of Egypt."*

We see that Moses, whose name means "pulled out", got this name because he was rescued, **pulled out of the waters**. The name "pull out" is given by Pharaoh's daughter, in whose regard, perhaps to our surprise, Scripture makes the same remark as in Eve's at the birth of Seth (see *Genesis 4:25*). The words we are referring to are: "*for, she said [...]*", and in both cases these words have a prophetic meaning. To see this clearly, let's put the two texts side by side:

Exodus 2:10 (KJV) "*[...] and she called his name **Moses: and she said**, because I drew him out of the water.*"

Genesis 4:25 (NASB) "*[...] and named him **Seth, for, she said**, "God has appointed me another child in place of Abel, because Cain killed him."*

Moses, the one "*drawn out of the waters*", is called by God to lead the people of Israel out of the bondage of the "waters of the

sea of Egypt" into the land promised to their father Abram. And as we have seen in the passage in Exodus 13, the Lord leads the people on a journey into the wilderness, to the Red Sea, precisely so that the sea may be before them.

Let's take a moment to observe how beautifully this event relates to the one in Genesis 1:9-13 (symbolically), which describes the first earth drawn from the water.

This "pulling out" of the people is done by a great miracle, namely **through** and **out of the Red Sea**, while the Egyptians who were following them are drowned by the waters of the sea. This is the bringing out of the waters of the second "earth"; a literal bringing out of/through the sea and a pulling out of the people/nations, a coming out of the "sea" of Egypt's bondage. Then follows their election as the Lord's covenant people through the Law given on Mount Sinai. Next passage highlights this:

Leviticus 20:24 (NKJV) *"But I have said to you, "You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey." I am the LORD your **God, who has separated you from the people.**"*

This taking in possession of the land and setting them aside, is a **fulfillment** (we're talking about the shadows in the Old Covenant) of what God promised Abram, when he built an altar and **called on the Name of the Lord**.

Note that the people of Israel became the "earth" of the second world, only after:

- God reveals Himself to Abram,
- Abram calls on the Name of the Lord,
- The "earth" is brought out of the waters of the sea by Moses.

In the first world, we see the same elements, in which God first reveals himself through Light and Heaven. At the birth of Enosh (son of Seth) people begin to call upon the name of the Lord, who revealed Himself to them, as He would do later to Abram. At God's command the 'earth' of the first world is brought out of the waters that 'covered' it.

From the story of the promise given to Abram, we can learn that there is no salvation, no deliverance, without calling on the name of the Lord. It is God who chooses to reveal Himself to man, but the calling of His name must be done by the one to whom He has revealed Himself to. Abram did this, because he believed God by the Word, and behold, God brought salvation to his tribe through Moses. At the right time He chose the people of Israel, Abram's seed as His people.

The people of Israel are the second "earth" that God brought out of the waters of the sea, rescued from the "waters of the nation of Egypt", just as their leader Moses was rescued from the waters of the river of Egypt. This deliverance brings the fulfillment of the prophetic Word, about the land of the Old Covenant, given by God to Abram in *Genesis* 15. The prophetic word given to **Abraham** in *Genesis* 17, about the land of the New Covenant, was to be fulfilled after more than two millennia, when the "Seed", Christ, came. This promise refers to the "*heavenly homeland*", which is of another creation, another world, having a spiritual nature.

Let's now return to the passage in *Genesis* 6 that we have already partially discussed. In it we see that God decides to destroy the man he made.

*Genesis 6:5-7 (NKJV) "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that **every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.** And the LORD*

*was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So, the LORD said, "**I will destroy man whom I have created** from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them."* "

Genesis 6:13 (NKJV) *"And God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for **the earth is filled with violence through them**; and behold, **I will destroy them with the earth**"."*

This filling of the earth with violence was caused by the union of the sons of God with the daughters of men. It is the union of the sons of the genealogy of the patriarchs, who walked with God (Enoch walked with God, Noah walked with God), with the daughters of men, not with the daughters of the patriarchs. Blessing and curse cannot be joined. The genealogy of those who called on the name of the Lord cannot be joined with sin, without heavy consequences. The result of their union was the spoiling of the land of the first world. It was not the dust that was spoiled, but the people of God in that world, the descendants of the patriarchs who had previously called on the name of the Lord. That is why God says, "*I will destroy them with the earth*". We see that the earth is treated as a separate entity from other people and cannot represent the globe. The physical earth has not been destroyed; it has not been exchanged for another. To the surprise of many, Scripture does not teach that this will ever happen. The earth that has been destroyed are the sons and daughters of the patriarchs. Their fathers called upon the name of the Lord, but their children spoiled their father's way.

According to the calculation of years based on the genealogy of the ancient world, the flood occurred 1656 years after Adam's creation (not after the creation of the universe). The longest living patriarch - Methuselah - who lived 969 years, dies in the year of the flood, but not drowned by the flood. None of the

patriarchs are punished by the waters of the flood, only their descendants who have gone astray. It is through the flood that the end of the first world occurs. And about this world, which lasted ~1656 years, the Scripture tells us all about it very briefly in the first seven chapters of Genesis. For a proper understanding of what happened then, we need to pay close attention to the New Testament revelation whenever references are made to the world before the flood.

We have seen from all the texts quoted so far that

the "earth", spoken about in the Scripture on the third day, includes the genealogy of the patriarchs of the first world.

Vegetation of the First World

Let us now try to understand what vegetation is spoken of in Genesis 1:11, where it mentions grass with seed and trees with fruit and seed.

At first glance after God brings the earth out of the waters, he commands vegetation to sprout on the earth, in the natural sense. Things are not as they seem at first glance. God's speech is also spiritual in *Genesis* 1:11. Having shown that the "earth" of the third day is to be understood spiritually, so the vegetation of the earth too, must have a spiritual meaning.

Genesis 49:22 (NKJV) "***Joseph is a fruitful branch***, A fruitful branch by a spring; its branches hang over a wall."

In Jacob's blessing of Joseph, he sees him as the shoot of a fruitful tree, though he was speaking of his son. Joseph was also

a fruitful tree with seed, and his seeds are his sons: Ephraim and Manasseh.

Genesis 48:11 (NKJV) *"And Israel said to Joseph, "I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, **God has also shown me your offspring!**"*

Also, David speaking of the man who does not go to the counsel of the wicked, says:

Psalms 1:3 (NASB) *"**He will be like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.**"*

So, it becomes obvious that references in Scripture to trees, fruit and seed are often about people. Let's look at a few more passages where vegetation represents people:

Isaiah 5:7 (NKJV) *"**For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant.** He looked for justice, but behold, oppression; for righteousness, but behold, a cry for help."*

Jeremiah 12:1-3 (NKJV) *"Righteous are You, O LORD, when I plead with You; yet let me talk with You about Your judgments. **Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are those happy who deal so treacherously? You have planted them, yes, they have taken root; they grow, yes, they bear fruit.** You are near in their mouth but far from their mind. But You, O LORD, know me; You have seen me, and You have tested my heart toward You. Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter and prepare them for the day of slaughter."*

Matthew 3:8-10 (NKJV) *"Therefore **bear fruits** worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have*

*Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even **now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.**"*

In these passages we see very clearly that people are spoken of metaphorically as represented by trees, vines, etc., and in the last quotation, John the Baptist tells people, that they are to bear good fruit like a good tree. Then he speaks to them of punishment, using the image of a tree that does not bear good fruit and is to be cut down.

The same language is used by Jesus.

Matthew 7:18-20 (NKJV) "**A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore, by their fruits you will know them.**"

In this passage, the image of a tree bearing good or bad fruit is used for people doing good or bad deeds.

So, what in *Genesis* 1:11-12 would appear to be natural vegetation is not, since it is not the literal meaning that is correct, but the spiritual (symbolic) meaning, and vegetation refers to people. If it were vegetation in the natural, physical sense, it would need natural light to sprout. And if we were to consider the fourth daylights to be physical, then they did not yet exist, so the natural light that is radiated by the natural sun would not exist either. Therefore, the literal meaning is unacceptable.

In *2 Samuel* 23, David prophesies about the Lord Jesus, but uses the reality of nature for symbolic speech.

2 Samuel 23:4 (ESV) "*He dawns on them like the morning light,*

like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth."

So, we have it very clearly expressed in the Scripture that it takes natural rain and natural sunlight for natural greenery to sprout and grow. If we consider the greenery on the third day of creation to be natural, then the impossibility of it sprouting is obvious, because of the lack of natural sunlight.

In the texts quoted above we have seen only a few examples of spiritual speech using different symbols. Scripture also has many such passages in which it speaks of people using the image of plants/trees: vine, fig, olive, cedar, etc. Who wishes to research them can find them in Scripture. (see 2 Chr. 25:18, Jud. 9:7-21)

Let's clarify even more what the vegetation on the third day represents. To this end we place the following passage next to the text describing the third day:

Genesis 2:4-8 (NKJV) *"This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, **in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown.** For the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and there **was no man** to till the ground; but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground. And **the LORD God formed man** of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. **The LORD God planted a garden** eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed."*

Even if we repeat passages that we have talked about before, this helps us to see the differences between *Genesis 1* and *Genesis 2* regarding the creation of vegetation. In *Genesis 1* this takes place before the making of man on the sixth day (in the idea that we

would consider this to be the first man, Adam). In *Genesis* 2 we see that there was no tree, no grass, and vegetation is created after Adam's creation from the dust of the earth: later "*the Lord God planted a garden*". We notice that things have a reversed order in the presentation of *Genesis* 2 versus *Genesis* 1. We emphasize this for those who still say that the third day would be about the creation of vegetation in the natural sense. This apparent conflict cannot be resolved unless we consider the spiritual meaning for "vegetation" on the third day. In fact, it is very plausible that the pre-Flood genealogies are represented by grass and trees, namely:

- the genealogy of Cain, and
- genealogy of the patriarchs.

The very fact that the Scripture emphasizes "*grass that bears seed after its kind, and trees that bear fruit and have their seed in them after their kind*," urges us to consider the possibility that the pre-Flood genealogies are represented by grass and trees. Seed speaks to us of a genealogical continuity, not a plant one, and with reference to trees it is emphasized that they "*bear fruit*" not just give seed for genealogical continuity. The grass merely continues its "variety" through seed.

Let's notice how grass is spoken of in the following passages:

Psalms 37:1-2 (NASB) "***Do not get upset because of evildoers, do not be envious of wrongdoers. For they will wither quickly like grass, and decay like green plants.***"

Psalms 92:7 (NASB) "***When the wicked sprouted up like grass and all who did injustice flourished, it was only that they might be destroyed forevermore.***"

Revelation 8:7 (NASB) "*And the first sounded, and there followed*

*hail and fire, mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and **all green grass was burnt up.**"*

(see also 1 Pet. 1:24)

So, the wicked are likened to the passing grass. Cain was of the wicked, and those of his genealogy were like him (see 1 *John* 3:12). And in the second world we have a similar example through Jacob and Esau. These two brothers also give rise to two genealogies. Jacob gives birth to the genealogy of Israel, and Esau gives birth to the genealogy of Edom. The prophet *Malachi* says that God loved Jacob but hated Esau (*Malachi* 1:2-3).

The genealogy of the patriarchs through Seth (Abel's replacement) represents those who called on the name of the Lord; they gave birth to sons and daughters. These sons spoiled their way by marrying the daughters of men. Because of their rebellion, God sent them by the flood into "prison," as the apostle Peter teaches in 1 Peter 3:18-20. Since the New Testament speaks of the fall of the first world, we will spend some time to clarify its fate.

The punishing of the First World

We know from the Scripture that the Lord Jesus Christ was raised not only in the body but also in the Spirit; He went in the Spirit to preach the Gospel to the dead of the first and second worlds. Let see this in the passages that follow:

1 Peter 3:18-20 (NASB) "*For Christ also suffered for sins once for all time, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but **made alive in the spirit; in which He also went and made proclamation to the spirits in prison, who once were disobedient when the patience of God***

kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water."

1 Peter 4:4-7 (NASB) "*In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them in the same excesses of debauchery, and they slander you; **but they will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.** For this reason, the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh but live according to God in the spirit. **The end of all things is near**; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer."*

The good news of the Gospel was also preached by the Lord to the "spirits in prison", to those punished in the first world by the flood. How was it possible for the Gospel to be preached to the dead? For what purpose did the Lord do this?

We recognize that the answer to these questions is not easy. When we talk about the dead, we enter a realm that is unknown and difficult to understand. However, given that God is just to all people, in whatever period of history they lived, He had to show His justice to all. Those who lived before the incarnation of Christ did not have the APOGEE OF REVELATION that is the GOSPEL of Christ, but only a partial revelation, the "*elementary principles of the world*" (see *Colossians* 2:20 NASB). The saints who lived in the first two worlds hoped and believed in God's promise of resurrection from the dead (see *Genesis* 3:15; *Acts* 13:33). Although the saints believed in the resurrection from the dead, prior to the incarnation of Christ there was no resurrection from the spiritual death that came through the first Adam. The resurrection was brought about by Christ, the first risen in the Spirit. Christ could be the first resurrected only in the Spirit! Resurrections of the physical body were also during the Old Covenant, and after a while those who were physically

resurrected died again. But no one was resurrected spiritually, in the Spirit, until after the resurrection of Christ. The physical resurrection was in and for the seen world, but the spiritual resurrection is in and for the unseen world, where the fellowship of the full presence of God is (God is spirit). It is the Spirit who gives life for the unseen world, and this is eternal, and he who receives it enters the spiritual kingdom of God.

Perhaps one would understand that even in the third world of the New Covenant in which we now live, those who have died physically can still be saved. We do not believe this at all since Hades (Sheol) no longer exists (this will be shown later in this study). In *Revelation* 20:14 (NASB) we read: "*Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.*" The Sheol existed as a waiting place until the return of Christ through which the third world was brought into existence. This is understandable, given that in the first two worlds there was no resurrection from spiritual death. But after the "*judgment of the great day*" (we will show this during the study) and for the dead of the first two worlds, shown in *Revelation* chapter 20, the existence of Sheol as a waiting place no longer makes sense. The One Who was waited for, that is, Christ, has returned spiritually and brought the new Heaven and the new Earth (spiritual, not physical). After this event, whoever believes in the Gospel has eternal life through resurrection in the spirit, and whoever does not believe remains in the spiritual death of the first Adam, and "[...] *shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power*" (2 *Thessalonians* 1:9 NKJV).

The earth of the third day of creation represents the genealogy of the ten patriarchs of the first world, and the vegetation represents other people who lived in the first world.

DAY FOUR: THE LIGHTS

In this chapter we want to show that the lights made on the fourth day are not stars, but people inspired by the Holy Spirit to give spiritual light. Based on the revelation they received, they enlighten the people who were God's "earth".

Genesis 1:14-19: (NASB) *"Then God said, **“Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and they shall serve as signs and for seasons, and for days and years; and they shall serve as lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth”**; and it was so. God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also. God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, and **to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness**; and God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day."*

This passage shows that the lights in the expanse of heaven were made:

- to separate day from night and light from darkness,
- to be signs to show the times, days and years,
- to light the earth and rule the day and night.

The separation of light from darkness is also mentioned on the first day. These lights were signs that show on the expanse of Heaven things that are temporal: times, days and years. "Signs" and "times" are words that refer to events, to changes that were taking place (or were to take place) on the "earth" under the expanse of "heaven". Of course, the earth does not refer to planet earth, but to people who are illuminated with the spiritual light of those lights, in an expanse in time, in which God rules by the order or ordinance He has given through His Word. As in the

case of the first three days, here too we must realize that the same **spiritual** speech is present, even though the presentation of things is made through images from the seen world. The light, the events and the changes that are shown through the LIGHTS in the expanse of heaven are directed to the earth, that is, to His people.

Let's remember an example from the Scripture, where again the lights are considered persons.

Genesis 37:9-10 NASB *"Then he had yet another dream, and informed his brothers of it, and said, "Behold, I have had yet another dream; and behold, **the sun and the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.** He also told it to his father as well as to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have had? Am **I and your mother and your brothers actually going to come to bow down to the ground before you?**""*

The interpretation of Joseph's dream, given by his father Jacob, is also in the spiritual sense; he does not even think of the physical stars in the sky. Jacob with his sons are the founders of the Old Covenant people - Israel - so the reference to his family as represented by the sun, moon, and stars we believe is somehow related to the fourth-day lights. This dream is a prophecy of the Holy Spirit that was to be fulfilled in its time. A literal understanding would be nonsense. Although we have many examples like this in the Scriptures, there are still many who support the literal interpretation of the Scriptures. The correct and unique interpretation of the Scripture is given by its author, that is, the Holy Spirit. The Apostles of the Lord are the first that received the Holy Spirit, and they reveal to us the spiritual understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures when they refer to them in the New Testament writings. In *Revelation* 11:8 (NKJV) we even find the expression "[...] *which spiritually is*

called [...]", in the sense of spiritual understanding. We must follow the same spiritual way of apostolic interpretation, for the other passages of Scripture, to which the apostles did not make a clear and explicit reference in the New Testament.

Following this spiritual understanding, **it is very plausible that on the fourth day (of creation) we already have a new world** - the post-Flood world - the world of the Old Covenant, which had as its light the revelation of God through the Law given by Moses. The old world was destroyed by the flood, and the passage between the two worlds was made through Noah's ark of salvation, in which there were eight souls. They were rescued from the waters of the flood and a new world was to be born from Noah's family. Shem, Noah's son, is the first of the ten patriarchs after the flood, and Abram is the tenth. Among Abram's descendants, or rather Abraham, is Jacob, or Israel. God's "earth" in this new world was the people of Israel chosen under the Law of Sinai, given through Moses, the mediator of the Old Covenant.

Next, we make some very important observations about the days of the Old Covenant world.

The fact, that the Old Covenant world unfolds over the three days of creation in *Genesis* 1 (day 4,5,6), is shown by God speaking to Moses as follows:

Exodus 3:18 (NIV) *"The elders of Israel will listen to you. Then you and the elders are to go to the king of Egypt and say to him: 'The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us. **Let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the Lord our God.**'"*

Exodus 5:3 (NIV) *"Then they said 'The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Now let us take **a three-day journey into the***

wilderness to offer sacrifices to the Lord our God, or he may strike us with plagues or with the sword."

Exodus 8:27 (NIV) "**We must take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the Lord our God, as he commands us.**"

These passages cause us to wonder if God taught Moses to tell a lie to Pharaoh (of course not!), since we know that He intended to lead the people out of the bondage of Egypt for good. Then, after a three-day journey in the wilderness, they were to serve the Lord by offering sacrifices. We note that the Scripture does not show that this would have happened. After the people are miraculously delivered through the Red Sea and Pharaoh and his army are drowned in the sea, Moses and the people sing the song of the Lord's victory that we find in Exodus 15. It is surprising what we are told after this song:

Exodus 15:22 (NIV) "**Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the Desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water.**"

The three (calendar) days of wandering in the wilderness were fulfilled, and instead of offering sacrifices to the Lord, as we would have expected, they grumbled because they were thirsty, and the waters of Marah were bitter. The Lord shows Moses a piece of wood (a tree trunk in the KJV translation – remember that Jesus was hung on wood) which he throws into the water. The water became sweet, healed, and good to drink.

In our understanding the three days of travelling in the wilderness are a pattern that shows us that the whole period of the Old Covenant was a spiritual wilderness, a bitterness and a terrible "drought".

The three calendar days symbolize the days of creation in *Genesis* 1 - day 4,5,6 - as periods of Israel's history. On the sixth day the voice of the one crying in the wilderness is heard: *"Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God"* (*Isaiah* 40:3 NKJV – see also *Mal.* 4:6). John the Baptist was this voice, the forerunner of the Lord Jesus. Through his Incarnation, Jesus came to end the "wilderness" period of the Old Covenant in which there was tribulation and suffering.

In the next passage, also from *Exodus* 15, God promises healing to Israel even before they are struck with any plague.

*"He said: 'If you listen carefully to the Lord your God and do what is right in His eyes, if you pay attention to this commands and keep all His decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, **for I am the Lord who heals you.**'"* (*Exodus* 15:26 NIV)

Healing comes **after** the three-day journey in the wilderness, metaphorically speaking, as the next text also shows:

Hosea 6:1-2 (NIV) *"Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces, but **he will heal us**, he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. **After two days he will revive us, on the third day he will restore us that we may live in his presence.**"*

He who quenches the "thirst" of the soul forever has come to give the water of life free of charge to everyone who believes in Him (see also *Rev.* 21:6). The twelve springs of Elim, which they reached after leaving Marah, speak to us in a concealed way about the water that was to be given by Jesus, water that would *"become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life"*. (*John* 4:14 NIV)

Another passage that refers to three calendar days as a shadow, as a pattern of the reality of the last three days of creation (4,5,6) is:

Exodus 19:10-11 (NIV) "*And the LORD said to Moses, 'Go to the people and **consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes and be ready by the third day, because on that day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.**'*"

On the third day of the second world, the world of the Old Covenant, the sixth day of creation in Genesis 1, the Lord truly came down from heaven. This is shown by the Lord Jesus in the following words:

John 3:13 (NKJV) "*No one has ascended to heaven but **He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man** who is in heaven.*"

At Sinai the Lord "came" in a thick cloud, like a shadow of reality, from which only His voice was heard. The reality of His coming is fulfilled in His descent from heaven in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ on the sixth day of creation, the third day of the Old Covenant. The proof that Christ worked during the three days (of creation - not calendar days) is shown to us by Jesus Himself in the following passage:

Luke 13:32-33 (NKJV) "*And He said to them, "Go, tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.' Nevertheless, I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem."*"

The three days in this passage cannot be understood as

calendar days (of 24 hours). Surely, from the time He says these words, several calendar days have passed until His crucifixion. The Lord is referring to the fact that He was with His people throughout the Old Covenant period (but not incarnate), and now, after the incarnation, He was about to finish His work - the END OF CREATION FROM GENESIS 1.

The three-day pattern is also found in Genesis 22.

Genesis 22:3-5 (NIV) *"Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. **On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance.** He said to his servants, 'Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.'"*

The sacrifice of Isaac, which foreshadows the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, was also to take place after a three-day journey. The underlining of the passage, "*saw the place **in the distance***", is not accidental. It shows us that the sacrifice of Jesus was in God's distant plan, and that it was also to take place on the third day, but not calendar days, but days of creation. The first world, before the flood, ended after the first three days of creation, and the second world, of the Old Covenant, was to end at the end of the sixth day of creation (i.e. the third day of the second world), when the sacrifice of Jesus took place. This, "***in the distance***" (distance in time), is also found in Balaam's prophecy, expressed in the words: "*I see him, but not now; I behold him, but **not near** [...]*" (Numbers: 24:17 NIV- prophecy about Jesus).

Finally, we note that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead also takes place on the third day. This certainly has to do with

the three days of creation in the second world of the Old Covenant. Throughout the three days of creation (day 4,5,6 of Gen. 1) Christ was present, but not in the physical body. His incarnation takes place close to the end of the 6th day of creation. He never left His people alone, but dwelt spiritually with them along history, even in the "*land of the shadow of death*" (Isa. 9:2 NKJV, Ps. 23:4 NKJV) and in the darkness of the Old Covenant Temple in which He chose to dwell (see 1 Kings 8:12-13). Before its end (Old Covenant), Christ was to overcome the Devil and bring into existence HIS NEW SPIRITUAL CREATION, with His New Temple illuminated by Him with the TRUE LIGHT.

After these observations we continue our explanation of day four by looking at the following passage:

Matthew 16:1-3 (NKJV) "***Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came and testing Him asked that He show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said to them, "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times."***" "

The Pharisees and Sadducees wanted to see a sign from heaven, and we ask: which heaven were they referring to? The physical heaven? In our opinion, certainly not! The Pharisees knew that the angels in heaven are the ones who perform the signs (the Pharisees believed in angels), so their request was for Jesus to perform a miracle like the angels did.

The Bath of Bethesda (see John 5:4), into which an angel occasionally descended to heal the first one who entered the water, is a very clear example of the miraculous work of angels.

The angels were the ministering spirits through whom heaven's dominion over earth was exercised during the Old Covenant. Jesus confirms the work of angels when he says:

John 1:51 (NKJV) *"And He said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter **you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.**'"*

In Jesus' ministry, the "*heaven open*" could be seen in the signs and wonders He performed through the unseen angels of God ascending and descending upon Him (recall also the image of the ladder at Bethel - Genesis 28:12). In His human nature - that of the Son of Man - He also needed the service of angels. This we also see from the following passage:

Matthew 4:11 (NKJV) *"Then the devil left Him, and behold, **angels came and ministered to Him.**"*

Although Jesus' answer to the Pharisees and Sadducees refers to the physical sky, whose "face" they could distinguish meteorologically, He also refers to the fact that they did not understand the signs of the times that the lights were showing in the expanse of the spiritual heaven. They could not distinguish them. This fact makes us understand that Jesus is referring to the time of the fulfillment of the prophecies in the Scriptures written about Him and His work. So, the "lights" in the expanse of heaven **were "enlightened" by the revelations they received from God which were later written on the pages of the Scripture.** These are Noah, Abram, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua and the judges, psalmists, prophets and so on.

The light of the lights is in fact the revelation of God's Word to His "earth". Such a light-giver was also the last prophet of the Old Covenant. About him the Lord Jesus says:

John 5:35 (NKJV) "**He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light.**"

The light that John was shining with was prophesied long before on the "*expanse of heaven*" in Isaiah chapter 40. John's light was manifested by preaching the baptism of repentance and making the Lord Jesus known to Israel, for He is the TRUE LIGHT.

Isaiah 9:2 (NKJV) "**The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;** those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined."

John 1:9 (NKJV) "**That was the true Light** which gives light to every man coming into the world."

These quotations speak of Jesus - the true Light - who enlightens all people, not just those who were ordained by God of old to be enlightened. In the Old Covenant period, God spoke through the prophets, giving them the revelation that His Word had given them. In the New Covenant, it is Christ who enlightens every man by the Holy Spirit, through the Word of the Scriptures, without intermediary lights.

Psalms 119:105 (NKJV) "**Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.**"

The Word of God that was revealed/written in the Old Testament Scriptures (by His lights) is light to the psalmist. In our opinion, the light of the fourth day lights cannot be other than the light of His Word.

Another example is in *Daniel*. Let's see what he writes:

Daniel 8:16-17 (NASB) "*And I heard the voice of a man between the banks of Ulai, and he called out and said, "Gabriel, explain*

the vision to this man". So, he came near to where I was standing, and when he came, I was frightened and fell on my face; and he said to me, "Son of man, understand that the vision pertains to the time of the end.""

Through God's revelation Daniel brings **prophetic light** on the "time of the end!" Let's remember that the fourth daylights were meant to be signs pointing to the times, days and years. From this perspective, Daniel was an end-time light bearer, having in turn been "enlightened" by the angel Gabriel through the interpretation of the vision. The Scripture also calls the angels stars (see *Revelation 1:20*), which are spirits created by God and who lighted through the revelation they brought to the prophets.

The prophet Jeremiah also speaks of the fourth-day lights in this way:

Jeremiah 31:35 (NASB) "*This is what the LORD says, He **who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night**, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar— The LORD of armies is His name: [...]*"

After in *Jeremiah 31:32* (NASB), the Lord reminds us about "*the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt*" and about the covenant He made with the people of Israel at that time, He goes on in the passage quoted above to remind us of the making of the lights (from *Genesis 1:14*), the raging of the sea and the roaring of its waves. To understand the message of this passage let us remember that when the people of Israel came out of Egypt "the sea roared" (see also *Isaiah 51:15-16*), opening a way into the sea, through the east wind that blew upon it with power all night (see *Exodus 14:21*). The people of Israel passed through as on dry land. In our understanding, **this passage through the sea** is mentioned by Jeremiah, **along with the making of the lights on the fourth day**, precisely to show us

that these are the lights of the Old Covenant in the second world. Recall again Joseph's dream (in Genesis 37:9) where the sun, moon and stars represent Israel (formerly Jacob) with his family. God also lightened long before, through Abram, about the exodus event of the people of Israel. Genesis 15 shows us how God informs Abram that his seed will be enslaved for four hundred years in another land, but in the end they will "*come out of there with great riches*." So, we see that the role of the fourth day's lights to point to the times to come, was fulfilled! From this point of view, Abram, Isaac and Jacob are "lights" placed by God on the "expanse of heaven" to illuminate "the earth", i.e. Israel (not all people). In this regard, Moses brings us another clarification by saying:

Deuteronomy 4:19-20 (DRB) "*Lest perhaps lifting up thy eyes to heaven, thou see **the sun and the moon, and all the stars of heaven**, and being deceived by error thou adore and serve them, which **the Lord thy God created for the service of all the nations**, that are under heaven. But the Lord hath taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace of Egypt, to make you his people of inheritance, as it is this present day.*"

From this passage we see that the people of Israel are warned of the danger of falling into idolatrous worship of the things that are seen on the sky. In this case, it is the physical stars (sun, moon, stars) which are things that "*God created for the service of all the nations that are under heaven*". We emphasize that it is not said "*to illuminate*", but "*for the service of all the nations*", which is not an accident, but is so, precisely to distinguish between spiritual and natural lights. God chose Israel as His people, to be "enlightened", set apart, to be the "earth" of the Old Covenant. The fourth day lighteners are certainly not the same as the lighteners in the above quote, because the fourth day lighteners were set on the expanse of heaven to lighten only

"THE LAND", not all peoples. So, the light of the fourth day lighteners cannot be the physical light, which physically lights all the people under heaven, but it is **the light of His Word** by which He "lights" His people whom He has set apart.

In the next passage we have an example of idolatrous star worship, the very thing God warned about in Deuteronomy 4:19-20:

2 Kings 21:3 (ESV) *"For he rebuilt the high places that Hezekiah his father had destroyed, and he erected altars for Baal and made an Asherah, as Ahab king of Israel had done, **and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them.**"*

Paul also shows us the spiritual meaning of the light of the Law.

Romans 2:17-20 (NASB) *"Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the Law, and make your boast in God, and know His will and distinguish the things that matter, being instructed from the Law, and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, **a light to those who are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, possessing in the law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth,**"*

From Paul's teaching we see that the light of God's people, Israel, lies in the teaching of the Old Covenant Law, which is written in the Scriptures. The Scriptures are written by **enlightened** people, or as Peter says, *"moved by the Holy Spirit"* (2 Peter 1:21 NKJV). During the period of the Law, the Gentiles (those who did not belong to Israel) did not have this light.

While on the Mount of Olives, Jesus taught his disciples about the end of the age, the coming of the Son of Man and the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem in this way:

Matthew 24:29 (NKJV) *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the **sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.**"*

This passage also refers to the lights of the fourth day of creation. Jesus is not announcing the end of the stars in the sky, but the end of the Old Covenant people who had the Law and the prophets as their light. This event was to take place at the end of the apostolic generation, at His return, which is proven by His words in the following passage:

Matthew 24:34-35 (NKJV) *"Assuredly, I say to you, **this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.**"*

"*This generation*" was the generation in which the Lord Jesus Christ became incarnate. Heaven represents the extent of the reign of the Law (as we saw in the chapter on heaven), and earth represents the people of the Old Covenant. Israel was under the rule of the Law, which was light for them.

Ezekiel 32:7-9 (NKJV) *"**When I put out your light, I will cover the heavens, and make its stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of the heavens I will make dark over you, and bring darkness upon your land,**" says the Lord GOD. I will also trouble the hearts of many people, when I bring your destruction among the nations, into the countries which you have not known."*

In the context of this passage, it speaks of the destruction of Egypt, which is associated with the darkening of all the lights of heaven. This darkness will be "**upon your land**", not over the whole world. Limiting the darkness to "**your land**" again proves

that it is not a cosmic cataclysm. Then the destruction of "Egypt" among the nations, *"into the countries which you have not known"*, makes it very clear that the world continues to exist after this "cosmic" event (Egypt itself belonged already to these nations, but Israel not). History does not confirm that Egypt, as a country, ever disappeared (it is only a symbol here). It still exists today.

To understand who Egypt symbolizes in Ezekiel 32, note that in Revelation 11:8 we find the city of Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified, named in a spiritual sense, as *"Sodom"* and *"Egypt."* The spiritual meaning in this passage refers precisely to the writings of the Old Testament, among which is the book of Ezekiel, all of them inspired by the same Spirit of God. In the passage from Revelation 11:8, Egypt is a symbol for the bondage of sin in which first-century Jerusalem found itself (see in Galatians 4 the parable of the **Egyptian Hagar** and Sarah). The spread of darkness over the land lies precisely in the fact that the Old Covenant lights cease to shine, since they had completed their mission when the TRUE LIGHT, Christ, came. The last prophet, the last "light" of the Old Covenant Israel was John the Baptist. He proclaimed the coming of the true Light. At the death of Jesus on the cross, darkness falls over the whole land for three hours, to announce the approaching end of the "night" of the Old Covenant heaven with its "lights", an event that was to take place at the end of the apostolic generation (in the first century).

The lights of heaven on the fourth day of creation do not refer to the physical stars, but to all those through whom God enlightened His people Israel with the light of the Word. His Word, written in the Old Testament Scriptures, illuminated during the second world of the Old Covenant, until the coming of TRUE LIGHT through CHRIST.

DAY FIVE: SEA CREATURES AND BIRDS OF THE AIR

In this chapter we want to show again **the spiritual meaning** of the making of sea creatures and winged birds. To understand this meaning, we will quote several passages from Scripture by which we will see that fish and sea creatures represent people. As for the birds that "fly in time" across the "*expanse of heaven*" (not physical space), we will see that there is a connection between "*birds*" and humans through the spirits that influence humans, for good or evil, throughout the history of Scripture.

This is how the fifth day of creation is described:

Genesis 1:20-23 (NASB) *"Then God said, **Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens**". And God created **the great sea creatures** and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed, according to their kind, **and every winged bird according to its kind**; and God saw that it was good. **God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth"**". And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day."*

In the most common understanding - the literal one - the living things made on the fifth day of creation are whales, sharks, fish of all kinds and other underwater creatures, plus the winged birds that fly in the air above us. Let's remember what we established at the beginning of this study, which is that, beginning in Genesis 2 from verse 4, we are given a brief summary of what was created in Genesis 1:1. In Genesis 2:19 we note that after God made the living creatures (beasts of the field, birds of the air, etc.) out of the earth, he brought them to man to name them. It is obvious that man already existed when God brought the animals to him. In the sequence of creation in

Genesis chapter 1 compared to Genesis chapter 2, the order is reversed: first the living creatures are created, and then man is created.

Genesis 1 living creatures → then the man

Genesis 2 man → then the living creatures

Of course, both cannot be true in the same literal sense. Therefore, the creation of the fifth day can only be understood spiritually (the language being symbolic), as we have seen with the first four days.

Sea creatures

The following quotation shows us what God says just after the first world destroyed by the flood has ended, and the second world has begun:

Genesis 9:1-2 (ESV) *"And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. **The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea.** Into your hand they are delivered."*

If God's command at the beginning of the second world, spoken in the hearing of Noah and his sons, "[...] *The fear of you (...) shall be upon every beast of the earth [...] bird of the havens [...] and all the fish of the sea*", refers to them as living creatures, the question arises: for what purpose should all living creatures be filled with terror? In our opinion, such a command would be meaningless, and we shall see that it literally never even came to pass. For example, let us see what Jacob says:

Genesis 37:33 (NKJV) *"And he recognized it and said, "It is my son's tunic. **A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces.**"*"

From this passage we understand that wild beasts killed people even at that time, although in this case Joseph was not killed by a beast. The same is true of the fish of the sea. Do we get the impression that sharks or killer whales would be filled with horror if a man were thrown into the sea! The meaning of God's words to Noah and his sons cannot be literal. And if we see what Psalm 8 also says about dominion over all created things, we will be even more edified.

Psalms 8:6-8 (ESV) "***You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.***"

Although the meaning of this passage is deeply spiritual, if we take literally what is said, we see that dominion is also over "***whatever passes along the paths of the seas***". If Psalm 8 speaks of the subjection of all that is in the sea, we have just shown that in nature this is not confirmed. And to put an end to these apparent contradictions, let's see what God says to Job:

Job 41:1 (NASB) "*Can you drag out **Leviathan** with a fishhook, and press down his tongue with a rope?*"

Job 41:33 (NKJV) "*On earth there is **nothing like him, which is made without fear.***"

This is what Psalm 104 also says about Leviathan:

Psalm 104:25-26 (NKJV) "***This great and wide sea, in which are innumerable teeming things, Living things both small and great. There the ships sail about; there is that Leviathan which You have made to play there.***"

We see that the Leviathan was a living creature found in the waters of the sea (today we no longer find such a creature; we do not think it is the crocodile, as some translations suggest). God speaks of Leviathan in Job chapter 41 in a surprising way. His

description of man's helplessness in the face of this creature is unexpected in contrast to what was said in Genesis 9:2; in Job it says that he "***is made without fear***". In the end, Job's conclusion is that only the Lord can subject everything, and therefore, also the Leviathan who had no fear of anything and whom man did not dare to challenge (see all of Job 41). Although in Job 41 God's speech is mysterious/symbolic, if we consider what is said about Leviathan as a living thing, it would contradict what He says, through David, in Psalm 8. Also, the blessing spoken by God in the hearing of Noah and his sons would be blatantly opposed to the way Leviathan was created. Taken literally, they are in conflict. We believe wholeheartedly that there are no contradictions in the Scripture, as long as we understand spiritual things spiritually, not literally. And in our understanding, both Job 41 and Psalm 8 have a deep spiritual significance.

