

# Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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## 26th Theological Conference

May 18-21, 2017

Calvin Center, Hampton, GA

Do please consider joining a unique group of One God, Messiah and Kingdom believers for those 4 days! You and your story, if you choose, will be an encouraging blessing to others who are emerging from various backgrounds. Our belief is that teaching the truths of the Bible is life-energizing!

**Conference rates per person**—inc. 3 nights, 9 meals

	Single	Double (per person)
<b>Hotel-style room</b> (2 beds with private bath, sheets/towels)	\$415	\$260
<b>Bunkbed room</b> (6 per room with bath) <i>We can assign roommates</i>	\$185 per person +\$15 for sheets and towels or bring your own	

Please note that there are **only 24 hotel-style rooms available**, so please register early. First come, first served! There are also hotels 15 minutes away by car (see list at [theologicalconference.org](http://theologicalconference.org)). If not staying at Calvin Center, the conference price including meals (except breakfasts) is **\$85 per person** (commuter).

Three ways to register:

1. Online at [theologicalconference.org](http://theologicalconference.org)
2. Mail the form on the back page
3. Call Atlanta Bible College at 800-347-4261

**Registration deadline: April 21, 2017**

### Airport Transportation

We will provide transportation between Atlanta airport and Calvin Center for \$25 round-trip or \$15 one-way, at the following times:

Airport to Calvin Center		
Thurs. May 18	2:00 pm	4:00 pm
Calvin Center to Airport		
Sun. May 21	1:00 pm	

Please arrange your arrival time on Thursday early enough to catch one of the two shuttle runs. On Sunday, May 21 we will provide **only 1** shuttle run. In order to allow you enough time to catch your return flight, we suggest you not book your return flight prior to 3:30 pm.

The conference begins with registration at 4 pm on Thursday and ends with lunch on Sunday. Driving directions to Calvin Center are at [calvincenter.org](http://calvincenter.org). The address is 13550 Woolsey Rd., Hampton, GA 30228.

## Baptism: Basic Terminology

by Kenneth LaPrade, Texas

The primary definition for **baptism** in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1971 edition) reads: “The action or ceremony of baptizing; immersion of a person in water, or application of water by pouring or sprinkling, as a religious rite, symbolical of moral or spiritual purification or regeneration, and, as a Christian ordinance, betokening initiation into the Church.”

The **secondary** meaning of baptism has to do with various figurative uses of the term. Similarly, **baptize** primarily is defined in OED as:

“To immerse in water, or pour or sprinkle water upon, as a means of ceremonial purification, or in token of initiation into a religious society, especially into the Christian Church; to christen.”

**Secondarily**, “baptize” is used **figuratively**, “in various shades of meaning.” This secondary usage includes the concept of being “baptized in holy spirit” which is something specifically mentioned in six passages in the Bible.

This information is quite harmonious with the basic Greek terms used in the New Testament:

“*Baptisma*, baptism [noun], consisting of the processes of immersion, submersion, and emergence (from *bapto*, to dip) is used (a) of John’s baptism, (b) of Christian baptism...(c) of the overwhelming judgments and afflictions to which the Lord voluntarily submitted on the Cross, e.g., Luke 12: 50; (d) of the sufferings His followers would experience, not of a vicarious nature, but in fellowship with the sufferings of their Master... Mark 10: 38, 39...*Baptizo*, to baptize [verb], a form of *bapto*, to dip, was used among the Greeks to signify the dyeing of a garment, or the drawing of water by dipping a vessel into another, etc.,... it is used...of washing oneself (as in 2 Kings 5:14, ‘dippeth himself,’ Sept.) [This is the record about Naaman.]...the rite performed by John the Baptist.... Distinct from this is the baptism commanded by Christ, Mt. 28:19, a baptism to be undergone by believers, thus witnessing to their identification with Him in death, burial, and resurrection...In Acts 22:16 it is used...in the command given to Saul of Tarsus, ‘arise and be baptized’...Likewise the nation of Israel was figuratively baptized when made to pass through the Red Sea under the cloud, 1 Cor. 10:2.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, p. 96-97.

This source goes on to list “baptize” in “holy spirit” (“which took place on the Day of Pentecost”) and “baptize” with “fire” as “**metaphorical**” uses of the verb.

