Is this the LORD’s Rapture?

Is this the LORD’s Pattern and Order for the Rapture of His Body ... or ...?

In this Paper my main Scriptural points of reference will be found in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 5:1-11; 2 Thessalonians 2 - 3 and 1 Corinthians 15:23.

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The God of order and purpose

From Genesis to Revelation the work of The LORD, The God of Israel and the Hebrews is marked by order according to the Divine Plan He gave to Moses and not by chaos. Creation has order. His Instruction to Moses has order according to a Pattern that required Moses’ absolute compliance. Psalm 50 speaks of the need to order our lives aright. The Apostle Paul says, “let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40) as he speaks of God’s order even in the Gospel of Salvation. And now we are looking at order in the resurrections.

We have the raising of the Head of The Body, Yeshua (Jesus) Himself, at His Resurrection after the LORD’s Feast of Pesach (Passover) followed by the ‘first fruits’ who rose from their graves at the same time and “entered the city and appeared to
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many” (Matthew 27:52-53). Then at the LORD’s Feast of Shavuot (Weeks - also called Pentecost) the Holy Spirit was given to empower the Body of The Messiah to show that a new era was unfolding with the Renewed Covenant as spoken by Yeshua during His last supper with His disciples (Matthew 26:28). The Renewed Covenant that Paul describes as One New Man (Ephesians 2:13-18) in Messiah – He is the Head and the Jew and the Gentile, both, are His Body - redeemed in His Full, Final and Perfect Sacrifice for the Sin of Mankind.

Times and seasons
The prophet Daniel tells us that the LORD can “change the times and the seasons” (2:21) but he also warns us that the Anti-Christ will change “times and laws” (7:25). The changing of Time is the prerogative of the LORD who is sovereignly in control of the whole space/time agenda. The Anti-Christ can only make his changes with the authority of the LORD, the God of Israel, as He brings His Pattern and Timetable for His Household of Faith together to a perfect eternal conclusion. He inhabits eternity but He can and does reach into time and history to make the changes necessary for the transition from one era to the next.

When speaking to Moses and Aaron regarding the Exodus and the celebration of the first Passover, He said “it shall be the first month of the year for you” (Exodus 12:2) when it was, in fact, the beginning of the seventh month. Then with Joshua (Exodus 10:12-14) and Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:8-11) you see clearly how the LORD has control over “times and seasons”. But everything is done in order - never by chance as a response to events being out of control. The LORD’s Hand is on and over everything so that order is the absolute and fundamental environment for all He does. He told Moses there was a Pattern for everything, in the construction of the Tabernacle, and everything was to be ordered and made absolutely in accordance with that Pattern; because, if you study the LORD’s Pattern, there are great and wonderful revelations to be made. That which is covert in the First Covenant Scriptures becomes overt in the Renewed Covenant Scriptures so that we may all receive wisdom, understanding and knowledge.

Repetition enables understanding
God is very gracious in His dealings with man - man is slow to comprehend all the LORD would show him. Yeshua said that the Parables were for His own disciples to know and understand but not for the natural man to understand (Matthew 13:3,10-11). Isaiah was told he would speak and prophesy but the people would “keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive; ... the heart of the people dull, their ears heavy, their eyes shut, lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and return and be healed” (6:9-10). All the LORD does is motivated for our salvation with His Love. Paul was encouraging the brethren in Thessalonica when he said, “putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation” (1st 5:8) in our core texts. ‘Hope’ in the biblical and scriptural context is ‘actual certainty’ of that eventual
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resurrection to be eternally with the LORD, the God of Israel and His Son, Yeshua (Revelation 21:1-8).

Everything the LORD does is methodical, orderly and repetitive because He understands and knows our weaknesses. Yeshua shows His own patient dealings with His disciples and those who listened to Him, who were so slow to understand all that He was showing them and teaching (Matthew 14:31; 16:8-11; 17:17). The Apostle Peter said, “‘I will not be negligent to remind you of these things ... to stir you up by reminding you ... Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease’” (2nd 1:12-15). In fact, Genesis contains the seed of all future doctrines for Israel and for the LORD’s Covenantal One New Man. God’s Word is truth, the historical events are true and the individuals really existed. Even the meaning of their names and the names of the places where events took place are significant.

God uses the history of Israel to encourage us and to teach us His Ways. They were after all to be His witnesses (Isaiah 43:10-12). God has laid His order over all these words and scriptures and everything has meaning and truth. The Scriptures weave and interweave all we need to know from the Torah of the first five Books – Genesis to Deuteronomy – through the Prophets, the Psalms, the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and their Epistles to Revelation. The typology of everything has always been there in the First Covenant Scriptures and the Renewed Covenant Scriptures tell the way the LORD brought it together in His Own Time through Yeshua. The Epistles help to set out how the Instruction of the LORD, the God of Israel and the Hebrews, can be assessed and rebalanced for the “called out” and “set apart” members of this One New Man in Messiah.