If we look at the passages of the Scripture where the words "terror", "fear" is found, we will see that they always refer to humans, not to animals, fish or birds.

Deuteronomy 2:25 (NKJV) "***This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee, and shall tremble, and be in anguish because of thee.***"

Deuteronomy 11:25 (NKJV) "*No man shall be able to stand against you; the LORD your God will put **the dread of you and the fear of you upon all the land where you tread**, just as He has said to you.*"

It is clear that the people "under the whole heaven" were terrified and afraid of the chosen people, Israel. The other people under heaven represented the nations to be conquered in order to take the Promised Land for their possession. The people of these nations were terrified of the people of Israel. Let's recall that we showed in our analysis of the third day of creation that the "sea" out of which the land of the first world

came represented the Gentiles. So, the terror and fear that the "*fish of the sea*" were to have referred to the people of the "sea", i.e. the other nations.

The sea creatures created on the fifth day represent people (nations) other than the people of Israel.

Ezekiel 47:9-10 (NKJV) "*And it shall be that **every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live**. There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and **everything will live wherever the river goes**. It shall be that **fishermen** will stand by it from En Gedi to En Eglaim; they will be places for spreading their nets. Their fish will be of the same kinds as the fish of the Great Sea, exceedingly many.*"

(See entire chapter 47)

Chapter 47 of Ezekiel represents a vision of the prophet's distant future, if we refer to the time when it takes place, when the people of Israel were in Babylonian bondage. In this vision we are told that the water flowing from the House of the Lord becomes a river so great that it cannot be crossed. The water "*was flowing from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar*". This healing river flows into the sea, and the waters of the sea are healed: "*There will be a very great multitude of fish*" and "*everything will live wherever the river goes*". The prophet tells us that on the banks of the river there will be fishermen with their nets spread out and there will be many fish.

The waters bring life wherever they reach, including the sea and the living things in it. The question is: what kind of life does this

water give? Does it refer to the biological life of living things in the waters of rivers and seas? In our opinion, the meaning of the prophecy is mysterious, spiritual, and must be approached spiritually. If not, then we should think again of natural water (H₂O) and underwater creatures: fish, whales, etc. We hope it is easy to see the absurdity of such an understanding which would imply that the altar of the Holy Place from which the healing water flows solves the problem of the life of fish and other creatures. We all know that the altar with the sacrifices that were offered on it was supposed to solve the problem of the sins of the people that were thus atoned for. To prove the spiritual meaning of the passage in Ezekiel 47 let us also look carefully at the following quotation:

Revelation 22:1-5 (NKJV) *"And he showed me **a pure river of water of life**, clear as crystal, **proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb**. In the middle of its street, and **on either side of the river, was the tree of life**, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. **The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations**. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and **His servants shall serve Him**. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever."*

We have no doubt that the river of Ezekiel 47 is the same as the river of the water of life in Revelation 22, which flows out of the throne of God and the Lamb. Here is a parallel of the two passages:

Ezekiel 47	Revelation 22
- The river comes out of the holy Place (verse 12) - Wherever this river reaches, there will be life (v.9)	- The river of life flows from the throne of God and the Lamb (v.1)
- Fruit trees on both sides of the river (v.12)	- The tree of life on both banks of the river of life (v.2)
- new fruit every month (v.12)	- 12 kinds of fruit, every month (v.2)
- The leaves will serve as medicine (v.12)	- The leaves of the tree serve to heal the nations (v.2)
- Fishermen will sit on its banks, spread their nets and there will be many fish (v.10)	- His servants will serve Him. They will see His face (vv. 3-4)

From the table above it is obvious that the two passages refer to the same river, called in Revelation "*the river of the water of life*". In Ezekiel we are also told that the river heals the waters of the sea (v.9), giving life to fish, after which it is suggested that the fish are caught in the fishermen's nets. In Revelation we are told that the leaves of the tree of life serve to heal the nations, and His servants who serve Him will see His face. We believe the following two associations can be made:

FISHERMEN <-> HIS SERVANTS

FISH <-> THE PEOPLE, NATIONS

In the New Testament, disciples are also called "*servants of Jesus Christ*" (2 Peter 1:1, Jude 1:1, Acts 16:17) who willingly obeyed Christ and dedicated themselves to proclaim the Gospel. The Apostle Paul and Barnabas are two of His servants, and in Acts

13:47 (NKJV) we are told of their words spoken to the Jews who rejected the Gospel:

*"For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a **light to the Gentiles** that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.'"*

We see that through the service of His servants the Gospel reached the Gentiles, and so the Gentiles who listened were healed (i.e. saved). We also recall that Jesus calls his disciples at the beginning thus: "[...] *Follow me and I will make you fishers of men*" (Matthew 4:19; Mark 1:17). It becomes very clear that the fish represent people caught in the net of the Gospel (in the most positive sense) preached by the "fishers" of men. Then, among the parables of the Kingdom in Matthew chapter 13 we also find the parable of the net that is cast into the sea and catches all kinds of fish. These fish represent people who listen to the call of the Gospel. In our view, the call from the beginning, given to the disciples (see also Luke 5:1-11) by Jesus, is fulfilled only after his resurrection from the dead, and from then on, they are sent out to "fish for people". The beginning of this sending is at the Sea of Tiberias, where the fishing described in John chapter 21 takes place.

John 21:3 (NKJV) *"Simon Peter said to them, "**I am going fishing.**" They said to him, "**We are going with you also.**" They went out and immediately got into the boat, and **that night they caught nothing.**"*

The evangelist's statement, *"that night they caught nothing"*, has great significance. We believe that the expression *"that night"* refers to the fact that during the "night" of the Old Covenant nothing was caught, i.e. no man was saved under the Law. Only after the Lord's sacrifice and resurrection, on the "morning of the Day" of the New Covenant, would the "fish" caught in their full

number be brought in.

John 21:4-6 (NKJV) "*But when **the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore**; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Then Jesus said to them, "**Children, have you any food?**" They answered Him, "No." And He said to them, "**Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.**" So, they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the **multitude of fish.**"*

We notice that on the morning of the day, the Lord asks them, "**have you any food?**" Although the question seems to refer to food for the body (food that the disciples had been trying to find all night), yet we see that the Lord is not referring to catching the fish with which they were feeding their physical bodies. The catching of the fish, at His word, after casting the net **to the right side**, represents (symbolizes) the fulfillment of the call the disciples received at the beginning: "*Follow Me, and **I will make you fishers of men.***" (Matthew 4:19)

John 21:11 (NKJV) "***Simon Peter** went up and **dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken.**"*

After this fishing in John 21, the call to be "*fishers of men*", which was made at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, now comes into effect. From this day on, Peter and the other disciples ceased to be fishermen on the Sea of Tiberias. From now on they had a great commission: to find the "fish" previously known and chosen by the Lord (the counting of the 153 fish suggests this). The right side where the net is cast is not by chance. In Matthew 25, Jesus says that He will separate those gathered before Him as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats: the sheep, the heirs of the Kingdom, will be placed on His right, and the goats, or the accursed, are on the left, and He drives them away. So, on the right side of the ship were found the elect whom **God justified** by His righteous sacrifice, thus paying for all the sins of

men. God's justice was fulfilled in Jesus' work of perfect atonement. The disciples were called to be part of this great work of **finding the "fish" on the "right side"**.

But let us remember that in the account of the fishing in Luke 5:1-11, an event that took place at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, He did not say where to cast the nets (this was before His sacrifice and resurrection). The fact that this is omitted in Luke 5 is not by chance, just as the specification in John 21 - "*on the right side*" (said after the resurrection) - is also on purpose. No word that the Lord says (or does not say) is neither unnecessary nor insufficient: "*For no word from God shall be void of power*" (Luke 1:37 ASV).

By these words at the end of His work on earth we believe that the Lord is also speaking of His right to be Lord over all things. The Risen Christ now had "*all authority*" in heaven and on earth for the subjection of all things.

When Jesus commands them to cast the net in John 21, He does not use the phrase "you will catch", but "***you will find***". Even this detail helps us to understand that the Lord is speaking symbolically of finding the lost. The three parables in Luke 15, including the well-known parable of the prodigal son, could be called "the parables of finding the lost".

From this day on, the disciples stopped catching fish to feed the physical body. After this moment they are sent to be "*fishers of men*", and their "net" is the preaching of the Word of the Gospel. They were sent in the power of the Spirit they had received from Jesus some time before (John 20:19-23), and on the day of Pentecost that shortly followed. Their food from then on was to do the will of the One who sent them to be "*fishers of men*," just as Jesus' food was to do the will of the One who sent him, that is, the will of the Father (see John 4:34). The words spoken by the Lord: "*As the Father has sent Me, I also send you. [...] He breathed on them and said to them: "Receive the Holy Spirit!"*"

(John 20:21-22 NKJV), show us that the disciples were called to work no longer for the "*perishable food*" but for that "*which remains for eternal life*" (see John 6:27 NKJV). On the day of Pentecost, through the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon them, the disciples have their first "catch" of people.

The next verse is also very meaningful:

John 21:12 (NKJV) "*Jesus said to them, "Come and eat breakfast." Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, "Who are You?"—knowing that it was the Lord.*"

Before the call to lunch there was a call to supper - to the last supper - from the night the Lord was caught and delivered into the hands of sinners. Then the disciples "*ate*" his body and "*drank*" his blood that was given as an offering for their sin (Matthew 26:26-28).

When the disciples arrived on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias, the Lord had already prepared the fire of coals, and on it were fish and bread. He says to them, "***Bring some of the fish you have just caught.***" We emphasize that the Lord did not share the meal before the fish they had caught were brought to the "altar" with the fire of coals, thus foreshadowing the "meal" that was to take place in the Kingdom of God. This was to be fulfilled at the end of the apostolic period, after the apostles had proclaimed the gospel "*to the ends of the earth*" (see Romans 10:18; Colossians 1:23) and all who believed had been brought to the altar of God. (The fact that the Jews were waiting to eat in the Kingdom of God we see from the following quote:

Luke 14:15 (NKJV) "*Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God!"*"

This idea that fish are people and that the apostles' ministry of

proclaiming the Gospel is like a sacrifice by which these people are brought to the Lord is also expressed by the apostle Paul, a leading "fisherman" of the Kingdom of Heaven. He "fished" most in the "Great Sea", travelling much on it, and catching many "fish", i.e. people from among the Gentiles. This is how he speaks of his ministry:

Romans 15:16 (NKJV) "[...] *that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the Gospel of God, **that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable**, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.*"

The apostle Paul speaks about the Gentiles living around the Mediterranean Sea who were won through the Gospel. In the system of sacrifices ordained through Moses is also the sacrifice of thanksgiving. Of such a sacrifice we believe Paul speaks in the passage quoted from Romans 15.

From all the passages we have analyzed so far, it appears that

the fish of the sea created on the fifth day are a symbol for humans and do not represent underwater creatures.

Winged birds

In what follows we want to show that, like fish, the birds made on the fifth day of creation are not living creatures of the animal kingdom, nor is it right that we see fish in the spiritual sense and birds in the literal sense. We will search the Scripture for passages that speak of birds to show that the meaning is symbolic, not literal.

Remember what we already said about the winged birds. They fly across the expanse of heaven, which is an expanse in time, in a spiritual space, not in the vault of the physical sky. We proved this in our analysis of heaven on the second day of creation.

Let's recall the passage in Gen. 9:2 (ESV) where God says:

"The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea".

So, fish belong to the sea, beasts belong to the earth, and birds belong to heaven. Since heaven is an expanse in time, then the birds must also fly in the "space" of the spiritual heaven.

The Scripture teaches us through Moses that some creatures in the animal kingdom (in the waters, on the earth, or those flying in the physical sky) were considered clean, and others were unclean. In chapter 11 of Leviticus, we find this classification. We will only quote a brief passage on some of the unclean birds:

Leviticus 11:13-19: (NKJV) ***"And these you shall regard as an abomination among the birds; they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, the vulture, the buzzard, the kite, and the falcon after its kind; [...]"***

(See also Deuteronomy 14)

After verse 13 a list of birds continues that are classified by God as unclean, they were "**an abomination**" and the people of Israel were not allowed to eat them. We note that the prohibition against eating the flesh of birds begins with birds of prey. Of course, these could not be offered as sacrifices to the Lord under any circumstances. Among the clean birds are the dove and the turtledove. These two are mentioned in Genesis chapter 15 as being among the animals that Abram sacrifices at the command of the Lord. We are also told about the birds of prey that come upon the flocks, but Abram drives them away.

Genesis 15:11 (NASB) *"And **birds of prey** came down upon the carcasses, and **Abram drove them away.**"*

What were these birds trying to steal from Abram?

Before we explain what the birds of prey in this quote represent, we will spend some time to see what God's promise to Abram was in the covenant from Genesis 15.

Genesis 15:1-21 NASB

1. *After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great."*
2. *But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"*
3. *Abram also said, "Since You have given me no son, one who has been born in my house is my heir."*
4. *Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir."*
5. *And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."*
6. *Then he believed in the LORD; and He credited it to him as righteousness.*
7. *And He said to him, "I am the LORD who **brought you out of Ur** of the Chaldeans, **to give you this land to possess it.**"*
8. *But he said, "**Lord GOD, how may I know that I will possess it?**"*
9. *So He said to him, "Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon."*
10. *Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds.*
11. *And birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away.*
12. *Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him.*
13. *Then God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will*

be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years.

14. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with [t]many possessions.

15. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age.

16. Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the wrongdoing of the Amorite is not yet complete."

17. Now it came about, when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, a smoking oven and a flaming torch appeared which passed between these pieces.

18. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates:

19. the land of the Kenite, the Kenizzite, the Kadmonite,

20. the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Rephaim, 21the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Girgashite, and the Jebusite."

In Genesis chapter 15, God promises to Abram that He will give him a seed without number, like the stars of heaven, a seed that will rule the land (see also Genesis 12). Abram then asks the following question:

Genesis 15:8 "[...] Lord GOD, **how may I know** that I will possess it?"

To answer this question, God asks Abram to sacrifice and bring before Him the clean animals He has appointed. All that is said in the rest of chapter 15 is the answer given to Abram's question, "[...] **how may I know** that I will possess it?" We notice that God announces to Abram (before it happens) the four-hundred-year bondage in Egypt of the people of Israel. The book of Exodus shows that after four hundred years of bondage, God judges Egypt and Moses leads the people to Mount Sinai where the giving of the Law takes place.

In the following table we find the common elements between Genesis 15 and Exodus 19, just before the giving of the Old Covenant Law, at Mount Sinai, is described.

Genesis 15:12,17-18	Exodus 19:16-18
Terror	Trembled
great darkness	a thick cloud
a smoking oven and a flaming torch	smoke ... like the smoke of a furnace
which passed between these pieces	The Lord descended upon it [the mountain] in the fire
The Lord made a covenant with Abram (vs.18)	The Covenant of the law (see Exodus 20)

"On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: [...]" - Genesis 15:18.

The covenant that God makes with Abram in Genesis 15 is about the inheritance of the earthly land of Canaan, whose borders are geographically edged by the two rivers and the people who lived in those regions. Note that God **does not say** that the possession of this land was to be eternal. The promise of this covenant was fulfilled by the election of the people of Israel under the Law of Moses at Mount Sinai. The entry into and taking possession of the Old Covenant land, by the genealogical seed of Abram, occurs later and is recounted in the book of Joshua.

Joshua 21:43-45 (NASB) ***"So the LORD gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took***

possession of it and lived in it. And the LORD gave them rest on every side, in accordance with everything that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the LORD handed all their enemies over to them. Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; everything came to pass."

Two chapters later, in Genesis 17, God makes another covenant with **Abraham** (and changes his name) of which God says, "*I will establish **My covenant between Me and you** [...] as **an everlasting covenant**" which refers to a land given as an "everlasting possession" (see verses 7-8).*

In our understanding, this covenant is a clear promise of the New Covenant by which the inheritance is a heavenly homeland, with a heavenly Jerusalem, which Abraham longed for (see Hebrews 11:16). By contrast, the covenant in Genesis 15 is a clear reference to the Old Covenant in an earthly, transient homeland with an earthly Jerusalem that was in bondage to sin.

Paul reveals in Galatians 4:24-26 that God gave Abram /Abraham **two covenants** (not just one) and explains their significance.

Galatians 4:24-26 (NASB) "*This is speaking allegorically, for these women **are two covenants**: one coming from Mount Sinai giving birth to children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is enslaved with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother"*.

So far we have seen that God's answer to Abram's question - "*Lord GOD, how may I know that I will possess it?*" - follows the scriptural pattern mentioned earlier in this study, namely,

that God offers something earthly and transient, to point to something eternal and spiritual; a shadow that prepares the human mind to understand the spiritual reality. God makes a first covenant with Abram, promising the land of earthly Canaan, **not to him, but only to his genealogical seed**. This **transient covenant**, with a transient countable genealogical seed, was meant to **make known** that Abraham and **his** uncountable (see Genesis 15:5) **spiritual seed**, would **eternally possess the** heavenly homeland of the New Covenant. The following verse is remarkable in this regard:

Genesis 17:8 (NASB) *"And I will give **to you** and to your **descendants** after you the land where you live as a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an **everlasting possession**; and I will be their God."*

We note that Abraham is now also included as an heir of the eternal land, by this: **"to you"**, which we do not find in Genesis 15:18 where only his genealogical seed is specified.

Over the whole course of the Old Covenant God's aim was the **KNOWING** of the Lord. This was revealed along the history of the Old Covenant, by which it was always and again remembered (prophesied) that the Eternal Kingdom in the Eternal Land of a New Covenant was to come. It was a continual call to have faith that the Lord would fulfill the promise given to father Abraham.

Next, we will quote some passages that tell us about the knowledge promised to Abram by the covenant in Genesis 15:

Exodus 6:7 (NASB) *"Then I will take you as My people, and I will be your God; and **you shall know** that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the labors of the Egyptians."*
Exodus 7:5 (NASB) *"Then the Egyptians **shall know** that I am*

the LORD, when I extend My hand over Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst."

Exodus 7:17 (NASB) "*This is what the LORD says: "By this **you shall know that I am the LORD**: behold, I am going to strike the water that is in the Nile with the staff that is in My hand, and it will be turned into blood."*

Exodus 10:2 (NASB) "*and that you may tell in the presence of your son, and of your grandson, how I made a mockery of the Egyptians and how I performed My signs among them, so that **you may know that I am the LORD**."*

Exodus 29:46 (NASB) "*And **they shall know that I am the LORD** their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, so that I might dwell among them; I am the LORD their God."*

Exodus 31:13 (NASB) "*Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: 'Surely **My Sabbaths** you shall keep, for it is **a sign** between Me and you throughout your generations, **that you may know that I am the LORD** who sanctifies you. "*

Jeremiah 31:34 (NASB) "*They will not teach again, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, '**Know the LORD**,' for they **will all know Me**, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "**for I will forgive their wrongdoing**, and their sin I will no longer remember."*

This KNOWING of which we speak reaches its climax, and is fully accomplished in the complete work of the Lord Jesus Christ, by which iniquity is forgiven as we read in Jeremiah. So the knowledge promised to Abram lies precisely in the forgiveness of sins. In this way all who put their trust in Christ have been, are, and will be sanctified.

In John 1:18 (BSB) it is revealed that only the Son made the Father known:

*"No one has ever seen God, but **the One and Only Son**, who is Himself God and is at the Father's side, **has made Him known**."*

In the passages quoted from Exodus and Jeremiah, we see that knowledge is only spoken to be revealed in the future. In John 1:18 we see that the Son has already "**made Him known**". This is the Lord's answer to Abram's question from Genesis 15 ("O Lord God, how shall I know that I shall possess it?"). Through Jesus who "**made Him known**", God's promise was fulfilled for Abraham and his spiritual seed.

Since, throughout the Old Covenant, knowledge was **partial**, let us now hear what Paul teaches us about the perfection of knowledge:

1 Corinthians (ESV) 13:8-10 *"**Love never ends**. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for **knowledge, it will pass away**. For **we know in part** and we prophesy in part, **but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away**."*

Full knowledge occurs when that which is perfect comes. This perfect knowledge is revealed at the return of Christ, when **the love that will never perish** fulfills its work of salvation. Salvation from death caused by sin is offered for all people who believe in the Gospel, for eternity.

In fact, the Old Covenant was the way of knowing God's holiness. At the same time it was the way of knowing man's sinfulness which transgresses God's holiness. If we wanted to give the Old Covenant a name to characterize it, we could call it: **"The Covenant that brought the KNOWLEDGE that the**

LORD fulfills the promise in the NEW COVENANT, by Grace."

In the Old Covenant we speak only of the knowledge, the conviction that the Lord will fulfill the promise, not of its fulfillment. The fulfillment of the promise, of the eternal inheritance, of the heavenly homeland, was not on the basis of the Covenant from Genesis 15, but on the basis of the Covenant made with Abraham in Genesis 17, by which God announces long beforehand a New Covenant made on the foundation of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sinful man is a stranger, separated from God, without any right of inheritance. Inheritance is only for the sons of God (see Galatians 4:7). No man can become an heir except by faith, and this can only be received as gift from the Lord Jesus Christ. Abraham's faith, which was reckoned to him as righteousness, refers to the HEIR who will come forth from him and the inheritance of the spiritual Promised Land through his Seed, who is Christ.

After this long explanation of Abram's question, about knowledge and dominion/inheritance, let's return to Genesis 15:11 to see what the "*birds of prey*" represent. Were these just hungry birds looking for food? We believe things go much deeper, and this passage must still be seen in a spiritual sense.

What were these birds trying to steal from Abram? Was it a battle of faith that was waged in Abram's soul?

Being old and without an heir, he did not know why God had not yet fulfilled what he had promised him. From the question, "*Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless?*" (Genesis 15:2), one can see the struggle in his soul. But after God shows him the stars of heaven and says to him: "*So shall your descendants be,*"

we are told that "*Abram believed in the Lord.*" That is why Abram drove away the birds of prey, because he had faith in God's promise. The entire Old Covenant, foretold in Genesis 15, was marked by Israel's struggle with these "*birds of prey*". They were coming to take away what the Word of God had placed in the "heart" of the people of Israel. The "*birds of prey*" represented spirits in the heavenly places who were resisting faith in God's promise, faith in His love, His rest, and His peace. This is shown by the following passage, in which we see that in the apostolic period, before the end of the Old Covenant that was marked by the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in the first century, evil spirits were in the heavenly places, like the birds that flew in the heaven of the Old Covenant.

Ephesians 6:12 (NASB) "*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, **against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.***"

Ephesians 1:17-21 (NASB) "[...] *the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the boundless greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead **and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named,** not only in this age but also in the one to come.*"

This passages prove that in the Old Covenant period the spirits of wickedness were still in the heavenly places. However, we see that the Lord Jesus was already exalted above all that can be named, either on the heavenly or on the earthly realm. These

spirits manifested themselves through lordships, dominions, rulers, etc. Most of the time, the evil spirits worked through evil men led by these spirits. An example is the very death sentence on Jesus demanded by the Jewish leaders and decided by the ruler Pilate of Pontus, under the pressure of their threat. About them, Jesus said in John 8:44 (NASB) *"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father."*

Spirits are like birds that fly and nest where they are allowed. The classification of birds in Leviticus 11, into clean and unclean, somehow symbolizes good spirits and evil spirits. The prohibition against eating an unclean bird was a characteristic Old Covenant teaching, which was engraved in the minds of the people of Israel, not to touch anything unclean. These food regulations were symbols for spiritual "food". Man's soul must not be nourished by thoughts, teachings, desires and lusts, which originate in the evil one, but by the spiritual food that comes from God. All that is from the devil must be driven out, just as Abram drove out the birds of prey.

To better understand which are the birds that fly in the *"expense of heaven"*, let's look at Pharaoh's baker in the following quote:

Genesis 40:17 (NKJV) *"In the uppermost basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, and **the birds ate them out of the basket on my head**".*

Joseph's interpretation of this dream is:

*"In three days, Pharaoh will take your head, hang you on a tree and **the birds will eat your flesh**."*

The meaning of birds eating from the third basket, which was *"in the uppermost"* on the head of Pharaoh's baker, was given to Joseph by God, and this interpretation was fulfilled. The birds

that the baker didn't stop from eating from the food that was intended for Pharaoh, brought him death. The chief baker was not faithful to his master Pharaoh by driving away the birds that ate Pharaoh's food. Unlike the baker, Abram was faithful to his master - God - by driving away the birds of prey. Here again we can see that the birds represent a spirit of unbelief and indifference, and this leads to death.

Let's look at what Jesus teaches us about the birds of the air in the parable of the sower who sows the seed of God's Word:

Mark 4:4 (NKJV) *"And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and **the birds of the air came and devoured it.**"*

Mark 4:15 (NKJV) *"And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, **Satan comes immediately and takes away the word** that was sown in their hearts."*

Matthew 13:19 (NKJV) *"When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then **the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart.** This is he who received seed by the wayside".*

From these quotes, we can see the correspondence between **birds** and **Satan**. The birds represent the evil one, Satan, who takes, who steals from the heart the seed of the Word.

Let's analyze another passage that speaks about birds.

Isaiah 46:10-11 (NASB) *"**Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My plan will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'; calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of My purpose from a distant country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will***

bring it to pass. I have planned it; I will certainly do it. "

Isaiah shows us that God fulfills his announced plans from the beginning (i.e. from the creation in Genesis 1) by calling a "*bird of prey*" from the east. And from the prophecy Isaiah makes next in chapter 47 we see that it refers to Babylon that has His people in bondage. Although the carrying away into captivity had not yet taken place, the Lord speaks through Isaiah as if this had already happened. Since Babylon has pressed hard on His people, the Lord announces its fall. For the fulfillment of judgment on Babylon, He calls this "*bird of prey*", which He calls "*the man*". Who is this man?

To answer this question, let us also read the passage in 2 Chronicles 36:18-23 where we see that Babylon, which had the people of God in bondage, comes under the rule of the Persians. "*The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus,*" king of the Persians, who issued the decree of deliverance. Cyrus was this "***man of My purpose***" who fulfills the Lord's plan for His people. Long before he was born, God calls him by name:

Isaiah 45:13 (NLT) "***I will raise up Cyrus to fulfill My righteous purpose, and I will guide his actions. He will restore My city and free My captive people— without seeking a reward! I, the LORD of Heaven's Armies, have spoken! "***

If we study the map of the world at that time, we see that in the east of Babylon was Persia. So, the bird of prey was a reference to Persia and to King Cyrus, the conqueror of Babylon. The liberation of the Old Covenant people from Babylonian bondage by the decree of King Cyrus is a pattern, a shadow of the liberation of the New Covenant people from the bondage of sin and law, in which first century Jerusalem found itself. This is why, in Isaiah chapters 47 and 48, we find several passages that are quoted in Revelation chapter 18, where the fall of the city called

"*Babylon the Great*" is shown. Although the purpose of this writing is not to identify the city of Babylon from Revelation, we simply want to say that in our understanding this was the first century Jerusalem, whose sin culminated in the crucifixion of the Lord and then the persecution of the apostles and the Church. (See Revelation 11:8; 17:4-6; 18:2-4; 18:7-8; 18:20)

Another passage is the one describing Peter's vision in which we are shown that unclean animals represented the Gentile people, considered unclean in Israel.

Acts 10:11-14 (NKJV) "[...] and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were **all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth**, wild beasts, creeping things, **and birds of the air**. And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat. But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For **I have never eaten anything common or unclean.**"

If we read further in Acts, we see that the meaning of the vision was that God had decided that the Gentiles also should be cleansed from their sins, forgiven by the sacrifice of Jesus. The uncleanliness of the Gentiles lays in the fact that they haven't had the light of God's Word. They were walking in the darkness of sin, living according to the "*prince of the power of the air*", which is **the evil spirit** (see Ephesians chapter 2). So, the Gentiles were unclean because they followed the evil one, who is spirit. People were considered clean or unclean according to the spirit that led them. Paul emphasizes in Ephesians chapter 2 this connection between people and the spirits that lead their lives. He teaches in verse 18: "*For through Him **we both have access, by one Spirit to the Father***" (see Ephesians chapter 2). So, the children of God are those who are guided by the Spirit of God, not by other spirits.

In Revelation 18:2 the association between unclean spirits and unclean birds is very evident:

Revelation 18:2 (ASV) *"And he cried with a mighty voice, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and is become **a habitation of demons, and a hold of every unclean spirit, and a hold of every unclean and hateful bird.**"*

The next verse shows that birds are also associated with deceit:

Jeremiah 5:27 (NKJV) *"As a cage is full of **birds**, so their houses are **full of deceit**. Therefore, they have become great and grown rich."*

Deceit comes from an evil spirit. Throughout history in the house of Israel there have been many people led by the evil one.

We have seen several examples where birds were symbols of evil spirits that influenced people. We also have examples where flying birds represent the Spirit of God or good spirits who are sent by God.

Matthew 3:16 (NKJV) *"When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, **the heavens were opened** to Him, and **He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him**".*

This passage shows us that the Spirit of God had a seen representation in the form of a dove, which was one of the clean birds.

In the next passages we see that beings of the angelic category, who are ministering spirits, have wings that fly like birds.

Isaiah 6:2 (NKJV) *"**Above it stood seraphim; each one had six***

wings: *with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and **with two he flew**".*

Exodus 37:9 (NKJV) "**The cherubim spread out their wings** above and covered the mercy seat with their wings. They faced one another; the faces of the cherubim were toward the mercy seat".

The angel Gabriel, called "*the man Gabriel*," flies in like a bird to enlighten Daniel's mind.

Daniel 9:20-27 (NKJV) "*Now while I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God, yes, while I was speaking in prayer, **the man Gabriel**, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, **being caused to fly swiftly**, reached me about the time of the evening [...]*"

An angel flies to proclaim the everlasting Gospel:

Revelation 14:6 (NASB) "*And **I saw another angel flying in midheaven** with an eternal Gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation, tribe, language, and people;*"

There are many other passages in the Scripture that tell us about birds and other animals from a spiritual perspective. We can't go through each one, but the idea that they refer to humans or humans influenced by spirits remains valid.

Job 12:7-9 (NKJV) "*But now ask the beasts, and they will teach you; **and the birds of the air, and they will tell you**; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you; **and the fish of the sea will explain to you**. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the LORD has done this?"*

Job 39:27-30 (NKJV) "*Does **the eagle** mount up at your command, and make its nest on high? On the rock it dwells and*

*resides, on the crag of the rock and the stronghold. From there it spies out the prey; Its eyes observe from afar. Its young ones suck up blood; **and where the slain are, there it is.**" (see also Matthew 24:28)*

Deuteronomy 28:49 (NKJV) "*The LORD will bring **a nation against you** from afar, from the end of the earth, **as swift as the eagle flies**, a nation whose language you will not understand [...]"*

Ezekiel 1:8 (NKJV) "***The hands of a man were under their wings on their four sides; and each of the four had faces and wings.**"*

Ezekiel 17:23 (NKJV) "*On the mountain height of Israel I will plant it; and it will bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a majestic cedar. **Under it will dwell birds of every sort**; in the shadow of its branches, they will dwell."*

Jeremiah 12:9 (NKJV) "***My heritage is to Me like a speckled vulture; the vultures all around are against her.** Come, assemble all the beasts of the field, bring them to devour!"*

Ecclesiastes 10:20 (NKJV) "*Do not curse the king, even in your thought; Do not curse the rich, even in your bedroom; For **a bird of the air may carry your voice, and a bird in flight may tell the matter.**"*

So, as a conclusion:

Sea life is not an underwater world. Fish represented people in the second world, especially the Gentiles. Winged birds symbolized the spirits that influenced people in the Old Covenant world for good or evil.

DAY SIX: THE CREATURES OF THE EARTH. THE MAKING OF MAN

Living creatures of the earth

The following quote describes the making of the living creatures of the earth:

Genesis 1:24-25 (NKJV) *"Then God said, **Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind**"; and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good."*

We see that living creatures are of the earth and belong to the earth, just as fish belong to the sea and winged birds belong to heaven. In our understanding, the earth does not refer to Planet Earth, but to the people of the Old Covenant: Israel. Therefore, for the creation of the sixth day we will follow the **spiritual** meaning, as with the other days. Later it will become clear that a literal meaning would lead to contradictions, which makes it unacceptable since God cannot contradict Himself.

If we follow what we said at the beginning of this study, that **we should not only look at what is said, but also at what is not said**, then we have a particularly important observation to make. This concerns the fact that God does not say on the sixth day (as in the case of the fish of the sea), ***„Be fruitful and multiply"***! Why? If it were the living creatures of the earth, should they not multiply and populate the planet? By this observation we show the difference between the two days (the fifth and the sixth): on the fifth day God says that fish and birds should multiply, but for the living creatures, created on the sixth day, God does not say

that. But of course, the animals of the earth multiply naturally, we know that. The natural multiplication is also an act of God's creation. Animals multiply naturally because they were created so. Again, the literal interpretation cannot be accepted. So, the absence of the commandment for the growth and multiplication, of the living creatures of the earth, is not an accident, it was not forgotten, rather it is intentional, and it is not without significance.

In our understanding the living creatures of the sixth day symbolize characters of people who had "*its kind*", i.e. a certain type of character. Animal species were representative through the features that characterized them. For example, in the Law of Moses, cattle and sheep are among the clean animals. In Israel they were also used as sacrificial animals and their milk and meat were used for food. Oxen were also used as draught animals, and we find written in the Law, the following:

Deuteronomy 25:4 (NKJV) "***You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.***"

So, if the animal was used for hard work, it had to be allowed to eat the grain it threshed. The question arises: is this all God wants to convey by this commandment? Surely not! Paul, called by God to reveal what was hidden in the Law, interprets this passage in this way:

1 Corinthians 9:9-10 (NKJV) "*For it is written in the Law of Moses, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.' Is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope.*"

If Paul had not clarified this passage, we would probably be left with a literal understanding. The spiritual meaning of this passage was the target of God's command, not just the care for the yoked animal. The apostles were represented in the Law of

Moses by a yoked animal. The field in which they worked was the world in which they preached the Gospel of Christ, reaching out with their preaching to the ends of the earth, in the first century (see Romans 10:18).

The system of the Law of Moses was based on animal sacrifices. The animal was sacrificed for the sins of the man who brought it. It was the man who was guilty, but the innocent animal was sacrificed instead of the man, so that the man could be forgiven. The sacrificial animal had to be chosen from among the clean animals. Animals were divided into clean and unclean, according to their 'character'. For example, the dove was a symbol of innocence and cleanliness, and at Jesus' baptism the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Him was represented by a dove. At the opposite pole were the birds of prey, such as those in Genesis 15, which were a symbol of evil. These birds symbolize the devil's struggle against God's covenant made with Abram. What would have happened if Abram had not driven out the birds of prey and let them eat the carcasses? Would it still have been possible for the flames of the covenant to pass through the split beasts? Surely not! But Abram acted on his faith in the One who made the promise. This faith was reckoned to him for righteousness. The evil one, represented by the birds of prey, could not take away Abram's faith.

Another example for the symbol given by the animal character is the lamb and the wolf. There is a big difference between the behavior of a lamb and that of a wolf. The lamb is so gentle that it doesn't fight back even when it is being led to slaughter. The fact that in the Old Covenant animal characters represented human characters, is shown by the Passover lamb. On the night before Israel came out of Egypt, the lamb was sacrificed as a representation of Christ's sacrifice, and John the Baptist says of the Lord in John 1:29: "[...] *Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*". At the opposite pole, the Apostle Paul tells the presbyters of the Church at Ephesus the following:

Acts 20:29 (DRB) "*I know that, after my departure, **ravening wolves will enter in among you, not sparing the flock.***"

Ravening wolves and dogs represented those who pretended to be Christians but were not. They were disuniting the Church by false teachings. An example are the Judaizes who taught Gentile Christians that they could not be saved unless they circumcised themselves and kept the Law of Moses. The church in Galatia, and beyond, was greatly shaken by these teachings. The deviation from the faith preached by the apostles was in a way a "kidnapping" caused to Christians by "*ravening wolves*". And in this case the wolves represent the wicked people who oppose the truth of God.

Jesus confirmed that the wolf was a symbol for people who prey on and scatter the "sheep of the flock".

John 10:12 (NKJV) "*But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the **wolf catches the sheep and scatters them***".

So, the living creatures of the earth, according to their varieties, are character patterns that describe the people who lived during the Old Covenant, including those of Jesus' time and those of the apostolic period. Among the creeping animals of the earth were also vipers, snakes, as Jesus called the hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees, who were the fiercest opponents of Him and the Gospel.

