July 22, 2011

A New Mission

by Robert Fitzpatrick

God allowed many people to participate in the great work of warning the world that May 21 would be Judgment Day. By the spring of 2011, that warning had already been going out strongly for over two years. As the day drew near, more people joined the effort and worked harder at it. It was truly a global work that the Lord raised up.

Many of those who warned the world about May 21 fully expected it to be the day of the Rapture and the mightiest earthquake ever to strike the earth. They knew that there was strong Biblical evidence for 2011 to be earth’s final year, and for May 21 to be the exact date for Judgment Day to begin; but when that day ended without any physical sign of God’s intervention, they were stunned and disappointed. Many were exhausted emotionally, mentally and physically as well as being financially drained. Perhaps you were one of these people.

As a result of our failure to correctly understand God’s plan for May 21, many are now wondering if there was a mistake in calculating that date. They have serious doubts and are looking for answers to questions such as: Was May 21 really the beginning of Judgment Day, and is October 21 really the date for the end of the world? Is there another date for the Rapture? Could the Rapture occur before October 21? If May 21 really was the last day to be saved, then why are we still here and what are we supposed to be doing until October 21?

Even with our new knowledge that May 21 was not the date of the Rapture, it is still difficult to understand many verses dealing with end times; but it is not difficult to understand that God has given us amazing proofs pointing to both May 21 and October 21. If you will take the time to review those proofs, you will see that the Rapture will definitely take place on October 21. You can be certain that Judgment Day began on May 21 and will continue until October 21. There is no doubt about these things, and there is no other date for us to discover. We can make these statements with certainty because of the many wonderful proofs God has given us.

*Proofs Lock In The Dates*

Perhaps you have seen some of those proofs but forgotten them. It may be helpful to review them. (You can read them in Mr. Camping’s “Time has An End” and “We Are Almost There,” or in “The Doomsday Code / God Is Warning Us Through The Bible”). There are many proofs pointing to the year 2011, and there are proofs linking each of the four end-time dates with a past event. There are also proofs connecting each of those four dates with another one of the end-time dates. That is why we can say that the dates all lock together.

To understand the proofs for the end-time dates, it helps to understand something about the great tribulation of our day. Thousands of years ago, the patriarch Jacob went through a time of tribulation; later on there was tribulation for the Kingdom of Judah. God gave us the examples of those tribulations so that we could understand the great tribulation of our own day. Let’s take a quick look at the three tribulations.

Jacob’s tribulation was a result of seven years of famine. We read about it in Genesis 45:6:

**For these two years *hath* the famine *been* in the land: and yet *there* *are* five years, in the which *there shall* neither *be* earing nor harvest.**

Shortly after this statement by his son Joseph, and in 1877 BC as a result of the famine, Jacob left his home. He left the land God had promised him to journey into Egypt. Surely it was a very difficult time for Jacob. He must have wondered why God had allowed it to happen.

The Kingdom of Judah’s tribulation was 70 years long. One of the verses telling us about it is Daniel 9:2:

**In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.**

The pivotal year for Judah’s tribulation was 587 BC. That was the horrible year when Jerusalem was captured after a long siege by king Nebuchadnezzar’s army. Apparently, most of the city was destroyed (even Solomon’s temple was destroyed: see 2 Kings 25:9-10).

In each of the two ancient tribulations, Jacob’s and Judah’s, the pivotal year was not the year ending the tribulation. Rather, it was a year that divided the tribulation into two parts.

We have learned that the great tribulation of our day lasted for 8,400 days. It began on May 21, 1988 and ended on May 21, 2011. The pivotal year of our tribulation was September 7, 1994. That date is associated with the latter rain (salvation outside the churches) and judgment against the churches.

It’s important to know that the length of our tribulation was determined by counting days. A key Biblical passage used to discover its length is Daniel 8:13-14, where we read:

**Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain *saint* which spake, How long *shall be* the vision *concerning* the daily *sacrifice*, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden underfoot? And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.**

This passage is part of an account of a vision given to Daniel concerning a future time – our time. The 2,300 days given in this verse is exactly the length of time from May 21, 1988 to September 7, 1994. The balance of the 8,400 days is 6,100 days; and that ended on May 21, 2011.

With this background of the tribulations in mind, we can now look at some of the amazing proofs confirming that our understanding of the great tribulation is correct. Once the duration of our tribulation (8,400 days) was discovered, it was noticed that its length was exactly 23 years. The number 23 is very significant and is associated with God’s wrath or judgment.