*Bapto* means “to dip in or under,” “to bathe,” “wash.” *Baptizo* means “to baptize.” “Christian baptism is practiced from the very first (Acts 2:38ff)...It plainly rests on a command of the risen Lord irrespective of critical objections to Mt. 28:19, 20.”<sup>2</sup>

“Secondary” or figurative uses of “baptize” and “baptism” are clearly **marked** by language clues in a few Scriptural contexts. For example, John’s mission of baptizing with water is contrasted with Jesus’ upcoming activity of “baptizing” people with **holy spirit**. Even in his ministry on earth, Jesus was known as the one baptizing in spirit (John 1:33; Matt: 3:11). Jesus’ words imparted spirit (John 6:63). The six passages that connect “baptize” to “holy spirit” are Matthew 3:11-12; Mark 1:7-8; Luke 3:16-17; John 1:26, 27, 30-34; Acts 1:5; and Acts 11:15-16. Two of these references (in Matthew and Luke) add another striking image: the figurative picture of **baptizing** people “with fire”! There is an obvious **metaphorical** usage in these prophetic utterances (by John the Baptist) to emphasize the exalted Messiah’s role in future judgment. All six of these Scriptural passages **figuratively** portray the Messiah as a greater **baptizer** than John (firstly, by his involvement in “pouring forth” holy spirit on the day of Pentecost, and secondly, by his active role in future judgment.) The beauty of this **metaphorical** exaltation of Jesus is clearly emphasized. Nevertheless, there is **no** biblical hint here at the concept that one “mode” of baptism (spirit) had somehow replaced a former, and now outdated “mode” of baptism (namely, water). Many relevant passages show that such a recently devised **replacement** scenario (involving two conflicting “modes” of baptism) is an idea rooted in some extremely faulty and divisive assumptions.

In addition to the above considerations about “holy spirit” and “fire” in conjunction with “baptizing” vocabulary, the words “baptism” and “baptize” are used metaphorically in the Bible to denote an anticipated, upcoming suffering. Mark 10:38-40 and Luke 12:50 exemplify this figurative emphasis. Israel’s passing through the Red Sea is figuratively referred to with the word “baptize” in 1 Corinthians 10:2. In all of these aforementioned non-literal uses of “baptize” or “baptism,” there are clear contextual details to clarify that literal dipping in water is not indicated.

In no way do the existence of these few metaphorical uses of “baptize” or “baptism” negate the primary, **literal** use of the basic terms in even more Biblical contexts! Not

only did John baptize with water as a symbolic, “cleansing” action to indicate a commitment to repent (from the heart), but Peter, Philip, and Paul also did so constantly throughout the period of the book of Acts: **Peter** in Acts 2:38-41 and 10:47-48; **Philip** in Acts 8:12, 13, 35-39; and **Paul** in Acts 16:14, 15, 29-33; 1 Cor. 1:13-17. John’s baptism, early in the Gospel narratives, was with a view to the coming Messiah, who was yet to be made manifest. The later persevering practice of baptism (with water) in Acts was with regard to Jesus’ already completed accomplishments as the Messiah. Jesus himself was baptized in water, and baptized his disciples in water (Matt. 3:13; John 3:22, 26; 4:1-2).

Though the books of Acts and Galatians (along with other Scriptures) offer a clear, forceful reproof of the continued practice of “works of the law,” **not once** is the continuance of baptism (with water) targeted as an outdated or replaced practice. Though specifically “outdated” “works of the law” **are** listed in detail, such as insistence on circumcision, Levitical food laws, mandatory calendar observances, and the system of animal sacrifices, **not once** is **literal** baptism discouraged, as if it were part of the old covenant standards that were being replaced. Not once! Though imposing “old covenant” standards on Christians is strongly reprimanded in the Bible, not once is there a biblical rebuke from Paul (or anyone) for baptizing Gentiles who were converting to faith in Christ! Furthermore, there is no Scriptural evidence for a dispute, disagreement, or debate about this issue in the first century. Baptism is never regarded biblically as a skewed attempt to “earn one’s salvation by works” or as a presumptuous badge of “once saved, always saved” posturing.