Let's return to the question at the beginning of this subchapter about the absence of God's command, to be fruitful and multiply. The answer could be that the living creatures of the earth refer to the people of the Old Covenant, the "Earth" which was to pass. "*Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth*", was to be built on the foundation of a New Covenant, in a New "Earth", a spiritual one, inhabited and owned by people born of God, no matter what nation they were from. That is why the "fish of the

sea" are given the command to grow, multiply, and fill the waters (sea represented the nations), because people are "fished" out of all nations by the fishers of men, from generation to generation. They are resurrected, brought to life through the Gospel of Christ, and live in the "New Earth". Thus, God's promise made to Abraham, was to be fulfilled: "[...] *in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*" (See Genesis 12:3 NKJV).

The Making of Man

Next, we will quote passages that speak to us about the making of man.

Genesis 1:26 (DRB) "*And he said: **Let us make man to our image and likeness: and let him have dominion** over the fish of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and the beasts, and the whole earth, and every creeping creature that moveth upon the earth*".

Genesis 1:27-28 DRB "***And God created man to His own image: to the image of God He created him: male and female He created them. And God blessed them, saying: increase and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it, and rule over the fish of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and all living creatures that move upon the earth.***"

(DRB - Douay-Rheims Bible)

The first point we wish to make, is that the man made on the sixth day **is not said to be of the earth**, as it is said of living creatures. The absence of specification of an earthly origin of man in verse 26, is not by chance, since we will see that this man has no earthly origin.

The passages quoted seem to express the same thing, yet we note the following differences:

Gen 1: 26	Gender. 1: 27-28
" he " (singular), masculine , has dominion	" blessed them " (plural), male and female , rule
Man in the image and likeness of God (man with two natures)	Man only in the image of God (has only one nature)

Although in most translations of Scripture, instead of "*let him have dominion*", we find "*let them have dominion*" (verse 26), in our opinion the translation using the singular is the correct one. We will clarify this as we go along, but for now let's analyze Psalm 8:3-8. Verse three refers to the creation of the heavens in Genesis 1, after which it goes on to speak of man created on the sixth day, and the dominion given to him, thus: "*You made him [...]*", "*You gave him dominion [...]*", "*you have put everything under his feet [...]*". We note that the Psalmist David uses the singular, not the plural, which confirms that the correct translation in Genesis 1:26 is the one that uses the singular: "*let him have dominion*". Scripture is verified by Scripture, not by other means outside the Scripture.

Now, let's study the making of man of the sixth day, from the two perspectives, highlighted by the two columns of the previous table.

The Man in the image and likeness of God

In Genesis 1:26, God says "*Let us make man [...]*". This "*let us make*" tells that God the Father was with the Word at the making of man in Genesis 1:26 (explanations will follow later). It is also important to note that it does not say: "*formed man from the dust of the ground*", as said in Genesis 2:7.

The Holy Spirit reveals this to us in John chapter 1:

John 1:1-3 (NKJV) "***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made***".

Paul, also writes to the Church at Colossae about the truth of the pre-existence of Christ (the Word), through whom and for whom all things were made and whom he says, is the image of God.

Colossians 1:15-17 (NKJV) "***He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist***".

By the WORD that was from the beginning with God, in Genesis 1:26 it was said, "*Let us make **man in our image, and likeness** [...]*".

Who is this man?

From childhood we were told that God made the first man, Adam, in the image and likeness of God, and of course this was said based on the text of Genesis 1:26. That is how most Christians still understand it. We have a different understanding, which we will explain. Before doing so let's point out a few discrepancies.

In Genesis chapter 2 verses 4-7 (NKJV) is the following description:

"This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created,

*in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and **there was no man** to till the ground;*

but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.

*And **the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground** and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."*

The passage goes on to describe the planting of the garden in Eden and the placing of the man made of dust there, after which the Lord causes vegetation to spring up from the ground. In verse 19, God makes from the earth the living creatures and brings them to man to name it.

We must admit that we have an apparent contradiction between the Genesis 1 account of man's making and the Genesis 2 account. The sequence in the creation of man and living things is opposite in the two accounts, thus:

Genesis chap. 1:20-25; 26 living creatures → then **MAN**

Genesis chap. 2:7; 19 **man** → then the living creatures

The conflict between the two accounts is obvious. In principle all Christians accept that God cannot contradict Himself. As far as we are concerned, we are fully convinced that there is no contradiction in the Scriptures; certainly, in the original text and in the spiritual meaning. Perhaps the translation may sometimes change the meaning, this can be discovered if someone searches the Scriptures with all his/her heart. In the case of the apparent contradiction which we have shown, it cannot be a question of mistranslation, since it is translated sufficiently faithful to the

meaning of the original text. Therefore, in what follows we want to show that **the MAN** of Genesis 1:26, who is **not said to be made of the dust of the earth** and who **also has the image and likeness of God**, is **different** from the man of Genesis 2:7, made of the dust of the earth. The latter has **only the likeness of God**, as the next verse shows:

Genesis 5:1-2 (NKJV) "***This is the book of the genealogy of Adam. In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created.***"

If the passages from Genesis 1 and 5 are understood literally, a contradiction arises. But it is obvious to us that we are talking about two different people/creations:

Genesis 1:27-28 - Man is created, **only in the image of God**, male and female,

Genesis 2:7 - Man is created **only in the likeness of God**, male and female, as it is clarified in Genesis 5:1-2.

Therefore, the man of Genesis 1:27-28, male and female, is made **only in the image of God**, and the man of Genesis 5:1-2 is made **only in the likeness of God**, also male and female. The contradiction in the literal meaning is eliminated only if we also consider the spiritual meaning. The male and female part of the man in Genesis 1:27-28 has a spiritual meaning, while in Genesis 5:1-2, the physical meaning is mandatory, since it refers to the first Adam's genealogy that follows.

Genesis chapter 5 presents the genealogy of the ten patriarchs before the flood. The first is Adam, and as we have already pointed out on Day 3, the patriarchs are those from whom the "earth" of the first world is born. We have no doubt that Genesis

chapter 2:7 and chapter 5:1 speaks about the first man, Adam, made from the dust of the earth, into whose nostrils God breathed **the breath of life** and he became a **living soul**. Unlike the animals, which also have the breath of life, he **is made in the likeness of God**. Why is the image of God not mentioned here? In our understanding this is because:

The first man - Adam - made from the dust of the earth, did not have the image of God, but only His likeness.

The likeness of God in which Adam was made distinct from animals, consist in the fact that God endowed him with a mind far superior, with aspirations, with skills, with discernment, with the ability to learn and speak, with the ability to create all kinds of things by the mind with which he was endowed. Elihu, speaking in the book of Job of the wisdom of man expresses this fact in a splendid way:

Job 32:8-9 (NKJV) "***But there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives him understanding. Great men are not always wise, nor do the aged always understand justice.***"

One of the most special attributes of the mind, of the soul with which man has been endowed, is choice, **free choice**. We all make choices in our soul, and this has consequences. The first Adam was placed in the "garden of choice" (in Eden) precisely so that he could freely express his choice. The two trees in the garden were appointed so that the first man, Adam, could express his free will. Into this likeness of God, capable to choose, we humans are born. The image of God, however, is entirely something else. This is received only by being born of the Spirit of God and by obeying the Gospel of Christ.

So, we have established that the man described in Genesis chapter one is not Adam. But let's see who this man is.

John 1:1, 14 (NKJV) *"In the beginning was the Word, [...] And **the Word became flesh** and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of **the only begotten of the Father**, full of grace and truth."*

We believe that what the Gospel of John describes in the first chapter is mysteriously announced as early as Genesis 1:26, namely, the incarnation of the Word, the coming of Jesus Christ into the world. The Incarnate Christ was God, **had the image of God** because He had in Himself the **Spirit without limit** (see John 3:34). He **was also man in the likeness of God**, as the first Adam was in the day he was made. David is descended genealogically from Adam, then from his son Nathan is descended Mary, and from Mary, after the body, is descended the Lord Jesus. By all this, we want to show that in Jesus we find both natures: **Godly** - through the Spirit without limit who was in Him, and **human** - through Mary, a daughter of David. The Spirit of God without limit that was in Jesus proves to us that He was God. He also had a human soul, so he was also human, but without sin, as was the first Adam before his fall. He did not depart from the Father's will because of the Spirit without limit that was in Him, even though He was tested much harder than the first Adam, being led by the Spirit into the wilderness (not into a garden) to be tempted by the Devil. He did not fall when tempted. The Scripture teaches that he had a sin-like flesh that entered the world through the first Adam (see Romans 8:3).

Let's now see what the Apostle Paul tells us about the image of Jesus Christ:

Philippians 2:6-7 (NIV) "*Who, **being in very nature God**, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, **being made in human likeness**.*"

The phrase, "*being in very nature God*", is a clear reference to the fact that Jesus Christ was God (incarnate) due to the image of God that was in Him. However, He does not make Himself God even though He was God but chooses to humble Himself. He willingly denied Himself, being made for a little while lower than the angels (see Hebrews 2:7), "*being made in human likeness*". The word "*likeness*" shows that He was not identical with men, who are fallen into sin, but just like the first Adam before the fall. We know that at the cross Jesus was physically stripped of His clothes, of the shirt which was of one fabric and had no seams, symbolizing the perfection and Glory with which His Person was spiritually clothed (see John 19:23). We believe that this symbol of Him being stripped off, speaks to us of the state of the first Adam before the fall, about whom we are told that he was naked.

Although the words stripped off makes us think, without clothes, we must see the **spiritual aspect of the nakedness** in which the first Adam was before his choice from Eden. In fact, the first Adam by his choice could clothe his "nakedness", either with the life of the Word of God (by obeying God), or with the self-life, the death that came through the Serpent's word (by obeying him). This is why Jesus said, "*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me*" (Matthew 16:24 NKJV). The Lord was speaking of the fallen self in the death of the first Adam, whereby man tried to be like God. It is a call of denying the dead works of the self, which can never please God.

Christ chose obedience to the Father, until death on the cross, being stripped off, willingly giving up the garment of His glory. This stripping of Himself (of His power as God/His Glory) makes Him **like (not identical!) the first Adam before the fall**, and from this state He **overcomes** the Devil who deceived the first Adam while he was "naked". From this state, being stripped off, laying aside His almightiness, He makes the choice of obedience to the Father even to the death on the cross, becoming sin for us (see 2 Corinthians 5:21). That is why he cried out on the cross with a loud voice: *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* (Matthew 27:46 NKJV), because he endured the pain of separation from God in the place of all men of all generations: past, present and future.

In contrast to Jesus, the **first Adam believes that being like God is something to be grasped**, by "eating" the deceitful words spoken by the Serpent. Thus Adam "clothed his nakedness" with the spiritual death from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. By obeying the Serpent's lie, the first Adam, from the state of "nakedness" becomes "clothed" with the death of his self-life. This clothing is symbolized by the apron he made from the leaves of the fig tree (the fig tree is a symbol for fleshly nature). After thousands of years Jesus sought fruit in the fig tree and because he did not find it, he cursed it (see Matthew 21:19). Nothing good dwells in our fleshly nature from the first Adam, symbolized by the fruitless fig tree. Any attempt to please God by one's own fleshly works is cursed.

At the approaching end of the earthly life of the last Adam, the righteous Jesus Christ, we see that His choice to obey the Father's will, by accepting to drink the cup of suffering for the sins of the world, also takes place in a garden. The garden is called Gethsemane. Here His sweat turns to blood, with the

choice before Him of whether or not to take upon Himself the filth of mankind's sins, of the past, present, and future. Out of love for the world He chose to obey the Father, taking upon Himself the sins of all men, in His crucified body on the cross of Calvary.

In Genesis 1:26 (DRB), after God says, "*let us make man in our image, and likeness,*" He goes on to declare: "*let **him** have dominion [...]*", **in the singular**. This singular talks about the incarnation of the Son of God.

Before the end of His ministry, He tells His disciples the following words:

John 16:32-33 (NKJV) "*Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, **and will leave Me alone.** And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; **but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.**"*

This declaration of victory refers to the dominion He gains through His Word and His Spirit of sacrifice. None of the leaders of the Old Covenant world, contemporary with Him, who hated Him without cause, whom He called "vipers" (Matthew 12:34, Matthew 23:33), could stand before His Word. This was fulfilled spiritually, but even literally:

John 18:4-6 (NKJV) "*Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, "Whom are you seeking? They answered Him, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them, "I am He." And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them. Now when He said to them, "**I am He,**" **they drew back and fell to the ground.**"*

About fifteen centuries earlier, Moses was sent by the One who calls Himself, "***I Am***" (i.e., God Himself), to bring His people out of the bondage of Egypt (see Exodus 3:14). Now **He, Himself, answering "*I am He*", had come** to deliver His people from the bondage of sin and death, through the cross, that followed within days after this event of His capture. How wonderful is the Lord! Who can refuse such love!

Three days after the crucifixion came the Resurrection by which he earned his right of dominion over all things, as he said:

Matthew 28:18 (NKJV) "*And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "**All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.**"*"

This, "*all authority*" of Jesus - the Man with two natures: God and Man - means that the Father gave all authority to the risen Christ. Thus, were fulfilled the words of Genesis 1:26: "*[...] Let him have dominion [...]*".

This was the fulfilment of the first part of the dominion, given to the Man made in the image and likeness of God, of Genesis 1:26 (all authority was given to Jesus).

The second part of the dominion was to be fulfilled by the Man made in the image of God alone (commanded in Gen. 1:28), male and female, that is, Christ the Head, with His Body the Church. This dominion is foretold by God in Genesis 1:28, where we find the command to increase, multiply, fill the earth, subdue it and rule over creation, and this was fulfilled in the apostolic generation.

The passages in Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2 prove that the dominion over creation was to be fulfilled only at the end of the apostolic period (from man's perspective).

Psalm 8:3-8 (NKJV) "*When I consider Your **heavens, the work of Your fingers**, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, **what is man** that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For **You have made him a little lower than the angels**, and You have crowned him with glory and honor. **You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands**; You have put **all things** under his feet, all sheep and oxen — even the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea that pass through the paths of the seas.*"

It is very obvious that Psalm 8 refers to the creation of Genesis chapter 1, which the man created on the sixth day was to take over. Notice that after the psalmist says, "***the heavens - the work of your fingers - the moon and the stars, which You have ordained***", he goes on to say "***You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands, You have put all things under his feet***", that is, including the heavens, which are also the work of his hands, created in Genesis 1.

How could the first Adam, made from the dust of the earth, have dominion over the heavens?

The answer to this question can only be one:

The man of Genesis 1:26 is not the first Adam, but the last Adam, Christ incarnate and resurrected.

In Hebrews chapter 2, the apostle inspired by the Spirit, quotes from Psalm 8 and tells us that the One to whom all things created in Genesis 1 are subjected, is Jesus:

Hebrews 2:6-9 (NKJV) "*But one testified in a certain place, saying: "**What is man** that You are mindful of him, or the son of*

*man that You take care of him? **You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet.**" For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who **was made a little lower than the angels**, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone."*

So, the dominion over all creation of Genesis 1 (as many Christians still believe this refers to the first Adam) was not "seen", fully realized in the first century, in the apostolic period. This means that **this dominion could not refer to the first Adam** or to his natural descendants. The author of Hebrews letter names Jesus as being the son of man spoken of in Psalm 8 and this Psalm clearly refers to the man of Genesis 1. Let's visualize it better:

Hebrews chapter 2:6-9 shows us that the Man of whom Psalm 8 speaks is Jesus,



Psalm 8 speaks of the dominion that was given to Man in Genesis 1:26.



So, the Man of Genesis 1:26 is Jesus, not the first Adam.

The texts of Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2 are very strong evidence that the MAN of Genesis 1:26 is Jesus Christ, not the first Adam. Let's remember that, before He was given to be crucified, God "utters" through Pilate's mouth these revealing words: "**Behold**

the MAN!" (See John 19:5 NKJV). We see that these words are pointing towards THE MAN of Genesis 1:26.

The next passage shows us what still remained until all things were to be subjected to Him. This was **the second part of the dominion** we spoke of earlier.

Hebrews 10:12-13 (NKJV) *"But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool."*

This expectation was almost fulfilled towards the end of the apostolic period, in the first century. Christ's return was to take place when all his enemies were made his footstool.

Has this happened?

In our opinion, it certainly did! We will show this throughout this study.

The dominion given to the Man with two natures

If the dominion of the earth lies in ruling over all creatures created by God, and if it were in any way possible for man to literally rule over the fish of the sea, the birds and other living creatures, then we should have seen described on the pages of Scripture the actions taken by Adam and his descendants, to fulfill this command. To take things a little further: how could Adam subdue flying birds, or whales? And to what end? God gives no such commands. This would be nonsense.

In the previous subchapter we talked about the dominion of Man in Genesis 1:26 and about *"all authority"* that Jesus was given after His resurrection. The question that arises is: what does this authority refer to? Or, for what purpose did Jesus receive all authority? The only Scriptural answer is that the

authority was given to bring "heaven" and "earth" under the dominion of God. Satan was to be cast out of heaven and stripped of the authority and dominion he had received through the deception of the first Adam. The fact that the evil one ruled in the Old Covenant world is shown in the next passage:

Luke 4:5-7 (NKJV) *"Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, **“All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.** Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.”* "

These words are of major importance for a correct understanding of the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation. We see that the Devil is trying to tempt the last Adam, like the first Adam. His temptation reaches its climax when he asks the Son, implicitly, to deny God the Father and accept him, the Devil, as god. This can be seen from the fact that he asks Him to worship him. Worship is due only to God. The devil thought of himself as god because he had dominion over the kingdoms of the earth which he acquired by deceiving the first Adam. This dominion was to be ripped out from the authority of the devil and passed under the authority of God. We see this fulfilled in Revelation 11 with verse 15 (NKJV):

*"Then the seventh angel sounded: and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ***“The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!”***"*

This was to be the fulfillment of God's words which were promised in Genesis 1:26-28, a dominion gained by Christ, through the cross, followed by the resurrection, the ascension,

and then the proclamation of the Gospel through the holy apostles to the ends of the earth. Paul tells us that in the first century the Gospel was already proclaimed to *"every creature under heaven"* (see Colossians 1:23 NKJV). By the proclamation of God's Word and its victory, all authority and obedience were given to the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church. What was lost in Eden through the first Adam was redeemed by the last Adam on the cross of Calvary who, together with His apostolic Church, defeated the evil one. This is why Jesus says: *"the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10 NKJV). The devil was cast down from heaven, and Name of Jesus was exalted above every name, so *"that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth"* (Philippians 2:10 NKJV).

DOMINION OF THE EARTH	
AT THE BEGINNING OF CREATION	AT THE END OF CREATION
IN THE FIRST ADAM	IN THE LAST ADAM - JESUS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The devil tempts Adam in Eden - the first LIE: Adam and Eve were misled to do what God has forbidden in order to be like God, knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:1-5) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The devil tempts Jesus in the wilderness - the last LIE: I give you the kingdoms of the earth you will be like god on earth if you worship me (Matthew 4:8-9)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adam listened to the Serpent - the tree was pleasing to the eye, desirable to open one's mind - choose the way of putting on the self that caused death - Genesis 3:7 (fig leaves-> the fig tree cursed by Jesus) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jesus rejects him: "Go away Satan!" (Matthew 4:10) - Jesus obeys God the Father - choose the way of the cross = self-denial (Mark 14:34-42) - was made sin - forsaken by the Father (2 Cor. 5:21; Mark 15:34)

THE CONSEQUENCE OF DISOBEDIENCE	THE CONSEQUENCE OF OBEDIANCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the spiritual death of Adam - Adam - the first spiritually dead man with earthly, death-giving nature - the death of mankind in Adam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the resurrection of JESUS in the body and SPIRIT - the First Risen - Life-giving Spirit (1 Cor.15:45; 1 Pet. 3:18; Acts 26:23) - Gospel-> preached in all the earth - eternal, spiritual life - the salvation of mankind in Christ
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the earth comes under Satan's rule in the first world and in the second world of the Old Covenant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the earth passes under the dominion of the Lord in the third spiritual world of the New Covenant

The Man in the image of God

Genesis 1:27 (DRB) "*And God **created man to His own image: to the image of God he created him: male and female He created them.***"

Whereas in Genesis 1:26, we learn about the incarnation of Man that has the image and likeness of God (i.e. Jesus, the Man with two natures: man and God at the same time), in verse 27 we are taught about the Man with only one nature, made only in the image of God. He is made up of the male part (i.e. the glorified Christ, the Head) and the female part (i.e. the Church). To them God said:

"[...] be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing creeping upon the earth" (Genesis 1:28 DRB)

From verse 26, we saw that Jesus Christ is the Man with two natures who **rightfully** subdued all things through the cross and

His resurrection from the dead. The priests and Jews blinded by their unfounded hatred, did not understand the revelation that God made through the mouth of Pilate, when He said: "*Behold the Man!*" (THE MAN of Genesis 1:26) As soon as they heard these words they began to cry out, "*Crucify him! Crucify him!*" Note that the command in verse 28 is given only after His victory on the cross, after He receives dominion over all things (prophesied in verse 26).

The dominion of the man made in the image of God

In contrast to verse 26 where it says, "*let Him have dominion,*" we notice that in verse 28 the plural is used, not the singular: „*God blessed them, [...] be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it.* These words are addressed to the man who is male and female and is made only in the image of God: that is, Christ the Head and His Body the Church.

In fact, this commandment is a prophecy, concealed, spoken long before its fulfillment. This prophecy is revealed by the Lord Jesus before his ascension to heaven, when he tells his disciples how to fulfil this commandment:

Matthew 28:19-20 (NKJV) "***Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.***"

In our understanding, **multiplication was to be** accomplished through this "*make disciples*", by preaching and teaching the Word of the Gospel of Christ, not through a natural relationship between man and woman (as many Christians still understand it). God does not command the perpetuation of the human race in Genesis 1:28! Perpetuation is something natural, it belongs to

the seen creation that God made. The natural perpetuation occurs in both cases, (1) for those who obey God and (2) for those who do not obey Him. The latter do not even question their obedience to the Lord and yet perpetuation takes place in their case too. Likewise, all species of animals and plants perpetuate their species naturally, because God created them that way. We must understand that the obedience to God's command in Genesis 1:28, is not an instinctive physical act, but a spiritual intentional one, with a clear purpose and with the ultimate goal to gain dominion over the "earth".

Since natural multiplication takes place through natural birth, let's see how Paul speaks of birth in the context of proclaiming the Gospel:

1 Corinthians 4:15 (NKJV) "*For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; **for in Christ Jesus, I have begotten you through the gospel.***"

Philemon 1:10 (NKJV) "*I appeal to you **for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten** while in my chains, [...]*"

Natural reproduction occurs as a result of a natural will and seed. **Spiritual** multiplication, i.e. that multiplication which comes by being born of the Spirit, follows a birth from a spiritual seed which is the Word of the Gospel of Christ. Let's observe this truth from the following passages:

1 Peter 1:23 (NKJV) "*having been **born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God** which lives and abides forever, [...]*"

John 3:5-6 (NKJV) "*Jesus answered (to Nicodemus), "Most assuredly, I say to you, **unless one is born of water and the Spirit,***

*he cannot enter the kingdom of God. **That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.**"*

Nicodemus thought that Jesus was talking about the natural birth, but in fact He was talking about the spiritual birth, by the Spirit of God. The multiplication spoken of in Genesis 1:28, is a result of being born of the Spirit, and the Spirit begets Spirit that enters the Kingdom of God.

By multiplication the building of God in Christ is built. It is a **spiritual** building, well-knit, growing, through the bond that each "living stone" gives. This understanding enlightens our lives as Christians, so that we live aware that we are spiritual beings who give forth life from Christ through the Gospel, not just biological bodies with a soul. Our permanent concern must be, in the first instance, our spirit, not our flesh. In the following passages we see how Paul taught the Galatians.

Galatians 3:3 (NKJV) *"Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?"*

Galatians 5:25 (NKJV) *"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."*

And all because we are the spiritual work of our Lord.

Ephesians 2:10 (NKJV) *"For **we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus** for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."*

Paul says that "**we are His workmanship**", being created in Christ. He is referring to **God's workmanship which was finished on the sixth day of creation** in Genesis 1.

1 Peter 2:5 (NKJV) "*you also, **as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.***"

Peter teaches that all believers together make up the spiritual house of God. Christians have been built into this house to offer spiritual sacrifices through Jesus Christ. If there is a "*spiritual house*" then the living stones are also spiritual beings born of the Spirit, and because Jesus says that the Spirit begets spirit, not flesh, it is well understood that **these living stones are spiritual beings brought to life in the Spirit, raised in the Spirit**, not in the flesh.

The Spiritual House has Jesus Christ as a Spiritual Cornerstone (as a life-giving Spirit), the First to be raised from the dead in the Spirit (see 1 Peter 3:18). It is not the physically resurrected body of Christ that became the cornerstone! The physical resurrection was the fulfillment of the prophecy in Psalm 16:10 and a sign to the unbelievers of His generation, whom He called "*an evil and adulterous generation [...]*" (Matthew 12:39).

Paul goes further with his explanations by showing that Christ was also present in ancient times with His people Israel. He was invisible to the physical eyes, but spiritually present, represented by the **spiritual Rock** from which they drank to quench their spiritual thirst, not their bodily one.

1 Corinthians 10:4 (NKJV) "*[...] and they all drank the same **spiritual drink**. For they drank of the **spiritual Rock** that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.*"

This is the Cornerstone of God's building. This **spiritual Man** that is spoken of mysteriously in Genesis 1:27. The **risen Christ in the Spirit is the Head, representing the male part, and the Church born of the Spirit is His Body, representing the female part.**

On the seventh day God rests from all the work He had created and made (see Genesis 2:3). It doesn't just say "*the work He had made*", it also uses the word "*created*". This word is no accident here. It foretells about God's new creation in Christ, long before it has come in the incarnation of Jesus. The word "*created*" refers to the same building shown by Paul and Peter, the new temple of God, represented by the city of the New Jerusalem, the Church, that comes down from heaven. The former things, i.e. the things that were made, have passed away together with the Old Covenant at the end of the apostolic generation. The NEW TEMPLE OF GOD, which is Christ united with His wife, the Church, is eternal.

The Man in Genesis 1:27-28, made only in the image of God, male and female, represents Christ the Head (male) and the Church, His Body (female).

Man's food

On the sixth day, God also says what foods man should eat.

Genesis 1:29 (NKJV) "*And God said, "See, I have given you **every herb that yields seed** which is on the face of all the earth, and **every tree whose fruit yields seed**; to you it shall be for food."*

Note that foods seemingly from the plant world, had to have seeds. This emphasis is not without significance, since the theme of seed is central to Scripture. We know that Jesus Christ is the "*Seed of the woman*" who was to crush the head of the Serpent. In turn, Christ has a seed of followers (see Isaiah 53) who work with Him to crush the Serpent's head (see 1 Corinthians 3:9; Romans 16:20). The food for man, in Genesis 1, must also be

understood in a spiritual sense. Note also, that the command given to Adam concerning the prohibition of "eating" from the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, refers not to what goes in the stomach, but to what goes into the mind. The desire stirred by the Serpent to be like God by opening the mind, to know good and evil, was an action of the mind, not of the gut (see Genesis 3:6).

If from this passage we understand only that God has established the diet for the human body, then we limit everything to something trivial, related only to the physical and to earthly things that are ephemeral. In the New Testament we see very clearly that the teaching is centered on the **spiritual**. Likewise in the Old Testament, teaching has a spiritual meaning, but it is presented to us through the shadow of things, not through their reality. The reality was to be shown with the incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension and return of Jesus in His glory.

The belief of many Christians is that humans before the Flood were vegetarians. The righteous Abel lived in this world. His occupation was shepherding flocks of sheep. Could he not have consumed milk? Or did he not eat the flesh of sheep? Did he raise sheep only for sacrifice? Such an explanation is hard to believe, since Abel offers a sacrifice to the Lord from the firstborn sheep. It was an act of faith and self-denial in that he gave precedence to the Lord. Instead of keeping his firstborn sheep for himself, he gave it up to the Lord. This is why Abel's sacrifice was pleasing the Lord. If Abel didn't eat of the sheep's flesh anyway, and only raised them for sacrifice, then why would it matter which sheep he brought as a sacrifice? And how did the Lord look with pleasure at Abel's sacrifice if it cost him nothing? From King David we learn that he did not want to offer the Lord

a sacrifice that did not cost him, thereby showing his love for God.

In the Old Covenant, God gives several commands to the people of Israel regarding food for the body. Let's note one of them, set for the time when it was the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Exodus 12:20 (NKJV) "***You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.***"

Although the commandment was to be fulfilled literally, for it was in the Law, the leavened bread is a symbol for sin, especially for the sin of self-righteousness. Unleavened bread is a symbol for Christ's righteousness which he gives us as a gift through faith. God's spiritual teaching on sin and righteousness was the focus of the commandment. To remove from our minds any natural meaning, Jesus says that **it is not what goes into the stomach that defiles a man, but what comes out of the mouth** (i.e. what comes out of the heart, the mind) - Matthew 15:11.

Breaking the commandment during the Feast of Unleavened Bread was punishable by physical death (see Ex. 12:19). By analogy, the sin of self-righteousness, after Jesus has given us righteousness through His grace, is also punished by death, but with the second death, that is, eternal separation from God.

Let's see how David is talking about food:

Psalms 63:5-6 (NKJV) "***My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips. When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches.***"

David writes in this psalm that he feeds his **soul** abundantly when he thinks of the Lord. This "food" comes through thought, so it is a fruit of the joyful mind when he meditates on the Lord,

on the Christ whom he expected to show Himself at the "*fullness of the time*" since he prophesied about Him.

1 Corinthians 10:1-4 (NKJV) "*Moreover, brethren, **I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers** were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, **all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink.** For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and **that Rock was Christ.**"*

From this passage, we see that Paul **wants us to know**, to understand, that the people of Israel in the wilderness ate **spiritual food** and drank **spiritual drink**, not just manna and water. It was food for the soul, for the mind, and we dare say that if Paul had not enlightened us, we would have remained at a natural understanding, strictly related to the stomach.

John 4:34 (NKJV) "*Jesus said to them, "**My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work** (to finish, to complete, to fulfill God's creation from Genesis)."*"

In this passage we see the prospect of a spiritual meaning for food. The fulfilment of God's will, the completion of God's work was "*food*" for Jesus. This "*food*" follows a conscious act of loving and obeying God's will.

Hebrews 5:13-14 (NKJV) "*For **everyone who partakes only of milk** is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But **solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.**"*

This passage tells of the "strong food" for the Christian's mind that comes through understanding the Word of Scripture. This

Word must first be discovered, then spiritually understood, after which the Christian can distinguish between good and evil.

Matthew 16:6-12 (NKJV) "*Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees." And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread." But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? —but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees."*

Jesus' words in this passage prove that the Pharisees and Sadducees were feeding on the "leaven" of the teaching of sin, leaven that was forbidden by the symbolism of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, as we said earlier. The Sadducees believed neither in angels nor in the resurrection of the dead. The Pharisees, however, believed in both. The Pharisees' leaven was not unbelief in God, but belief in their self-righteousness, "feeding" on the works of their own selves which they laid boastfully before God (see Luke 18:10-14). Teaching self-righteousness and rejecting the righteousness given by grace through Christ was their "leaven." Jesus speaks in the next passage in the same spiritual sense about food:

John 6:27 (NKJV) "*Do not **labor for** the food which perishes, but for **the food which endures to everlasting life**, which the Son of*

Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him."

Matthew 4:4 (NKJV) "*But He answered and said, "It is written, '**Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.**' "*

John 6:54 (NKJV) "***Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.***"

Jesus is not talking about eating His physical body, but about receiving the gift of forgiveness through His righteous sacrifice on the cross. Food for the soul, not for the belly, is spoken of here! The goal of the teaching is to receive the gift of forgiveness through which we have eternal life and resurrection from the dead! About food for the belly, He says:

Matthew 15:17 (NKJV) "*Do you not yet understand that **whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated?***"

If everything that goes into the stomach is thrown out, how come there are still some who claim (contrary to Jesus' teaching) that the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper becomes the physical body and physical blood of Jesus? These people do not realize what they are saying. They implicitly assert that the body and blood of the Lord Jesus is thrown out into the cesspool, into the garbage. This is indeed blasphemy.

In the next passage we see that Peter was hungry in his physical body, but God gives him another food that he did not expect.

Acts 10:10 (NKJV) "*Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance [...]" (see passage further)*

We notice that Peter receives from God a **spiritual food**, a **teaching**, a **revelation** that God has decided to give salvation to the Gentiles as well.

Paul thus speaks of food as follows:

2 Corinthians 9:10 (NKJV) "*Now may **He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food**, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and **increase the fruits of your righteousness**, [...].*"

The fruit of a tree, such as an olive tree, is meant to produce nourishment for the physical body. The spiritual fruit that God's believers produce, nourishes the soul of man who listens to the teaching sown by the Lord's sowers.

Apostle Paul was a great sower of the Lord. He sowed the Word of Christ all his life after the call of the Lord. Timothy was his disciple, whom he fed with the words of faith and good doctrine.

1 Timothy 4:6 (NKJV) "*If you instruct the brethren in these things, **you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine** which you have carefully followed.*"

The food of Genesis 1 has a spiritual meaning and refers to the food which the soul of saved man is to be fed with, not his physical body. The food for the soul was to be with "seed". The theme of seed in the Scriptures occupies a central place in God's plan of salvation, for it pointed to the work of Christ and His seed of descendants. A seed is always a promise and an assurance for the future harvest. The "food with seed" in the spiritual realm speaks of Christ eternal "seed" that will always beget eternal life.

DAY SEVEN: GOD'S REST

In this chapter, we will show that God's rest on the seventh day from the end of creation in Genesis, a rest also promised to man (see Hebrews 4), comes only after the fulfillment of the prophecy in Revelation, at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. While for man things unfold linearly in time, from God's perspective everything was already finished in the beginning in Genesis 1.

Genesis 2:2 (NKJV) "***And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.***"

Genesis 2:3 (NKJV) "***Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.***"

The sixth day ends the creation. On the seventh day ALL WORK is done, so there is NOTHING, NOTHING, NOTHING left to do! The time of made things, i.e. of things shaken, of temples built by human hands, is over. The last Temple of the Old Covenant from Jerusalem that was made by man's hand, has been torn down according to the Word of the Lord Jesus Christ (see Matthew 24). The **Spiritual** HOUSE of God He dwells in with His people has come down from heaven (see Rev. 21:1-3). God's final offer and promise from generation to generation is:

His rest in the holy city of New Jerusalem, a city that was established by the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, stretched out and pierced on the cross of Calvary.

The gates of the holy city will not close during the "Day" because there will be only day, for the "night" of the Old Covenant (the time when man could not see the face of God) has passed. Whoever wishes may enter the city to partake of the fruits of the tree of life, quench his thirst with the waters of the rest of life and be enlightened by the presence of God. From the throne of God and the Lamb now flows a river with the water of life that gives eternal life. The reign of death caused by the sin that came through the first Adam, and the dominion of Law given at Sinai have been cast for eternity into the lake of fire and brimstone. From now on and until everlasting, the only dominion is that of the love of Christ who calls to life all who thirst.

Under the eternal New Covenant that came into full effect at the end of the apostolic generation, which marks the end of creation on the sixth day of Genesis 1, whoever believes in the gospel receives the gift of eternal life. This promise is to all generations of men forever (see Gen. 17:7).

We can affirm that every Christian, during his life, goes through the process of creation (on an individual level), from a fallen person, dead in sin, to a new creation, being brought to eternal life by Christ.

The creation that took place during the first two worlds, on a historical scale, somehow replicates in the life of every Christian. This process is not without suffering, because suffering and pain are part of the process of creation. For example: the bringing of a child into this world, from the moment of conception until it is fully formed into a human being (see Ps. 139:13-16), followed by birth, and then growth, is not a process without suffering and

pain both for the parents (especially the mother) and the child. We believe that this pattern we see in the physical world is a symbol for the reality in the spiritual realm. The Apostle Paul expresses this truth in Galatians 4:19 (NIV):

*"My dear children, for whom I am again **in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you** [...]"*

Before birth, the baby is surrounded by a "bag" filled with fluid, in which it "lives". Through the placenta it receives all the nourishment and everything necessary for its development. After birth, after his coming into this world, the placenta and the fluid filled "bag" are no longer needed. Likewise, our soul and spirit reside in a physical body that is no longer needed when we depart from this world into God's "world" for which we were created. This is the purpose for which man was created on earth, as in the womb of a mother, in a secret place (see Ps. 139), to receive the Image of Christ and be prepared for the world and life in the presence of God.

Unlike the other days, on the seventh day God does no more work. God's work is finished in six days, from His perspective, but not from man's perspective. If this were also true from man's perspective, then creation would be mainly **physical**, referring only to the universe, including life on earth. Where then, is the spiritual part of creation? Or did God not create also the spiritual things? In our understanding, God created them all in Genesis 1. However, for man, spiritual creation has a long history and is described in Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.

If God had finished all His work in Genesis 1 also from human perspective, without including the other things related in the Scriptures - including Revelation - then the (serious) logical implications would be that:

- a) The other Scriptures are not part of the whole work of God;
- b) The incarnation of Jesus Christ would not be part of the whole work of God;
- c) We Christians, brought to life by Christ, would not be "*His work*", so the apostles' teaching would not be true.