Here’s another proof that we have the numbers right. If we add the durations of the three tribulations (Jacob’s, Judah’s and our own), we get:

 7 + 70 + 23 = 100 (total length in years for the three tribulations)

We have learned that the number 100, like the number 10, signifies the completeness of whatever is in view.

*Another Amazing Proof of the Tribulation’s Duration*

In the book of Haggai, we find another amazing proof that we have the correct numbers for the great tribulation of our day. There, we find four dates that allow us to calculate two distinct time periods in days. Let us first take a look at Haggai chapter one. In the first part of Haggai 1:1, we read:

 **In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet …**

As we read the first chapter of Haggai, we find that the Lord’s message deals with the withholding of His blessing from the people and His instructions to “build the house,” that is, the temple. Then in Haggai 1:14-15, we read:

 **And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.**

The difference in time between the two dates, from the first day to the twenty-fourth day of the same month, is 23 days.

In the second chapter of Haggai, we find another pair of dates that allow us to calculate a second time period. The first date of this second pair is given in Haggai 2:1, which states:

 **In the seventh *month*, in the one and twentieth *day* of the month, came the word of the LORD by the prophet Haggai, saying,**

The message that follows this verse is one of encouragement (e.g., “fear ye not.”). It is also a message pointing to the end times (“…I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry *land*;”). Then, in Haggai 2:10, we are given a second date:

 **In the four and twentieth *day* of the ninth *month*, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,**

This date is repeated in verse 18, and again in verse 20. For our purpose of analyzing time periods, verses 18 and 19 are especially important. This is what we read in Haggai 2:18-19:

 **Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth *month*, *even* from the day that the foundation of the LORD’S temple was laid, consider *it*. Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless *you*.**

Notice how the Lord is directing our attention to the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Twice in these two verses, He is telling us to “consider.” Then, He tells us “from this day will I bless.” God is definitely indicating that there is something important about that twenty-fourth day of the ninth month and afterwards. What could it be?

Before we try to answer that question, let us calculate the number of days between the two dates given in Haggai chapter 2. The first date is day 21 of the seventh month; the second date is day 24 of the ninth month. We know that there are almost exactly 29.5 days in a month, as determined by the cycle of the moon. Therefore, from the first date to the second we get:

 8.5 + 29.5 + 24 = 62 days

However, God indicates that the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month begins a new period of time (“from this day will I bless.”). Therefore, that day should not be included in the time period beginning on day 21 of the seventh month. On this basis, the time period should only extend to day 23 of the ninth month and we should count as follows:

 8.5 + 29.5 + 23 = 61 days

We have now calculated two time periods. In the first chapter of Haggai, we saw that there was a period of 23 days; in the second chapter, we found a period of 61 days. Notice how these two periods mirror the two-part great tribulation of our day (2300 days and 6100 days), and how God uses language in the book of Haggai to point to end time events.

It’s no coincidence that we find in Haggai two periods (23 days and 61 days) that mirror the two parts of our own time of tribulation. The numbers agree because God has given us this proof that we have the correct dates for our great tribulation.

Before May 21, when it was believed that the Rapture would happen on that date, the verse promising God’s blessing (Haggai 2:19) could have been understood to mean that the Rapture would occur immediately after the end of the great tribulation (“from this day I will bless”); but now, we must understand this promise to refer to the period following the tribulation – the 153 day period that will end with the Rapture on October 21.

*Spiritual Night Has Come*

Read Matthew 24:29-31:

 **Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.**

These verses deal with the time following the great tribulation – the period of spiritual night in which we now find ourselves. This period began on May 22 and will continue until October 21, 2011. As we read about the sun becoming darkened and the moon not giving her light, we must conclude that God is telling us in these verses that the day of salvation has ended. No other conclusion seems possible.

Notice that in Matthew 24:31 the elect are gathered after spiritual nighttime has come. This agrees with what we read in Revelation 7. In that chapter, we read about the apostle John’s vision of a great multitude of people. Revelation 7:9 states:

**After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;**

In verses 7:13-14, we learn something important about this great multitude:

**And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**

So we see that the great multitude came out of the great tribulation; and from Matthew 24:29-31 we know that the period when the sun becomes darkened follows the great tribulation. Notice that the great multitude of God’s elect does not come out of the period following the great tribulation, but out of the great tribulation itself.

There is something else in the book of Revelation that tells of a time when God’s saving work has ended. In Revelation 22:10-12, we read:

**And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.**

Notice these verses seem to be dealing with the time immediately before the Lord Jesus returns (“the time is at hand” and “I come quickly”). It is in this setting that we read Revelation 22:11:

**He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.**

This verse seems to be telling us of a time when there is no longer a possibility for anyone who has not already been made righteous to become righteous – that is, to be saved.