Also, since the primary, literal significance of baptism indicates dunking people in water (in Greek and English), there is no reason to doubt its literal meaning in dozens of passages, including Jesus’ command in Matthew 28:19-20 (“baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and holy spirit”). Peter, Philip, Paul, and others obviously took this command **literally**. Many years later, Peter still understood the concept **literally**: “baptism now saves you — not the removal of dirt from the flesh” in its symbolic importance as “an appeal to God for a good conscience — through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 3:21). Failure to be baptized signifies a failure to gain a saving good conscience before God.

Those men who heard Jesus’ command did not **spiritualize** the term to make it mean “to immerse” vaguely into “whatever.” There is not one Scriptural indicator that these men were mistaken when they persistently obeyed Jesus’ command to baptize those who were becoming disciples. There is **no** Scriptural reason

<sup>2</sup> *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, abridged in one volume by Geoffrey W. Bromily, p. 92, 93.

not to take baptism literally in Romans 6:3-4 and Colossians 2:12. Literal, physical baptism, a symbolic action to accompany a penitent heart, **enhances** the picture of our identification with Christ (in death, burial and resurrection); **it does not detract from it!** It is not up to modern readers to “spiritualize” or change simple, literal word meanings to squeeze in a nebulous theology, dismissive of physical baptism. When **no** context clues in Scriptures point to figurative “immersing” into the Red Sea, suffering, holy spirit, or a future judgment of fire, basic rules of language demand a **literal** understanding of baptism (i.e., dunking in water).

On top of all this, there is **not one** Scriptural instance in which literal baptism (in Acts or anywhere else) is portrayed as being incongruent with believers receiving holy spirit. No pattern is ever developed to suggest that a new “mode” of baptism is in conflict with an outdated, anti-spiritual “mode.” No Scriptures even remotely hint that the outpouring of holy spirit on Pentecost relegates **literal** baptism (immersion in water) to an irrelevant practice. The old covenant involved obeying certain commands to do physical things in hundreds of details (such as the tabernacle, priests’ clothes, sacrifices, the temple, etc.) to symbolize spiritual realities. Is it really outrageously surprising that the same God (YHWH) would ask that obedient response to the new covenant include a couple of physical, symbolic actions, like baptism and communion? Both actions honor Christ’s accomplishments. And salvation is given to those who obey Jesus (Heb. 5:9).

I am writing this article as someone who adamantly rejected literal baptism for more than 42 years, even though I was a professing Christian. Though working a 35-year career as a teacher of grammar (among children and adolescents), I had simply misunderstood the application of some basic definitions and rules of language. Almost two years ago I realized that I should address my reluctance to change. I now have no regrets about humbling myself as a child to God with a very simple, physical (and richly symbolic) response. Though I had struggled with a time of hesitancy, mostly rooted in pride, I praise God that I’m currently not ashamed to confess that I was severely mistaken on this topic for more than four decades. For almost two years now, I’ve had the joy of helping some others to overcome the same errors. How merciful is Yahweh! ✧

Pastor Brian K. Wright has relocated to Kentucky and is available for in-home visits and Bible studies anywhere in the state.

Interested persons may contact Brian at (404) 909-6009 (cell); (502) 286-6131 (home); or by email at [brianwright@bardstowncable.net](mailto:brianwright@bardstowncable.net)

## The Old Testament Shadows of the New

Excerpt from *The Law, the Sabbath and New Covenant Christianity* by Anthony Buzzard

Speaking of Old Testament events in the life of Israel, Paul says that “these things were *types* for us” (1 Cor. 10:6). “These things happened to them ‘typically’ and they were written for our instruction” (1 Cor. 10:11). We have no difficulty seeing that the Israelites’ “baptism” in the cloud and the Red Sea (1 Cor. 10:2) was a “type” replaced by Christian baptism in water and spirit. Similarly their obligation to rest on the seventh day typified our rest in Christ (Col. 2:16-17). The seventh-day Sabbath was a shadow of an ongoing Christian rest. The writer to the Hebrews passes over the weekly Sabbath observed by Israel and sees the seventh-day rest of God at creation as a “type” or shadow of our “rest” from sin now and our final rest in the coming Kingdom. That “sabbatism” (not Sabbath day) remains for the people of God (Heb. 4:9). The Old Testament Sabbath day has passed away as a shadow of better things now come (Col. 2:16-17), since Christ has come. The true light of the Genesis creation is found in the face of Jesus Christ who represents the New Creation: “For God who said, ‘Light shall shine out of darkness’ [Gen. 1:3] is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6). In 2 Corinthians 3 Sinai is superseded by the glory of Jesus.