If that were the case, we would be the victims of a big lie.

The Scripture speaks of only one work that God created and made, and we find it described in Genesis 1. Even if we repeat what we have already said, we emphasize again that all the other things that are recounted in the Scripture show the unfolding in human time of God's work, completed in Genesis 1. We thank God for enlightening us to understand creation, in human view, as a work from Genesis to Revelation.

After the seventh day of creation there is no other day!

Note that after all creation is finished, on the seventh day it is **no longer** said as on the other days, "*so it was evening and then it was morning*". And after that it does not say: "it was the seventh day". Why is that? Although it may seem unbelievable, the answer to this question is found in Revelation. Here is the end of all of God's work from a temporal perspective as seen by humanity framed in time. This end comes with the descending from heaven of the city of the New Jerusalem in which God dwells. In this city we are told that there will be no more night.

Revelation 21:25 (NKJV) "*Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there).*"

Here we find the explanation why on the seventh day it is no longer said, "*there was evening and a morning*"; for where God dwells there is only the light of "The Day".

The emphasis in the previous quotation on the gates of the city of New Jerusalem, which will not be closed in the daytime, is special. In ancient times the gates of the cities were usually closed at night or when there was war, but they were open during the day. The enemies, the evildoers, acted primarily in the dark, when they could not be seen. In the city of New Jerusalem there is only "daylight", and its gates are eternally open to those who wish to enter to experience the LIGHT of God's eternal DAY. The fact that the city descends from heaven proves that the New Jerusalem is God's work at the end, the BUILDING with which ALL HIS WORK ends. This is a **Spiritual City where** there is **Spiritual light** and **Spiritual Day**. God dwells in it (God is Spirit) and enlightens it eternally. Therefore,

The seventh day of Genesis 2:3 must be seen in the same spiritual sense, not literally, since it is eternal.

Considering that on this day God rested from all His work, we want to see what the Sabbath rest meant in the Old Covenant period.

The Sabbath of the Law was the "shadow" of the true Sabbath

Let us recall the fourth commandment given by God on Mount Sinai:

Exodus 20:10-11 (NKJV) "*but **the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your***

gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore, the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it."

The commandment of Sabbath rest, known as the fourth commandment, is given at Mount Sinai. It is one of the Ten Commandments that God spoke to the people of Israel at Sinai. The Law is a whole and breaking one of the commandments brought upon the transgressor the guilt of breaking all the other commandments. Since the commandment of the Sabbath rest is in the Law, we will do an analysis of the Law, to show:

- how the Law was given,
- what impact the Law had on the people of the Old Covenant,
- what the purpose of the Law was and how long it lasted.

Next, we explain these things about the Law, so that later we can understand what the Sabbath rest really means.

The people were to stay at a certain distance which was marked by the borders around the mountain, established by Moses according to God's command. The crowd was terrified by God's presence on the mountain and after they heard the Ten Commandments, demanded that God speak only to Moses, and that they obey him. The Israelites turned away from the mountain because God's presence terrified them. They refused to listen to God's voice. Moses approached the cloud where God was and listened to his words (see Exodus 20).

The message that **terrified** the people at Sinai, spoken by God from the midst of the fire, consisted precisely in the Ten

Commandments of the Law that they heard with their ears. Later Moses received them written on the two tablets of stone, just before he came down from the mountain.

The Apostle Paul explains the purpose of the Law in detail. One of the explanations he gives is that the Ten Commandments are a "*ministry of death*".

2 Corinthians 3:7 (NKJV) "*But if **the ministry of death**, written and engraved on stones, [...]*"

We notice that Paul is referring to the Law that was written and engraved in stone, which makes it obvious that the reference is to the Ten Commandments. This was the purpose of the Law: to point out man's sin and unrighteousness, and by to condemn to death. God, in His plan, made before the foundation of the world, decided to have mercy on people in His love shown in Christ. This is explained by Paul to the Christians in Galatia as follows:

Galatians 3:22-25 (NKJV) "*But **the Scripture has confined all under sin** that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, **we were kept under guard by the law**, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore, the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. **But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.***"

We have underlined the words that show us that we are no longer under the guidance of the Law. So, the Law is no longer a "light" to guide us in the life of faith. The Law has illuminated until the coming of faith. It has guarded like a guard that watches over a condemned man in prison until the coming of pardon, that is, the decision of release given by God in Christ.

Let's take the analogy one step further: what happens to the guard who guarded the prisoner, after he is pardoned? Does he go home with him? Will he still accompany him as he did when he was in prison? We all know the answer: no! The guard's job with the ex-convict is over.

The Ten Commandments have "enlightened" during the "night" of the Old Covenant. But their light is too small, good only for the "cells" in the "prison" of the Old Covenant Law. Now we have the greatest light, the Light of the eternal Day, in which the "Sun" that rose from on high, the Lord Jesus Christ, shines upon us.

In case anyone should find themselves twisting the above words, we want to say plainly that anyone who thinks he is free to commit the sins bound by the Ten Commandments has understood nothing of Christianity. For the light of Christ is far superior to the light of the Law, and the sanctification given as a gift by Christ, to all who believe, is given precisely because He knows that we do not have in our fallen selves the power to fulfill the commandments of the Law. By His grace, by His mercy, we are born again to live a new life, superior to that required by the Law, and this only by the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Law has no mercy but punishes - according to the wrongdoing. One such example is in the following passage:

Deuteronomy 19:21 (NKJV) *"Your eye shall not pity: life shall be for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."*

Jesus, however, has a far superior teaching to the Law, saying:

Matthew 5:43-44 (NKJV) "*You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, **love your enemies**, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, [...]*"

The law was addressed to man's self who has been proven to be powerless because of the sin that dwells in him (beginning with the man Adam in Eden). Any attempt of man to fulfill the Ten Commandments by the power of his own self, was, is, and will be a failure. Therefore, the Lord Jesus says:

Luke 9:23 (NKJV) "*Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, **let him deny himself**, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."*"

Now, if one says that the Ten Commandments are still necessary for Christians, then the self to whom they are addressed must also be kept alive. This would be contrary to the teaching of Jesus who asks us to deny our self every day. In the same way, Paul also teaches that our self was crucified with Christ on the cross.

Galatians 2:20 (NKJV) "*I have been crucified with Christ; **it is no longer I who live (myself)**, but **Christ lives in me**; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."*

So, Paul says it bluntly, "*it is no longer I who live*" (the self), "*Christ lives in me*". Our self, to whom the commandments of the Law were addressed, was crucified on the cross with Christ, died a righteous death, that we might have new life from Him. And if I have died with Christ, I have also died to the Law; the Law can no longer address the self because I am no longer my

old self. From now on I am **a new creature** in whom Christ lives; the old has gone with the bondage of the Law, "*behold, all things have become new*".

If indeed Christ is alive in us, if He has risen in us, then we are alive too, we have eternal life in the Spirit, and the law that condemned us to death has no more power over us. Whoever still upholds the applicability of the Law to Christians, implicitly also upholds the death that the Law gives, thus rendering the grace of life brought by Christ in vain. You can't have it both ways: either one or the other. We cannot be both, the wife of the Law and the wife of Christ, because in Christ we have died to the Law (see Romans chapters 7 and 8). Does it not seem to you that the advocates of applying the Law to Christians, even in part, are proposing a life of spiritual adultery? Those who continue to identify themselves with the morality of the Law, no matter how good they look on the outside, may be in the worst state: the state of spiritual adultery.

In the next passage, Jesus shows us that the morality of the Law is not sufficient for the inheritance of eternal life.

Luke 18:18-23 (NKJV) "*Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, 'Good Teacher, **what shall I do to inherit eternal life?** So, Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. **You know the commandments:** 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother.' "* And he said, "*All these things I have kept from my youth.*" So, when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "***You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.***" But

*when he heard this, **he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.***"

So, this rich young man was very careful to keep the commandments in the hope that he would inherit eternal life. But to his surprise, Jesus tells him that this is not enough. What he lacked was the most important thing: self-denial. His self-love and the love for the things that belonged to him, caused him to grieve when he heard Jesus' words, and he went away sorrowful (see Mark 10:22). What he lacked was the fact that he did not want to give his life to receive a new life from God. From this example, we learn that we cannot receive eternal life unless we deny our self-life, which is dead to God no matter how moral it may be. In fact, in the justification given by the morality of the self is hidden, very subtly, the rejection of Christ's grace and love. We need to **totally** depend on His mercy and goodness.

In the early Church there were those who argued that Gentiles must keep the whole Law of Moses in order to be saved (the Law included the Sabbath rest). Let us not forget that the period of the Law was not fully completed before the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans (in A.D. 70). With that destruction, the Levitical sacrifices also ceased.

Here is the passage we are referring to:

Acts 15:5 (NKJV) *"But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and **to command them to keep the law of Moses.**"*"

Peter confronts hem, calling this a tempting to God:

Acts 15:10 (KJV) "*Now therefore, **why tempt ye God**, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?*"

The yoke Peter refers to was precisely the attempt to be righteous by fulfilling the law. It was not the sacrificial system that was the most difficult yoke, but precisely the Ten Commandments that terrified the people at Mount Sinai, so that they asked God to stop speaking to them.

The next passage shows us what the apostles and presbyters in Jerusalem decided about the Gentile Christians:

Acts 15:28-29 (NKJV) "***For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from **things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality**. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.***"

So, the Holy Spirit, together with the apostles, decided to ask the Gentile believers (not the Jews among Gentiles) to abstain from four things among those forbidden by the Law: fornication, blood, devoured beasts, and things sacrificed to idols. The choosing of only four commands was because these evil deeds were widespread among the Gentiles. Also, the Jewish Christians in the Gentile churches, were quarreling about these unlawful acts (see Acts 15:1-2). The four things decided by the apostles are called by James "**burdens**" (see Acts 15:28), because they were part of the **yoke of the Law** of which Peter said that: "*neither our fathers nor we could bear it*" (Acts 15:10). Placing this weight of the yoke of the Law on Gentile Christians who, unlike the Jews, were not under the Law, was a necessary, exceptional "**burden**", that pertained to

the transition period from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. However, unlike the Gentile Christians, the Jewish Christians had to keep the whole Law with all its customs until it was changed (see Acts 21:21-25). This change took place at the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the Temple.

We note, however, that even for the transition period from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant, the commandment to keep the Sabbath of the Law was not included by the Holy Spirit's decree for Gentile Christians, which is shown by Jacob's words: "**no greater burden.**" So, the Sabbath was not considered by the apostles to be a necessary burden, even though it is part of the Ten Commandments of the Law.

This is why we ask: if in the apostolic period, when the Old Covenant had not yet fully passed away, the Gentiles were not required to keep the Sabbath of the Law or any other commandments of the Law given through Moses (apart from the four things mentioned), why would we be today required to keep the weekly Sabbaths? Isn't Christ, who fulfilled the whole Law in our place, sufficient? He took the yoke of the whole Law upon Himself so that we might be freed from it fully, not partially! That is why He says, "*Take My yoke upon you [...] for My yoke is good and My burden is easy*". His yoke is good, but the yoke of the Law is not good for man. With the change of the Law, the yoke of the Law had to be changed too, with the yoke of Christ which sets us free. That's why Paul said to the Galatians, "*Remain strong, therefore, and do not bow again to **the yoke of slavery.***" (Galatians 5:1 ESV)

In all that has been said so far, we in no way mean to attack the holiness that the Ten Commandments demanded by the Law. But man's work of sanctification was never (and will never

be) received through the Law of Sinai, but is granted only through the work of the Holy Spirit:

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." (Romans 8:2 NKJV)

The Spirit acts from within us, from the new creation, while the Law acts from outside us, from the lifeless tablets of stone. The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel prophesied the good news of the work of sanctification by the Holy Spirit placed in our hearts, long before its fulfillment, saying:

Jeremiah 31:33 (NKJV) *"But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: **I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.**"*

Ezekiel 36:25-27 (NKJV) *"Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart **and put a new spirit within you**; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. **I will put My Spirit within you** and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them."*

We emphasize that "My law", in the first quotation, does not refer to the Ten Commandments written on stone, but to "*the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*" written in our hearts and working in us: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, temperance (see Galatians 5:22-23). Against the fruit of the Holy Spirit there is no law, so if we are led by the Spirit from within, we have been delivered from the Law; we no longer relate to it to fulfill it because the

fruit of the Spirit goes far beyond the things required by the Ten Commandments.

The new creation lives in the sanctification given by faith in the grace of Christ, sanctification that was indeed proclaimed by the symbol of the Sabbath rest of the Law, but the Law no longer applies to it.

1 Timothy 1:9 (NKJV) "*knowing this: that **the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, [...].***"

Therefore, a believer who claims that the Law still applies to him (the Sabbaths being included in the Law), implicitly does not accept that he is fully righteous by the grace of Christ. That is because he still sees himself as the old man's self. Such a believer struggles to be justified by keeping the Law. He might even declare that he is righteous by grace, but he does not really believe it, because he still wants to keep the Law and the weekly Sabbaths, in order to please and be accepted by God. Such a self-righteous understanding is not validated by the teaching of Scripture. We have already shown the superiority of the LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE. Since "*the law made nothing perfect*" (Hebrews 7:19 NKJV), we are shown that it was not given by God with the intention of making man holy or perfect.

Although the Ten Commandments are an image/shadow of the righteousness Christ has fulfilled, to the powerless human self they bring death. In other words, we can say that because of the incapacity of man's self, the Law is death-giving, so through it comes condemnation to death, not life. The Giver of life is the "*life-giving Spirit*" in whom Jesus was raised from His nature as the Son of Man (see 1 Peter 3:18; 1 Corinthians 15:45). Victory over death rests on the foundation of Jesus'

resurrection in the Spirit, not on the basis of the law that empowers sin: "*the strength of sin is the law*" (1 Corinthians 15:56 NKJV).

We conclude here the explanations about the purpose and impact of the Law, which were necessary for a better understanding of the Sabbath rest.

At the end of the several periods of forty days and forty nights which Moses spent with God on Sinai, God concludes His revelation of the Law by WARNING about the importance of Sabbath rest.

This is what the Lord has commanded:

Exodus 31:13-17 (NASB) "*Now as for you, **speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'You must keep My Sabbaths** (Sabbaths - plural); for this is **a sign between Me and you throughout your generations** (all generations of Old Covenant Israel), **so that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you.** Therefore, you are to keep the Sabbath, for it is holy to you. **Everyone who profanes it must be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a Sabbath of complete rest**, holy to the LORD; **whoever does any work on the Sabbath day must be put to death.** So, the sons of Israel shall keep the Sabbath (the sons to keep Sabbath - singular), **to celebrate the Sabbath** throughout their generations **as a permanent covenant.**' It is **a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever**; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed."*

In the following table, we highlight God's different wording at the beginning of this passage and at the end, as well as the significance of the repetition of the Sabbath commandment.

My Sabbaths(plural)	THE SABBATH (singular)
- You must keep - throughout your generations (it doesn't say "the sons must keep")	- The sons shall keep the SABBATH by keeping it as a permanent (i.e. forever) covenant
- A sign by which you may know that I the Lord sanctify you (i.e. a sign of the promise that Christ will sanctify them through His sacrifice)	- A sign forever between Me and the sons of Israel, showing that creation was finished in 6 days - He made the heavens and the earth (no more sea - see Rev. 21:1) - then He rested
-Whoever will break the sign of the temporary Sabbaths of the Law will be punished with physical death	- Whoever violates the SABBATH of complete rest, forever , brought by Christ, working his own salvation, will be destroyed from among the people - that is, eternal death (see also Acts 3:23)

In the fifth chapter of the book of Deuteronomy, Moses recalls the ten commandments of the covenant made with Israel at Horeb. Regarding the Sabbath rest, it is very important to note a new aspect in Deuteronomy that we do not find in the book of Exodus ch. 20, at the giving of the Law. Let's follow the quote:

Deuteronomy 5:13-15 (NASB) "*For six days you shall labor and do all your work, but **the seventh day is a Sabbath of the LORD your God**; you shall not do any work that day, you or your son or your daughter, or your male slave or your female slave, or your*

*ox, your donkey, or any of your cattle, or your resident who stays with you, so that your male slave and your female slave may rest as well as you. And **you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt**, and the LORD your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; **therefore, the LORD your God commanded you to celebrate the Sabbath day.**"*

On the one hand, the Sabbath rest of the Law was a **reminder** that the Lord had delivered them from the physical bondage of the labors of Egypt, and on the other hand it was a sign by which Israel was to know that the Lord was going to sanctify them in the future (Exodus 31:13-17), i.e. He would also deliver them from the spiritual bondage of sin. Since the Scripture teaches that sanctification is only through the blood of Christ (see Hebrews 13:12), it becomes very clear, that **the promise of deliverance** through the sanctification given as a gift by Jesus Christ, was **the target of the rest**, symbolized/disguised by the Sabbath of the Law. So, the weekly Sabbaths were a reminder, but at the same time a future promise to them.

Some Christians believe that the weekly Sabbath commandment must be fulfilled just as it was during the Law. Those who keep weekly this commandment from Sinai, not from creation (the Sabbath from creation is not weekly), believe it is still in effect. Therefore, most of those who believe that the Sabbath must be observed in the same way today, also believe that they cannot be saved without fulfilling it, since they are transgressing the Law of God. They believe that it must be fulfilled exactly as it is written, as an eternally applicable law. In their view, all the Ten Commandments would still be in force, holding sway over Christians as well. Is this really so?

Let's investigate whether or not this is true by noting a few lessons that emerge from the passage quoted from Exodus 31:

- **keeping the weekly Sabbaths was a commandment** given strictly to Old Covenant Israel (not the Gentiles!) and breaking them had serious consequences

The Sabbath, as a weekly day of rest, was part of the Old Covenant. It was not ordained by God's pre-Law believers, nor is it for the Church. No saint from before the election of Israel kept the seventh day as a day of rest, worshipping the Lord in that way. We do not find this written in the Scriptures. Consider Abraham, who is particularly representative, and of whom Scripture does not tell us that he kept the seventh day as a day of rest, even though God had rested on the seventh day at creation long before Abraham was born. The argument of some believers that the weekly Sabbaths represent the seventh day at the end of creation (from Genesis 2:2-3), does not stand because of Abraham's example of not keeping them. We don't think anyone doubts that Abraham was a God-pleasing believer, saved by faith, without keeping the Sabbaths in any way.

In Old Covenant Israel, breaking the Sabbath was punishable by physical death. In Numbers 15:32-36 we read of a man in Israel who gathered wood on the Sabbath. The Lord commanded Moses that this man be stoned to death outside the camp. Therefore, if the commandment to keep the Sabbath of the Law is still in effect, then the consequence of breaking it must also still be in effect. We have not heard of any believer today being killed for breaking the Sabbath.

Weekly Sabbaths cannot be a condition for salvation or a commandment for believers in Christ's Church today.

- **The Sabbaths were a sign** between God and the chosen people Israel

Exodus. 31:13 NASB "[...] **You must keep My Sabbaths**; for this is **a sign** between Me and you throughout your generations, so that **you may know** that **I am the LORD who sanctifies you.**"

We notice the underlining, "you must", as a warning that the Sabbaths were to be kept without exception. By the phrase "My Sabbaths" (plural) and by keeping those as "a sign" repeated weekly, the children of Israel were to know that the Lord sanctifies them. There is a big difference between the phrase "a sign" at the beginning of the passage and at the end of the passage, "a sign [...] forever". We will see that the meanings of these two expressions also differ. The imperative at the beginning, "you must keep My Sabbaths", is changed at the end of the passage with, "sons of Israel shall keep [...], to celebrate the Sabbath". This is no accident, since breaking the Sabbaths of the law had the same negative consequence for man as breaking the other nine commandments. In fact, from this imperative, "you must", one can see the spirit of the commandments of the law, which was condemnation.

The Lord's warning recalled above reveals the purpose of the weekly Sabbaths. They were merely a sign in the Old Covenant period by which God was informing them that He was the Lord who sanctifies them (sanctification to be given by Christ). Likewise, Abraham also received as a sign of the New Covenant God made with him and his seed, in Genesis 17, the commandment of circumcision in the flesh. This sign was for Israel like a seal, a symbol of the true circumcision, of the "heart", to be circumcised by the Holy Spirit (see Genesis 17:11; Romans 2:28-29; 4:11). From Abram's genealogical seed only

Abraham's seed was saved, which was also spiritual, not just genealogical.

We have already mentioned that in Acts chapter 15, the early Church decides that this sign, which was circumcision, should not be required of Christians among the Gentiles. Christ brought its fulfillment through the true circumcision, which is the Spirit's, the circumcision of the heart. In the same way, the sign of the Sabbath of the Law was fulfilled, because the sanctification made known by the Sabbath of the Law, was brought; the true rest received as a gift from Christ is eternal, continuous, not just once a week. Christ's work resulted in the changing of the Old Covenant Law to His New Covenant, a covenant that went into final/complete effect at the destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem in the first century when the Levitical sacrifices also ceased.

The work of sanctification of His people Israel, through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, was to take place at the end of the Old Covenant Law; then the sign of the weekly Sabbaths ceased, as it was with the sign of circumcision in the flesh, being replaced by circumcision of the heart. It cannot be that the sign of the New Covenant (circumcision) given to Abraham in Gen. 17:11 had to cease, and the sign of the Sabbath of the Law should continue. The proclamation/promise of sanctification by the weekly Sabbath sign is meaningless after sanctification has been brought. Therefore, the weekly Sabbaths have completed their purpose, since the promise proclaimed through them has been fulfilled. In the same way, the Levitical sacrifices that were brought to the temple have ceased, and can no longer be necessary, since **the supreme, unique sacrifice was brought once and for all by Christ.**

Keeping the weekly Sabbaths as a sign was a regular **reminder** of the promise that the Lord was doing the work of sanctification FOR the people. **Believing this promise with all their heart, they were to rest every weekly Sabbath, and in this sense, it was a day dedicated to the Lord.** An implicit consequence of this sign is that the Law does not sanctify, which is also confirmed by the quotations mentioned before. The complete sanctification could not come before the passing of the Law, which was a death-bringing service.

It was important for the people of Israel to keep the Sabbaths until the end of the Law, until the bringing of sanctification or, as Daniel 9:24 (NKJV) says: "[...] **to bring in everlasting righteousness** [...]". This is why Jesus, speaking of the end of the Age of the Law (not of the physical world, as it is still claimed), the destruction of the Temple and His return in Glory, tells His disciples (who were Jews) in Matthew 24:20 (NKJV) : "*And pray that your flight may **not be in winter or on the Sabbath.***" In this verse we see that the Sabbath day of rest was to be kept by the people of Israel to the end of the Age of the Law. Christians who still keep the weekly Sabbaths today and still await in our future the fulfillment of the events that are described in Matthew 24, should therefore pray that the escape will not be on the Sabbath. Is anyone doing this?

We know from the Gospel accounts that Jesus was also accused by the Jewish elite of breaking the weekly Sabbath, because he healed on the Sabbath. One of the answers He gives for this accusation is:

Matthew 12:8 (NKJV) "*For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath.*"

Since Scripture tells us in Paul's letter to the Romans about the end of the Law (not just the ceremonial Law, but the whole Law), how can anyone say that it is eternal? After Christ has made us partakers of the Spirit of His love, we no longer relate our lives to the Ten Commandments of the Law, but to Him. It is not the holiness required by the Law that is our example, but the love of Christ received in us through His Spirit, that makes us cry: "*Ava! Meaning: Father!*" In love the commandment of the Law is also fulfilled (see Rom. 13:9-10), but without the Law ruling over us. If the Sabbath of the Law is still to be kept, then we implicitly accept that we are under the dominion of the Law and seek to be accepted by the Lord, by keeping it.

In 1 Corinthians 15:56 (NKJV) Paul teaches us that "*The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law,*" so it is sin that brings death (not physical death, of course). Therefore, if the validity of the Law is eternal, then the power of death given by sin is also eternal; so, no one could be raised from the dead by faith in the Gospel, if the Law is still in force. But the truth is that "*the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus [...]*" (Romans 8:2 NKJV) replaced the Law of Sinai, delivered us from the Old Covenant Law, and this new "Law" is eternal, just as the New Covenant made in the blood of Christ is eternal.

In Christ, it is not the morality of the Ten Commandments of the Law, that is the source of life, but His love received into our hearts. In Scripture we find written that "*God is Love*" (1 John 4:8; 16), but we do not find written that "God is Law". The Law is holy, but man cannot fulfill it. The holiness and righteousness required by the Law has been fulfilled by Christ FOR us.

Paul reduces the Law to a single commandment:

Galatians 5:14 (NKJV) "*For **all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself"**.*

And from Galatians 3:24 we saw that the Law was given only as "***a tutor to bring us to Christ***". Having come to know Christ by faith, we have received the Spirit, and if we walk by the Spirit, we no longer need the guidance of the Law **that was temporary** (no longer is). We cannot be both under the guidance of the Law and under the guidance of the Spirit.

If we could fulfill the Ten Commandments, it would be too little to please God. In fact, when Jesus is asked, "*Teacher, which is the **greatest commandment in the Law?***" (Matt. 22:36 NKJV), He does not quote any of the Ten Commandments, but he does quote those that teach us to love God and our neighbor (see Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18).

If the sign of the weekly rest, of the seventh day, had been ordained by God for all saved men forever, then why does Jesus speak of another rest?

Matthew 11:28-29 (NKJV) "*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden (by the condemnation of the Law), and **I will give you rest** [...], you will find **rest for your souls***".

The implication of Jesus saying: "***I will give you rest***", is that no one had TRUE REST through the weekly Sabbaths, because the Sabbaths of the Law were only a sign/symbol for the true rest that came after the sanctification was given as a gift by Jesus Christ. The weekly Sabbath rest was only a shadow of God's REST at the end of creation in Genesis.

"His rest" on the seventh day of Genesis 2:2-3 was brought for the saved by the Lord Jesus Christ.

With His spiritual return to His Kingdom, God's creation in Genesis 1 is finished, not only from God's perspective, but also from man's perspective.

➤ **The Sabbath as a "*sign forever*" comes last**

First come the weekly Sabbaths only as "*a sign*" for the promise of sanctification that the Lord was to give. This "*sign*" ceases once the "*sign [...] forever*" (sanctification and, as a result, eternal rest) has been brought and revealed based on an "*everlasting covenant*" (unceasing, never ending, i.e. the New Covenant). This sign forever from Exodus 31:17 cannot describe a weekly repeated everlasting sign like that given to the earthly land of the Old Covenant, since the everlasting sign belongs to an eternal, heavenly, New Covenant homeland (see the everlastingness of the land in Genesis 17:7, Hebrews 11:16). And if the homeland and covenant are eternal, from an unseen creation, beyond the boundaries of time, then the Sabbath cannot be weekly either. The holiness and true rest given as a gift by the Lord are not weekly, but permanent. We are united with Him in an everlasting covenant that is "*rooted and grounded in love*" (see Ephesians 3:17 NKJV), not in a system of rules. All of us together make up His spiritual body; we are His wife; therefore, rest is spiritual, and worship is spiritual, continuous, without end. For example, what if in a family the wife gave her husband only one day a week? I think we understand the ridiculousness of such a relationship.

In the next passage, Moses speaks to the people of Israel about entering the rest of the land of Canaan only after deliverance

from all their enemies, a deliverance that would also free them from fear.

Deuteronomy 12:10 (NKJV) "*But when you cross over the Jordan and **dwell in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety.***"

Let us represent more suggestively the order of things that lead to rest, based on the above quotation:

AFTER VICTORY OVER ENEMIES



THEN COMES THE ENTRY INTO REST



THE FEAR OF ENEMIES DISAPPEARS (dwell in safety)

From the way Moses expresses himself, it is clear that he knew he would not cross the Jordan. The one who was to cross the Jordan into the land of the Old Covenant, was Joshua (Yeshua). He is the shadow of Christ who was to pass His people into the land of the New Covenant, at true rest. Joshua did not offer true rest in the Old Covenant land, as we will see in the passage from Hebrews 4, but Jesus did in His eternal Kingdom.

First, note that **sanctification** was implicitly promised by God to Abraham through the oath in Genesis 22:15-18. The explanation of this promise is given by the Holy Spirit by the priest Zechariah, who connects the words of Moses in the previous quote with the promise in Genesis 22:15-18. Let's follow the quotes carefully:

Genesis 22:15-18 (NKJV) "*Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: "**By Myself I***

have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son—blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

Luke 1:72-75: (NKJV) *"To perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember **His holy covenant**, the oath which He **swore to our father Abraham**: to grant us that we, **being delivered from the hand of our enemies**, might serve Him **without fear, in holiness and righteousness** before Him all the days of our life."*

By the passage in Luke 1, Zechariah the priest, inspired by the Holy Spirit, sums up God's promise to Abraham, as recalled by Moses in Deuteronomy 12:10. From the following table we can see the connections between the passages quoted from Moses' and writings of Luke 1. The very clear conclusion from Zechariah's song is that all that was promised through Abraham and through Moses, has a deep spiritual meaning and has its fulfilment in the New Covenant of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is evident in the spiritual meaning, because in the literal/physical meaning, the people of Israel in Canaan under Joshua's leadership, had rest for a short time (Judges 3:8 NKJV *"Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia: **and the children of Israel served Chushanrishathaim eight years**"*).

God's promise to Abraham could not have referred to this short quiet period.

In the following table we have highlighted the fact that the promise of rest is fulfilled only in Christ.

THE WRITINGS OF MOSES --->	THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE
<p>Gen. 22:15-18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"by Myself I have sworn"</i> - <i>"your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies"</i> 	<p>Luke 1:72-75</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"promised to our fathers... swore to our father Abraham"</i> - <i>"to remember His holy covenant"</i>
<p>Deut. 12:10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>you will "dwell in the land"</i> - <i>"He gives you rest"</i> - <i>"from all your enemies' roundabout"</i> - <i>"you dwell in safety"</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"being delivered from the hand of our enemies"</i> - <i>"might serve Him without fear"</i> <p>(service in the rest of righteousness)</p>
<p>Exodus 31:13</p> <p>- <i>"My Sabbaths ... this is a sign ... you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you"</i></p> <p>Exodus 31:16</p> <p>- <i>"to celebrate the Sabbath ... as a permanent covenant"</i></p> <p>Exodus 31:17</p> <p>- <i>"a sign forever; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day... He was refreshed"</i></p>	<p>- <i>"serve Him ... in holiness and righteousness"</i> (fulfilled in Christ)</p> <p>- <i>"His holy covenant"</i> (The New Covenant)</p>

If we read Exodus 31:17 carefully, we see that **the SABBATH as a forever sign** comes only **after** God has made the heavens and

the earth in six days (the sea and everything in it, is not mentioned).

In Ex.20:11, the sea is mentioned together with all that is in it, everything on earth and in the heavens.

What?! God made the heavens and the earth **in six days?!** Doesn't it say in Genesis 1 that heaven was made on the second day, and the earth appeared out of the waters on the third day?

The passage in Exodus 31:17 says He made them in six days. Do these two passages talk about the same heaven and the same earth? Certainly not! Exodus 31:17 foretells the creation of the New Heaven and New Earth of Revelation 21 ("*the sea was no more*"), in six days (creation days not 24-hour days). The New Heaven and New Earth were finished to be created, were complete, only after the six days of creation of Genesis 1 ended.

There are other passages of the Scripture where we see again that **the forever sign** does not refer to an eternal keeping of the Law and the Sabbath rest ordained by the Law.

Hebrews 4:7-10 (ESV) "*again he appoints a certain day, "**Today**," saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, "**Today, if you hear his voice**, do not harden your hearts." For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. So then, **there remains a Sabbath rest** for the people of God, for whoever has entered **God's rest** has also rested from his works as God did from his.*" (God rested at the end of creation)

We notice that the day of rest is called "**Today**," by a new decree of God for "**another day**" (verse 10). This "*today*" of another day refers to "His REST" on the seventh day at the end of Creation. The seventh day of Genesis 2:2-3 is certainly the day to which

Hebrews 4 refers, and it is only day, without night, not weekly repeated. The Sabbaths of the Law began in the evening (so night came) and ended on the evening of the next day (see Leviticus 23:32). This "**another day**" does not refer to another day of the week, but to the last day of creation, the eternal DAY of Christ's reign in the city of New Jerusalem, and **there is no more "night"**.

In the same quotation we also note that rest is linked to entering the Promised Land. Under Joshua's leadership only a temporary rest was given. Under Jesus' leadership the ETERNAL REST is offered. This is His rest ("My rest", Hebrews 4:3) from the seventh day after the end of creation. The Sabbaths of the Law were also kept after the entry into Canaan, not as a fulfillment of the promise of His rest (from creation), but also as a sign that this rest was to be given in the future. This sign has symbolic value and is limited in time, as was the earthly Canaan. Likewise, it was with the circumcision that ceased, because the Holy Spirit was given to us from heaven to "circumcise our hearts", that is, to enlighten our minds. Signs - which belong to shadows, not to reality - cease with the coming of **reality** through Christ. He brought God's REST of Genesis 2:2-3 at the end of the apostolic generation, when the Old Covenant ended with the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. His rest is eternal, just as His **righteousness** given to us as a gift is also eternal.

Some Christians say that there is no reference to the Sabbath at all in the text of Hebrews 4. Let's see what word is used in the original Hebrews 4:9 and compare it to the original term also used for the weekly Sabbath in the Gospels.

"Sabbatismos" in Hebrews 4:9 (G4520 in Strong's concordance)

"Sabbaton" in Luke 6:2 (G4521 in Strong's concordance)

Strong's concordance says that Sabbatismos is a derived form of the word Sabbaton. So, we cannot overlook the replacement of the weekly Sabbath with the true REST ("My rest") just to motivate to keep on observing the shadows instead of the reality.

In our understanding the Sabbath command in Exodus 20:11 is indeed motivated by the day of rest from creation. We also note that Hebrews 4:4 refers precisely to the rest from creation. So, both, the rest in Hebrews 4 and the Sabbath rest of the Law in Exodus 20:11, refer to the rest on the seventh day of creation. This leads us to understand that this "**another day**" of Hebrews 4:7-8, called "**Today**", determines the **cessation of the Sabbath of the Law**. This was only a sign for this "**Today**" of the eternal rest, on the Day of God's eternal presence among His new spiritual people under a New Covenant.

Old Covenant Israel ceased to be the only chosen people at the end of the apostolic generation starting with the destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (according to history). Thus, the period of the Law came to an end, and with it the Sabbath of the Law also. Today God is the God of all who call upon Him from whatever nation they may be. The true rest of a New Covenant is:

**Christ's REST at the end of creation, the New Creation,
created by His pierced hands on the cross.**

- **The Sabbath was the weekly reminder** that the final victory belongs to God

From God's perspective the whole work of creation was completed in Genesis 1. The people of Israel were to rest weekly **in the assurance of the promise of the sanctifying work of God, at the end of creation**, on the sixth day. This sanctification would give them the entrance into His rest on the seventh day. The sanctification and blessing of the seventh day, at the end of the whole creation in Genesis 2:3, speaks to us in a concealed way about the completion of His work at the end of the sixth day, that God was to do through the Messiah. It was not the period of a 24-hour day that was blessed and sanctified by God at the end of creation! Those redeemed by the Messiah were sanctified and blessed with His presence in the eternity of His forever lasting Day of Rest.

From man's perspective, in the apostolic period, the end had not yet come. **God's work** which had a **certain** finality, and the giving to men of His HOLINESS, as a gift by faith, was still in progress. The completion of God's work of creation, was very near in the apostolic generation, not for subsequent generations (or for us, as some Christians still claim today).

Therefore:

after the end of God's spiritual creation,

after the renewal of all things,

after all the enemies of the sanctification of His spiritual people have been defeated (in the apostolic period), made "*His footstool*," after the coming of His Kingdom with power (see Mark 9:1), beginning in the first century, **the REST and**

sanctification are given from generation to generation to everyone who believes in the gospel.

Let's see this truth from the following passage:

Hebrews 4:3 (ESV) "*For **we who have believed enter that rest, as He has said, "As I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest,'"** although **his works were finished from the foundation of the world***" (i.e. in Genesis 1).

From man's perspective, the weekly Sabbaths were foreshadowing God's final victory. They were a weekly reminder that the gift of eternal holiness/righteousness will be given to them (see also Daniel 9:24). The weekly Sabbaths were also a call to the faith that it is the Lord who destroys all His enemies (see Hebrews 10:13), that is, **the enemies of the sanctification of His people through faith in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ** (Philippians 3:18 ESV "*For many, [...] walk as enemies of the cross of Christ*").

So, the entrance into God's REST from the foundation of the world (Genesis 2:3), was also to come for **His spiritual people** saved by Grace, at the end of the apostolic period, after His enemies had been made His footstool, by the preaching and victory of the gospel throughout the world (see Colossians 1:23; 1 Timothy 3:16).

After all that has been said so far about the Sabbath rest, there is an important conclusion to point out:

The keeping of the Sabbaths of the Law showed that sanctification was a promise of the Lord still for their future. Those who kept the Sabbats were not yet sanctified (saved). If someone still keeps the weekly Sabbaths today, considering them necessary for salvation, after sanctification has been given

as a gift by the Lord Jesus Christ, that person is still waiting for sanctification and salvation. Consequently, that person has not entered His rest either. We ask then: what has the Lord Jesus Christ done for a person who is not yet sanctified? What did this person receive from the Lord through His sacrifice on Calvary?