Interestingly, we find something in the Old Testament that seems to reflect that same idea we find in Revelation 22:11. Recall that earlier we looked at two time periods in the book of Haggai, seeing that they mirror the great tribulation. It was in the 24th day of the ninth month (day number 62) that God promised His blessing; but there was a curious message that the Lord gave to Haggai that day. In Haggai 2:11-14 we read:

**Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ask now the priests *concerning* the law, saying, If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. Then said Haggai, If *one* *that* is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the LORD; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean.**

God is here giving us a picture showing that there is no way to transfer holiness. Notice that a person’s garment cannot be made holy by coming into contact with “holy flesh,” but that uncleanness can be transferred (in the Bible, God uses leprosy as a picture of sin – and leprosy is a communicable disease). Of course, holiness or righteousness can only come from God. These verses, however, seem to give the same message as Revelation 22:11: that in the time following the great tribulation, salvation has ended. It is the time we read about in Joel 2:10-11:

**The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp *is* very great: for *he is* strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?**

*The Harvest Ends*

The current period is a time of spiritual darkness because the light of the Gospel is no longer shining with salvation. As we search the Bible, we can find other verses telling us in different ways that such a time would come. In Jeremiah 8:20, we read:

**The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.**

Here we see the end of harvest associated with the end of summer. We know that October 21 of 2011 will be at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles, and we know that this feast is associated with harvest. Verses concerned with harvest give us another way to look at this current period of time.

The Feast of Tabernacles has to do with the harvest. It was held in the seventh month, beginning on the 15th day of the month (see Leviticus 23:34-36). In Leviticus 23:39, we read something about the setting of this feast:

**Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day *shall be* a sabbath, and on the eighth day *shall be* a sabbath.**

 Notice the implication that the feast occurs after the harvest is over. This is also what we read in Deuteronomy 16:13:

**Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine:**

We know that the Lord Jesus compared the gathering of His elect with a harvest (e.g., see Matthew 13:30). The above verse from Deuteronomy, indicating that the harvest is over before the Feast of Tabernacles arrives, indicates that the day of salvation is over.

The Lord Jesus also made a statement that appears to tell us that salvation will end months before the harvest or ingathering of the elect, which will be the Rapture. In John 4:35, we read:

**Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.**

This verse must apply to our day. Notice that the fields are “white already to harvest” months before the time of harvest. The Greek word translated as “white” is Strong’s number 3022, and it is associated with the raiment of God’s elect (as in Revelation 6:11). The message of John 4:35 seems to be that God’s people will already be saved four months before the harvest.

Remember that the harvest was already finished before the Feast of Tabernacles (which was also the Feast of Ingathering – see Exodus 23:16). In fact, in ancient Israel the harvest may have been completed a couple of weeks or so before the feast began (see 2 Chronicles 31:7); so the four months in the Lord’s statement actually appear to fit well with our understanding that salvation ended on May 21. That would be approximately four months before the time the crops were harvested and exactly five months before the last day: October 21.

Once we understand that the day of salvation has ended, we find that we need to re-examine some very important Biblical issues – including our approach to the Gospel itself. One very basic question is, “Should we continue to send out the Gospel?”

We know that the Lord commanded the Gospel to be preached throughout the world. Mark 16:15 tells us:

**And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.**

How can we understand this verse in a world where the Gospel is no longer saving anyone?

*Should We Continue to Preach the Gospel?*

To help us understand the command to preach the Gospel, we need to remind ourselves how the Gospel should have been preached before May 21; but first we need to ask ourselves an even more basic question: “What is the Gospel?”

It’s been said that the Gospel is the entire Bible. While that definition may help us to understand God’s word, it doesn’t help us to share it. If someone asked you about your faith, you wouldn’t sit down with the person to start reading from your Bible at Genesis 1:1 and keep going until you reached Revelation 22:21. Obviously, that approach is impractical.

Instead, to present the Gospel you would probably read, quote or explain to your hearer some key verses. You might tell them that the Bible reveals that all have sinned (Romans 3:23); and that according to God’s law – which is the Bible - the penalty for sin is death (Romans 6:23). Then, you might tell them that God paid the penalty for His elect (Ephesians 1:7) in order to save them (Ephesians 2:8), and that God uses His word to give them the faith that saves them. Romans 10:17 is a key verse helping us understand that last step:

**So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

Here is where we need to recognize a major change in the Gospel after May 21. If we know that the day of salvation is over, then we may no longer tell people that God is saving through His word. If we continue to tell them that God is using His word – the Bible – to save people, then we are preaching a false gospel! We can tell them that God PREVIOUSLY USED His word to save people, but He is no longer doing so.