For long-standing Sabbath-keepers a necessary “paradigm shift” will involve some serious study and meditation on the theme of the shadow and body contrast of Colossians 2:16-17 and Hebrews 10:1, freedom from the law of Moses, the “fulfillment” of the law introduced by Jesus, and the “spiritualizing” of Old Testament shadows taught by Paul as Jesus’ agent to the churches. Colossians 2:16-17 should be read prayerfully and with full attention to each word, and no attempt should be made to avoid what Paul says: The Sabbath and holy days and new moons are a shadow. All three are a single shadow. As such they are hardly a matter of life and death to believers. If insisted on, they re-erect the barrier between Jew and Gentile which Jesus has abolished (Eph. 2:14-15).

Jesus, speaking to fellow countrymen before his death which inaugurated the New Covenant, can still refer to some of the ten commandments (the fourth is never cited) as a beginning point for faith, though it must be remembered that to his inner circle of disciples he goes beyond the letter of the law of the ten commandments (Matt. 5-7). Jesus also told some to offer sacrifices according to the law of Moses (Mark 1:44), but no one now would feel bound to follow that instruction. When

Jesus told the Pharisees to tithe on separate herbs, he was speaking to men still under the law (Matt. 23:23). To the Christians he spoke through his Apostles, declaring that the whole Sabbatical system (of which one part, the weekly Sabbath, appeared in the ten commandments) was a “sketch,” outline or shadow of the present reality of Christ (Col. 2:16-17; Eph. 2:15).

It was at the cross that this New Covenant was inaugurated. At that time, all of the New Covenant words of Jesus, given as Matthew arranges them in five blocks of teaching (reminiscent of the OT law), were ratified. Just as Moses had given the words of the Old Covenant and then solemnized the covenant with blood (Ex. 24), so Jesus follows this pattern for the New Covenant.

Until the time of the cross Jesus’ followers continued to observe the Sabbath (Luke 23:56) and no doubt circumcise their children. The situation is very different when Paul writes to the Colossians to warn them against enforced Sabbath observance (Col. 2:16-17). For Paul the ten commandments are now summarized in the higher law of love in the spirit (Rom. 13:9-10). Paul himself was expressly not under the law (of Moses) but “within the Torah of Messiah” (1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2).

Let every man be persuaded in his own heart after careful study (Rom. 14:5), but let us not refuse the plain words of Colossians 2:16-17 describing the status of the Sabbath and holy days as a single shadow. Should we insist on the weekly Sabbath, we must, to be consistent, insist also on the holy days *and the new moons*. They stand or fall together as part of the whole Sabbatical system given to Israel under the Old Covenant. The Sabbath was the sign of the *Old Covenant*, not the New (Ex. 31:13).

Attempts to retranslate Colossians 2:16-17 are unsuccessful — for example the proposal that Paul wishes the “body of Christ,” the Church, to judge in the matter of days. This is a forced and unnatural translation. Paul’s words are: don’t let *anyone*, in or out of the Church, take you to task on the issue of food and drink or annual, monthly and weekly observances.

It is misleading to maintain with the *Plain Truth*<sup>3</sup> that the annual Sabbaths are binding because they were instituted “forever” (Lev. 23:41, “a perpetual statute throughout your generations”). Only a verse earlier Israel was given an equally perpetual statute about not eating bread or roasted grain or new growth before offering the wavesheaf. Does anyone consider this to be binding today? What about the “perpetual statute” that those who come in contact with a dead person are to be unclean for seven days? (Num. 19:14-21).

Throughout the book of John the feasts are described as Jewish — John 7:2 (Tabernacles), 6:4 (Passover), 5:1

(Passover). The preparation day for the Sabbath is called “the *Jewish* day of preparation” (19:42). John thinks of the Sabbath as Jewish with a Jewish preparation day preceding it. These terms are scarcely compatible with the conviction that the Old Testament observances are now binding on the Christian community. With Paul, John sees the days as a shadow of the much greater reality of Christ.