We have already seen Jesus' call to rest in Matthew 11:28 (ESV):

*"Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and **I will give you rest.**"*

The rest promised by Jesus is in the future tense: "*I will give you rest*". Of course, the next question that comes to mind is:

When was the Lord going to give the REST?

The answer is also found in Scripture:

2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 (NKJV) *"and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

We see that Paul tells the Thessalonian believers, who were being persecuted for their faith, when exactly were they to receive rest, and their persecutors, who disobeyed the gospel, were to receive punishment. The bringing of rest and punishment was to take place at the revealing of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven "*with His mighty angels*". The two passages (from Matthew 11:28 and 2 Thessalonians) speak of the same rest, the REST of Christ, into which all who responded to the call of the Gospel and remained steadfast in the faith until the end of the Old Covenant age, were to enter. If Christ has not returned to His Spiritual Kingdom, then, the rest has not been brought, the battle with enemies continues, and they were not made His

footstool. Whoever understands things in this way is still living with the perspective of the first century Church, before the transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. In that case, the Lord's great commission given to the apostles would have not defeated the enemies of Christ, their struggle with "*the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places*" (see Ephesians 6:12 NKJV), did not come to an end. If this were so, we would have to declare the failure of the apostolic Church's struggle with the Devil, and the subduing of all things to Christ and His Church, had not yet taken place. Christians who do not believe in the apostolic Church victory are continuing an imaginary battle with the spirits of wickedness in the heavenly places, which leads many to insecurity and fear. But we understand from the Scripture that **Jesus Christ - the First Resurrected in the SPIRIT - has returned victoriously over His enemies in His spiritual nature, not physically - as many Christians still expect Him.**

A physical, seen return of Jesus Christ, will never happen because Scripture teaches no such thing. After the ascension, Jesus Christ resumed His glory as God. God is Spirit, and the Spirit has no physical body: "[...] *a spirit does not have flesh and bones* [...]" (see Luke 24:39 NKJV).

Eternal rest was brought to us when the Lord took possession of the Kingdom, with power, in the apostolic generation (see Mark 9:1), after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Old Covenant Temple in AD 70 - according to history.

At the end of this chapter, we concentrate everything we have shown so far in two tables.

The first table shows the rest of the day represented by shadows and realities.

THE DAY OF REST	
THE SHADOWS	THE REALITY
- Weekly Sabbaths (of the seventh day of the week)	- THE SABBATH (of the seventh day of CREATION)
- Sabbaths are shadows of rest repeated weekly (from evening to evening)	- The SABBATH is the reality of rest in the everlasting DAY a continuous rest, in the New Covenant
- a weekly sign that showed that the Lord sanctifies them in the future	- an eternal, non-weekly sign that the Lord already sanctified them by His blood
- A sign between Me and you and your natural descendants - Exod. 31:13	- An eternal sign between Me and the children of spiritual Israel-Exodus. 31:17
- Violation of the Sabbath of the Law, after man had worked six days: any physical work was punishable by physical death - Exodus. 31:15	- Violation of the holy Sabbath: doing any work for sanctification through good deeds, on this DAY (after the gift of sanctification was brought by Jesus), punishable by eternal spiritual death - Exod. 31:14, Acts 3:23
- A transitory covenant (OLD COVENANT -Gen. 15:18-21) made with ABRAM having his old name	- An everlasting covenant (NEW COVENANT- Gen. 17:8) made with ABRAHAM having a new name

The following passages that speak of rest will only be quoted with some emphasis.

2 Samuel 7:11 (NKJV) *"Since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people **Israel and have caused you to rest from all your enemies.** Also, the LORD tells you that He will make you a house."*

1 Chronicles 23:25 (NKJV) *"For David said, **"The LORD God of Israel has given rest to His people, that they may dwell in Jerusalem forever;"**"*

(Of course, the spiritual New Jerusalem coming down from heaven)

Isaiah 32:17 (NKJV) *"The work of righteousness will be peace, and **the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.**"*

Ezekiel 34:15 (NASB) *"**"I Myself will feed My flock and I Myself will lead them to rest,"** declares the Lord GOD."*

Matthew 11:28-29 (NKJV) *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavily laden, and **I will give you rest.** Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find **rest for your souls.**"*

Psalms 132:13-14 (NKJV) *"For the LORD has chosen **Zion**; He has desired it for His dwelling place: **"This is My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it."**"* (Zion - meaning the Church)

The second table summarizes creation with its two parts: made and created.

THE CREATION	
MADE	CREATED
"which He had made" (Genesis 2:2)	"which HE had CREATED and made" (Genesis 2:3)
Passing	Everlasting
SHADOWS	REALITY
things that SHAKE	things that don't SHAKE
"in six days, the Lord made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them" (Exodus 20:10-11)	<i>"in six days, the Lord made the heavens and the earth"</i> - Exodus. 31:17 (without the sea and everything in it, because the sea was no more - Rev.21:1)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the first things, beginning things, elementary things - ALPHA - THE OLD TESTAMENT - THE OLD CREATION 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the last things, things made perfect - OMEGA - THE NEW TESTAMENT - THE NEW CREATION
There were two worlds: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the ancient world (before the flood) - the world of the OLD COVENANT, of the chosen people Israel. =>Both passed	Last World: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the third world of the NEW COVENANT, of the CHURCH of CHRIST. => Present now and forever

Unfortunately, even today there are still believers who, in their minds, live in a world of shadows, a non-existent world. They "are" in a period of transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant, in a state of imaginary struggle and expectation, while salvation has already been brought to us, in all its fullness, in the first century, at the end of the apostolic generation by Christ's victory through the Gospel.

PART II - ANSWERS TO IMPORTANT QUESTIONS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CREATION

PURPOSE OF PART TWO

In the second part of our study, we will try to explain some possible controversial themes in the Scriptures that are more difficult to understand. To achieve this goal, we will propose some questions believers might have, and then answer them. Through the answers we give, we will see how these themes fit into God's complete and finished Creation, given the perspective presented in the first part of this study. The purpose of the questions and answers that follow is precisely to clarify or correct some confusion, misunderstanding or misinterpretation of certain teachings in the Scripture.

Many of us do not study the Scripture or have abandoned the study of the Scripture because we do not understand it. Others don't study it because they pick up various interpretations or manifestations that exist in Christianity today without checking whether they are really taught in Scripture. There are also people who simply follow what others say, just because: they think they are highly regarded people, a kind of "chosen vessels", or are good speakers, or many seek them out and listen to them, or they have high education, or they shout when they preach, or because they are dressed in "priestly clothes", etc. Even if among those listed above there are good Christians (and we think many are), we must verify what they say.

In our opinion, only the wholehearted personal study of the Scripture brings understanding of the Truth and only in this way can the believer become fully rooted in the truth. **Any teaching, by whomever it comes, must be checked against the Scripture** to see if it really has its place in the whole plan of God, from Genesis to Revelation. The Jewish believers in Berea searched the Scriptures to see if, what Paul and Silas said, was revealed in

the Scriptures. The fact that they checked their teaching is seen as a positive thing: "*These were more fair-minded [...]*" (see Acts 17:11 NKJV). Whoever loves God fulfills and loves His Word. And if we want to fulfill His Word, then we must know the Word and seek to understand it. The Christian has a firm, immovable foundation, and this is the foundation of the Word of the Scripture understood and lived. Whatever guidance, from whomever it comes, whatever experiences are claimed to validate a teaching, if that is not found in the unified teaching of the Scripture, these are only human things that do not lead to life. Therefore, let us check with Scripture any teaching we hear, comparing it with the teaching of the apostles which, in our opinion, cannot be disputed.

In the following, we will give answers to several questions, in order to achieve the goal, we have already mentioned.

IS PHYSICAL DEATH A CONSEQUENCE OF THE FALL INTO SIN?

Before answering, we need to see what man's condition was prior to the fall. The Scripture tells us how God created man in the following passage:

Genesis 2:7 (ASV) "*And Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils **the breath of life**; and man became **a living soul**.*"

We note that the body of the first man is made of the dust of the earth, and the breath of life, which is from God, made man "*a living soul*." When we read these words, the first thing that comes to mind is that man is a physical, breathing body. This "*breath in the nostrils*" seems to refer to breathing, but it is much more than that (God is Spirit, He does not physically breathe). To prove this point, we will quote two passages of the Scripture.

Genesis 27:25 (NKJV) "*He said (Isaac), "Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's game, **so that my soul may bless you**."* So, he brought it near to him, and he ate; [...]"

From this passage we see that the blessing Isaac was to give to his son Jacob was an action of the soul, so it is certainly not Isaac's breath. The act of blessing was an action of Isaac's mind, which was enlightened by the Spirit of God. If we read further the words in which Isaac blesses Jacob, we will notice that he speaks of abundance of wheat and wine, which is a prophecy with reference to Christ, who gave His Body (represented by wheat) and His Blood (represented by wine) for the forgiveness of mankind's sins.

Deuteronomy 11:18 (NKJV) "*Therefore, you shall lay up these words of mine **in your heart and in your soul**, and bind them as*

a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes."

This passage refers to God's commandments and shows us that words are put into the heart and soul. We learn that the **heart and soul is where the words of God's commandments are "put"**. The term "heart" cannot refer to the biological organ (which is just a pump for blood), nor does "soul" refer to the breathing of the lungs (animals breathe too, yet God did not breathe into their nostrils). As biological organs, they merely sustain the life of the physical body. Human life, spiritually speaking, is precisely this "*living soul*" that God gave to the first man through the breath of life.

So, when the Scripture speaks to man, it speaks to his soul that dwells in a body. Every decision: to love, to hate, to do or not to do something, is an action of the soul through the choices of the mind. The mind with which man has been endowed by God is superior to the mind of any other created being on earth. Animals also breathe, but no animal's "thinking" can compare with the superiority of man's wisdom. In Genesis 5:1-2 (NKJV) we are told that man was made "*in the likeness of God [...] He created them male and female*". It is not the physical body that has the likeness of God, but the soul that is "seen" through the manifestation of reason, feelings and will. Before the fall man was made only in the likeness of God (while empty). And after the fall we see that Seth was born in the image and likeness of Adam.

Genesis 5:3 (NKJV) "*And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.*"

The image spoken of here is not the image of God, but the image of the earthly and of the "Serpent" that man chose at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. So, to say that every human being is made in the image of God is wrong.

The history of mankind shows us how much creativity and skill man has been endowed with by God. We are amazed at the discoveries of recent centuries and the changes they have brought about. All these abilities: to speak, to learn, to choose, to discover, to create all kinds of things, to distinguish things, we inherited from the first man, Adam, and without them there would have been no progress of mankind. The animal world did not progress because God did not give them His likeness, having only a very limited, instinctive 'wisdom'.

So, the first man, Adam, after he was created, was body and soul. Or in other words, according to the Apostle Paul, the first Adam was a living soul dwelling in a body:

1 Corinthians 15:45 (ASV) *"So also it is written, the first man **Adam became a living soul**. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit."*

Notice that Paul quotes from Genesis 2:7, the same passage we began with, to answer the question of the cause of physical death. The distinction between the first Adam and the last Adam brings great clarification:

First **Adam-living soul** ↔ Last **Adam-life-giving spirit**

This distinction proves that the first man was not made with the spirit of life. He was only a soul living in a body. It was only after the choice he made in the Garden of Eden that the first Adam

was to receive the spirit. This is precisely why the two trees are named:

- a. the tree of life (intended to give eternal life)
- b. the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (with the consequence of giving death)

The man's state, before the fall, is shown by the following quotation:

Genesis 2:25 (NKJV) "*And **they were both naked**, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.*"

The most common understanding of this passage is simply that Adam and Eve were completely naked (undressed). That's how we also understood it for many years, but the message of this text reaches much deeper. The state of his "nakedness" in which man found himself, was regarding God and must be understood spiritually. His obedience/disobedience to the Word of God, who is a life-giving Spirit (see John 6:63 NKJV), was to change the condition of man's soul: from "naked" to "clothed" (see Rom.13:14). This is why God spoke to the first man and commanded him not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, so that he would not die (towards God).

The Lord's warning that eating of the fruit of this tree brings death, does not refer to the fruit of a tree. The target of God's command does not refer to what goes into the belly, but to what goes into the soul, into the mind. The following passage proves this:

Genesis 3:6 (NKJV): "*So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was **pleasant to the eyes**, and **a tree***

desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate."

The fruit of the tree was food for the mind: "*desirable to make one wise*", not for the belly. Jesus said: "*it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person [...]*" (Matthew 15:11 ESV). So, the defilement caused by sin, from which the first Adam ate, was for the "heart" and for the soul. Following the choice he made in the Garden of Eden, man's soul "ate" the Serpent's words that brought him death. It was not the physical body that ate and died that day, but the soul of man, which from its "naked" state died to God because he chose to "put on" the Serpent's words and became "alive" to the Devil.

Genesis 2:17 (NKJV) "*but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for **in the day** that you eat of it **you shall surely die.***"

If the consequence of sin would have been physical death, man would have died physically that day, which he did not. Some people, however, in order to give an explanation to this, tell us stories, which imply, that from that day on, the body of man entered the process of decay. The Scripture does not support such teaching. That is why the New Testament does not speak of the salvation of the physical body, but of the salvation of the soul. And where the apostle Paul speaks of "*the redemption of our body*", he is not referring to the physical body, but to the "body" in which the Spirit bears fruit (see Romans 8:23 NKJV) and this is certainly not the body of flesh and bones.

Peter clarifies this too:

1 Peter 1:9 (NKJV) "*receiving the end of your faith—**the salvation of your souls.***"

If it is the soul that is to be saved, then the fall into sin is also a fall of the soul of man who has died to God, having been separated from Him by sin.

The death of the first Adam was in his soul, in which he chose to transgress the commandment and not believe the word of God; instead, he obeyed and believed the words of the Serpent, thus dying to God.

The physical body dies because that is how God created it. It is part of the things that are seen, and therefore transient (see 2 Corinthians 4:18). Likewise, animals die physically, although we are nowhere told that they die because they have sinned.

Physical death is not a consequence of the fall into sin but is a natural part of God's seen creation.

Those who preach a restoration of Eden, of the so-called "lost Paradise", must bear in mind that they are implicitly speaking of bringing man back to the state of "nakedness" in the Garden of Eden, before the fall. There are the two trees: the tree of life and the tree of death. So, after man would be restored to his original state, he would again be in the position to choose between life and death. In our understanding, entrance into God's Heaven is not through a restoration of a "lost Paradise" but occurs only by choosing LIFE IN CHRIST. In God's Heaven, in the Paradise, we no

longer find the two trees, but only the tree of life (see Revelation 22:2).

Although there are believers who claim that man had eternal life in Eden, which he lost through sin, we do not believe this to be true. This would imply that Adam could have had eternal life without choosing Christ. As we explained before, the "naked" state at the beginning shows that man was not "clothed" with the life of Christ and the two trees were appointed by God precisely so that man, created with free will, could express his choice. This was between life and death, for we see that God did not forbid man to take from the tree of life, which was meant to give eternal life, but only from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Man's expulsion from Eden after his fall into sin was precisely to deny him access to the Tree of Life. Sin put a '*wall of separation*' between man and the Life in God (in Christ), symbolized by the Tree of Life. The restoring of the right to "eat" from the Tree of Life only takes place through faith in Christ and KNOWING CHRIST (see John 17:3), after He has paid on the cross of Calvary, for the sin that entered the world through the first Adam.

Revelation 2:7 (NKJV) *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."*

Revelation 22:14 (NKJV) *"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that **they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.**"*

The two trees, in fact, symbolize two spirits: The spirit of Christ who gives eternal life and the spirit of evil which gives death. Choosing to listen to the Serpent's words, Adam clothed himself

with his own self-life whereby he believed he could be like God. This is symbolically shown by the aprons Adam and Eve made with their hands, aprons of fig leaves, to cover their nakedness. God replaced with garments of leather (after a sacrifice). Jesus' cursing of the fig tree that bore no fruit (see Matthew 21:19), shows that man's attempt to please God by the "good" works of self (as Israel also tried under the Law) is doomed to failure. Therefore, the Lord Jesus says:

*"If anyone desires to come after Me, **let him deny himself**, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."* (Luke 9:23 NKJV).

Since we are all born into the sinful nature of the first Adam's self, we in turn make the same choice as he did, namely death by sin. We are all responsible for the sin of our fallen self. The only way to life is to crucify this inner self on the cross with Christ and receive the gift of His life in return. This is not a restoration to the original state in Eden, but rather an **INSTAURATION of eternal life in a New Creation**. Christ brought it to us at God's appointed time, according to the plan He had made in Himself before eternity. The emptiness of our soul towards God can only be clothed with the garment of righteousness received as a gift from Christ.

WHAT ARE GOD'S COVENANTS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT?

We will give an answer to this question, structured around four aspects:

- 1) Which are God's covenants?
- 2) To whom are they addressed?
- 3) What is their purpose?
- 4) What is the duration of each covenant?

Along the way we will see that all the covenants God makes in the Scriptures are at His initiative. Through the covenant He makes promises that are to be fulfilled at a time of His choosing. Through each covenant He sets the framework, sometimes also the necessary conditions, for its fulfillment and the people who are to fulfill it. The parties to the covenant are destined to have blessings or punishments (as listed in the terms of the covenant), thus fulfilling the purpose of the covenant. God also determines the duration/validity of a covenant; it can be temporary or eternal.

So, let's start with the first covenant we find in Scripture:

The covenant of salvation of Noah and his family

This is the first covenant we find on the pages of the Scripture, and it is the only one God makes during the first world. It is made with Noah, the tenth patriarch of the first world. As it is written, *"the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually"* (Gen. 6:5 NKJV) so God decides to destroy all living things on the earth by flood. Noah, however, was a righteous man, on whom God had mercy and decided to rescue him and his house, telling him of what was to come. The following quote shows us this:

Genesis 6:18 (NKJV) "***But with you will I establish My covenant; and you shall come into the ark, you, and your sons, and your wife, and your sons' wives with you.***"

In this covenant, Noah is taught by God to build the ark of salvation. The one who lays out the plan of the ark with all its details is God. Noah obeys Him and believes in His Word, building the ark for about one hundred and twenty years (see Genesis 6:3). This was a long period of time during which Noah worked persistently to build the ark, bearing witness to the world in which he lived. The Apostle Peter spoke of the people of this period who were punished by the flood and called them "*the spirits in prison*":

1 Peter 3:19-20 (ESV) "[...] *he went and proclaimed to **the spirits in prison**, because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, **while the ark was being prepared**, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.*"

So, the rebellious people of the first world were told by Noah of God's decision. The building of the ark on dry ground, which seemed crazy, was also a warning. Noah's world remained indifferent, unconcerned, continuing their lives lived in sin. Their contempt for the righteousness preached by Noah - the righteousness shown by his faith in the Word of the One who announced the flood - continued to the end. God's long patience during the building of the ark for them was in vain, because they did not believe. All this is shown in the following passage:

2 Peter 2:5 (ESV) "[...] *if He did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, **a herald of righteousness**, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;*"

The apostle who writes the letter to the Hebrews shows us the indifference of that world to the faith preached by Noah:

Hebrews 11:7 (ESV) *"By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he **condemned the world** and became an heir to the righteousness that comes by faith."*

In this passage we see that Noah's world was condemned by Noah's belief in the things God had foretold before. God's long patience was intended to give to that world the chance to turn from unbelief to faith. It was not the sins committed by the people of that world that were the direct cause of their destruction, but their failure to repent and turn to God, their failure to believe the message of punishment that was made known by His Word spoken through Noah. A similar example was the city of Nineveh, which was very sinful; God decides to destroy it, but not before sending the message of warning through Jonah (see the book of Jonah). After the warning, following their repentance, God spares the city of Nineveh and does not destroy it, because they believed God and turned from their sin. Repentance and faith in God's goodness were the only way of salvation for Noah's world, and the only way of salvation for every human, in every generation, past, present and future. This principle of salvation by repentance and faith is true throughout the Scripture. The example of the first world, which received the chance of salvation through God's long-patience, shows that "*Jesus **Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever***" (Hebrews 13:8 NKJV).

Christ, who is the SAME, but being not yet incarnate, was also present during the first world. He showed His love through Noah's preaching and was ready to forgive, but that world did

not obey the grace of His long patience. After His incarnation, Jesus, **the same Jesus** who had been present during the first world, but not incarnate, makes the following revelation about the carelessness of Noah's world:

Luke 17:26-27 (NKJV) "*And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: **they ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.***"

A careless world, which enjoyed parties and amusements, disregarded the goodness of God who called it to repentance and perished. Noah's covenant of salvation, instead of being a means of redemption from sin, was a doom to perdition.

Noah's family, along with all the creatures in the ark, make the transition to the second world. Thus, the promise of comfort given by the Lord through Lamech, Noah's father, continues its way until the time of its fulfilment, when the 'Seed', the incarnate Christ, would come. Here are the words of Lamech:

Genesis 5:29 (DRB) "*And he called his name Noah, saying: **This same shall comfort us from the works and labours of our hands on the earth which the Lord hath cursed.***"

Noah (i.e. "Comforter"), the son of Lamech, carries on the genealogical line of the "Seed" of Seth who was to save mankind from the work and toil of trying to be like God by good works. The cursed earth is not the agricultural soil, but the nature of the first Adam fallen into sin who wanted to be like God by the effort of his "hands". That is why the message of comfort through Noah is based on the belief that the "Seed", Christ, will come to save them. Out of love for man He was to take upon Himself the curse of Eden, being crucified on the cross of Calvary, crowned with

thorns (symbolizing the sin of the flesh) borne of the cursed "ground", so that we might be through faith in Him, sons of God.

The covenant with Noah, his seed and the living creatures

We saw that God's covenant with Noah made during the first world was fulfilled by saving Noah and his family from a world that was destroyed. After they came out of the ark, at the beginning of the second world, (Genesis 8:20-22) Noah built an altar and brought burnt offerings that were pleasing to the Lord. The Lord said in his heart: "*I will no more curse the earth for the sake of man: [...] therefore I will no more destroy every living soul as I have done*" (DRB). This "***as I have done***" makes it clear that this is a promise by which God assures us that there will never again be a total suppression of physical life on earth. This promise is very important when we seek to understand things that relate to the end of creation. For example, in 2 Peter 3:10 (NKJV) we are told that "*[...] the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up*". The meaning of this passage cannot be taken literally, that the physical earth would burn. Such an understanding would blatantly contradict God's promise mentioned above, since the physical burning of the globe would result in the total extinction of life. In fact, Peter teaches here that the people of the Old Covenant (the earth), with the Law system (the heaven of Law) were to "*burn up*", that is, pass away, be changed, for the time had come for a "*new earth*" and a "*new heaven*" (spiritual, not physical) in which the righteousness of the life given by Christ reigns, not the death given by sin and the condemnation of the Law. God's decision to stop destroying all that is alive, was followed by the covenant that enshrined this. This covenant is made by God immediately after the Flood, after

all that was alive and had the breath of life had been destroyed. The following passages show us the covenant:

Genesis 9:9-11 (NKJV) "*And as for Me, behold, I establish **My covenant with you and with your descendants** after you, and **with every living creature that is with you**: the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth. Thus, I establish **My covenant with you**: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; **never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.**"*

Genesis 9:12-17 (NKJV) "*And God said: "**This is the sign of the covenant** which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that is with you, **for perpetual generations**: I set **My rainbow in the cloud**, and **it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth**. It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember **My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh**; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember **the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.**" And God said to Noah, "**This is the sign of the covenant** which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth.'"*

These verses tell of an everlasting covenant made at God's initiative with the people who will follow and with all living things of every kind. We see that God promises to never again destroy fleshly life by flood. This is a covenant with no conditions attached and has as its sign the rainbow in the sky. The duration of the covenant is everlasting: "*the everlasting covenant*".

Another passage which tells us that the earth remains forever and generations are continually perpetuated on it, is the following:

Ecclesiastes 1:3-9 (ESV): "*What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? **A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever.** [...]."*

We are surprised by the way God's word speaks, because it seems that generations of people will last forever on earth. This does not fit at all with our mentality formed by the messengers of the imminent end of the physical world. The question is: who are we listening to? To whom do we give credibility? The right answer can only be one: to GOD.

Somebody might say that such a promise appears in only one place in Scripture, so we cannot form a belief from just one passage. We will show in the continuation of this study that this language appears repeatedly. For instance, in Genesis 17:7 God makes an **everlasting** covenant with Abraham **from generation to generation**. Likewise, the Apostle Paul tells us in his Epistle to the Ephesians 3:21, that Christ is glorified in the Church **throughout all generation, forever and ever** (see ESV translation). In Psalm 45, which speaks of Christ, we find the same truth expressed by the sons of Core thus: "*I will cause your name to be remembered **in all generations**; therefore nations will praise you forever and ever*" (ESV).

The idea that emerges from all these passages is that generations perpetuate themselves forever. Those who dispute this can only do so by twisting or neglecting the teaching of the Scriptures.

In conclusion, by the first covenant God makes at the beginning of the second world, He guarantees the perpetuation of life on

earth, from generation to generation, without end. This covenant did not exclude God's punishments inflicted on humans throughout history. But they were local, for certain groups of people, not total as in the case of the flood.

God's covenants made with Abram/Abraham

Just as God made two covenants - one transient and one eternal - with Noah, the tenth patriarch of the first world, so he did with Abram, who is the tenth patriarch of the second world. Although most of us think that God made only one covenant with Abram, Scripture tells us of two covenants. We have already mentioned them in passing, but now we will look at them in more detail. Here is what Paul teaches us about them:

Galatians 4:21-26 (NKJV) *"Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? For it is written that **Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman**. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, **which things are symbolic**. For **these are the two covenants**: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar—for this **Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia**, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is ("now is", in the first century), and is in bondage with her children—but **the Jerusalem above is free**, which is the mother of us all."*

As revealed through the Apostle Paul, God made two covenants with Abram/Abraham. These are represented by the bondwoman Hagar and her son, and Sarah - the free wife - and her son. Now let us identify the two covenants in the book of Genesis. The first covenant is found in chapter 15.

Genesis 15:18 (NKJV) *"On the same day the LORD **made a covenant with Abram**, saying: **"To your descendants I have given this land**, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates [...]"*

To understand the context of this passage, we recommend the reader to read chapters 15 and 16 entirely, since in our

explanations we will also refer to other passages in these chapters, which we have not quoted here, but only made observations regarding them.

The first Covenant made with Abram

The passage quoted before shows us that the Lord made a covenant with Abram concerning his genealogical seed: "*to your descendants I have given this land*". This covenant, although made with Abram, refers **only** to his genealogical descendants through Isaac and to the physical Promised Land geographically delimited by the two rivers (the river of Egypt and the river Euphrates) and identified by the people who lived in those territories. As we have shown in previous chapters, Genesis 15 contains elements that we will find at the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai (fire, smoke, darkness, horror, etc.). Therefore, in our understanding, this covenant received by Abram is a **foreshadowing** of the covenant of the Law at Sinai, also called the Old Covenant, by which his genealogical seed inherited the earthly land Canaan with the geographical boundaries mentioned by God. The Covenant was given only to the chosen people of Israel. The duration of the covenant was limited in time and the sanctification that God was to give as a gift through the Messiah, sanctification that was announced through the weekly Sabbaths, was included in the promise. The fulfilment of all the promises announced came through Jesus Christ.

God makes a covenant with Abram in Genesis 15. In Genesis 16, we see that the Egyptian Hagar gives birth to Ishmael. Paul told the Galatians that Ishmael represented the bondage in which first-century Jerusalem found itself.

Genesis 15 → Old Covenant foreshadowing Abram's genealogical seed

Genesis 16 → the symbol of the Old Covenant is born: Ishmael, son of the Egyptian woman, the slave Hagar

Let us remember that this covenant was given to Abram as an answer to his question: "*O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it (the Land)?*" (ESV). So, the Old Covenant with the land of earthly Canaan, was meant to make known to the people of Israel that the Lord will fulfill His promise given to the father Abram, about the possession of THE SPIRITUAL LAND, for him and for his "Seed". That means, God was to give Abraham and his spiritual seed the land of the New Covenant in eternal possession. Since Abraham was physically dead when the Law was given at Horeb, and forty years later the people of Israel took possession of the land, it becomes very clear that the land which the Lord had promised him, was not the physical/geographical land of the Old Covenant. Moses confirms this fact by pointing out that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were not part of the covenant at Horeb:

Deuteronomy 5:2-4 (NKJV) "*The LORD our God made **a covenant with us in Horeb**. The LORD did **not** make this covenant **with our fathers**, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive.*"

Notice what Moses says?! "**This covenant**" was not made with their parents who were physically dead, but with them, who were all alive then and there. So, the fathers/patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob from whom Old Covenant Israel descended, are not part of the covenant of Horeb by which Israel inherited the land of earthly Canaan. The implications of this are

far-reaching, especially regarding the final fulfillment of the promise given to their fathers (fulfilled in Christ).

In his defense, Deacon Stephen said that Abraham did not take possession of the Promised Land during his lifetime:

Acts 7:3-5 (NKJV) *"and said to him, 'Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.' Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, **He moved him to this land in which you now dwelt**. And God gave him no inheritance in it, not even enough to set his foot on. But even when Abraham had no child, **He promised to give it to him for a possession, and to his descendants after him (in the heavenly homeland).**"*

It is noteworthy that Stephen does not include himself as part of the inhabitants of the land in which the high priest and the Jewish elite who judged him lived. Stephen physically lived in Canaan, but he did not "dwell" spiritually in the land of the Old Covenant, as was the case with the Jewish elite who rejected Christ by putting Him to death. This is shown by the words: *"this land in which **you** now dwell"* (those in the Sanhedrin). About Abraham it is not mentioned that he dwelt in that land, but that he was "moved", although he had physically lived there. The verb "to dwell", in this passage, has not only a literal meaning, but also a spiritual one. The Jewish elite did dwell in the land of the Old Covenant in the literal sense but did dwell also spiritually. But Stephen was spiritually "dwelling" in the "land of faith", of the New Covenant of Jesus Christ, in which he believed, which he desired and expected like Father Abraham. This "land" was to be taken possession of in Stephen's near future, namely at the end of the apostolic generation. The fact that Stephen states some two millennia later that Abraham did not take possession

of this land, "***not even enough to set his foot on***" of the "***land that I will show you***" (although Abram physically lived in the land of Canaan), proves that the reference is to the same heavenly, spiritual land. In the physical land of Canaan, he had enough land "***to set his foot on***" for he lived in it.

Therefore, the Old Covenant land was promised only to the genealogical seed of Abram, based on the covenant of Horeb. Abraham and his spiritual seed were promised ANOTHER "land" that he had not taken possession of during his lifetime (the heavenly homeland of Hebrews 11:16).

Since the "land" promised to Abraham was not the physical land of Canaan, it follows that it was not promised to his "Seed," i.e., Christ (see Galatians 3:16).

(1) The first implication of this is that the risen Christ will never return to the physical land of Canaan in which He was incarnated (although there are many who preach this untrue and unscriptural teaching).

(2) The second implication is that Abraham's "Seed" inherits the same heavenly homeland as Abraham. **Christ - the Seed - was to return as "*the heir of all things*" (see Hebrews 1:2) to this heavenly homeland.** This land has a spiritual nature, and it is of another creation. In our understanding, Christ returned spiritually to the heavenly homeland at the end of the Old Covenant marked by the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem (according to history, in AD 70). Any other expectation of a future physical return is merely human delusion, not the teaching of the Scripture. The heavenly homeland in which Christ reigns forever is also our inheritance as Christians. We belong NOW to this homeland in which we will spend eternity after we are stripped of our "*earthly tent*".

The land promised to Abraham was not the earthly Canaan, but another land: a heavenly homeland that Abraham could not take possession of unless he was resurrected from the dead. The resurrection had to be in accordance with the heavenly nature of the land, i.e. a spiritual resurrection, in the Spirit, just as Christ was also resurrected (1 Peter 3:18).

The second Covenant made with Abraham

This brings us to the second covenant that God makes with Abraham, which concerns the inheritance of the heavenly homeland that we have already mentioned. Follow the quotes below:

Genesis 17:4-5 (ESV) "*Behold, **My covenant** is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but **your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.***"

Genesis 17:7 (ESV) "*And I will establish **My covenant between Me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant,** to be God to you and to your offspring after you.*"

This is the second covenant that God makes with Abraham and his seed. We notice that God says, "*Behold, **My covenant***", as if this were a covenant made in Himself, of Himself, by which

Abraham and his seed are made partakers (beneficiaries). By virtue of this covenant, he was to be made "*the father of a multitude of nations*", a fact reinforced by God by changing his name from Abram to Abraham (i.e., the *father of a multitude*). Abraham's genealogical seed also received the second covenant at the end of the 40 years spent in the wilderness. The Lord commands Moses to make another covenant with them (a covenant that was made with an oath, with their parents), "*besides the covenant he made with them in Horeb*" (see Deut. 29:1; 29:12-13).

If in Genesis 15, God "*made a covenant with Abram*" without attributing it to himself (lacking this "My"), in Genesis 17 this attribution is of great significance. This is **God's covenant**, in which He promises to be forever the God of Abraham and his seed "*throughout their generations*", that is, from generation to generation. An everlasting God could not make a covenant to be His, and this to be transient. Therefore, God does not consider the covenant of Genesis 15 as His own, because it was transient and referred only to the Old Covenant with the physical land of Canaan.

In His new covenant (Genesis 17), called "*My covenant*", God also includes Abraham as an heir of the Promised Land, not just his seed, as it was in the case of the covenant in Genesis 15:18-21.

Genesis 17:8 (ESV) "*And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojourning's, **all the land of Canaan**, for **an everlasting possession**, and I will be their God.*"

This "**to you**" includes Abraham also as heir of the land of everlasting Canaan (not the physical land of Canaan). In Hebrews 11:9-16 the apostle, speaking of Abraham's faith, tells us that

Abraham settled in the promised land and lived in tents (a temporary dwelling), thereby showing that the land was not his own; he was waiting for the heavenly, eternal homeland, whose creator and maker is God. Moses also relates what God said about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, concerning His covenant and the land of Canaan:

Exodus 6:4 (ESV) "*I also established **My covenant** with them to give them the land of Canaan, **the land in which they lived as sojourners.***"

Although Abraham, Isaac and Jacob physically lived in the land of earthly Canaan, they were sojourners in it because it was not theirs (they wanted a better homeland). They merely traveled through it to another land, to a heavenly homeland that is eternal.

From Genesis 17:8 we also note that God says to Abraham, using the future tense, "***I will give to you ... the land,***" even though he was physically living in Canaan at that time. This means God was not referring to the geographical land. So, a future promise is made to Abraham and his spiritual seed with reference to another land, indicated by the word "*ayth*" (H853 in Strong's concordance - meaning namely) in original. This is the land of Canaan, to be given in eternal possession, without geographical boundaries. It is remarkable that in Genesis 15:18 we find the same word "*ayth*", when the borders of the country are explicitly listed, but without being mentioned "*everlasting possession*", as in Genesis 17. The land that Abraham and his spiritual seed were to possess **eternally**, was a promise of future fulfillment ("***I will give you ... the land***"). This promise became reality only in the future, when God became their God ("***I will be their God***"), which implied their resurrection from the dead (see Luke 20:37-38). This was possible only after the resurrection of "*the first risen*"

(in the body and in the spirit), that is, Christ who "*became a life-giving spirit*" (see 1 Corinthians 15:45).

The Covenant of Genesis 15	The Covenant of Genesis 17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a passing covenant, with Abram 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an everlasting covenant, made with Abraham: My covenant (verse 4)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The first promise - made exclusively for his genealogical bloodline - "<i>To your offspring I give this land (...)</i>", namely (explicitly) the geographically bounded land of physical Canaan - does not say: an everlasting possession (verses 18-21) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The second promise – made to him and his spiritual offspring - "<i>to be God to you and to your offspring after you</i>" (verse 7) - "<i>I will give (in the future) you and to your offspring after you the land [...]</i>", namely (explicitly) "<i>the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession</i>", without borders – without geographical setting (verse 8)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the earthly, transitory country, given only to Abram's genealogical descendants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the heavenly, everlasting land given to <u>Abraham</u> and his spiritual seed
<p>The Old Covenant land in which he physically lived - is not promised to Abram</p>	<p>The land of the future New Covenant, made by Christ (the "Seed"), is promised also to Abraham (Galatians 3:15-18)</p>

"*My covenant*", found many times in the Scripture, refers to the covenant of Genesis 17, promising an eternal homeland to Abraham and his spiritual seed, not to the covenant of Genesis

15, which promised a geographically delimited earthly Canaan to Abram's genealogical seed for a period of time.