Obviously, this isn’t the kind of thing you can preach to the world at large. And that is the point. We can help someone who comes to us for help in understanding God’s word, because that person may have been saved before May 21 and is now being drawn to God; but we can’t preach the Gospel to the world at large. Our “testimony is finished.”

*The Two Witnesses*

**And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. Revelation 11:7**

In Revelation 11, we read about two witnesses who represent God’s elect. Reading this chapter with the timeline in mind, we can identify three time periods that appear to correspond exactly with the final three periods of God’s salvation plan. When we read what happens to the two witnesses and when it happens, we see support for our understanding that the day of salvation has ended.

The first time period is given in Revelation 11:2:

**But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty *and* two months.**

In this verse, we read that the Gentiles will tread the holy city under foot for 42 months. This period of time equals three and a half years. In the next verse, we read of another time period. Revelation 11:3 states:

**And I will give *power* unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.**

The time period given in this verse, 1,260 days, is also equal to three and a half years or 42 months (each month being 30 days long).

We should not conclude that the first verse is describing the same time period as the second verse. The Greek word translated as the first word of Revelation 11:3 (“And”) can be used to indicate the passage of time. That Greek word is Strong’s number 2532, and we can find it used in Matthew 2:11. There, we read about the wise men going to worship Jesus. We read that they went into the house “and” fell down to worship. The word “and” is used in the sense of the words “and then” because it shows one action following another in time. This usage shows us that the second time period (1,260 days in Revelation 11:3) follows the first one (42 months in Revelation 11:2).

The third time period in Revelation 11 appears twice. In Revelation 11:9, we read:

**And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.**

In Revelation 11:11, we again read about three and a half days:

**And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.**

 As we read Revelation 11, we find that the two witnesses are “killed” (verse 7), but they are not put in graves (verses 8-9). Their bodies are out where they can be seen for three and a half days. Then, after three and a half days, the witnesses stand on their feet (verse 11). We can see that the three and a half days of verse 9 represent the same period of time as the three and a half days of verse 11.

To analyze these time periods, let’s first remember that God uses the number seven in the Bible to show the perfect fulfillment of His purpose. Half of seven is three and a half, and we have three of these three and a half’s in Revelation 11:1-11. Could it be that God is showing us that the first time period joins with the second, and that the second joins with the third? We will see strong evidence that this is the case. Let’s see how the three periods fit together.

In verse 2 we find the first period; it is the time when the holy city is tread under foot for forty and two months. Then, in the second period, God gives power to the two witnesses (verse 3) and they prophesy for 1,260 days. When they have finished their testimony, they are killed (verse 7). Their bodies lie in the street for three and a half days. After that, the Spirit of life from God enters into them (verse 11), and they ascend into heaven (verse 12). The end of the three and a half days marks the end of the third period.

Now, let’s compare these time periods with the final three time periods in God’s salvation plan. We know that on May 21 in 1988, God ended the church age and installed Satan as head of the church. Hardly anyone was saved from May 21, 1988 until September 7, 1994. That was the first of the final three periods of God’s salvation plan.

On September 7 in 1994, God again began saving people; but salvation was possible only outside the church. This period of salvation continued until May 21, 2011 – the last day in history when God would save anyone. That day marked the end of the second period.

We are now in the third time period. These five months from May 21 until October 21 will be the final five months of earth’s existence. It will end with the Rapture and God’s physical judgment on the unsaved.

Notice how the time periods, as understood from the time-line, agree with the time periods we find in Revelation 11. In the first period, hardly anyone (perhaps no one) is saved – this is the time when “the Gentiles” tread the holy city under foot.

In the second period, many people were saved outside the churches and God raised up His great work to warn the world about May 21; it corresponds to the time when the two witnesses prophesied with great power (verses 5-7).

We are now in the third period, wondering about our current situation. As we do so, if we keep in mind what we have learned about the third time period from the time-line, we will see how closely our situation fits with the fate of the two witnesses. Recall that in the second period of Revelation 11, the two witnesses prophesied with power. Then they “finished their testimony” and were killed (verse 7). Their bodies lay in the street because people did not want them put in graves: people wanted to shame the two witnesses because these two prophets “tormented them that dwelt on the earth.”