The matter of the observance of days should be settled by each individual as he comes to learn true Christianity. People with scruples about food and days should be treated with patience until we all come to the unity of the spirit (Rom. 14:1-6): “One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind” (Rom. 14:5).

Should anyone take it upon himself to interfere with this precious freedom granted to believers, he should consider that Sabbaths, holy days and new moons were Old Testament types of New Covenant realities in Christ. The danger of legalism is that it may promote a self-righteous justification on the basis of strict observance to Old Covenant law.

He who receives the sign of the Old Testament Covenant — physical circumcision — is “under obligation to keep the whole law” (Gal. 5:3). He is warned against doing this and losing Christ. This statement of Paul clearly implies that Christians are not bound by the “whole law.” Those who insist on law, in the Old Testament sense as a code of regulations, “have been severed from Christ...You have fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4). These are Paul’s stern warnings to any who impose upon believers legal obligations which Jesus does not require of his followers. It is wise to remember that it was hostile Jews who persecuted Jesus “because he was breaking the Sabbath” (John 5:18). Jesus’ claim was that he had been working uninterruptedly with the full authority of his Father (John 5:19). This is not to argue, however, that Jesus, during his ministry on earth, disregarded customary Sabbath observance.

### **The Sunday Resurrection: An Appropriate Reason for Christian Gathering**

The resurrection of Jesus occurred on Sunday, and Sunday, though certainly not a Sabbath in the Old Testament sense, is an appropriate day for a weekly celebration of Christ’s rising from the dead. Jesus predicted that he would rise “on the third day.” In fact, the New Testament states *eleven* times that the resurrection was on “the third day” (Matt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; 27:64; Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:7, 21, 46; Acts 10:40; 1 Cor. 15:4).

These references to the “third day” most probably go back to the statement in Hosea 6:2 (cp. 1 Cor. 15:4)

<sup>3</sup> Sept. 1991, p. 18.

which speaks of Israel being raised up “on the third day.” Since Jesus represents Israel as its ideal leader, it would be appropriate for him to fulfill what is predicted of Israel (with a future raising of the nation of Israel still unfulfilled). Similarly, according to Hosea 11:1, Israel, the son of God, was to be called out of Egypt. A fulfillment of this prophecy is found in the life of Jesus, as representative of Israel (see Matt. 2:15). Jesus “recapitulates” the experience of Israel and he models what true Israel (cp. Gal. 6:16, the church) ought to be.

It is strange that students of the Bible, particularly Sabbath-keepers, who want the resurrection to have occurred on Saturday, concentrate all their attention on one reference in Matthew 12:40, where Jesus spoke of being “three days and three nights” in the heart of the earth. As will be shown in a moment, this is a Hebrew idiom familiar to Matthew which need not be taken, as a 20th-century English speaker might understand it, as meaning exactly 72 hours.

It is safer to found doctrines on the predominant evidence, and that evidence points to the resurrection on the third day. What is meant by the third day? In Luke 13:32, Jesus says: “Go and tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures *today* and *tomorrow*, and *the third day* I reach my goal.’” This way of reckoning time has its roots in the Hebrew Old Testament: “The Lord also said to Moses, ‘Go to the people and consecrate them *today* and *tomorrow*, and let them wash their garments; and let them be ready for *the third day*, for on *the third day* the Lord will come down on Mount Sinai’” (Ex. 19:10-11). “When I have sounded out my father about this time *tomorrow*, or *the third day*...” (1 Sam. 20:12).

This method of calculating time forbids a Wednesday crucifixion and a Saturday resurrection. From Wednesday, Friday would be the third day (today, Wednesday, tomorrow, Thursday, the third day, Friday). But which day does Luke consider to be the third day, i.e., the resurrection day (Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:7)? The answer is simple: it is Sunday.