The fact, that the physical land of Canaan was given to Abram's genealogical descendants for a limited time, is shown by Moses in Deuteronomy 32 (DRB). After Moses in verse 18 foretells in front of the assembly of Israel saying: "*Thou hast forsaken the God that beget thee, and hast forgotten the Lord that created thee.*" (i.e. Christ, when they gave him to Pilate), in verse 26 he says about them: "[...] *I will make the memory of them to cease from among men*". This prophecy was fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem, an event also prophesied by Jesus in Matthew 24. After Moses concludes his speech (called the *Song of Moses*) before the assembly of Israel, he utters his last words as a warning:

Deuteronomy 32:46-47 (ESV) "*he said to them, "Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, **that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law.** For it is no empty word for you, but your very life, and **by this word you shall live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to possess.**"*

If Moses speaks only of a lengthening of days in the land of Canaan beyond the Jordan, then the possession of that land was not meant to be eternal.

To reinforce the promise of eternal possession of the spiritual land, in Genesis 17:8, God gives a sign commanding that every male child be circumcised on the eighth day.

Genesis 17:11-12 (ESV) "***You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you.*** He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether

born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring."

(Note that in the case of the covenant in Genesis 15, Abram receives no sign for this covenant. But his genealogical seed received the sign of the covenant at Sinai hundreds of years later: The Sabbath.)

The Apostle Paul explains the purpose of circumcision:

Romans 4:11 (ESV) "***He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well.***"

What, then, was sealed by the sign of circumcision? **The righteousness** that Abraham received **by faith**, thus becoming the father of all who believe and are partakers of this righteousness, whether circumcised or not. Righteousness by faith, based on which God becomes the God of Abraham and his seed, was the goal of the second covenant made with Abraham, a covenant that promised eternal dominion over the spiritual land.

The fulfilment of this covenant was to take place when **the Seed**, Christ, came. To Abraham and his "Seed" it was promised the inheritance of the land based on a New Covenant, foretold in Genesis 17. This was fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary, followed by His spiritual return in Glory at the end of apostolic generation.

Since the fulfillment of God's promise was far off in time, far beyond Abraham's lifetime, it is a necessity to note that Abraham believed in the resurrection from the dead. In fact, the

faith that was counted to him as righteousness was precisely the faith in the promise of the resurrection from the dead, which was to come through his **Seed**, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is proved by Paul who teaches us:

Acts 13:32-33 (ESV) "*And we bring you the good news that **what God promised to the fathers, this He has fulfilled to us, their children, by raising Jesus**, as also it is written in the second Psalm, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten You.'*"

Jesus is the first resurrected from the dead (spiritually - see Acts 26:23). In Him, Abraham believed that he would be raised to receive the inheritance of the heavenly homeland. But if we read the whole of Genesis chapter 17, we find no explicit promise of resurrection from the dead. However, if we follow carefully the phrase in verse 8: "*[...] **I will be their God***", we will see that this was precisely the promise of resurrection, implicitly expressed. This is what Jesus reveals to us:

Luke 20:37-38 (ESV) "*But that **the dead are raised, even Moses showed**, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the **God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob**. Now **he is not God of the dead, but of the living**, for all live to Him.*"

Although Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were physically dead, Jesus shows us that the promise of resurrection from the dead (not physical) was made precisely by God calling Himself their God, since He is the God of the living. Since in Genesis 17:8 God says the same thing ("*I will be their God*"), this means that the promise God gave to Abraham in this phrase was resurrection from the dead, which Paul confirms in the quotation from Acts 13:32-33 (see also Romans 4:17).

If we read Genesis chapter 22, we see that God asks Abraham to bring as a burnt offering his only son Isaac, from whom **the Seed** would genealogically come and through whom God would fulfill the promise. Although God's request seemed to nullify the promise that was continued through Isaac, Abraham obeyed by placing Isaac on the altar and raising his hand with the knife to stab his only son through whom he had the continuity of the promise. When God saw Abraham's faith, His angel called to him from heaven and stopped him (see Genesis 22:10-14). Thus, Abraham proved his faith in the word God had given him. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, concerning this event, the following remark is made:

Hebrews 11:17-19 (ESV) ***"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back."***

Although Abraham had not slain Isaac, the inspired Word tells us that he *"offered up Isaac"*. From this we learn that God looked at Abraham's heart and saw his faith. In this passage it is also revealed that Abraham believed that God could raise Isaac even from the dead. Although the apostle refers to the possibility of physical resurrection of Isaac to give genealogical continuity for the coming "Seed," Abraham's faith was not limited to the miracle of a physical resurrection. Faith in Christ's resurrection and in the day of the Lord's return in His glory (see John 8:56, where we read that Jesus says of Abraham that he saw the day of the Lord and rejoiced) - this was Abraham's faith that was counted to him as righteousness. The physical resurrection miracles throughout the history of the Scriptures all ended with

a tomb, Jesus being the only exception (we will also study the case of Enoch/Elijah). Not a resurrection of the physical body was God's promise given to Abraham, but resurrection into a new, heavenly creation, conforming to the nature of Christ's resurrection in the Spirit (see 1 Peter 3:18). God is Spirit; therefore, the promised resurrection also conforms to His nature. Let us also remember that the death of the first Adam through the fall into sin was not physical, but spiritual. From this death, i.e. from the separation from God caused by the wall of sin (sin in the singular - i.e. of the sinful nature coming through the first Adam, not of sins in the plural - i.e. of sinful deeds caused by the sinful nature) man had to be resurrected and brought to spiritual unity with Him.

The promise given by God to Abraham through "*My covenant*" in Genesis 17 is fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ followed by the spiritual return in His Glory, in the heavenly homeland at the end of the apostolic generation, marked by the destruction of the Temple.

The Covenant of eternal Kingdom made with David

The story of David is found in the books of 1st and 2nd Samuel. He is the second king of the people of Israel, having been chosen after the Lord had rejected King Saul. The passage that tells us about God's covenant with David we will quote later. Now let's spend a little time looking at Saul's rejection.

The reason for Saul's rejection was his disobedience to the word of the Lord, Who had commanded him to destroy the Amalekites for good, including their animals. He destroyed only the animals that did not look good, and of the sheep, lambs, oxen, fat cattle, etc., he kept the best. When Samuel confronts Saul for his disobedience, he justifies it by saying that he kept a leftover of what was to be destroyed, to be offered as a sacrifice to the Lord. Samuel's response is as follows:

1 Samuel 15:22-23 (ESV) *"And Samuel said, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. For **rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king.**"*

After Saul hears these words, he admits that he has sinned by breaking the Lord's command and obeying the voice of the people he feared. However, his repudiation remains final, just two years after he was enthroned as king over Israel. Although the period during which he was king over Israel is almost forty years (see Acts 13:21), all this time he remained rejected by the Lord. This leads us to observe that Saul's rejection has a much deeper meaning. It symbolizes the fact that God was going to

deny the kingdom of Old Covenant Israel, which was no different from the kingdoms of the other nations, because Israel was idolatrous, like the other nations.

We know that Samuel was grieved when the elders of Israel demanded that he put a king over them like the other nations (see 1 Samuel 8:4-8). After praying, the Lord answered Samuel:

1 Samuel 8:7 (ESV) "[...] *Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but **they have rejected Me** from being king over them.*"

Who did they reject? The Lord! Here are some verses that confirm this:

Luke 19:14 (ESV) "*But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, '**We do not want this man to reign over us.**'*"

John 19:12 (ESV) "*From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar."*

John 19:15 (ESV) "*They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "**Shall I crucify your King?**" The chief priests answered, "**We have no king but Caesar.**"*"

The request of the elders of the people of Israel for a king, addressed to Samuel, is a foreshadowing of the denial of Jesus Christ by the elders of Israel in the first century. For the Lord to whom Samuel was speaking was Christ yet not incarnate, who's spirit was present throughout the Old Testament, right from creation in Genesis 1.

Saul's heart was far from the Lord, and we see this from the next passage:

1 Samuel 15:30 (ESV) *"Then he said, "I have sinned; yet **honor me now before the elders of my people and before Israel, and return with me, that I may bow before the LORD your God.**""*

Notice what was at the forefront of Saul's life? He was ready to admit that he had sinned, but only because his desire was to be honored before the elders of the people. He demands to worship the God of Samuel, which shows us that the Lord was not his God as well. From his disobedience in claiming to have kept animals to sacrifice to the Lord, we can see how he related to the Lord. For him it was just a heartless ritual, by which he thought he could "bribe" the Lord. His pretense towards God caused him to be disown as king.

Saul's reign is a pattern of the Old Covenant kingdom, during which the people of Israel honored the Lord with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him (see Isaiah 29:13). As God rejected King Saul, so in due time He rejected the Old Covenant kingdom, replacing it with the New Covenant kingdom made in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

After Saul's rejection, the Lord chooses David, whom he describes in the words of Samuel:

1 Samuel 13:13-14 (ESV) *"And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the LORD your God, with which he commanded you. For then the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. **The LORD has sought out a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you.**"*

The man after God's own heart was David, whom Samuel anointed as king in Saul's place. David becomes king at thirty and

reigns for forty years in Israel. This period of forty years is very significant in its symbolism. David had a life of battles and war throughout this time. Only at the end does the Lord give David rest after delivering him from all his enemies.

2 Samuel 7:1 (ESV) "*Now when the king lived in his house and **the LORD had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies**, [...]*"

The life of King David mirrors the life of Christ and His apostolic Church. David struck Goliath on the head with a stone, who "*fell on his face*," drew his sword from its sheath and cut off his head (Goliath was a symbol of the devil). After that he reigned in Israel, waging the Lord's wars for the subjection of his enemies. Likewise, Christ, first cast the devil from heaven down to earth by His victory on Calvary's cross, then followed the "cutting off" of the devil's head during His reign in His apostolic Church, fighting with the sword of His Word - the Gospel - for a generation (about forty years) to subdue all enemies of the Gospel (see 1 Corinthians 15:24-25).

On the day of Pentecost this battle began, also with a "stone". Peter was the "**stone**" in the "**hand**" of Jesus, the Son of David, with whom the spiritual battle for the victory over the devil and his enemies began. The gospel of the Risen One from the dead began to be proclaimed from Jerusalem. Peter's name used to be Simon, but the Lord chose him and changed his name: "*And I tell you, you are Peter* (Greek: Petros), *and on this rock* (Greek: Petra) *I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" (Matthew 16:18 ESV)

David's kingdom with the wars he fought is a "shadow" for the reality of the fight of the Gospel in the apostolic period, from about the year 30 until the Roman's destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in the year 70. With this first century

destruction, Jesus' prophecy in Matthew 24 was also fulfilled. During this 40-year period (David also reigned 40 years), Christ reigned in the early Church, and **His enemies were made His footstool**. This was accomplished through the **victory of the Gospel**, which followed the sending of the apostles by Jesus (see Matthew 28:19). At that time (in the 1st century, not today!), the Gospel of the Kingdom was proclaimed "*to the ends of the earth*" (Romans 10:18), was "*made known to all nations*" (Romans 16:25-26) and "*preached to every creature under heaven*" (Colossians 1:23).

The confirmation that the apostolic period was the time of Christ's reign for subjection to His enemies, is given by Paul in the following passage:

1 Corinthians 15:24-25 (ESV) "*Then comes the end, when **He delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.***"

1 Corinthians 15:28 (ESV) "*When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subjected to Him who put all things in subjection under Him, **that God may be all in all.***"

Therefore, the enemies of the Gospel of Christ had to be subjected before the end came, just as the enemies of the people of Israel were subjected by the God whom King David trusted. In both cases, David's and Christ's, we are talking about a period of forty years each. And if we accept that David's reign over Israel is a pattern, a shadow of Christ's reign in the apostolic period, then the latter must necessarily have ended with the victory of the Gospel in the world (like David's victory over his

enemies), in the first century. Paul confirms this victory in the following passage:

1 Timothy 3:16 (ESV) "*Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, **vindicated by the Spirit**, seen by angels, **proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world**, taken up in glory.*"

The fulfillment shown by this passage occurred during Paul's lifetime when the gospel was preached to every creature under heaven (Colossians 1:23). The victory over the enemies of Christ was accomplished by the proclamation of the Gospel, which was believed in the first century world. So, His promised rest (see Hebrews 4) is also brought after the victory (in the first century) over His enemies at the end of the apostolic period.

In David's reign we have this pattern: after his victory over all his enemies, at the end, the Lord gives him rest. This pattern was a foreshadowing of the reality of the coming REST after Christ's reign up to the end of the apostolic period, when Christ was victorious over all His enemies (see 1 Corinthians 15:25). After David's reign followed Solomon's reign in which there was peace and rest (as a pattern again for Christ's eternal Kingdom). The next passage shows that after the Lord "*put under the sole of*" David's feet all his enemies, Solomon was given rest to build the house of the Lord.

1 Kings 5:2-5 (ESV) "*And Solomon sent word to Hiram, "You know that David my father could not build a house for the name of the LORD his God because of the warfare with which his enemies surrounded him, **until the LORD put them under the soles of His feet**. But now **the LORD my God has given me rest on every side. There is neither adversary nor misfortune. And so, I intend to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD***

said to David my father, 'Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, shall build the house for My name.' ”

David's victory followed by Solomon's rest is a pattern, a shadow that reinforces the truth that the promise of entering in His rest was fulfilled at the end of the apostolic period (also 40 years), when Christ's enemies were made His footstool ("*put all His enemies under His feet*" 1 Corinthians 15:28 ESV).

The following tables show this truth more suggestively:

Saul's kingdom (~40 years) (see Acts 13:21)	THE SHADOW	THE REALITY
	Israel's first king. Concerned with form, not change of heart - rejected	Temporary reign of the Old Covenant - cast off
	Saul persecutes David	The Jews persecuted Christ and the apostles - the natural persecutes the spiritual

David's Kingdom (40 years) (see 2 Samuel 5:4)	THE SHADOW	THE REALITY
	"man after God's own heart"	Christ is the beloved Son in whom God takes all His pleasure
	wage wars and defeat enemies	The gospel is proclaimed, and the enemies are defeated
	rests at the end of the reign	brings eternal rest

What are God's covenants in the Old Testament?

	David prepares everything for the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem.	The Apostolic church is prepared as a bride to welcome her Bridegroom.
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	THE SHADOW	THE REALITY
	Peace and rest during the reign	Peace and eternal rest in the Kingdom of God
Solomon's kingdom (40 years) (1 Kings 11:42)	He builds the Temple in Jerusalem	The New Jerusalem, built by Christ, descends from heaven (Rev. 21:2) God and the Lamb are in the Temple (Rev. 21:22)

The next 2 passages are also important to our study:

2 Samuel 7: 12-13 (ESV) "*When your days are fulfilled **and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.***"

2 Samuel 23:5 (ESV) "*For does not my house stand so with God? For **He has made with me an everlasting covenant,** ordered in all things and secure. For will He not cause to prosper all my help and my desire?"*

In the first passage God promises David that after, "*you lie down with your parents, I will raise up your offspring after you [...] from your own body*". It is noted that David's offspring would come forth from his body after David had died. This promise excludes

Solomon who came out of David's body during his lifetime. Therefore, the house that was to be built for the name of the Lord and the everlasting strengthening of the throne of His kingdom, cannot refer to Solomon and the temple he built. The mere existence of this passage would be sufficient to prove that Solomon and the Temple he built in Jerusalem are not at all part of this great promise given by the Lord to David, a promise previously given to Abraham and his "*Seed*" in Genesis 17. The successor the passage refers to, was supposed to be from his genealogical line, and this is Jesus, the son of David. Jesus descended from the line of David, which the Apostle Paul shows in the following passage:

Romans 1:3-4 (NKJV) "(the Gospel of God which is) *concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was **born of the seed of David according to the flesh** and declared to be **the Son of God** with power **according to the Spirit of holiness**, by the resurrection from the dead.*"

We know that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, of the Holy Spirit, so Joseph, Mary's husband, even though he is descended from the line of David through Solomon, does not belong to the bodily genealogy of Jesus, since Joseph did not "know" his wife until she gave birth to Jesus. Thus, it becomes necessary for Mary to trace her lineage to David. The genealogy in Luke is instructive in this regard.

Luke 3:23 (ESV) "*Jesus, when He began His ministry, was about thirty years of age, **being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, [...]***"

He was thought to be Joseph's son, but he was not; he was Heli's son, that is, Heli, Mary's father. This becomes even clearer if we study Joseph's genealogy in Matthew 1 where we are told that

Joseph, Mary's husband, was the son of Jacob, not Heli. In the continuation of the genealogy in Luke 3 we notice that where David's son is mentioned, it is not Solomon, but Nathan (see verse 31), who is one of David's four sons born to him in Jerusalem (see 2 Samuel 5:14). We should also note that in the genealogical line of Nathan, there is no other king between David and Christ. On this genealogical line, after David's kingdom follows Christ's kingdom, about a thousand years apart.

In the quote from 2 Samuel 23:5, we note that David states that **"He has made with me an everlasting covenant."** This covenant made by God with David refers precisely to the eternal kingdom of the reign of the Son of David and the house built by Him to the Name of God. It is not at all difficult to see from the Gospels that the kingdom spoken of, is the kingdom of heaven, preached by Jesus and the apostles, and the house built by Jesus' hands is the temple of His body in the New Jerusalem. Let us notice what the following passage tells us:

John 2:18-21 (ESV) *"So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" Jesus answered them, "**Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.**" The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" **But he was speaking about the temple of his body.**"*

The Old Covenant Jerusalem with Solomon's Temple, rebuilt by Herod in forty-six years, was to be destroyed, demolished, and then the spiritual New Jerusalem with the spiritual New Temple was to come down from God out of heaven. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, prophesied by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 24, was to take place towards the end of the apostolic generation (see Matthew 24:34). The fulfillment of this prophecy we find recounted in Revelation 18, where the fall of the city of

Babylon the Great is shown, which is a symbol for the bondage of sin in which the Old Covenant Jerusalem of the first century was.

The next passage shows the descent of the new city from heaven:

Revelation 21:2-3 (NKJV) "*Then I, John, saw **the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.”***"

If the Temple of the Old Covenant was destroyed, if the kingdom of Israel has passed away, and if the Jerusalem of the Old Covenant was desolated (which history confirms), then surely the New Jerusalem has descended from heaven, the Kingdom of God has come, and God Himself is in this spiritual city with His people. It cannot be that about 2000 years after the Old Covenant world passed away, God is still without a city, without a people, and without a kingdom. And if the kingdom is present now, then the King Jesus Christ has returned spiritually to be eternally with His spiritual people.

The understanding and acceptance of this reality is hindered by the imaginary expectations of a physical return (not taught by Scripture), which many Christians still have. We hope that the explanations in this study will clarify the true reality which is spiritual (as God's nature is).

In the following table we have a summary of the covenants.

The Covenant	The Meaning
<p>The first covenant: God <-> Noah, during the first world</p>	<p>The saving covenant of Noah's family from which the second world is born, giving continuity to the seed of Seth</p>
<p>Second Covenant: God <-> Noah, an everlasting covenant with his seed after him and with every living creature of every flesh</p>	<p>The promise that God will never again destroy all living creatures as he did with the flood. The sign of the covenant is the rainbow.</p>
<p>The first covenant: God <-> Abram (Genesis 15), temporary covenant, valid only until its fulfillment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The covenant by which Abram was to know that the Lord will give him the spiritual land (Gen. 15:8). - It was the Old Covenant made only with the genealogical Abraham's seed (the people of Israel) who take possession of the earthly Canaan and to whom the Law is given. - The sign of the covenant was the weekly Sabbath by which it was known that the Lord is the one that sanctifies them. (Ex. 31:13)
<p>Second Covenant: God <-> Abraham and his Seed (Genesis 17) is an everlasting covenant from generation to generation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The covenant by which Abraham and his spiritual seed were to take eternal possession of the heavenly homeland. - is fulfilled in the New Covenant of the Lord Jesus Christ. - the sign of the covenant for the genealogical seed of Abraham was circumcision

<p>Covenant: God <-> David, The Covenant of the eternal Kingdom</p>	<p>- The covenant of the eternal kingdom for his successor Jesus Christ - a continuation of the covenant made with Abraham in Genesis 17, being fulfilled in the New Covenant by the Lord Jesus, the Son of David</p>
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THE THOUSAND-YEAR KINGDOM. THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Although the Thousand-Year Kingdom comes before the Kingdom of God we begin our study with the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God

We have seen that in the covenant with David, God promises him an everlasting kingdom. His throne was to be given to the descendant who emerged from his body after he physically died. It was already shown that this is Jesus Christ. Therefore, with Jesus' coming into the world, the promise of the eternal kingdom was going to be fulfilled. He would reign on David's throne. And before His birth, the angel Gabriel tells Mary the following words:

Luke 1:32-33 (ESV) *"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And **the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David**, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and **of his kingdom there will be no end.**"*

This verse proves, without a doubt, that the kingdom promised to David was to be given to his son Jesus, after the flesh, who, after the spirit, is also "*Son of the Most High*" (see Romans 1:3-4). So, His kingdom is eternal, it has no end, and in the New Testament it is called the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God. After it no other kingdom can come, for it is eternal. God sits on the throne of this Kingdom with the Lamb (see Revelation 22:1), and with its coming all the things promised by God are fulfilled. After the fulfillment of all things promised, the eternal Kingdom of God and of Christ will continue and remain forever. All people who have been, who are, and who will be saved and

cleansed, sanctified by the blood of the Lamb, to the Glory of God, will be forever together in the Kingdom of God from generation to generation (see Ephesians 3:21). To clarify things concerning the Kingdom of God, we will answer several questions:

What is the nature of this kingdom?

The answer should not be hard to give, because on the throne is God who is spirit and Christ who was raised in spirit (so he is also Spirit like Father). The kingdom must conform to the nature of the King, so the kingdom is SPIRITUAL, not physical.

What is the location of the kingdom?

The answer is given by Jesus when he says:

"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." (John 14:2-3 NKJV)

So, the place prepared by Jesus is not in a three-dimensional space somewhere in a recreated physical earth (as it is still preached), but in a spiritual presence: "**where I am**", in the Father's house (Father is Spirit - see John 4:24). All the saved stand "face to face" with God and Christ, who sits on a spiritual throne, and the foundation of the throne is the love of God that will never perish (see 1 Corinthians 13:8, 1 John 4:8).

What characterizes this kingdom?

The Apostle Paul teaches us:

Romans 14:17 (NKJV) ***"For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."***

So, the kingdom of God is in the "place" where the Holy Spirit brings forth righteousness, peace, and joy. These are states of the "heart" of the saved man, not bodily satisfactions given by food, drinks, or other things. In the same way, Jesus teaches us that the kingdom is manifested within us, that is, in the spirit.

Luke 17:20-21 (NKJV) *"Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, **'The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.'**"*

This passage not only teaches the spiritual, inner nature of the kingdom, but excludes the possibility of a seen nature to it: "[...] *nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!'*".

Has this kingdom come to the apostolic generation?

One of the most powerful testimonies to the coming of the kingdom is the following passage:

Mark 9:1 (ESV) *"And he said to them, **'Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.'**"*

Therefore, Jesus' statement that some of the disciples will not physically die until they "see" the coming of the kingdom, places this event in the time of the apostolic generation, i.e. in the first century (it is not transfiguration as some Christians claim). We cannot get past this truth, unless we say that Jesus did not know what he was saying (remember what C.S. Lewis said). As far as we are concerned, this argument cannot be accepted. We explained this in more detail in the preface. We believe that this passage reinforces everything we have shown so far about the

spiritual, unseen nature of the kingdom, which came with power at the end of the apostolic generation. With the end of the Old Covenant, at the destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem, the coming of the Kingdom of God with power took place as a spiritual reality, conformed to the nature of God, not as a physical reality.

From the perspective of creation in Genesis, if we want to place the Kingdom of God into one of the days of creation, then, its place is in the eternity of the seventh day. The Kingdom of God is a Kingdom of peace and eternal rest with the Father and the King of peace, Jesus Christ, on the throne. This came at the end of the apostolic generation as an eternal spiritual reality.

The thousand-year kingdom

We have already seen in the order from the title of this subchapter that the thousand-year kingdom was to take place before the kingdom of God, although we study them in reverse order. Therefore, we want to show that the time frame of the thousand-year kingdom is at the end of the sixth day of creation, i.e., in the apostolic generation. We will see that these thousand years cannot be seen in a literal sense, but only symbolically. The only place where we are explicitly told about the thousand-year kingdom is in Revelation chapter 20. We recommend that the reader carefully reads this chapter before reading the explanations that follow.

We see that the thousand-year kingdom begins with the binding of the devil, so that he can no longer deceive the nations during this period.

Revelation 20:1-3 (NKJV) *"Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while."*

From Chapter 20 we note:

1. The thousand-year kingdom is limited in time and lasts until the end of the period in which the Devil is bound. The Kingdom of God follows the thousand-year kingdom and after the final judgment, being eternal and taking place in a new heaven and a new earth (see Revelation 21-22).
2. The saints, martyrs and conquerors of the beast were resurrected before the general resurrection of all the dead, and judgment was given to them before the *"judgment of the great day"* (Jude 6). This resurrection is called the *"first resurrection"*, and those who were partaking in it are called *"priests of God and of Christ"*.
3. At the end of the thousand-year kingdom, the Devil is released for a little while to deceive the nations.
4. The devil is overcome and cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are.

They will be tormented day and night forever and ever, so they will never rest.

5. Then, the passing of the Old Covenant heaven and earth follows, the resurrection of all the dead, and the "*judgment of the great day*" from the great white throne.
6. Death and the Dwelling of the Dead (Hades, Sheol) were thrown into the lake of fire. Anyone not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death.

We have summarized the order of things described in Revelation chapter 20. It is notable that the thousand-year kingdom begins with the binding of the devil and his casting into the bottomless pit and continues throughout the time in which the devil is bound. At the end of the thousand years, he is released for a little while. The binding of the devil is done by an angel who came down from heaven holding the key to the bottomless pit and a large chain. Since angels are ministering spirits, and the devil is also a spirit (but an evil one), we understand that the key and chain in the angel's hand cannot be physical and belong to a spiritual, unseen world. Likewise, the bottomless pit, the Abyss, was a spiritual prison in which the angels who sinned during the first world, were already bound in "chains" (see 2 Peter 2:4). It was like a "remand prison" in which fallen angels were kept for the judgment to come. So, the "binding" and "releasing" of the devil are spiritual actions, not physical. For example, if a thief is physically imprisoned, this is so because he stole, and because he must be stopped from stealing again. Those entitled to imprison him, based on the law, have greater power than the so-called thief. In the same way, spiritually speaking, the Devil could only be bound by the One stronger than him. During the time

that the Devil reigned in his kingdom, in the first world and in the second world of the Old Covenant, he was the strong one. Jesus talks about the Devil's kingdom in Matthew chapter 12, beginning in verse 24. We ask the reader to read this passage before going through the explanations that follow. From Matthew 12 we quote the following verse:

Matthew 12:29 (NKJV) "*Or **how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.***"

We notice that Jesus gives us an example from the seen world. By this He tells that to dethrone (plunder) the devil (who was the usurper in the Garden of Eden), He had first to have bound him. To be dispossessed of his dominion acquired through the deceit of man in Eden, he had to be bound by the One greater than himself. The devil was the "*strong man*" in the first and in the second world of the Old Covenant. But at the end of the second world "*the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil*" (see 1 John 3:8 NKJV), the murderous works caused by the words of his lie. The lie in Eden, by which man was deceived into believing (implicitly) that God is not good and does not want that the man be like Him, is now destroyed by Jesus. The Word of Truth, which says that God so much loved the world **from the beginning of creation** (see John 3:16), has been proven by the Lord Jesus, who paid for all the sins of mankind caused by the lie of the evil one in Eden. Through the redemption of those lost in sin, accomplished by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, followed by His resurrection, **the devil was rightfully dispossessed of the power of sin and death that came through him over man.** Through the deception of sin, the Devil had received the right to rule over the world. That is why, after resurrection, the Lord Jesus says: "**All authority has been given to Me in heaven and**

on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, [...] (Matthew 28:18-19 NKJV). By this authority - "*all authority*" of forgiveness through faith in the Gospel - the devil has been spiritually bound to stop deceiving the nations with his lie, a lie that implicitly denies that God is love. After "destroying" the lie on the cross, the Lord sends His own to make disciples of all nations by the good news of the Gospel. So, by the victory over death through resurrection, Christ becomes the strong One, and the kingdom of the devil very soon began to be "plundered" and destroyed forever. The final victory came through the proclamation of the Gospel during the apostolic generation, beginning with the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, and continuing to "*the ends of the earth*" (see Acts 1:8). What is rightfully won through Christ's death and resurrection, was now to be taken possession of. As an analogy, after one gains the right to property in a court of law, within a certain period of time set by the bailiff, possession follows, even if the one who lost the property objects. Something similar happened in the apostolic period when they took into possession the Kingdom.

The foreshadowing of this reality is found back in ancient times, when the nation of Israel emerged. First, Egypt was overthrown by the arm of the Lord that pierced the dragon (see Isaiah 51:9-10). This is the foreshadowing of the binding of the Devil. Then the Old Covenant people took possession of the physical land of Canaan. Likewise, after Christ first delivered His people from the "Egypt of the bondage of sin" by the cross, binding the dragon and casting him into the Abyss, He leded his people of the New Covenant to take possession of the heavenly homeland. Just as the wilderness period of Israel was 40 years, the apostolic period was also 40 years (from the year A.D. 30 to the year A.D. 70, when the Temple was destroyed). This shadow-reality pattern is so obvious that we believe it cannot be denied. It is our

conviction that no honest argument can be made from Scripture with which this truth can be fought.

After the dragon was bound and cast into Abyss, we see that the saints, martyrs and conquerors of the beast were resurrected with the so called "*first resurrection*". The reign with Christ for a thousand years belongs to those who have experienced the "*first resurrection*". Consequently, at the "*judgment of the great day*" they would no longer be judged, since they had passed from death to life, which is shown by the words, "*The second death has no power over them*" (see Rev. 20 NIV). This means that they would be forever with Christ and God. The second death, which is eternal separation from God, was for those punished on the judgment day, i.e. anyone who was not found written in the Lamb's book of life. This book was written at the foundation of the world, i.e. at creation (see Rev. 13:8). The fact that the saints had already risen proves that they were written in the book of life. Therefore, at the "*judgment of the great day*" they were not judged, since they had already passed from death to life. This fact is shown by Jesus in the next verse:

John 5:24 (ESV) "*Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me **has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.***"

Therefore, as stated above, eternal life is given by obedience and faith in the words of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus. He who puts all his trust in the grace proclaimed through the Gospel is born of God, i.e. receives the gift of eternal life. In the Scripture, being born of the Spirit of God or resurrected is one and the same thing. Even if we repeat what we have already said, we recall that this is proven by Psalm 2:7 (ESV) "[...] *You are My Son; today I have begotten you*". These words are explained by the apostle Paul in Acts 13:33 as being fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus

from the dead. This resurrection refers to His resurrection in spirit (bodily resurrection was true also), a resurrection that made the last Adam a "*life-giving spirit*" (see 1 Peter 3:18; 1 Corinthians 15:45). The truth, that "*it is the Spirit who gives life,*" as Jesus teaches us in John 6:63 (ESV), is also shown in Ezekiel's vision in chapter 37. In this chapter Ezekiel shows how the house of Israel, represented by the valley of dry bones, is resurrected by the word, by the breath of the Spirit (verse 4-9). Over this house, after its resurrection from the dead, David was to be king forever (verse 24; this refers to Jesus, the Son of David). The same breath of the Spirit, shown in Ezekiel 37, is also spoken of by Jesus to Nicodemus in John 3.

John 3:7-8 (ESV) "*Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and **you hear its sound**, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. **So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.***"

To Jesus, who became "*a life-giving spirit*", on the day of His resurrection, on the first day of the week, was given all power to "breathe" His Spirit of life upon those dead in sin. The first to experience the breath of life were His disciples:

John 20:20-22 (ESV) "*When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."* And when He had said this, **He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."**"

The first to be brought to life by the first risen One, the Giver of life by His Spirit, were His beloved disciples. They are the first to be resurrected, **on the first day of the week**, rejoicing to see the "**Light**" of the **New Creation**. For they are the first, so then, **with**

them the "first resurrection" began. The proof that the disciples were the first resurrected, brought to life on the same day of Jesus' resurrection, is also shown by the way He later calls them, at the Sea of Tiberias:

John 21:5 (NKJV) "[...] **Children**, do you have any food? [...]"

This is the first time the Lord calls them "**children**", because they had become children of God and of Christ. Receiving the Holy Spirit from the mouth of the first risen One, who was made a "*life-giving spirit*", He made them children of God.

After his disciples, many others were resurrected, but this resurrection took place only after the "breath" on the day of Pentecost, manifested by the sound of a rushing mighty wind that came from heaven where Jesus had ascended and had been glorified. On this day the apostles were filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, which the Lord had promised them on the day of His ascension (see Acts 1:8). The power of the Holy Spirit with which they were baptized to confess the Lord Jesus, brought to life nearly three thousand more souls that day. The number of those who experienced the "*first resurrection*" was increasing every day, because "*the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved*" (Acts 2:47 NKJV).

By being born of the Spirit we also have eternal life, thus becoming children of God. This birth, at the same time resurrection, secures man's entrance into the Kingdom of God, as we see in John 3:1-6.

The saints who experienced the "*first resurrection*" by reigning with Christ "*a thousand years*" are first of all the disciples of the Lord, followed by all those who were saved through the preaching of the Gospel during the apostolic period.

Writing to the Christians of the twelve tribes of Israel who were scattered throughout the first century world, the Apostle James tells them the following:

James 1:18 (ESV) "*Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that **we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.***"

Through birth from the Word people come to receive the gift of life, becoming children of God. And because James calls them "*a kind of first fruits of His creatures*", we are shown that they have had the "*first resurrection*". Christ, who is the first fruit, "*the first fruit of those who have fallen asleep*" (1 Corinthians 15:20 ESV), "[...] *the **firstborn** of all creation*" (Colossians 1:15 ESV), i.e. the **first raised from the dead** (see Acts 26:23), was followed by these "*first-fruits of His creatures*" of which James writes.

In the next two passages, Paul shows us the same truth about the first resurrection of the apostolic period.

Ephesians 2:6 (ESV) "*and **raised us up with him** and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus*".

Colossians 3:1 (ESV) "*If then **you have been raised with Christ**, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.*"

And the epistle to the Hebrews teaches us the same truth.

Hebrews 12:22-23 (ESV) "*But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to **the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven**, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, [...]*"

It is obvious that the apostle is referring to the first-century Church whose members he calls "*firstborn*", first resurrected, written in the book of life. So, because the Christians of the early Church are the first resurrected, it means that they have reigned with Christ "*a thousand years*".

So, there is sufficient evidence that the "*first resurrection*" took place in the apostolic period of the first century. And since in Revelation 20 we read that those who reigned "*a thousand years*" with Christ are the ones who experienced the first resurrection, it means that the thousand-year kingdom took place in the apostolic generation. Since the "*first resurrection*" and the thousand-year kingdom cannot be separated in time, any possibility of placing the thousand-year kingdom in another period of the history of salvation is excluded.

We have stated that the thousand-year kingdom took place during the apostolic period. The following questions may arise in our minds:

- How is it explained that a thousand years is actually about forty?
- What is the nature of this kingdom?
- What happened during the thousand-year kingdom?

These questions will be answered next.

To answer the first question, we must keep in mind that Revelation is a book full of symbols. In chapter 20 we frequently encounter this symbolic speech, and the meaning of this passage must necessarily be spiritual, not literal. We have already shown that an angel, who is a spirit, cannot hold a physical chain in his hand to bind another spirit. And if the writing in the book of Revelation is full of symbols, the thousand years must also be taken in a symbolic, not literal sense. In our understanding, **the promise of the eternal kingdom that King David received, followed by a period of about a thousand literal years that passed from David to Christ, finds its fulfillment in Christ's symbolic "thousand years" kingdom of the apostolic period.** We are convinced that there will never be a fulfillment of the expectation of a future thousand-year kingdom in the literal sense. Such expectations of physical, seen fulfillments were held by the people of Israel in the first century. Let's follow one such passage:

John 12:34 (ESV) *"So the crowd answered him, **"We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever.** How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?"*

The fact that Israel waited for Christ to reign "*forever*" on the physical earth, since that is what they read and understood from the Law, is shown in this passage. Their mind, which was limited to things seen, did not allow them to spiritually understand the promise of the eternal kingdom. Therefore, we too must be careful how we read and understand Revelation chapter 20. Let us not make the same mistake that the people of Israel made, expecting a physical fulfillment.

On the second question, we think we can say that the nature of the thousand-year kingdom had to be conformed to the nature of the risen Christ. Since the saints reigned with Christ, this

implies a spiritual kingdom. The physical, fleshly resurrection of Jesus (see Luke 24:39) cannot be the nature of the resurrection the new creation begins with, in which He is "*the Firstborn*," that is, the First Risen. He is not physically the First Risen from the dead (see Acts 26:23), but is the First Resurrected in the Spirit, because He was made "*a life-giving Spirit*". His physical resurrection fulfilled what is written in Psalm 16:10 ("*nor will you let your faithful one see decay*" - NIV) and was also a sign to His generation which He called "*an evil and adulterous generation*" (see Matthew 12:39-40 ESV). His physical resurrection cannot be taken as the nature of His resurrection in the new creation. The new creation must be conformed to the nature of the Father, who is spirit. Therefore,

The thousand-year kingdom was spiritual, not physical, and Christ's throne is spiritual, according with the nature of His resurrection in the New Creation.