The Rapture teaching – where did it come from?
The historical Reformation allowed much to be addressed when the Protestant church separated from the Church of Rome but many important subjects were not explored or set on a correct foundation. Subjects like Eschatology and the place of Israel in the Covenant purposes of the LORD. Consequently there have been many false interpretations and teachings over the years that still need to be addressed and reconsidered. One of the Eschatological subjects is the so-called Rapture, which is the subject of this Paper. I am going to endeavour to explore it in order for you to test it and consider it for yourself.

There was a particular teaching credited to J N Darby and the Schofield Bible of the Brethren community in 1830 which has tended to be a major teaching today but which is not accepted by all. It is based on an utterance given at a conference at Powerscourt and not on a scriptural presentation. Why is this teaching rejected? Is it possible it is not acceptable to our spirit? It has been suggested that the Jesuits introduced this teaching earlier in order to stem a popular view that the Pope would be involved with the future Anti-Christ. If it could be taught that there was to be the
removal of ‘the Church’ then the Pope would no longer be in that final picture of the Book of Revelation. Historically it was the Church of Rome that changed “times and laws” which, according to Daniel, is a work of the Anti-Christ. We have many questions but are there any complete answers to be found?

Yeshua set out certain details His disciples should look out for so they would not be taken by surprise over events in the End Times (Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21). Yeshua also said that the Holy Spirit was to be given not just to empower His people but to teach them and reveal many things that they were unable to understand in the early days of the Faith (John 14:26). Today we are looking at the End Times because we believe this age is quickly reaching its conclusion. Should we not expect the Spirit of God to take us on into a clearer and more understandable sphere today so that we not continue to be ignorant of His Ways at The End?

God’s Word is complete – do we need to rethink what we believe?

Does this mean that we need to reconsider the teachings and conclusions reached by others in time past and allow the Spirit of God to update us with the mysteries that remain hidden within the Patterns of the First Covenant? God is not adding to His Word today. God gave His Word and His Word has been made available over many generations in the same order and form as it was given. However, within the Word there are levels of understanding that are released with the maturing of the student disciple. We may, therefore, find ourselves confronted with facts and events that deny the traditions we have come to accept and obey within the denominational strands of the Faith. Our only straight edge is the Word of God and we have to allow the LORD to direct us according to His Word and not our traditions however dearly we hold them. It has been said that, as we study the scriptures, we should make our notes using a pencil and an eraser as the Holy Spirit takes us on into the different stages of our spiritual maturity. The Rapture has tended to be taught as a swift event that plucks the Church out of the world leaving many, very perplexed, behind. This idea was taken up in the “Left Behind” series of Tim LeHaye. Is this the real pattern that has been given by the LORD and concealed within the Scriptures?

The pictures in the Hebrew Scriptures – can they help?

There are many beautiful pictures in the First Covenant Scriptures that are types we need to discover. Abraham the father sacrificing Isaac his son is a picture of God our Father sacrificing His Son Yeshua for us. Isaac carrying the wood as Christ carried the Cross while Abraham carried the knife and the fire; the knife/spear that would pierce the side of Yeshua as He hung on the Cross and the Fire of Judgement that the LORD will exercise over all His created people at the end. Abraham was aware that if he had to take Isaac’s life there would be a resurrection of that life (Hebrews 11:19) because it was Elohim who was asking – Elohim the God of Creation. God stopped Abraham in the act of offering up his son but He fully gave His Own Son so that all who believe in Him may be saved (John 3:16).
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There is Jacob’s son Joseph rejected by his brothers but sold into Egypt according to God’s will and purpose so that he would be there to save God’s own people. Yeshua, too, was never understood or accepted by His family until after His Death and Resurrection. In Exodus Christ is the Passover Lamb. In Leviticus He is the High Priest explained in the Letter to the Hebrews. In the Book of Ruth Yeshua is represented by Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer, redeeming his bride, Ruth, a Gentile who had bound herself to Naomi her Jewish mother-in-law. In Genesis the servant is the Holy Spirit sent by Abraham, the Father, to seek the Bride for Isaac, his son, although she became a daughter of Abraham. As we read and comprehend these beautiful pictures so our “hearts burn within us” as with the disciples who spoke with Yeshua on the Emmaus Road (Luke 24:13-29) as He used the First Covenant Scriptures to explain all that had taken place in their day.

What of the Rapture?

So what of the Rapture? Is it a swift event or is there so much more to be seen and understood and weighed? Paul said that as this Day approaches we are not to be in the dark over events but, “as people of the day and of the light” we are to be in understanding (1 Thessalonians 5:5). Certainly the first century disciples expected an imminent return of Christ but we are still here, without His Return, some two thousand years further on. What are we to see and to watch for so we are not taken by surprise but are fully prepared and ready when that call comes? Our prime objective is to see Him as He comes for us, which means we should be working on our own obedience to God’s Word in our own walk of Faith. But we tend to concentrate on the events that are still outstanding elements of the prophetic scriptures waiting to be outworked. Moses has said that there are “secret things” which “belong to the LORD our God but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of the law” (Deuteronomy 29:29). However, we need to be ready as Yeshua encourages us to be ready in the parable of the five wise virgins (Matthew 25:1-13).