“But on the first day of the week at early dawn they came to the tomb...Two of them were going that very day [i.e., the first day of the week] to a village named Emmaus” (Luke 24:1, 13). On that same Sunday the disappointed disciples remark that “*today* [Sunday] is *the third day* since these things happened [i.e., the crucifixion, v. 20]” (Luke 24:21). This third day, Sunday, is the day the disciples had expected the resurrection to happen, based on Jesus’ prediction that he would be raised on the third day. Jesus even reminds them of this after his resurrection: “Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and he said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead *the third day*’” (Luke 24:45-46). That third day

is the very Sunday on which he appeared to them and the day when they were expecting the resurrection (Luke 24:21).

It is not hard to calculate that if Sunday is the third day, Friday is the day of the crucifixion. Sunday as the third day from Friday corresponds to Luke’s way of reckoning in Luke 13:32 (above): “Today [Friday], tomorrow [Saturday], and the third day [Sunday].”<sup>4</sup>

Luke’s account of the crucifixion and subsequent events is crystal clear. In Luke 23:54-24:1 he records that “it was the day of the Preparation [which is the standard Greek term for *Friday*] and Sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and saw the tomb, and how his body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath [just mentioned] they rested according to the commandment. But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices which they had prepared.” Imagine how extraordinarily confusing Luke would have been if he had intended to say that the crucifixion day was *Wednesday*! What he gives us is a clear sequence, one day following the next. The day of Preparation, followed naturally by the Saturday Sabbath of the ten commandments, followed by the first day of the week. This evidence should not be avoided.

The question as to whether Jesus and the disciples took the Passover or whether Jesus *died* on the Passover day is best resolved by taking as our fixed point the fact that according to Matthew, Mark and Luke Jesus celebrated the Passover, as did the Jews, late on our Thursday evening. John did not contradict this fact. John agrees that the crucifixion took place on the next day (the 15<sup>th</sup> Nisan). The crucifixion day (Friday) was the preparation for the important *weekly* Sabbath falling in Passover week. “It was the preparation [Friday], that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath day [Saturday], for the day of that Sabbath [Saturday] was a great day” (John 19:31). The meaning is that the *weekly* Sabbath (holy days are not called “Sabbaths” in the NT) was of special importance since it occurred within the Passover week. Note that John said in 19:14, “It was the preparation of the Passover [festival],” not “*for* the Passover [meal].” The Jews refused to go into the Praetorium for fear of becoming defiled because of the following celebration of Passover week, not because of a presumed Passover *meal* that evening (John 18:28). They would have anyway been clean by the end of the day,

<sup>4</sup> Some have argued for a Thursday crucifixion, maintaining that Jewish rules governing the observance of the Passover and astronomical data make Thursday, April 6th, AD 30 the most likely date. But Sunday, counting inclusively, is not the third day from Thursday (Luke 24:21). See also the clear sequence in Luke 23:54, 56 and 24:1.

which suggests that an evening meal is not in John's mind. Again, the Friday of the crucifixion John called "the preparation of the Passover [week]," (19:14) not a preparation for the upcoming Passover meal, which had already taken place on the Thursday evening, as the other three Gospels tell us.<sup>5</sup>

What then of the much quoted "three days and three nights" of Matthew 12:40? Firstly, this is not an exact prediction if one insists on taking the words literally. Jesus was in the grave three nights and three days, in that order, not "three days and three nights." Secondly, it was customary for Jews to reckon any part of three days and nights as complete periods of day and night. Even in the Old Testament we find a passage which does not require a period of three whole days to fulfill a reference to "three days." In Genesis 42:17 Joseph imprisoned his brothers for three days and released them on the third day, before the completion of a full three days. Several passages in Jewish rabbinical literature confirm the idiomatic use of the expression "three days and three nights." Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah (ca. 100 AD) says that "a day and a night are an 'onah' [a portion of time] and a portion of an 'onah' is as the whole of it."<sup>6</sup>

This important point is confirmed by the *Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Midrash* by Strack and Billerbeck (available only in German). The following is a translation of their remarks on Matthew 12:40 in the light of its Jewish background: "In regard to the reckoning of the three days, we must note that...part of a day was considered to be a whole day. R. Yishmael (ca. 135 AD) treated a part of an 'onah' (in this case 12 hours) as a whole 'onah' (i.e., as a full 12 hours)...*Pesahim* 4a: 'A part of a day counts as a whole day (the same is true of a part of a month or a year).'"<sup>7</sup>