To answer the third question, we must note that during the thousand-year kingdom, those who experienced the "*first resurrection*" reigned with the resurrected Christ in the spirit (not in the body of flesh that He had before His ascension). The purpose of this time-limited kingdom and what happened then is made clear to us in the New Testament, as we will show below.

In Revelation chapter 20 we see that those who were to reign with Christ were "*priests of God and of Christ*". We believe the passage below shows us who these priests were:

Revelation 1:4-6 (ESV) "*John **to the seven churches** that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and **from Jesus Christ** the faithful witness, **the firstborn of the dead**, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood **and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father**, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*"

The seven Churches existed in Asia Minor at that time, and the book of Revelation was sent to them by John. The kingdom of priests included Christians, contemporary with John, and John himself was a priest in this kingdom, as shown by the words "**he made us a kingdom, priests [...]**". So, if John was a priest for God in this kingdom, we need to clarify which kingdom the above passage refers to. Is this a different kingdom and priesthood than the one of a thousand years? Who was the king of this kingdom?

In our understanding, the kingdom spoken of in Revelation 1:6 also refers to the thousand-year kingdom, who's King is Christ. If we stick to this passage, it would be enough to prove that the thousand-year kingdom took place in the apostolic generation. But we will see that there is more evidence.

Revelation 5:10 (ESV) "*And **you have made them a kingdom and priests** to our God, and **they shall reign on the earth.**"*

Notice that unlike the other quotations, this passage says that the priests "*shall reign on the earth*". In verse 9 of chapter 5 we are told that they have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, being men of every tribe, tongue, people and nation. The earth on which they reigned is the earth that was before the New Earth, i.e. the Old Covenant "earth" (not planet earth) that was

to "flee" before the one who sat on the throne (see Revelation 20:11). To understand what the purpose of this kingdom of priests was and what happened during this time, let's see what the apostle Peter teaches:

1 Peter 2:9 (ESV) "*But **you are** a chosen race, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, **that you may proclaim the excellences of him** who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*"

Peter shows us what the purpose of the royal priesthood was: "*to proclaim the excellences*" of Christ and God. Let us remember that the risen Christ was given all power, all authority which He imparted on His disciples in order to make disciples of all nations, through the preaching of the gospel (see Matthew 28:18-20). One might ask: how did they reign on earth with Christ, if he was ascended to heaven? To give an answer, note that Jesus says in Matthew 28 verse 20 (ESV): "*[...] and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age*". After saying these words, He ascended after a short time. He makes this statement which is apparently in contradiction to His going to heaven. The conclusion that follows from this is that He did not refer to His physical presence, but to His spiritual presence, as a "*life-giving spirit*". The Holy Spirit whom Jesus sent on the day of Pentecost was the One who empowered the disciples to bear witness to the Gospel until the end of the Old Covenant age.

The thousand-year kingdom was spiritual in nature, intended to proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the Old Covenant earth (not in a physical sense), to subdue and take possession of all things that had previously been under the devil's dominion.

Paul speaks of this dominion as a reality that they experienced at that time.

2 Corinthians 6:10 (ESV) "*[...] as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, **yet possessing everything**.*"

This reality of the apostles' taking possession of all things can only be understood in a spiritual sense. The apostles did not receive the authority of a worldly dominion. Paul's words "*yet possessing everything*" refer to all things pertaining to the Kingdom of God, which is spiritual in nature. After the spiritual kingdom of "*a thousand years*" follows the Kingdom of God into which they first entered, those who fought the good fight of proclaiming the gospel, then, in the first century. This struggle during the thousand-year kingdom was accompanied by many tribulations through which they were entering the Kingdom of God (see Acts 14:22). The fight was spiritual and was directed against the dominion of the devil in the Old Covenant age, which Paul shows in the following passage:

Ephesians 6:12 (NKJV) "*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, **against the rulers of the darkness of this age**, against spiritual hosts of wickedness **in the heavenly places**.*"

The fact that the phrase "*the darkness of this age*" refers to the Old Covenant age is proven by the following passage:

Isaiah 9:1-2 (NASB) "*But **there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish**. In earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He will make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. **The people who walk in***

darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them."

It is very clear from the above passage that the land of sorrow was the people of Israel (not the physical globe) living "***in a dark land***", where the darkness of the Old Covenant "night" dwelt. The great light that was to come over their spiritual darkness was the light of Jesus Christ.

The end of the battle with the kingdoms of darkness, during the thousand-year kingdom, would come when the dragon, the serpent of old, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. We understand that this was spiritually fulfilled at the end of the battle during the apostolic period. The victory lies precisely in the fact that the heavenly (spiritual) places were cleansed of all the evil of the devil's words, by casting him and his demons into the lake of fire and brimstone. The father of lie, the original murderer in Eden, was destroyed forever along with the lie and the darkness of his words. The love, justice and truth of God's Word from the beginning, which were questioned by the serpent of old - "*Did God really say?*" - were powerfully vindicated in the end by the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His sacrifice.

If the Devil has been destroyed, why do people still do bad things?

The answer is: every man born into this world inherited the sinful nature from the first Adam. The evil that people do is a consequence of this fallen nature. Therefore, when somebody chooses to do a bad thing, he/she cannot blame the Devil. The only way to escape this nature is to strip off our dead-self in sin and put on the life received as a gift from Christ. Before the victory of Christ no one had this chance to life. However, many people choose to remain in the death of the sin of the first Adam,

rejecting the love of Christ. Even Christians sometimes choose to do the deeds of the self which they have not yet fully denied; therefore, evil deeds still exist. In the spiritual Kingdom of the love of the Son of God, in which the new man/new creation dwells, there is no evil, there is no death, but only spiritual abundant life.

Paul shows us that before the Kingdom of God came, in which God "*is all in all*", Christ reigned in the apostolic period for the subjection of all His enemies.

1 Corinthians 15:24-26 (NKJV) "*Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. **For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.** The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.*"

The purpose of the thousand-year kingdom was to subdue all enemies of the Gospel of Christ. The victory lays precisely in the fact that the Gospel was believed in the world at that time (see 1 Timothy 3:16).

This concludes our answer to the third question.

The reign of Christ in the apostolic period, which according to Paul's teaching has at its end the giving of the kingdom into the hands of the Father, can be none other than the thousand-year kingdom, for after it follows the eternal kingdom of God the Father.

In Revelation 20 we read that before the dragon is thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, he is temporarily released to deceive the nations. In the next passage Paul teaches us that *the "Lawless One"* who was working through the power of Satan was to be revealed in the apostolic period:

2 Thessalonians 2:7-12 (NKJV) *"For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And **then the lawless one will be revealed**, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. **The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason **God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie** that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness."***

In the context of chapter 2 of the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, we see that among the Christians of that Church there was a belief that the day of Jesus' return had already occurred. It is noteworthy that Paul does not correct them by saying, "Look! Physical heaven and physical earth have not yet passed away!" (as many Christians still expect today), but teaches them that before the Lord's return, repudiation of faith had to come. The Thessalonian Church had been taught earlier, by word of mouth, by Paul himself, about the events of the end (verse 5: *"Do you not remember that when I was still with you, I told you these things?"* NKJV). If the Thessalonians did not expect the physical burning of heaven and earth, we conclude that Paul who taught them about Jesus' return, he also did not wait for the burning of the cosmos. Why would we, then? So, the

Thessalonians' expectation of the Lord's return during their lifetime was based on the teaching they received from Paul himself. This was not a deception. The deception of the Thessalonians by other teachers than Paul was that they had said that the Lord had returned BEFORE the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. This destruction had the role to mark the end of the Old Covenant. The ungodly, "*lawless one*", whose lie was to lead to the repudiation of the faith, had to sit in the Old Covenant Temple. This is why the return could not take place before that happened.

The conclusion that follows is that if the Temple was destroyed, then the repudiation of faith had already taken place, the "*lawless one*", the son of perdition, who sat in the Temple and posed as God, was destroyed, and the second revelation of Christ took place at the end of the apostolic generation. Those who argue that the son of perdition must show himself in OUR future, should understand that Paul did not say that this would be in a rebuilt temple in the future sometime. All these attempts to place this already past event in our future are nothing more than pure speculation, not founded on the Scripture.

The repudiation of faith of those who did not receive God's love to be saved, was because they believed the lie of the "*lawless one*" who performed signs and wonders by powers they sought. They did not love God, but wanted only the power by which signs were done (we have an example in Acts 8, in the person of Simon the sorcerer who wanted to buy with money the sign-working power). This is why God sends them a misleading work of signs and powers of the "*lawless one*" (the so-called Antichrist). About him it has been said that:

- he is working with the power of Satan,

- his work is to deceive,
- his deception is a work of misleading for those who have rejected the love and the truth in order to be saved,
- the purpose of deception is to condemn those who have rejected love.

The following table highlights the parallels between the passage in 2 Thessalonians 2 and Revelation 20.

Revelation 20	2 Thessalonians 2
Satan was stopped from deceiving, being bound and cast into the bottomless pit. He was to be released to deceive at the end of the thousand year kingdom.	He who stopped the deception coming through the " <i>lawless one</i> " had to be taken out of its way, so that the " <i>lawless one</i> " could do his work of deceiving.
His release for a little while ends with his being thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone.	The " <i>lawless one</i> " is destroyed (thrown into the lake of fire) by the breath of the mouth of the Lord Jesus at His return.
Anyone not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone.	All those who did not believe the truth were deceived into believing a lie and were condemned.

The fact that at the time Paul was writing to the Thessalonians the deception had not yet taken place, but was "on the way", proves that they were in the time of the thousand-year kingdom. The "*mystery of lawlessness*" had begun to work (in the first century), but the revelation of the "*lawless one*" was still hindered. Deception, or deceiving, was to come during their lifetime, when the "*thousand years*" almost ended, shortly before the return of Christ.

The thousand-year kingdom of the First Risen from the dead took place in the apostolic generation. First century Christians were called to be priests of God and of Christ, to proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the earth at the cost of their lives. By proclaiming the Gospel to the world, at that time, in the midst of many tribulations, Satan was overcome by those who washed their garments in the Blood of the Lamb. All of Christ's enemies were made His footstool, in a spiritual sense. The kingdom was taken out of Satan's hand by Christ through the spiritual warfare of the Church of the firstborn. He gave it to God the Father, who, since then, has been spiritually all in all for those who have believed, who believe, and who will believe the Gospel, people of every nation, from generation to generation, for ever and ever.

WHAT ARE THE LAST DAYS? ARE WE LIVING IN THE LAST DAYS?

Since my youth I have heard that we are living in last days and that the end of the world is near. I was taught that the coming of the Lord was very near then, so, I wondered back then, if I would ever get married, and if I did, how long it would be until the end. However, at the age of twenty-three I got married and here we are forty years later. God has given us three children, who are now adults, and we already have a three-year-old grandchild who is a great joy for me and my wife. Looking back, I wonder what it would have been like, if I had not taken this step, if I had reached this age living alone, without a family, because of a teaching received in the Church. Now I know that it is not the end of the world that is near, but my passing from this world.

Another example caused by erroneous teaching in the Church is that of a young family with a two-year-old daughter whom I met about twelve years ago. They, too, believed the same message of the imminent end of the world and the great tribulation, from the sermons they heard. The terror of the prospect of going through the great tribulation made them stop wanting children, because they could not bear the thought of seeing their children go through the suffering they expected. After several discussions with them on the subject, based on passages of Scripture, they understood that things were not as they thought. After a while I was happy to learn that God had given them another child.

These examples (and others like them) are indicators of the influence that the teachings we adopt have on us. In order not to fall victim to wrong teachings, it is very important to read Scripture carefully and understand how the things written in it relate to each other.

To answer the questions in the title of this chapter, we will quote several passages of Scripture that refer to the last days, then we will seek to understand what they refer to. We will show that the **last days do not refer to the end of the world or of the universe, but to the end of the creation of the sixth day in Genesis 1, of the Old Covenant age**, and of the people of Israel, chosen under that covenant.

The first passage that explicitly refers to the last days is found in the book of Genesis.

Genesis 49:1 (NKJV) *"And Jacob called his sons and said, "Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you **in the last days**"*".

In Genesis chapter 49 we find the blessing that Jacob gives to his twelve sons. This is special to each of them, foreshadowing what was to happen in the future to the twelve tribes of Israel. The most representative of these is the blessing he pronounces on Judah, blessing which has in its center Shiloh, the Messiah. There is even a mention of the colt Jesus rode on when He was greeted with cheers from the crowd, saying "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord, the King of Israel". Since this blessing has Jesus Christ at its center, it means that it refers to the last days when His incarnation took place. So, the Scripture foretold through Moses long beforehand, when and what would happen in the last days. We also note that the last days refer to events strictly pertaining to the twelve tribes of the nation of Israel. The only reference to other nations is given by the phrase: *"and the obedience of the nations shall be his"* (Gen. 49:10 NIV), i.e. the good news of the Messiah's Gospel will be received also by the other nations, which is confirmed by the New Testament.

Genesis 49 makes it clear that the last days do not refer to the last days of the whole world, but only to the twelve tribes of Israel (see also Deut. 4:26, 30).

In the following quotation Peter identifies the exact last days from Joel's prophecy.

Acts of the Apostles 2:16-20 (NKJV) "*But **this is what was spoken** by the prophet Joel: "And it shall come to pass **in the last days**, **says God**, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. **I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.**"*"

The proclamation of the Gospel in the languages of the nations present at the feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem, is interpreted by Peter as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel 2, which proclaims the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on all flesh. He places the fulfillment of the prophecy in the last days, a time when the manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which began on that day of Pentecost, takes place. Peter goes on to show the chronology of events that are to take place in the last days, namely, "*I will show **wonders** in heaven above and **signs** in the earth beneath: **blood** and **fire** [...] the sun shall be turned into **darkness**, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the*

great and awesome day of the Lord". We notice the order of things in the last days:

- in the beginning are signs and wonders,
- then there is blood, fire, the darkening of the sun, the turning of the moon into blood, after which comes the great and awesome Day of the Lord.

The fulfillment of what Peter proclaimed can be found in the New Testament. The signs and wonders by which the proclamation of the Gospel was reinforced are recorded right from the beginning of the book of Acts. God determined that the preaching of the Gospel in the last days should be strengthened with many signs and wonders. Towards the end of the apostolic period, after the Gospel was proclaimed throughout the Old Covenant world, the miraculous gifts ceased. Whoever still claims today that the Lord gives gifts of signs, healings, or even resurrections from the dead, as in the apostolic period, is only misleading Christians. The inspired Word and our daily reality dispute these claims of so-called healers, since there is no evidence of this power as there was in the apostolic period. For example, the healing of the lame man at the beautiful gate could not be disputed by the Jewish elite. It was precisely so, because the healing was real. They held Peter and John accountable for saying, that the lame man was healed by the name of Jesus Christ.

In saying this, we do not want to affirm that if God wants to heal someone today of a certain disease, even in the physical body, He can't do so. However, this is not within the reach of some healers, or as they are called, "vessels of the Lord's work". Looking for supernatural healings or manifestations, to confirm God's presence, rather proves the unbelief in the written word,

of those who seek them. Nothing can measure up to the faith that comes from "hearing" the Word, when we not only hear but also understand it.

The miracles of the apostolic period have their correspondence in the "shadows" or patterns of the beginnings of the people of Israel, when they came out of Egypt on their way to the land of earthly Canaan. There, in the wilderness the life of the people of Israel was marked by miracles. For 40 years the food of the people of Israel was manna from heaven. After they entered the land of Canaan under Joshua's leadership, the miracle of the manna from heaven ceases, and they are left to eat only the fruits of the land. We find this pattern being fulfilled in the apostolic period which lasted also 40 years (from the year A.D. 30 to the year A.D. 70). At the end of the last days the miracles ceased, for now the entrance into the spiritual land of the New Covenant was to take place. From now on God's people are of every nation; no longer just one nation, but of every tribe, of every people, etc. (see Revelation 7:9).

The third passage we will look at is:

2 Timothy 3:1-5 (ESV) "*But understand this, that **in the last days there will come times of difficulty**. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, [...] having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. **Avoid such people.***"

Paul writes this epistle to his disciple Timothy while he was imprisoned in Rome. Towards the end of the epistle, he informs him that his departure from this world was near, since he knew he was to be executed after his condemnation by the emperor of Rome. So, Paul did not live to the end of the last days, but Timothy, who was young, did. Paul gives a description of the

decadence of the people in the last days, and he says to Timothy, **"Avoid such people."** In other words, the **"times of difficulty"**, were in Timothy's lifetime, and he had to **"avoid"** the wicked, fallen, formalist people. Who? Timothy! He had to avoid them.

If Timothy lived in the last days, it means they were in the first century. The physical heavens and the physical earth did not burn up. The world was not destroyed, since the last days refer to the end of the Old Covenant and the end of the Old Covenant people, not the end of the world.

If anyone disputes Paul's words, saying that they represent only his faith which was not fulfilled at that time, he implicitly disputes the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in all of Paul's writings. There are Christians who acknowledge that the apostles did wait indeed for the end during their generation, but argue that it did not happen, since, according to their expectation, heaven and earth have not yet passed away. Their problem stems from a misunderstanding that the heavens and earth referred to in Scripture are the physical ones. We have shown in this study what they are, in the chapters on the second and third day of creation.

The fourth passage we will look at is:

James 5:3 (NKJV) *"Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. **You have heaped up treasure in the last days.**"*

It is important to note that James associates the last days with judgment, expressed in the words, "*will eat your flesh like fire.*" The rich contemporaries of James' time were to be judged for having gathered their treasures in the last days, by cheating and not paying their workers the wage due to their work. The apostle also accuses them: "*You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you*".

In the rest of the passage, James addresses Christians contemporary with him, urging them to be patient, "*[...] for the coming of the Lord draws near*" (James 5:8). **James is not addressing us with these words**, but first-century believers. For example, when we read the Lord's words to Saul of Tarsus: "*Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?*", we do not believe that there is anyone who would apply them to himself, nor would he answer, "*Who are You, Lord?*". Why then, when we read passages such as those quoted before, do we consider that they apply to us directly, without questioning whether they meant anything to those to whom they were addressed? In our opinion, we must first seek to understand what the written words meant to them, and then see what lessons we can draw. We cannot apply to ourselves events that have already happened, such as, the passage of the people of Israel through the Red Sea. They are useful for us too, because they teach us, they are part of salvation history, but the historical event was experienced only by that generation. In the same way, the events of the last days, ending with the judgment and the coming of the Lord, were also part of the apostolic period. James told his contemporaries that "*the Judge is standing at the door*" (James 5:9). He did not tell us! So, like Paul, **James applies the last days to his contemporaries, not to us.**

The fifth passage we will look at is:

2 Peter 3:4 (ASV) "[...] **in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of His coming?** For, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

Peter makes the association between the last days and the coming of the Lord. If we read verse 7, we are told about preservation of heavens and earth "*for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly*". Thus, James and Peter both speak of the last days as the days before the coming of the Lord and the judgment. In the rest of the passage, Peter also associates the last days with the passing of the heavens and the earth, "*which are now*" (v.7), that is, in the apostolic period. The heavens and earth in Peter's days followed the heavens and the earth of the first world, which perished in the flood ("*the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water*" - v.5). Peter also reminds the first century Christians of God's promise in Isaiah 65:17 of the coming of the new heavens and the new earth, in which righteousness would dwell. Therefore, after the passing of the Old Covenant heavens and the Old Covenant earth, the New Covenant heavens and the New Covenant earth would come, in which dwells the righteousness given as a gift by the Lord Jesus Christ (righteousness given to men, not to the physical earth). Christians today have plenty of the gift of Christ's righteousness, Who returned after He overcame in the last days all His enemies, including the Devil who was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, in the spiritual sense. Christ's victory was complete at the end of the apostolic generation. From then on, the Lord has been united with the Church, His bride. Like Paul and James,

Peter applies the last days to his contemporaries, showing that at their end is the coming of the DAY of the LORD and the renewal of all things at the creation of the New Heaven and the New Earth (spiritual, not physical), when all creation in Genesis 1 is finished.

WHAT DOES THE SCRIPTURE TEACH ABOUT THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH?

Rapture is one of the highly controversial topics that has led to some separation among Christians due to differences in interpretation. Behind these differing understandings are teachings that are handed down or even imposed by those at the head of local churches or Christian denominations. Most Christians adopt a particular understanding without checking whether it is supported by the Scripture. If the teaching is wrong, then the Christian's expectations are also wrong, so they will not be fulfilled. The consequences are not to be neglected. Here is what the Scripture teaches us:

Proverbs 13:12 (ESV) "***Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.***"

Some believers can end up very disappointed with unfulfilled expectations. Frequently they resort to fasting, praying and weeping, insisting that God will bring the long-awaited fulfilment. Disappointment can become even greater when they see that God does not answer them.

To answer the above question, we need to see what the Scripture teaches generally about rapture, in the Old and New Testament. After this we will look at the passages that teach us specifically about the rapture of the Church.

The Rapture of Elijah

The best-known Old Testament passage in which we are told about rapture is the one referring to the event of Elijah's rapture. We will quote the fragments that describe this event.

2 Kings 2:1 (ESV) "*Now when the LORD was about **to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind**, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal.*"

To Elisha's request to receive a double measure of his spirit, Elijah answers:

2 Kings 2:10-11 (ESV) "*And he said, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am **being taken from you**, it shall be so for you, but if you do not see me, it shall not be so. "And as they still went on and talked, behold, **chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.**"*

The sons of the prophets requested:

2 Kings 2:16-17 (ESV) "*And they said to him, "Behold now, there are with your servants fifty strong men. Please let them go and seek your master. It may be that the Spirit of **the LORD has caught him up and cast him upon some mountain or into some valley.**" And he said, "You shall not send." But when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said, "Send." They sent therefore fifty men. And for three days they sought him but did not find him.*"

So, Elijah did not get into the chariot of fire, it merely separated him from Elisha; however, we hear Christians speak of Elijah's ascension to heaven in a chariot of fire. There are even paintings showing Elijah in the chariot of fire. But the quoted text shows us that Elijah was taken from Elisha and lifted up to heaven in a

whirlwind. So, Elijah was taken by a tornado, not the chariot of fire. If up to now we have believed otherwise than we need to correct our belief by aligning it with God's Word.

The question that can be asked is: to which heaven was Elijah caught up in?

There are Christians who teach that Elijah ascended to God, justifying this belief by his appearance with Moses on the mountain, where Jesus's face shined like the sun (see Matthew 17). This understanding is completely wrong, since the presence of Moses with Elijah proves the opposite. We are not told that Moses was lifted up to heaven, but that he died and was buried by God in a valley in the land of Moab (see Deuteronomy 34:6). Thus, Moses appeared on the mountain even though he had not reached heaven, and by his physical death he was added to his people, to the Sheol. We will prove that Elijah was also at the same place with Moses and the others dead in faith.

In fact, their appearance on the mountain is clarified by the Lord, calling it: "*this vision*". The vision was not the actual reality of the Lord's coming in His glory, but only a representation, a foreshadowing of it, before His return (see 2 Peter 1:16-17).

What happened to Elijah then? Where did the whirlwind take him?

Even the sons of the prophets did not think that Elijah had been caught up to God in heaven. Therefore, they ask Elisha's permission to look for him in some valley or on some mountain, where he might have been moved by the Spirit of the Lord. After a search of three days, they did not find him. This should not lead us to the hasty conclusion that he was nevertheless taken away to God, for the Scripture proves that Elijah was only moved by

the tornado, having been taken away from Elisha, not taken to God.

Let's see what the evidence is:

Elisha became prophet instead of Elijah. Thus, from that moment on, the Word of the Lord was with Elisha, as it was with Elijah. The next passage shows us that by the time Jehoshaphat ruled over Judah, Elisha had already taken over the ministry from Elijah.

2 Kings 3:11 (NKJV) "***But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there no prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of the LORD by him?" So one of the servants of the king of Israel answered and said, "Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, who poured water on the hands of Elijah."***"

Therefore, Elijah's rapture took place before Jehoshaphat asked the Lord through the prophet Elisha. The following passages are instructive as to where Elijah was taken after his ascension to heaven in a whirlwind.

2 Chronicles 21:1-2 (NKJV) "***Now Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. And Jehoram his son reigned in his stead. He had brothers, the sons of Jehoshaphat: Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azaryahu, Michael, and Shephatiah; all these were the sons of Jehoshaphat king of Israel.***"

2 Chronicles 21:4 (NKJV) "***Now when Jehoram was established over the kingdom of his father, he strengthened himself and killed all his brothers with the sword, and also others of the princes of Israel.***"

2 Chronicles 21:12-14 (NKJV) "***And a letter came to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus says the LORD God of your father***

*David: Because you have not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat your father, or in the ways of Asa king of Judah, but have walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and have made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to play the harlot like the harlotry of the house of Ahab, **and also have killed your brothers**, those of your father's household, who were better than yourself, behold, the LORD will strike your people with a serious affliction—your children, your wives, and all your possessions;"*

These passages prove that after Jehoshaphat's death (so Elijah's rapture had already taken place), his son who succeeded him to the throne of Judah killed his brothers. Then, to our surprise, "**a letter came to him from Elijah the prophet**", which is certainly **after** the event of Elijah's ascension to heaven in the whirlwind. The question that arises is whether anyone in heaven could still send letters? The answer can only be one: Elijah wrote the letter from earth after the Spirit of the Lord relocated him.

Another passage that proves definitively, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that Elijah did not ascend to God is the following (words spoken by the Lord Jesus):

John 3:13 (NKJV) "**No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.**"

Elijah's rapture took place many centuries before the incarnation of Jesus. Because Jesus says in the first century, "**no one ascended into heaven,**" the conclusion is:

Elijah was not taken up to heaven to God but was merely moved by the whirlwind to another place on earth, dying after a while like any other man.

The same Christians who claim that Elijah was caught up to God in heaven, also believe that the patriarch Enoch was taken to God and did not die physically. The text they refer to, in support of this belief is the following:

Hebrews 11:5 (NKJV) "***By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.***"

The apostle writing to the Hebrews makes the following statements about Enoch, based on the text of Genesis 5 verse 24: "*Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.* So, he was taken away, moved by God. It does not state that he was taken up to God in heaven. And by the expression, "*that he did not see death*", it cannot be understood that Enoch would not have died physically for if we read further about the people of faith, of which Enoch is one, we see that they all died in faith.

Hebrews 11:13 (NKJV) "***These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.***"

So, Enoch died physically like the other believers and was moved in the same place with them. He saw decay, just like all humans, with no exception among humans throughout the history of the world. The only one who has not seen decay is the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who ascended into heaven in the sight of His disciples. And if anyone were to ask what happened to His physical body, the answer would be that we have no clarification in Scripture about this. The only statement we can make is that He was changed, glorified, to the Glory He had before the

foundation of the world (see John 17), when Christ was not incarnate.

As in the case of Elijah, neither Enoch could go to heaven (see John 3:13), because no one can go to heaven without the forgiveness received through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. For what reason would Enoch and Elijah be considered more faithful than the father of faith Abraham, who died physically like all other men? This is a question that would be hard to answer for supporters of the rapture of Enoch and Elijah.

Ezekiel's Rapture

Next, we will show what Ezekiel's raptures represent, without going into the details of the visions he has had. Recall that our ultimate goal is to answer the question at the beginning: what does Scripture teach about the rapture of the Church?

First, let's look at who Ezekiel is and the historical setting of the book.

Ezekiel 1:1-3 (NKJV) *"Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as **I was among the captives by the river Chebar**, that the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. On the fifth day of the month, which was in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity, the word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, **in the land of the Chaldeans by the River Chebar**; and the hand of the LORD was upon him there."*

This passage tells that Ezekiel was a priest and therefore of the tribe of Levi. In his prophecy are written several visions that he had while he was in the land of the Chaldeans, in the Babylonian bondage, during the time of King Jehoiachin.

The quotations we will show are in reference to several visions. Visions are not realities, but through them the Spirit of God makes known things that are to come. As a justification that visions are not realities, let us read the last part of verse 23 of Ezekiel chapter 12: "*The days are at hand, and **the fulfillment of every vision.***" So, what Ezekiel saw was going to be fulfilled in reality.

Another example which shows that visions are not reality is in the book of Daniel. He too was in the bondage of Babylon, and we are told of a dream in which he had "*visions of his head while on his bed*" (see Daniel 7:1 NKJV). So, the place where the visions manifested themselves was Daniel's mind and through them things that were to happen in reality were foretold.

In the case of the prophet Ezekiel, the quote shows how the Lord speaks to him through visions while he is physically by the river Chebar. All that the vision shows in the first chapter, is summarized in Ezekiel 1:28: "*[...] this was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD*". And although the phrase "caught me up" is not used in this quotation, in the book of Ezekiel it appears several times when the prophet has visions. The following verse shows this:

Ezekiel 8:3 (ESV) "*He put out the form of a hand and took me by a lock of my head, and **the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the gateway of the inner court that faces north, where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provokes to jealousy.***"

The Spirit takes Ezekiel and leads him to Jerusalem, where the visions are shown to him. The text tells us that he was brought "*in visions of God to Jerusalem*", so he is not physically taken to

Jerusalem, but in visions. The hand that grasps him, "*by a lock of my head*", is also part of the vision. All that he hears and all that he sees in the vision are things that describe the decay of Jerusalem. And unlike the case of Elijah's rapture, which was not a vision but a moving to another place on earth, in Ezekiel's case the rapture is in the Spirit giving him revelations in the form of a vision.

Ezekiel 11:1 (ESV) "***The Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the east gate of the house of the LORD, which faces east. And behold, at the entrance of the gateway there were twenty-five men. And I saw among them Jaazaniah the son of Azzur, and Pelatiah the son of Benaiah, princes of the people.***"

Ezekiel 11:24 (ESV) "***And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me in the vision by the Spirit of God into Chaldea, to the exiles. Then the vision that I had seen went up from me.***"

In the last two passages we see that the Spirit raptures Ezekiel in two other visions. The first rapture of the Spirit is at the east gate of the House of the Lord in Jerusalem, and the second rapture is back to the captives of war in Chaldea.

Ezekiel's discoveries, made by the Spirit in the form of visions, are not physical relocations of the prophet, but are revelations that the Spirit makes through visions.

Philip's rapture

Acts 8:39-40 (NKJV) *"Now when they came up out of the water, **the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.**"*

Philip is one of the seven deacons chosen by the Church in Jerusalem (it is not the disciple Philip). He was also an evangelist who preached the Gospel in Samaria after the persecution of the Christians in Jerusalem began. While he was in Samaria, the Lord speaks to Philip and sends him on his way down to Jerusalem to Gaza. On this road he meets the Ethiopian eunuch to whom he preaches the Gospel and baptizes him. The passage quoted shows exactly this moment after baptism when Philip becomes unseen, being caught away by the Spirit. Surprisingly, Philip is found at Azotus from where he leaves for Caesarea. The question that arises is: how did Philip disappear and then appear at Azotus? The answer is also in the passage quoted: *"the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away."*

In our understanding, as in Elijah's case, it is a physical removal of Philip from the Ethiopian eunuch to another place on earth (at Azotus). A similar case is when Jesus makes himself invisible to the two disciples he met on their way to Emmaus. Anything is possible with God. The laws of physical nature are made by Him, man is subject to them, but God is above them.

The Spirit of the Lord physically took Philip away from the eunuch and moved him to another place on earth. Any physical rapture is from a physical place to another place, also physical.

Paul's Rapture to Heaven

Moving on to answer the question of the rapture of the Church, we will seek to understand the nature of Paul's rapture as presented by the following passage:

2 Corinthians 12:1-5 (NKJV) *"It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. **I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: I know a man in Christ** who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one **was caught up to the third heaven**. And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—how **he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words**, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. **Of such a one I will boast**; yet of myself I will not boast, except in my infirmities."*

Based on the above quote, we can state the following:

- Paul speaks of visions in which he had revelations from the Lord,
- Paul speaks of himself as "*a man in Christ*", not in the flesh,
- The "Paul in Christ" was caught up to the third heaven,
- Paradise is in the third heaven,
- Heaven is a place where Paul, as a man in Christ, hears words that cannot be spoken to a human being,

- Paul boasts of the man in Christ,
- Paul does not boast about himself except about his weaknesses.

So, Paul was caught up in a vision, as we saw with Ezekiel. To make this very clear, he points out that **the man in Christ** was caught up, that is, the man born of the Spirit of God, not Paul in the physical body. And the remark we find written: "*whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows,*" refers to the body of man in Christ, not the physical body.

What kind of body does a man in Christ receive?

To answer this question, let's see what Paul also tells us in the following passage:

2 Corinthians 5:1 (NKJV) "***For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.***"

In the first part of the passage, Paul speaks to the Corinthians about man being made up of soul and physical body (like the first Adam), in the words, "*our earthly house, this tent.*" The soul of man, like the soul of the first Adam, dwells in the physical body. At some point, they are to be separated from each other by the death of the physical body. The unity of soul/spirit returns to the One who gave it (see Ecclesiastes 12:7), and the physical body returns to the earth from which it was taken.

In the second part of the passage it says, "*we have a building from God [...] in the heavens,*" a body that is from heaven, called by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:44, "***the spiritual body.***" This was the body that was to be given to Christians brought to life by the Holy Spirit at the Lord's second coming. This was to be fulfilled

in the resurrection of those who were already physically dead, or by the change/rapture of those who were not yet asleep, that is, who had not yet died physically. Thus, the spiritual body, the building from heaven, was a promise for the near future, but not yet fulfilled (when Paul writes) for the Christians of the early Church, brought to life by the Spirit.

After all these explanations, the answer to the above question, about the body, becomes obvious:

The Apostle Paul is referring to the spiritual body of glory, not the body of flesh.

What Paul did not know is whether he was clothed in this glorified body when he was caught up to heaven.

A physical rapture to the third heaven cannot even be considered, which Paul points out in the following verse:

1 Corinthians 15:50 (NKJV) "*Now this I say, brethren, that **flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God**; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.*"

Let's see how Scripture describes the heaven called: "*the third heaven*".

Revelation 21:1-3 (NKJV) "*Now **I saw a new heaven and a new earth**, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also, there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And **I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and***

He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God."

Revelation 22:1-2 (NKJV) "***And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.***"

From these quotes we note:

- in the new heaven there is only the tree of life (in Eden there was also the tree of the knowledge of good and evil),
- the victors are promised the right to eat from the tree of life, a right that ceased in Eden after the fall of the first Adam,
- the new heaven is one and the same as the third heaven, the heaven of the third world,
- God's throne is in the third heaven,
- the tree of life is on both sides of the river in which the water of life flows,
- the river comes out of the throne of God and the Lamb.

Now we can understand much better where Paul was taken. The most remarkable thing he notes from the vision in which he was caught up, as a man in Christ, is that he "***heard inexpressible***

words". Whose words? Surely, the words of the one who sits on the throne. Thus, according to Paul's revelation, the heaven of God is the place where the words of God are heard. Since in Scripture Christ is called "*the Word of God*", we can conclude that heaven is the place where the presence God and of Christ, the Word, dwells.

In the next passage Paul shows us God's dwelling place.

2 Corinthians 6:16 (NKJV) "[...] ***For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people."***

According to this teaching, God's dwelling place is the Church of the saved, of which the Corinthian believers were part of. This reality was not fully realized at the time Paul wrote these words. He was speaking of a reality that was to come in their lifetime, which is evidenced by the context of the passage above. He also states:

2 Corinthians 7:1 (ESV) "***Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.***"

"*I will dwell in them and walk among them [...]*", was a promise not yet fulfilled, since the Corinthian believers are urged to carry their sanctification "*to completeness*". When this "*completeness*" was reached, the promise of God's dwelling with his people would also be fulfilled. So, the place where Paul was raptured in his vision, was a reality that would be fully fulfilled in Paul's future at Christ's second coming. This was the long-awaited fulfillment for the early Church in the first century.

Paul's rapture into heaven was a foreshadowing of the rapture of the Church, which was to take place at Christ's Second Coming.

The so-called rapture of Enoch and Elijah is not a foreshadowing of the rapture of the Church, as some Christians still claim. The Scripture does not teach this. But Paul's rapture into heaven as a man in Christ, is truly a foreshadowing of the rapture of the early Church.

Before concluding this sub-chapter, we want to point out a few more things about third heaven, which are understood from the teaching of Scripture.

We saw that in heaven is the river with the water of life, which flows out of the throne, and the tree of life which is on its banks. Jesus teaches us that *"It is the **Spirit who gives life**, the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life"* (John 6:63 ESV). So, the river of life with the water of life is a river into which the words of eternal life "flow" coming forth from the Throne of God and giving life and fruit to the tree of life.

So, God gives eternal life through His Word.

Isaiah 55:11 (ESV) *"**so shall my word** be that goes out from my mouth; **it shall not return to me empty**, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."*

John 6:68 (ESV) *"Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? **You have the words of eternal life.**"*

Since the Law of the Lord represents God's words, if we replace "**Law**" with "**Word**" in the following passage, we see that it expresses the same truth.