Do you see how closely this describes the situation of God’s elect, who warned the world about May 21? They warned the world that Judgment Day would be the day of the Rapture and the mightiest earthquake ever. That warning went out all over the world. Some people heard it many times. Undoubtedly, many of them hated it. They were “tormented” by hearing the warning.

When May 21 came and went without the Rapture and the earthquake, those who brought the warning were shamed in the eyes of the world. They have lost friends, and may no longer be well treated even by family members. The world doesn’t want to let God’s people forget that they were wrong. It won’t let their bodies be “put in graves.”

The fate of the two witnesses shows us that we are not to preach the Gospel to the world at large. Like the two witnesses after their 1,260 days, our “testimony is finished” and we have been “killed.” We now must confront a big question. If God’s elect are no longer supposed to bring the Gospel to the world during these final 153 days, then why are they here?

*“Look Here to Find Out About the 153 Days”*

Did your Bible come with a bookmark inserted near John 21, telling you to “Look here to find out about the 153 days?” That’s a silly idea, isn’t it? Well, maybe it isn’t so silly.

We know that the number of days from May 21 to October 21 is exactly 153. That turns out to be the same number of fish caught in the net in John 21:11:

**Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, and hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.**

We know that God wouldn’t have used 153 as the number of fish unless He had a good reason; so it’s no coincidence that the number of fish matches exactly the number of days in these five months from May 21 to October 21. It appears that God is pointing us to this part of the Bible for answers to our questions about these last five months.

Notice the setting for the catch of fish. It was days after the Lord had risen from the dead and first appeared to His disciples. Peter and a few of the others had been out fishing, but that night they caught nothing. In the morning, they see a figure on the shore. He tells them to cast their net on the right side of the ship. They do so, and catch so many fish that they cannot draw up the net. The disciples then recognize that the figure on the shore is the Lord. The Lord tells them to “bring of the fish which ye have now caught.” Then Peter, by himself, does what the disciples could not do using the ship – he “drew the net to land.”

Think about some similarities in this account with conditions during the end times. The ship represents the churches (local congregations), but God finished using them in 1988. From 1988 to 1994, hardly anyone (perhaps no one) was saved. Might not this period correspond to the night when Peter and the others caught nothing?

Beginning on September 7 in 1994 and continuing until May 21 of 2011, God poured out His blessing and saved a great multitude. These saved individuals appear to be represented by the great catch of fish. The disciples, however, could not use the ship to draw the net - because God is no longer using the churches to save people. Instead, God empowered Peter (here representing God’s elect working outside the churches) to drag the net to land.

The net didn’t break, and the catch is now in. There will be no more fish caught, because salvation ended on May 21. Notice the Lord’s command to Peter in John 21:15: “Feed my lambs.” Then notice the similarity with verses 16 and 17, where the Lord tells Peter to feed His sheep.

It’s interesting that the first two Gospels end with a statement of the great commission (see Matthew 28:19, and Mark 16:15), and the last chapter of Luke’s Gospel has a reference to it (Luke 24:47). The great commission, of course, was the effort to bring the Gospel to the whole world. In John 21, however, we don’t find anything about the great commission. Instead, we find the Lord’s instructions to feed His lambs and His sheep.

A lamb is a young sheep, and there are plenty of new believers around now because God promised to save a great multitude out of the great tribulation. That saving process continued right up to May 21. Others were saved years before May 21. They are the sheep, and they too need to continue hearing God’s word.

What do these things mean for established ministries, such as Family Radio and Bible Ministries International? They must follow the Lord’s commands given in John 21. They should remember that there might be a great number of newly saved persons (“lambs”) who know very little about the Bible. Programs and messages with simple and basic content should be produced for these people.

Also, these ministries should not try to bring the Gospel to places and people who have never before heard it; and they should be careful not to imply that God is still saving people.

*More About the Five Months / Pictures of Silence*

A Bible chapter we should consider is Revelation 9. It is concerned with end-times and tells us about some very strange locusts. It actually mentions a period of five months. Like John 21, this chapter of Revelation is concerned with the time after May 21.

In verses 2 and 3, we find that the locusts come out of smoke arising from the bottomless pit. The smoke is “as the smoke of a great furnace,” and “the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.” This darkening of the sun suggests the time of the locusts to be immediately after May 21. It is the time when the sun has been darkened because judgment has come on the earth and salvation has ended.