Some have thought that two Sabbath days must have occurred in the crucifixion week. They argue that the women bought spices after a Sabbath (Mark 16:1) and before a Sabbath (Luke 23:56). This detail should not be permitted to overthrow the strong evidence for a Friday crucifixion, the third day before Sunday. It may well be that two groups of women are distinguished in the account (as also after the resurrection — John 20:1; cp. Luke 24:1). In Matthew 27:55-56 there are "many women," among whom Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons

<sup>5</sup> For further information, the useful "Note 11" on p. 279 of A.T. Robertson's *Harmony of the Gospels* (Harper, 1922) should be consulted.

<sup>6</sup> Jerusalem Talmud: *Shabbath* ix. 3, cp. Babylonian Talmud: *Pesahim* 4a, cited by H.W. Hoehner in *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, Zondervan, 1977, p. 74.

<sup>7</sup> Munich: Beck, 1926-61.

of Zebedee are singled out. The larger group is the "many other women" of Mark 15:41. They may have prepared spices before the weekly Sabbath (Luke 23:49, 56), while the group of three waited until after the Sabbath (Mark 16:1); or, alternatively, spices may have been hastily bought before the Sabbath and supplemented by others bought after the Sabbath. Mark 16:9 (as a very early witness to the facts) places the resurrection on Sunday: "Now after he had risen on the first day of the week, he first appeared to Mary Magdalene."

The Saturday resurrection theory does not fit the facts of the New Testament. The Sunday resurrection gives point to a weekly celebration of that great event. This weekly celebration is reflected in the early Christians' meeting on the first day of the week. Thus in Acts 20:7, there is just such a gathering to break bread. The meeting here occurred on Sunday evening. Luke uses Roman reckoning to calculate days. In Acts 4:3 it was evening, but the following morning is "the next day." In Acts 20:7 the believers met on Sunday evening, the evening of the first day of the week, and Paul departed at daybreak (v. 11), which was "the next day" (v. 7). The meeting in Acts 20 would have included a sermon and the Lord's Supper, which was celebrated "when you come together as a church" (1 Cor. 11:18), "when you meet together" (v. 20). The expression "breaking the bread" (Acts 20:11) does not indicate just a common meal any more than it does in Acts 2:42, where it is linked to other religious practices, "the Apostles' teaching, fellowship and prayer." Indeed, as Paul said, "the bread which we break [in the Lord's Supper] is a sharing in the body of Christ" (1 Cor. 10:16). This Christian "Communion" is a "fulfillment" of the Old Covenant practice of "eating the sacrifices" (1 Cor. 10:18-21; Lev. 7:6), which occurred more than just annually. It would be difficult, therefore, to maintain that the New Testament "Communion" or "Lord's Supper" was celebrated only once a year. The Lord's Supper was celebrated "when you come together as a church" (1 Cor. 11:18). *Every* first day of the week money was deposited in church to avoid collections when Paul came (1 Cor. 16:2).

The point needs to be emphasized that the Christian "Communion" or "Eucharist" is not an *annual* celebration of the Passover. It reflects, of course, the events of Passover, the blood of the "lamb" Jesus providing an atonement for our sins. But it reminds us, too, of the great event in Exodus 24:7-11 where blood was sprinkled on the people as a sign of initiation into the covenant mediated through Moses. Christians are to participate in the New Covenant mediated by Jesus. The "Communion" represents the New Covenant equivalent of the sacrificial meals of the Old Covenant — the difference being that the bread and wine, representing Jesus' body and blood, now replace the animal sacrifice.

These sacrificial meals were not observed once a year. Thus Paul speaks not of an annual celebration of the “Lord’s Supper” but one occurring “as often as you drink it,” “as often as you eat this bread” (1 Cor. 11:25- 26).