Psalms 1:1-3 (ESV) "*Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; **but his delight is in the Law (Word) of the LORD, and on his Law (Word) he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.***"

With regard to the physical body, we use to say that man is what he eats. In the same way, man is spiritually affected for better or worse by the words or thoughts with which he feeds his soul. When we feed on the Word of God, understanding and believing it with all our heart, we will have an abundant life.

From Paul's rapture we learned that Paradise is in the third heaven, where God the Father and Christ the Son are present, where God's life-giving Words are heard.

The Rapture of the Church

So far, we have seen several examples of the rapture that Scripture shows us. They are useful for a correct understanding of the next passages that speak of the rapture of the Church.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (ESV) "*But **we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep**, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus,*

God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and **with the sound of the trumpet of God.** And **the dead in Christ will rise first.** Then **we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.**"

1 Corinthians 15:51-54 (ESV) "Behold! I tell you a mystery. **We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet.** For the trumpet will sound, and **the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.** For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and **this mortal body must put on immortality.** When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "**Death is swallowed up in victory.**"

The only passages in the New Testament that refer to the rapture of the Church are these two quoted above. The first passage uses the words "caught up" and the second uses the word "changed", referring to the same event. The following table highlights the similarity between these two passages.

1 Thessalonians 4	1 Corinthians 15
<i>those who are asleep</i>	<i>we shall not all sleep</i>
<i>with the sound of the trumpet of God</i>	<i>at the last trumpet</i>

<i>the dead in Christ will rise first</i>	<i>the dead will be raised imperishable</i>
<i>we who are alive, who are left, will be <u>caught up</u></i>	<i>We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be <u>changed</u></i>

So, in the Apostle Paul's understanding, rapture or change is the same thing. Therefore, the expression "*will be caught up [...] in the clouds*" cannot lead us to think of a flight to the clouds of physical heaven, as some believers teach. The word "*changed*", used by Paul as a synonym for "caught up", does not allow us to consider such a meaning. However, in order to explain as clearly as possible what can be meant by rapture, we will consider other helpful passages.

In the next passage Paul speaks of the transient glory of the Old Covenant, a covenant that had not yet passed away in the apostolic period, and then points to the hope of future glory through the Spirit's service under the New Covenant.

2 Corinthians 3:11-18 (NKJV) "***For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious. Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech—unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. But **their minds were blinded**. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But **we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are*****

being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."

So, the future glory that was to come by rapture/change and was to replace the transient glory of the Old Covenant only after its end, was still a hope for Christians in the early Church, which is shown from Paul's words, "*since we have such a hope [...]*". The Spirit of the Lord was progressively doing the work of changing the Christians of the first-century Church, "*into the same image (of Christ) from glory to glory*". Of course, this progressive change was not in the physical body, but in the spirit of the Christians (in their understanding and grasping of the spiritual reality to come), which makes it clear that the rapture or change at the end, would also be spiritual. This image of glory would be perfected only at the appearing of Christ, when the bringing of "*everlasting righteousness*" would take place (see Daniel 9:24). What was transitory for first-century Christians, that is, "*this mortal body*" (1 Corinthians 15:54 ESV), a spiritual mortal body not a physical one, which belonged to the Old Covenant creation, would come to an end in the apostolic period, when they were about to "*put on immortality*" as a creation of the New Covenant. This new creation came into full effect with the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in the first century (A.D. 70), thus also marking the end of the Old Covenant. Let us not misunderstand Paul's words - "*this mortal body*" - as referring to the physical body made of flesh and bones. The body to which Paul refers by this expression is the body that has been affected by sin. We have shown throughout this study that the death that comes through sin is the death of the soul, not of the physical body. The choosing of sin gives death and is an action of the mind of the old man, in the first Adam, driven by an earthly thinking. Although man tried during the Old Covenant period to justify himself before God by his own works, the result was failure. The

fallen self in sin is the "*body of sin*", which must be put to death every day through the crucifixion (with Christ) of the old man's mind. Jesus implicitly identifies the body of sin in the following words:

Matthew 5:28 (NKJV) "*But I say to you that **whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.***"

Thus, from His perspective, sin was committed without having taken place in the physical body. Then the body of sin is in the soul of the person that makes the choice, so the resurrection of the mortal body was also to take place by bringing life into the soul - "[...] *the salvation of your souls*" 1 Peter 1:9 - not in the physical body. The following passages also confirm this.

Romans 6:6 (NKJV) "*Knowing this, that **our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.***"

Romans 6:13 (NKJV) " *And **do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and **your members as instruments of righteousness to God.*****"

Romans 8:11 (NKJV) "*But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead **will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.***"

In Paul's understanding, sin only manifests itself through the physical body, made up of what he calls "*members*" seen as instruments of the body, as a result of the wrong choices made by the old man within. Therefore, he teaches Christians to crucify their old man (spiritual) with Christ, not their physical body!

The change, or rapture of first century Christians, was from the old man to the new man made in the image of Christ.

This change in spiritual status was to take place only at Christ's second appearance. Then the "*future glory*", which for them was a hope, would become an irreversible spiritual reality. This is why there were many in the early Church who fell from grace, because they returned to justification by the works of the Old Covenant law, a covenant that had not yet fully passed away until the end of the apostolic period. But all those who received the seal of the Spirit of Christ (the seal was the guarantee of salvation) were changed from the status they had before the end under the Old Covenant (already saved, but not yet), to the new status of saved, united with Christ forever, on the basis of the grace He brought at His second appearing: "[...] *set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*", 1 Peter 1:13 (ESV). After the victory of the Gospel, which was preached throughout the Old Covenant world (in the first century), and by which the Serpent's head was crushed, followed the casting of the Serpent into the lake of fire and brimstone. Thus, the Old Covenant dominion was wrested from the devil's hand and taken by God along with His Christ. Salvation was now complete. It became irreversible with its coming in fullness together with the change in the status of Christians. They, who had also lived under the Old Covenant, were raptured/changed, brought to a new status, in a new creation,

as part of the New Covenant. This was not possible before the kingdom was wrested from the devil.

We now quote the whole verse we mentioned earlier:

1 Peter 1:13 (NKJV) "*Therefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and **rest your hope fully upon the grace** that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*"

We note that Peter, like Paul, attributes this hope of grace at Christ's second coming, addressing to the Christians contemporary with him, (see 1 Peter 1:1). Neither the salvation nor the rapture or change that the New Testament teaches about, could have taken place without this GRACE brought by Christ at His second appearing. The new status, of "*caught up in the clouds*", that is, caught up in glory, is not based on works done under the law, but on the grace of Christ, brought only after He had subdued all things in heaven and on earth, at the end of apostolic generation. If this did not happen already, we are not saved yet.

The following passage expresses the same truth of the resurrection for those who were at that time in the Dwelling of the Dead (Sheol), and of the rapture/change for those who remained alive until the second appearing of Christ.

Romans 8:19-25 (NKJV) "*For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For **the creation** (the creation - of the first and second world) was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that **the whole creation** (being at that time in Sheol) **groans and labors with birth pangs** (birth = resurrection in the new creation) **together until now. Not***

only that (the creation), ***but we also*** (those alive then, in the 1st century) *who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, **eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our** (fallen spiritual) **body** (i.e. the rapture/change of Christians remained alive, not asleep - from the first century). For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance."*

The texts in brackets are added by us as a brief explanation. For those who wonder how the dead could have suffered the pains of childbirth, our answer considers the fact that the Gospel was proclaimed by Jesus to the souls of the dead of the first two worlds (see 1 Peter: 3:18-19; 4:6). Their resurrection, or "birth" into the New Creation was dependent on their response to the Gospel. We cannot explain in what way. How this could be done for the souls of the dead, we cannot explain, since Scripture gives us no further clarification. But we consider Paul and Peter worthy of all belief.

The rapture of the Church took place at the end of the apostolic period; it was spiritual in nature and consisted in the change of the Christians of the early Church, from the status of waiting for complete salvation to the status of raptured/changed, brought to Glory, from an old creation, of the Old Covenant, to a new creation, through the eternal grace of the New Covenant.

Referring to God's creation in Genesis 1, the rapture and resurrection of the dead occurs at the end of the sixth day, followed by His eternal rest on the seventh day of creation.

The Father created everything in six days. The Son made all things new at the end of the sixth day. The kingdom was brought in by Christ at His second (spiritual!!) coming, and it is a spiritual kingdom.

Rapture is a change of status that only affected Christians of the apostolic generation who have remained alive until Christ's return. For our generation, or any other future generation, we are saved, with the same complete salvation, in the moment we believe the Gospel of Christ.

WHAT DOES THE SCRIPTURE TEACH US ABOUT THE SHEOL?

Although we have already talked about the Sheol throughout this study, we would like to make some clarifications. To this end, we will quote several passages from which we can draw a sound conclusion about Scripture's teaching on the Dwelling of the Dead.

Psalm 89:48 (ESV) "***What man can live and never see death? Who can deliver his soul from the power of Sheol?***"

We see that every human being, without exception, had and still has to go through physical death. The death of the physical body is followed by its disintegration, which Scripture calls decay or putrefaction. As for the soul of the one who dies, the passage quoted tells us that it will end up in the Sheol. So, the Sheol is

shown as a place for the souls of the dead. The Sheol contained all the souls of the people of the first two worlds. Along the way, we mentioned that from the third world onwards things are different, since the change relates to the second coming (appearance) of Christ.

There are believers who mistakenly identify the Sheol with the grave of the physical body. They believe that the soul of man disappears with the cessation of the life of the physical body. The dead (whose existence would have ceased at physical death) would be brought to life at a future resurrection (according to their belief). In our view, this belief would imply that the soul of man is a product of the material brain, and therefore the breath of life from God (that living soul) would also be merely the breath of the body that disappears at its death. Such an understanding is proved wrong by the following passage:

Luke 16:22-24 (ESV) "*The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. **The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.** And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.'*"

The above words are spoken by the Lord Jesus and are found under the title "*The rich man and Lazarus*" (a title that does not exist in the original but was added to the Scripture). From the Lord's words it can be seen very clearly that during His life on earth the souls of the dead existed in the Sheol, so they did not disappear. The rich man was in a place of torment and unbelief in God's words, whereas Lazarus was in the same place as faithful Abraham, in the "place" of faith and trust in the Lord's words. The two places were separated by the abyss of a great

chasm that could not be crossed. Abraham's bosom was above, and the place of torment was below. These two places speak to us of two future destinies that were to be definitively established at the resurrection of the dead.

Although Jesus is describing a symbolic image, He is talking about a spiritual reality still existing at that time. If this were not the case, then we are forced to consider that Jesus would be telling a parable that has no reality behind it. We would have to consider that He is conveying a teaching that is based on fiction. Perhaps those who hold to the theory of the disappearance of the soul at physical death do not realize the implications of what they are saying. If the rich man's soul would have disappeared at physical death, then how come Jesus is talking about his torment? Also, Father Abraham is a well-known historical figure, not a fictional one.

Another passage that proves that the souls of dead people did not disappear with their physical death is the following:

1 Samuel 28:11 (ESV) *"Then the woman said, **"Whom shall I bring up for you?"** He said, **"Bring up Samuel for me."**"*

1 Samuel 28:15 (ESV) *"Then Samuel said to Saul, **"Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?"** Saul answered, **"I am in great distress, for the Philistines are warring against me, and God has turned away from me and answers me no more, either by prophets or by dreams. Therefore I have summoned you to tell me what I shall do."**"*

If we read the whole of chapter 28, we will better understand the context of the above quote. In short, King Saul, who had been rejected by the Lord while Samuel was still alive, was now at war with the Philistines. Terrified of the Philistines' camp, he asked the Lord what to do. Seeing that the Lord did not answer

him, even though he knew the Lord's command forbidding the calling of the dead (see Leviticus 20:27), he went to a woman who communicated with the dead, asking her to call Samuel who had died in the meantime. Then follows the dialogue between Saul and the spirit of Samuel. If the dead had not been in the Sheol, then to whom did Saul speak?

Proponents of the theory of the disappearance of the soul at physical death are people who say that the one who spoke to Saul was in fact an evil spirit, theory they cannot prove. The Lord forbids in Leviticus 20 verse 27 (NIV) the practice of necromancy: "*Men and women among you who act as mediums or who **consult the spirits of the dead** [...]*". So, according to these people's theory, the spirit of a dead person would be an evil spirit, not the spirit of a person who has physically died. In other words, we can deduce that in their view, God's command was, a prohibition against calling the unclean spirits, which God called the spirits of the dead. In our opinion, such a theory remains without any justification in Scripture. On the contrary, Scripture simply speaks of the spirits/souls of dead people who have come to the Dwelling of the Dead (Sheol).

What is notable in the dialogue between Saul and the spirit called by the woman, is that the spirit repeats the exact words that Samuel said to Saul when he was still alive. So, the supposed unclean spirit reminds Saul of what the Lord had actually said to him through Samuel during his lifetime. What's even more shocking is that it also tells him what was to happen on the next day, when the war with the Philistines would be lost and Saul and his sons would end up in the same place as him, the Place of the Dead. To the surprise of those who hold the theory of an evil spirit, Scripture says that Saul was "*[...] filled with fear because of the words of Samuel [...]*", not the words of an evil spirit. Even

more surprising is the fact that the events happened exactly as Samuel foretold them. In our opinion Scripture says otherwise than the proponents of the unclean spirit theory, since the Dwelling of the Dead was an existing reality in the first two worlds before the return of Christ.

Other passages proving that the Sheol existed are the following:

Psalms 49:15 (ESV) "***But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me.***"

Psalms 16:10 (ESV) "***For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.***"

The passage in Psalm 16 certainly refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. So, if the Sheol did not exist as a spiritual reality, then we could understand that the passage would say, "You will not let Me disappear" (during the three days that the Lord was in the grave). According to the theory in question, the spirit of Jesus Christ would have disappeared during the three days. But Peter teaches that He went, in the Spirit, to preach the Gospel to the dead in Sheol (see 1 Peter 3:18-20, 4:5-6). If the Sheol did not exist, then, where did the risen Christ go in the Spirit to preach the Gospel? In our understanding, He went to Sheol to proclaim the Gospel. The Scripture teaches that there is only one Name given to men that they might be saved, applicable to every world, every generation, every nation, and that is Jesus Christ. Therefore, it was necessary for the dead of the first two worlds to hear the message of Christ's victory at the approaching end of the second world, for judgment was to come (see 1 Peter 4:5-7).

In the next passage, we will see what Jacob says, lamenting for his son Joseph, whom he thought had died.

Genesis 37:35 (ESV) "*All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted and said, "No, **I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning.**" Thus, his father wept for him.*"

From Jacob's words, "*I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning*", we see that he understands the Sheol as a reality where he would go after death, and where he believed his son was. Jacob did not believe that Joseph's soul would disappear with his physical death. In the first two worlds all men, without exception, descended into the Place of the Dead, because all sinned and fell short of the glory of God (see Romans 3:23). For this reason, no one ascended to heaven during the first two worlds (see John 3:13). The only way man could, or can, get to heaven is through Jesus Christ. Therefore, prior to Christ's return there had to be this place of waiting until the enemy was destroyed forever. This was finished with Christ's spiritual return at the end of the apostolic generation.

After Christ's complete victory, the existence of the Sheol has no more justification to exist.

Another passage that proves the existence of the Sheol during the Old Testament period is the following:

1 Samuel 2:6 (ESV) "*The LORD kills and brings to life; He brings down to Sheol and raises up*" (passage from Song of Hannah).

In our understanding, in her song, Hannah who praises the Lord, is prophesying the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ in the apostolic generation. The passage quoted shows us that it is the Lord who sends the dead to the Sheol, and it is He who brings them out of

there by resurrection. So, in this case too, the Word of God proves that this place was a spiritual reality indwelt by the dead. We cannot say that Scripture gives the name "The Dwelling of the Dead" (Sheol) to a non-existent place and that it is in fact a representation of non-existence, as some believers claim. If this were so, then the passage in Revelation 20:14, where we are told that the Dwelling of the Dead (Hades) was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, would actually tell us that something was cast that never even existed! Scripture contains no such teachings which, in our opinion, would be downright ridiculous.

The same idea is also evident in the following verse:

Psalm 139:8 (ESV) "*If I ascend to heaven, you are there! **If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!***"

The passage shows us that God is omnipresent both in heaven and in the Sheol. If the Sheol did not exist as a spiritual place, would it not be understood that heaven does not exist either?

Let's look at two other passages:

Job 11:7-9 (ESV) "***Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the Almighty? It is **higher** than heaven—what can you do? **Deeper** than Sheol—what can you know? Its measure is **longer** than the earth and **broad**er than the sea.***"

Ephesians 3:17-19 (ESV) "*so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, **being rooted and grounded in love**, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints **what is the breadth and length and height and depth**, and **to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge**, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*"

In the following table we highlight the similarity of the quoted passages.

Job 11:7-9	EPHESIANS 3:17-19
<i>The deep things of God the limit of the Almighty</i>	<i>to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge</i>
<i>is higher than heaven</i>	<i>height</i>
<i>deeper than Sheol</i>	<i>depth</i>
<i>longer than the earth</i>	<i>length</i>
<i>broader than the sea</i>	<i>breadth</i>

If we follow the table line by line, we see that the perfect knowledge of the Almighty, taught in the book of Job, is revealed by Paul as the knowledge of the love of Christ. God's love in Christ is almighty and nothing can separate the Christian from it (see also Romans 8:38-39). In the other four lines we find the four "dimensions" of God's love.

The height is the dimension of love that ascends to heaven all the children of God that are in the other three dimensions, being ascended by grace.

Depth is the dimension of love that is deeper than Sheol to raise from death to life all the believers of the Lord who were in it.

The length is the dimension of love that encompassed the whole earth, that is, all His elect in God's spiritual Israel.

The breadth is the dimension of love that encompassed

the whole sea, that is, all His elect among the other nations.

The bringing to life (the ascension to heaven) of all these in the three dimensions (the Sheol/deep, the expanse of the earth/length and the sea/breadth) was accomplished by the love of God, made known through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ, and completed at Christ spiritual return at the end of the apostolic generation, when He was united with His Bride, the Church. The same love that brought people of all generations to life then, brings them to life now and in the future through faith in the Gospel. This is shown by Paul in the following passage:

Ephesians 2:6-8 (ESV) "*and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, **so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.** For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God.*"

The Sheol existed in the first two worlds and ceased to exist with the ending of the Old Covenant at the end of the apostolic period, after Christ returned spiritually in His Glory. The dead of the first two worlds who died in unbelief were judged, and those who died in faith received the reward of eternal life from Christ.

Since then, a new world has begun, a New Covenant world, in which Christ reigns for eternity. His Gospel is proclaimed from

generation to generation, so that everyone who believes may not perish but have eternal life. Therefore, in the world in which we live, whoever does not believe in the Gospel does not go after death to the Sheol, but to eternal perdition. And whoever believes has passed from death to eternal life through the resurrection in the spirit, a resurrection according to the nature in which Christ also rose (see 1 Peter 3:18).

WHAT DOES "*BEHOLD, I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW*" MEAN FOR US TODAY?

Our Lord Jesus brought from the Father's eternity a different reality, not that of "good" and "evil". He taught His disciples how to think spiritually, that is, how to receive into their thinking the heavenly, eternal perspective:

2 Corinthians 4:18 (NIV) *"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."*

Without this kind of thinking we cannot live in a world corrupted by sin and yet have an abundant life. Jesus said that we Christians are in the world but not "*of the world*" (see John 17:16). Thus, our thinking no longer belongs to the earthly (the system of thinking inherited through Adam from the tree of death that divides everything into good and evil) but belongs to the heavenly - the abundant life that comes from choosing to base our every thought on the Father's undeserved, limitless and unfailing love for us, His children.

This eternal love revealed to us in Christ is in fact the reality of all things renewed by Him.

What does this mean? What does it mean for our everyday lives to unfold in this reality, while we live on earth in the midst of daily events and hardships?

We believe this means enjoying in all circumstances the rest that comes from knowing that we are loved, we are treasured, we

are the light of God's eyes and the delight of God's heart, we are united with Him, and nothing and no one can ever separate us from the love of God that is in Christ our Lord (Romans 8:38-39).

If you remember, we discussed at the beginning of this book about the two trees in the Garden of Eden: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (or the tree of death) and the tree of life (or the tree of the knowledge/awareness of His love). The two trees represent two systems of thought.

Let's see what characterizes the thinking defined by each tree:

THE TREE OF DEATH

Those who feed from this tree, like Adam and Eve:

- believe they are separated from God;
- are aware of their self, a self-life separated from God's resources, a self-life eager to see with physical eyes the fulfillment of all its desires, a self-life righteous by its own deeds, a self that believes that by its own wisdom it can determine what is right and what is wrong;
- believe the lies of the wicked one and have a false image of the living and true God;
- listen to the inner voice of the self, the voice that whispers continually that they could be like God, that they are and should be in control;
- live in the natural and not in the spiritual;
- consider their identity to be their ego, their self. They are on their own and have to take care of themselves, because they have to ensure the victory of good (which they are interested in)

over evil (which they do not want), both evaluated according to their mind, as the first men did in Eden;

- do not dispute God's existence, but believe that He is not good, does not care about them and does not love them;
- believe that they are right and have the ability to evaluate and even correct God;
- live a hell, an inner death, a disease that kills their soul;
- adopt a system of thought that enslaves them, oppresses them, torments them, and makes them experience the most vivid death and the deadliest life;
- choose to become one with the oppression, fear, doubt, curse and death that spring from the lying words spoken at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

THE TREE OF LIFE

Our access to the tree of life is only through Christ. The crucifixion of our sinful nature comes when in our thoughts and our hearts we know that the love of God is beyond good and evil and greater than our weaknesses and sinfulness.

He who feeds on the tree of life:

- adopts the spiritual, heavenly, victorious and truthful system of thought;
- knows through faith life in abundance because he is moved, from now and from here, into the spiritual dimension where there are no more tears, pain, struggles, tribulation, delusion, doubt, fear, helplessness, needs, because all these are not allowed to enter there;

- does not seek the benefit of his self;
- doesn't consider that what comes in everyday life is an accident;
- does not see self-suffering as something that comes from the Devil;
- does not rebel;
- does not believe that, as a child of the Highest, he encounters anything but his Father's unfailing love;
- does not allow himself to be led by fears, doubts, lies;
- treats every moment as a gift from God no matter what the life situation looks like;
- does not consider itself separate from God;
- no longer believes in two powers fighting each other, but only in the almightiness of God;
- trusts in God's goodness and love like you trust a dear friend;
- no longer fights the devil because the devil is already defeated by Christ;
- looks in every situation at things unseen, at God's perfect plan, at His boundless love;

Let's take a simple example to analyze and learn how we can have a spiritual mindset. Consider the situation of a man who loses his job. What are some of the possible thoughts of this man, at each of the two trees?

THE TREE OF DEATH (the "good-evil" thinking system):

"I lost my job. That means I won't have anything to eat, what to wear, where to live (fear, worry, depression and the whole range of negative feelings and thoughts are all over his soul). God could have prevented this, but He didn't. He abandoned me. He doesn't love me. He shouldn't have done that if He loves me."

THE TREE OF LIFE (the "rest in God's love" thinking system):

"I lost my job. My father knows what I need. I trust in His goodness, His care, His wisdom, His perfect plan for my life. I am His beloved child. I have nothing to fear. My Father will take care of everything. I look by faith at what is unseen. I don't know the future, but my God, my Shepherd, my Friend, my Father, the Lover of my heart, He knows it because He planned it out of love for me. I am safe in His fatherly arms!"

At the beginning of creation we find the two trees, the two systems of thought, from which man had to choose. At the end of creation, where all things are made new, only the tree of life appears.

THE KINGDOM OF THINGS MADE NEW IS ALSO OUR KINGDOM

Our Lord finds joy in being with us permanently, in being one with our spirit, with our conscience (see Isaiah 65:19; Ezekiel 34:15). His desire is for us to know how much He loves us. This knowledge causes us to become like Him (1 John 3:2). Spiritual oneness with Him thus guides our every thought and action.

The essence of all things renewed lies in the fact that everything that exists in the life of a child of God is transported, moves, has even already been moved to the tree of life, to the reality where the eternal love of the Son of God alone reigns. When Jesus walking the earth from place to place, preached the Gospel, this was His message: The Kingdom has come! That is, everything

passes from the hands of a thief and liar who spread death, into the pierced hands of the Lamb of God who gave His life to pay the price of our redemption. From the hands of the father of lies it passed into the almighty hands of the Creator of new things. The old things are gone. Behold, all things have been made new by the love of Christ. So, when something unpleasant happens to us and we suffer, it is not the happening or the suffering that is the reality of our kingdom, but His love that has a plan with all that comes into our lives, (whether it seems good or evil).

The good or bad we go through no longer impresses us or shakes us. God's good plan, His good and perfect will are relevant. The end that is known by God beforehand has relevance. Good and evil are transformed into LIFE in His presence. Without faith in His goodness, good and evil are great suffering to the flesh, to the self-life. We are no longer our earthly nature. We have a different identity. We are His sons and daughters, born not of the flesh, nor of the will of any man, but of God (see John 1:12-13). Inner suffering is caused by choosing not to live with this awareness. Adam and Eve chose this, and like them we have all chosen this for a long time.

HOW TO COME TO HIM - ALL OF US WHO LABOR AND ARE BURDENED - AND HOW TO RECEIVE HIS REST?

To think in terms of the New Covenant, new creation, renewed things, His kingdom that came with power, is to be constantly aware of His presence and reign in whatever circumstance we are.

This is rest: to marvel at the beauty of God's plan when you see with the eyes of faith how great He has ordained everything in your life. Rest means that there is nothing between you and Him

(no thought) to cloud, to sully the image of God as your perfect Father. Rest comes to your soul when you find delight in His heart. Good and evil vanish from your thoughts. Only trust in Him remains. His beauty, goodness and love are overwhelming. They make you "collapse" with happiness. Rest is trusting and being sure that He can never leave you because you are of Him. You are a new being. You are one with the Lord. You are forever with Him in the Holy of Holies. We are "*bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh*" in a spiritual sense. We are inseparably united with Him.

Your burdened soul is given rest the moment you believe that God has created the heavens and the earth into a new spiritual world - the kingdom of love - where there are no tears, no grief, no inner pressure because the former things (where all of this SEEMED to be reality) are gone, dissolved like vapor.

"*Behold, I make all things new*" becomes a reality in that our thinking is transformed into an entirely heavenly thinking, because thoughts are now made of another substance. We are henceforth one with Him. Death no longer exists for our heart in which His life abounds. Our soul thus becomes the breath of life which is clothed with our spirit. And our spirit is the gift of His love and presence placed in us as a new creation. We are never again alone. We are in the Lord and the Lord is in us forever.

Jesus' prayer as recorded in John 17 was answered. From then on, wherever we walk we are a light, a beacon, a shining of God's love revealed by Christ. We are the city that descends from glory spreading an eternal heavenly light in a world haunted by the death of its ignorance. We are on the mountain of His inheritance. We are His spiritual temple in which He reigns. Christ is our eternal Sun, is the light of His beloved city - the New

Jerusalem; He is the glory of a new Creation that will never end. Invincible!

When you see with the eyes of faith the inheritance of the sons in glory and realize that all this is your inheritance and the inheritance of those who choose to witness these wonders, you cannot but worship Him, weep tears of uncontrollable happiness, live in continuous adoration. All things have been renewed. The evil one certainly wanted to harm us, but God has changed that evil into a glory that can only be approached with a spiritual body: the body born of the love and unity of the Father, His Son and the Holy Spirit (see John 1:13). Christ - the Word - became flesh and dwelled among us full of grace and truth and has given us the life of His Spirit. He gave us a body of His love and moved us into another, spiritual building: the creation of all things new.

This has always been God's intention. We were created to be loved and to love and we are blessed to have His name. He has placed His name upon us, the name above every name. His face now shines upon us. And this light and blessing has given us the grace and the right to use the same life-giving words for you who read these thoughts. We pray to the Father that you may be blessed with the knowledge of His love! Be blessed with the true rest that banishes all religious striving devoid of His life! Be blessed with the Light of Truth that allows no more manipulation from those who preach shackling your soul with rules and distorted understandings of the Scriptures. Be blessed with the revelation of God's **finished** work in all of His Creation from Genesis to Revelation! Open your souls to the Lord, rejoice in Him, again we say:

Rejoice!

CONCLUSIONS

In the first part of this study, we saw that God's creation in Genesis chapter 1 includes not only the beginning of everything God made, but also the end of all these things. In our understanding, to see creation from man's perspective only as God's work, begun and completed in Genesis 1, with an emphasis on physical creation, is a big mistake. God who is Spirit, having neither beginning nor end, the Existence itself, is the Creator of all that is seen and all that is unseen. Since He is outside of time, if we try to see creation from His perspective, we understand that for Him things are not created sequentially, one after the other. For God there is neither past nor future, but only the continuous present. Jesus shows us this when He speaks of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who died many centuries before He spoke the following words: *"For He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for **all live to Him**"* (Luke 20:38 NKJV). Such a concept is hard for us to grasp, because we are transient, like a *"vapor that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away"* (James 4:14 NKJV). And though we are so limited compared to God, the Word of Scripture reveals to us that He has placed within us something we are longing for. Here's the passage to which we refer:

Ecclesiastes 3:11 (ESV) *"He has made everything beautiful in its time. **He has also set eternity in the hearts of men, yet they cannot fathom the work that God has done from beginning to end.**"*

This desire of man to be eternal, like God, was also placed in the heart of the first man - Adam, but the Serpent deceived him into believing that he could be like God by the powers of his own self.

The salvation history that the Scriptures show proves that transient man cannot by himself be like God. The Scripture teaches that only what is made by the hand of the Creator endures forever. The passage below shows us this truth:

Ecclesiastes 3:14 (ESV) "*I perceived that **whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it [...].***"

Although we cannot grasp eternity with our limited thinking, the thought of it exists in us, because the desire to be eternal, like God, has been placed in our hearts. God's creation is complete when this thought of living for eternity, placed in man's heart becomes a fulfilled reality. This is accomplished with the renewal of all things.

Revelation 21:5 (ESV) "*And the One seated on the throne said, **“Behold, I make all things new.”***"

From man's perspective, framed in time and space, God's creation unfolds in time throughout the salvation history revealed in the Scriptures. The Scriptures, in fact, are the history of creation centered in Christ and His Church of which He is the Head; that is, the New Man made up of a male and female part, in the spiritual sense. The history of creation begins in the book of Genesis with the words: "*This is **the history** of the heavens and the earth when they were created*" (Genesis 2:4 NKJV) and ends in the book of Revelation when "*the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished*" (from Genesis 2:1 NKJV), after the appearance of the New Heaven and the New Earth (see Revelation 21:1). Only at the end does the creation of Man in the image of Christ become reality. From then on, he has the image of God, he has eternal life which he received as a gift and is joyful in His presence. In our understanding, this spiritual reality came

at the end of the apostolic period, a truth which we believe cannot be disputed, as we believe we have amply proved throughout this writing.

Creation understood as beginning in Genesis 1:1 and ending at the end of the book of Revelation, shatters a lot of myths and apocalyptic beliefs about the passing and changing of the material universe to another. We have shown along the way that the Scripture teaches no such thing. People have discovered how large and unbounded the material universe is, in which everything is in constant motion and change. Its dimensions cannot be determined, no one has found its edges. The boundlessness of the material, seen creation shows how great the Unseen One is, who created all things in the seen and unseen world. In the infinity of the physical universe, we should see, as an example, the eternity of God as Spirit. The Scripture teaches us that He is unbounded in His grace, in His goodness shown in Christ Jesus to all the saved (see Ephesians 2:7). In the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Boundless One, limited Himself for a little while so that we might know His immeasurable love and thus become unbounded in love with Him. Thus, ends all creation on the sixth day, with everything that, "*it was very good*" (Genesis 1:31). All things were made new by Jesus Christ, renewed by His unfailing love through which the endless rest of eternity was brought forth from the seventh day of creation. The six days have passed away so that only the seventh day with the rest of God's presence remains for eternity. From generation to generation, people limited by the ignorance of God's love are brought to eternal life, resurrected and made one with the Unlimited One, through faith in the good news of the Gospel which makes known His love in Christ Jesus. This is the good news of the Gospel: that God has already established the kingdom of his love and calls us to live fearlessly, from here and

now, in his new creation in which all things have been made new. How wonderful is this truth of the gift of eternal life, given through knowing Him, as shown in the following passage!

John 17:3 (NKJV) "*And **this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.***"

This knowledge of God is revealed by the good news of the Gospel, which Scripture says is eternal. If the Gospel is everlasting, it means that it is proclaimed forever, and then generations of people must also be perpetuated forever, since the Gospel is for people. It is perhaps difficult to accept such an understanding, because we have become accustomed to the teachings received in the family, in the Church, in certain books, etc. According to them, everything must end sometime, time must disappear, and everything must end with the fulfilment of the prophecy in the book of Revelation. But it is precisely the book of Revelation that teaches us that the Gospel is eternal, thus:

Revelation 14:6 (NKJV) "*Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having **the everlasting gospel** to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.*"

In our understanding the Gospel is proclaimed forever in the eternity of the seventh day of creation, in which the gates of the city remain open forever, so that all who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life (see Revelation 21:22-27) may enter through faith in the Gospel, to all generations of men forever and ever.

Ephesians 3:20-21 (NKJV) "*Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, **to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.***"

So, the eternal perpetuation of generations is confirmed by Paul. KJV translation even says: *“world without end”*.

This is also taught by Moses in Genesis 17:7 (NKJV): *"And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you **in their generations, for an everlasting covenant**, to be God to you and your descendants after you."*

This truth taught by the Scripture is not to be contested with arguments based on conclusions or teachings outside of the Scripture. For example, one could say that the world could be completely destroyed with nuclear weapons held by the great powers, so that generations would cease to exist. This seems even more plausible now when we hear such threats in the context of the war between Russia and Ukraine. But let us not forget that when God destroyed everything in the flood, He saved Noah's family and promised that He would never again destroy all living things on the earth. God is above all, and nothing can oppose His will. Even though men, in their wickedness, may mass murder entire populations, yet generations will not perish from the earth, for God has guaranteed this. All things are held by Him, and even if we cannot explain or comprehend them with our minds, yet we must never question His Word.

In the second part of this study, we have answered questions that many Christians still have about difficult topics. The paradigm shift due to the expanded view of creation that begins in Genesis and ends in Revelation, was decisive for the answers we gave. The spiritual nature of the fulfilment of God's promise requires us to change our minds and stop believing all sorts of myths that Scripture does not teach. An important aspect of our repentance must be precisely the acceptance and replacement of our wrong beliefs with right beliefs, proven from the teaching

of the Scripture. We have tried to prove by the Scripture the things stated in this study and hope we have succeeded.

If we continue to live a Christianity perverted in many ways by the diversity of "*the thoughts of men*" (Matthew 16:23) through all kinds of traditions and customs, through rituals or other lifeless practices, and through teachings that contradict each other from one Christian denomination to another, then we may be guilty of being more loyal to men than to God. We must seek to fully understand God's Word without following unscriptural teachings in a herd spirit. Therefore, every Christian must seek God with all his heart in the truth of His Word written in the Scriptures, in which we find no contradiction; of course, this truth must be seen in a spiritual sense.

Our hope is that we have shown clearly enough God's plan with man between the two books: Genesis and Revelation. Thus, we believe that any Christian who has read this study with great care and interest, comparing it with the Scripture at his side, has been able to come to a clearer understanding of the Scriptures as a whole. The details are many and we cannot explain all of them in a writing such as this one. It remains that they be part of our study throughout our lives.

The bread of God's Word is our daily spiritual food, so that through the Word we may become more mature in Christ. Then, as mature people in Christ, we contribute to the "birth" of new children of God, who receive His image as a gift, being born of the Spirit through His Word. The children must then be raised to become mature people in Christ in order to continue to give "birth" and raise children of God. This is perpetuated in Christ's Church from generation to generation, for ever and ever (see Genesis 17:7, Psalm 45:16-17, Ephesians 3:21). This is God's call for every generation of Christians. Having been saved by the

good news of the Gospel, we in turn carry forward this message for the salvation of those who listen and obey its Truth.

Each generation of people ends its life's journey in the seen world, where physical birth and death are continually perpetuated. Through physical death we leave forever the seen world in which we have been for a short time. What follows is the eternity in the presence of God for all the saved, or eternal perdition for all the unsaved, far away from the face of God. Each of us is responsible for the choice we make when we are called to eternal life by the Word of the Gospel. May God grant, that all who hear the call of the Gospel, understand it and respond to it with great joy! Through the Gospel we are shown the path of life of which the psalmist speaks:

Psalm 16:11 (NKJV) "*You will show me the path of life; **In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.***"

The joy and pleasures in the presence of HIS FACE cannot be expressed in human words. We have seen that even the Apostle Paul could not describe the words he heard in Paradise in the third heaven. His eternal presence, His relationship of friendship and love with us, is our very great reward that God promised to our father Abraham. Therefore,

"To Him be the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus, throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."
(Ephesians 3:21 ESV)