The smoke itself suggests God’s judgment. The locusts come out of the smoke, so they come out of Judgment Day. They weren’t around before Judgment Day; but after Judgment Day begins, they exist. Who or what are these locusts? In Revelation 9:4, we read that the locusts can only hurt those men “which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. “ Then, in Revelation 9:5, we read about their power to hurt:

**And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment *was* as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.**

In Revelation 9:10, we read something similar:

**And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power *was* to hurt men five months.**

These locusts have something in common with another group described later on in that same chapter of Revelation. In Revelation 9:16-18, we read about that other group - an army of 200 million horsemen. These horsemen ride horses that “kill” the third part of men by fire, smoke and brimstone that “issued out of their mouths.” We have seen that the third part of men identifies with those in the local congregations of Christian churches. The horsemen themselves (verse 17) are described as having “breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone” - in other words, these are God’s elect and are pictured as bringing judgment on the churches. There is, however, a similarity between the locusts and the horses. In Revelation 9:19, we read that the horses have tails “like unto serpents.” Both serpents and scorpions (the tails of the locusts) identify with the harm a false gospel can inflict. But God’s army isn’t bringing a false gospel; so what is going on here?

The word translated as “stings” in Revelation 9:10 is Strong’s number G2759. It is only used in four other places. In each case, it is associated with the penalty for breaking God’s law. For example, it is used to describe the chastisement God brought on Paul in Acts 9:5 (“*it* *is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks”). Similarly, the “sting” of the locusts is the warning of Judgment Day brought by God’s elect before May 21. Don’t be misled by the fact that the locusts are so ugly (John 7:24). Like the horsemen, the locusts represent the elect of God.

The horsemen of Revelation 9 represent the Lord’s armies (see Revelation 19:11-14), against which Satan gathers the kings of the earth and their armies (Revelation 19:19). This is the so-called battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:16). There won’t be any shots fired in this battle. But the sight of God’s people going up to heaven (the Rapture) will serve as a judgment against the world – especially against those in the churches.

These pictures of the locusts and the horsemen don’t contradict our understanding that the testimony of God’s people “is finished” (Revelation 11:7).

We can find another interesting reference to a five-month period in the Bible. Recall that the mother of John the Baptist was Mary’s cousin Elisabeth. In Luke 1:24-25, we read:

**And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on *me*, to take away my reproach among men.**

From Luke 1:7, we know that Elisabeth had no children and was beyond the age when she could expect to have any. So when we read Elisabeth’s statement about the Lord taking away her reproach among men, our first thought might be that Elisabeth had felt like an outcast because she was childless. We might say, “Now that she knows she will have a child, people will see her differently and accept her.” But is that really what God is telling us about Elisabeth’s thinking?

The word translated as “among” (Strong’s number 1722) in Luke 1:25 can also be translated as “in” or “with.” When we consider those meanings, we can understand the verse to be telling us that the Lord had taken away her reproach as a sinner (as part of mankind) because He saved her!

Elisabeth, therefore, seems to be a picture of a child of God who understands that she has been saved. And what did she do when she realized it? She hid herself for five months!

It’s also interesting to notice something about Elisabeth’s husband, Zacharias. He too is identified as a child of God (Luke 1:6). The Lord informed Zacharias that he would have a son (Luke 1:11-17). However, because of unbelief, Zacharias was stricken so that he could not speak (Luke 1:20). He remained stricken until after the birth of his son, John the Baptist (Luke 1:63-64).

It is true that Zacharias was stricken months before Elisabeth’s statement, which we examined earlier; but he remained unable to speak during the five months Elisabeth hid herself. His condition may also relate to the silencing of God’s people after May 21.

We find another picture of silence in the book of Joshua. You may have heard Mr. Camping mention that the fall of Jericho relates to the end of the world, as well as the end of the church age. Notice what we read in Joshua 6:10:

**And Joshua had commanded the people, saying, Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout; then shall ye shout.**

The people were commanded to go around the city once each day for six days, as seven priests carried the ark and blew shofars. On the seventh day, they did it seven times (they made a total of 13 trips, which suggests the world’s 13,000-year history). Then Joshua told the people: “Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city” (Joshua 6:16). Verse 20 tells us what happened: the wall of Jericho “fell down flat.”

Does this account remind you of anything? In the book of Revelation, we read about seven angels with seven trumpets (Revelation 8:2). When the seventh angel sounds we read: “The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 11:15). What follows the sounding by the seventh angel (Revelation 11:19) appears to be a picture of the end of the world, and to agree with what we see in Revelation 16:17-21. Revelation 16:19 is especially significant in this regard:

**And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.**

So we see similarities between the account of Jericho’s fall and Revelation’s picture of the world’s destruction – which we know will happen on the last day. These similarities suggest that Joshua’s command of silence to the people is a picture of silence by God’s elect during these last five months.