The Lord’s Supper was instituted at the time of the Jewish Passover, but is itself a *new ordinance* to remind us often of the death of Christ and his risen presence with the believers until he comes again. The Jewish Passover is fulfilled in Christ (“Christ is our Passover,” 1 Cor. 5:7, i.e., permanently, not just once a year). The Lord’s Supper is instituted to mark the new events of the New Covenant and is a “fulfillment” of several different Old Testament “shadows.” It is also a “preview” of the banquet to be celebrated in the coming Kingdom. The wine symbolizes Jesus’ blood shed to ratify the Covenant which grants kingship to believers in Jesus’ future world government (Luke 22:20, 28-30; Rev. 5:9-10). Wine (a symbol of joy and a glad heart, Ps. 104:15) will be enjoyed at the Messianic banquet (Isa. 25:6).

The Lord’s Supper was to be kept “when you come together,” “when you come together as a church” (1 Cor. 11:17, 18, 20). Paul was intending to visit the Corinthians within a year, yet he found it necessary to deal immediately with the problems of their ongoing weekly celebration of the community meal, which included the drinking of wine as a symbol of the blood of Christ and eating bread to commemorate his death. The entire supper looked forward also to the Messianic banquet to be celebrated at the return of Jesus in glory to establish the Kingdom of God in a renewed earth. ✧

## Comments

• “I wanted to thank you for all your hard work to produce the New Testament *The One God, the Father, One Man Messiah Translation with Commentary* [available at Amazon.com or Atlanta Bible College, 800-347-4261]. I had longed for a faithful unitarian translation for many, many years. I am enjoying reading it, and have bought 35 copies and have given many as gifts. I also plan to give them as graduation gifts. I have also given them to newly married couples. Thank you for standing faithful in the sharing of the message of the Kingdom of God!” — *Wisconsin*

• “I am working on reading *What Happens When We Die?* I am typically a slow reader so I can try and retain as much as possible while I read. I’m very much enjoying *Christianity’s Self-Inflicted Wound* and learning quite a bit in that book as well. Thank you so much for all you do to teach others about the true God and the true Messiah (never the same person in Scripture). I did a study on the use of ‘logos’ in Scripture and I was surprised to see it used over 60 times without being

referred to as a ‘pre-existent Son.’ It is used to convey ‘speech,’ ‘plan,’ ‘message,’ ‘report,’ even in Mark 1:45 ‘the news.’ Words have meaning and we should always consult the original meaning for the original audience as to not enforce a modern-day thinking or doctrine on the original text. I enjoy learning more and more about the one God and the one mediator between God and man. Your books, videos, and emails have been very encouraging and have taught me very much.” — *Georgia*

• “I would like to say thank you for *Focus on the Kingdom*. It is truly God-inspired. Keep up the awesome work.” — *Mississippi*

## California News

Greetings to all biblical unitarians in southern California. The Church of God General Conference in cooperation with Anthony Buzzard and the Restoration Fellowship, is launching a new congregation in Los Angeles on April 30 of this year. The organizing event will be held at the Church of the Open Bible, 440 West La Verne Avenue, Pomona. Worship services will be at 10:00 a.m. with an organizational meeting following. A meal will be hosted by the Pomona congregation, which is a member congregation of the General Conference. The event will be introducing those in the area to the Pomona church at the same time it organizes the beginning of a congregation in Los Angeles. Anthony Buzzard will be the guest speaker, along with Seth Ross, the Executive Director of the Church of God Conference. Robin Todd, Coordinator of the U.S. Missions Board for Church Planting, is organizing the event in conjunction with the Pomona pastor, Bruce Reye.

God is calling a people together to be a team for His Son, Jesus the Messiah when he returns to set up his Kingdom on this earth. All of us are called to use our gifts, talents, and abilities for the good of the team’s effort to share the Good News of the coming Kingdom of God before it actually arrives. All members of the body are needed in order to encourage one another as we see the day approaching, to advance spiritual maturity amongst the members, and to share the Gospel.

If you are interested in fellowship with others of like mind in the Biblical faith, please make plans to join us at this event, and to be participating members of the new congregation in Los Angeles or members of the Pomona church. If you have any questions you can contact Robin Todd at (360) 701-9219, or email him at [robinsings4u@comcast.net](mailto:robinsings4u@comcast.net). For questions regarding onsite particulars, contact Pastor Bruce Reye at the church phone number, 909-593-3411, or email him at [rey003@aol.com](mailto:rey003@aol.com). We look forward to seeing you there! These are exciting times for the people of God!

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