*The Feast of Tabernacles: A Long Feast Picturing A Long Period of Time*

You may know that the Feast of Tabernacles was only one of the annual feasts God commanded ancient Israel to observe. Today, God’s people no longer keep these feasts; but we need to know about them because they show us a picture of God’s salvation plan. Even if you are familiar with them, there is something that you may not have considered; but before we continue, let’s take a brief detour and have an overall look at the annual feasts.

It was shortly after the Exodus that God instructed ancient Israel to observe these special days every year. Over 1,400 years later, God began to fulfill them, beginning with the birth of our Lord. There is a great deal of Biblical evidence to indicate that the Lord Jesus was born on the Day of Atonement in the year 7 B.C. In ancient Israel, this feast was observed on the tenth day of the seventh month (Lev. 23:27).

The next fulfillment of a feast day occurred over 30 years later. We know that the Lord was announced as the Lamb of God (John 1:29) and began His public ministry on the day known as the Feast of Trumpets in 29 A.D. That feast day was observed on the first day of the seventh month (Lev. 23:24).

The Lord’s ministry on earth was short – only about three and a half years. The next important date that matches with one of the annual days is the day He was crucified. We know that occurred on the Passover on April 1 of 33 A.D. Perhaps we shouldn’t call the Passover a feast day, but it was a special day that was observed in the first month on the 14th day.

Shortly after the Lord returned to Heaven, He began the church age. That happened on Pentecost Day: May 22, 33 A.D. Its date was determined by counting 50 days after Passover. To the Israelites, Pentecost was known as the Feast of Firstfruits, or the Feast of Harvest, or the Feast of Weeks. It pictured the smaller harvest of true believers (compared to the great harvest of our day) that God saved during the church age. Leviticus 23:15 and the next few verses tell us about this feast.

Now we’re almost ready to get to the point of this review of the annual feast days. Recall that the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Trumpets and Pentecost are each only one day. (We’ll consider the Passover separately.) Each of these feasts pictured an event that happened in just one day. Respectively, these were the birth of our Lord, His announcement as the Savior, and the beginning of the church age. In each case, it was a one-day feast picturing a one-day event. The remaining two annual feasts, however, are each at least one week long. Why would that be? Let’s take a look at them - the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:6-8) and the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:34).

The Passover, which pictured the death of our Lord, is linked to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. We read about this in Leviticus 23:5-8:

**In the fourteenth *day* of the first month at even *is* the LORD'S passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month *is* the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD seven days: in the seventh day *is* an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work *therein*.**

Just as the Feast of Unleavened came immediately after the Passover, the Lord’s resurrection came right after His crucifixion and death.

During the Feast of Unleavened bread, the Israelites were to eat unleavened bread (also see Exodus 12:15-16). But do you remember what Jesus said about Himself being the bread of life? He said “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever:” (see John 6:48-51). It is clear that the Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures the resurrection of the Lord on the Sunday following the day He was crucified. God designed the Feast of Unleavened Bread to extend over a period of time because it shows us a picture of a period of time: the death and resurrection of the Lord.

There is, however, more to this feast. Notice that it begins with a holy convocation on the first day and ends with a holy convocation on the seventh day. During those two days and in between, the people were to eat unleavened bread. Does this suggest anything to you? Recall that the Lord was with His disciples for 40 days (Acts 1:3) before He ascended back to heaven (Acts 1:9-10). The interim between the feast’s two convocations identifies with the time the Lord was with His disciples, and the second convocation identifies with His ascension!

With this in mind, let’s now take a look at the Feast of Tabernacles. We know that the Feast of Tabernacles is the only annual feast for which we have not seen a corresponding event in the New Testament. However, we will see that it is being fulfilled right now! In Leviticus 23:34-36, we read about this feast:

**Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month *shall be* the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD. On the first day *shall be* an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work *therein*. Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it is a solemn assembly; *and* ye shall do no servile work *therein*.**

We have learned that God links the holy convocation that ends the Feast of Tabernacles (the eighth day, on the 22nd day of the seventh month) with the following day. This is seen by comparing 1 Kings 8:66 with 2 Chronicles 7:10. Those verses are concerned with King Solomon’s dedication of the temple during the Feast of Tabernacles. Using those verses and others, it was discovered that this coming October 21 (which corresponds to the 23rd day of the seventh month according to the ceremonial calendar) will be the end of the world.

The Feast of Tabernacles, however, is not just a one-day feast. What might the rest of this feast picture? Notice what God tells us about the feast in Leviticus 23:42-43:

**Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I *am* the LORD your God.**

It was during Israel’s 40 years in the wilderness that God “made the children of Israel to dwell in booths.” So we see that when Israel kept this feast, the seven days of dwelling in booths reminded them of their 40 years in the wilderness.

Do you see how the seven days of dwelling in booths can relate to our day? We know that the holy convocation ending the feast identifies with October 21. Therefore, the evidence is that the period of dwelling in booths identifies with the 153 days between May 21 and October 21, and that the holy convocation beginning the feast identifies with May 21! Like the Feast of Unleavened Bread, this is a feast that extends beyond one day because it pictures events occurring over more than a single day.

In the book of Nehemiah, we also read an account of the people keeping the Feast of Tabernacles. In Nehemiah 8:17-18, we read:

**And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness.** **Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner.**

These verses should be a lesson to God’s people today. The elect of today are like the children of Israel who came out of captivity, because as of May 21 God has freed them all from Satan’s kingdom. Now, each one of them has a new, resurrected soul. Like the people of Nehemiah’s day, God’s people today should have “great gladness.” And like the people of Nehemiah’s day they should “sit under booths,” concentrating on God’s word – not go out to the world to proclaim the Gospel.

As they “feed” on God’s word, newly saved Christians will more fully experience the fruit of the Spirit we read about in Galatians 5:22-23:

**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,** **Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.**

Notice that this is fruit of the Spirit – it doesn’t develop until someone has the Spirit. This suggests a reason God’s people are still here even though God is no longer saving anyone: they are to become more like Christ as they develop the fruit of the Spirit.

*While We Wait for October 21*

The picture we see in the Feast of Tabernacles supports our earlier understanding of this time after May 21. This understanding can help to guide God’s people through this period and help them to make effective use of the time.

We have seen that established ministries should concentrate on “feeding the sheep.” They should provide simple materials or messages for the “lambs” (some of whom may be senior citizens!) as well as the deeper studies for “advanced sheep.” However, most of God’s people are not associated with an organized ministry. What should they do?

First, let’s realize there are some things they should not do. They should not try to preach the Gospel to everyone, and they should not try to warn everyone that October 21 is the end of the world.

A couple of months ago, you may have heard a report of someone who committed suicide out of fear over the May 21 warnings. Whether or not the report was true, God’s people should not try to warn everyone about October 21 because of the possibility that it might result in someone taking his or her own life. Besides, the warning is pointless because God is no longer saving anyone. The world had to be warned about May 21; it doesn’t have to be warned about October 21.

Some of God’s people may be invited to join or return to a local congregation. It is true that there are scriptures indicating that Satan is now under judgment and no longer ruling in the churches. This does not mean, however, that Christ is again ruling there. There’s nothing in the Bible telling us that God will ever again return to the earthly churches. They will continue to depart from the truth. Like the rest of the world, they will become more sinful; so God’s people should avoid them.

We know that everyone God planned to save was freed from Satan’s kingdom as of May 21; but we can’t assume that Satan is powerless. Revelation 16:13-14 indicates that he will continue to oppose the Lord right up to the last day. God’s people continue to need “the whole armour of God,” found in God’s word (Ephesians 6:11-13).

You may be tempted to contribute time or money to an organization that is trying to correct a social problem in our land. Some organizations are fighting to end abortion, or trying to reform school boards so that creation can be taught in the classroom, or trying to end some other practice that is clearly against the Bible. These fights are over. There may be some victories here and there, but the downward trend is clear and cannot be stopped. God’s people should not spend their time on such organizations. On the other hand, there are organizations working to provide immediate relief to end various types of human suffering. If you really want to do volunteer work, those organizations may be worthwhile.

What, then, should God’s people really be doing until October 21? While waiting for that day, all should continue to pray and read God’s word. They should praise God and thank Him for the blessings in their lives. They should continue to be good neighbors and good citizens.

Some may be able to contribute money to faithful ministries. Also, many individuals and families need help because of sacrifices they made to warn the world about May 21. If God’s people become aware of such a need and are in a position to help, then they should. God’s people should also try to comfort and encourage each other by God’s word.

Keep in mind that someone who heard God’s word before May 21 might ask you for help in understanding it. It could be a neighbor who accepted one of your tracts, or a friend with whom you once spoke about the Bible. That person might have recently been saved, and so God’s people should be willing to speak with anyone who sincerely asks about God’s word. All in all, what remains to be done is really easy compared to the tremendous job of warning the world about May 21; but for God’s people, that’s the new mission.