God’s Word has been given in perfect wholeness, there are no superfluous words and every word that has been given has an important and major role in alerting us to all He wants to impart even if some of it needs digging out. Here we must be very careful because texts taken out of context can be made to say whatever we want them to say and we can fall into error and false teaching. Paul tells us there will be much heresy and false teaching in these Last Days so there is an even greater need to be very careful how we look at and consider all of God’s Word in our Bibles.

Why are the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures in a different order?

The LORD has spoken to His people through those chosen and set apart to Him as Prophets. However, He has not had them set down in chronological order but in the order of their messages. When we study the Hebrew Scriptures of Judaism we find that their order is different from the Christian Bible. However, all the Books that comprise the First Covenant Scriptures are included in the Christian Bible. So do we
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need to understand that the LORD is saying something to the Jew and something different to the Gentile even in this anomaly? However we address and study the Scriptures there is always something to be learned. Hallelujah!

The Scriptures were given eons ago and in each generation there has been relevance for the age. Now as we are approaching The End can we not expect that which was indistinct in its perspective to be brought into much finer detail? Paul suggests that it was only as Yeshua underwent His life on earth that the angels began to understand how everything that had gone before suddenly began to be understood. Should we not expect our Heavenly Father to enable us to see and to understand so that we may have our lamps primed and ready for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb?

Daniel was told to “seal the Book until the time of the End”(12:4), so that at the End there will be an unsealing even as the Book of Revelation is being unsealed today. Of course, it is more clearly unsealed to us if we have a good knowledge of the First Covenant Scriptures.

What is God’s order in considering the Rapture?

Paul begins his explanation of these End Times by saying it is “the word of the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:15) and the dead in Christ precede us in this transition from our natural bodies to resurrected supernatural bodies. The dead go first before those who are still alive. First suggests a sequence and a sequence can take time, because a sequence is usually a set of circumstances that are designed to follow each other in a prescribed order. The dead are out of the grave first and it is only as they are all together for the departure that things culminate. Is this an event that takes place before Christ’s Return or within the sequence of His Return? Let us continue. This future resurrection was begun at the Resurrection of Yeshua when He rose from the dead after His Crucifixion (1 Corinthians 15:20) and the graves of many others were also opened and they were seen by many in the city (Matthew 27:51-54). The Lord Yeshua died as a grain of wheat and rose again bearing much fruit (John 12:24).

These souls who rose at the beginning were those who had “fallen asleep” not only believing in Yeshua as the Messiah, son of David, but as Emmanuel - God with us. These had died pre-crucifixion but the words of Isaiah and the prophets were available for all to study and accept as the prophecy of a future event that they had understood, accepted and believed. We should remind ourselves that the first century church only had the First Covenant Scriptures as their Bible. Although they also had the apostles who had been with Christ and went about afterwards, between the many assemblies of disciples, to encourage and teach them before the Renewed Covenant Scriptures were available. The fact that they were resurrected as the first fruits at “the LORD’s Feast of First Fruits”(Leviticus 23) with Yeshua must allow us to assume that they are true believers and members of His own Body. Then we who are alive follow after.
What is the Trump of God?

But first of all, in these details we are studying, we have the fact that before all these End Time events the Lord Yeshua descends with a **great sound**, the trump of God (1 Thessalonians 4:16). An awesome sound that at other times in scripture, when God comes to His people in awesome ways, they have to be told, “**Fear not!**” At this Trump of God with the voice of an archangel and the shout of the Lord, Himself, the dead in Christ will rise first. What is this Trump? The First Covenant speaks of two silver trumpets and the Ram’s Horn Shofar. What have we here? The Authorised King James Version says Trump, not trumpet as in other versions, suggesting an emphasis on the sound and not necessarily the instrument. A sound that raises the dead! A sound that issues forth as the Lord descends.

When the Lord ascended (Acts 1:9-11) the two men standing with the disciples said that He would return in like fashion but in this passage we are given to see something more than just a quiet return of the Messiah. At that time He ascended on the clouds as they stood silently watching; now He would appear to be returning with the Archangel and even a company of angels. This Trump may however, only be heard or apply to His own Body - those dead and those alive at this point. We also need to incorporate this passage in Thessalonians with 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, which speaks of the change from natural to supernatural bodies along with this sequence taking place. The dead are raised at the **first** trump and the change is effected at the **last** trump.

However, the sound needs an instrument and we have mentioned such instruments provided by God in His Instructions. In the Book of Numbers Moses is instructed to make “two silver trumpets ... of hammered work ... for calling the congregation and for directing the movement of the camps” (10:2). In our context this makes an interesting reflection if we also understand that God instructed Moses to make artefacts that were earthly examples of heavenly things. We have the gathering together of God’s people at the first trump and the moving of them on at the last trump. We are told these trumpets will be used at all the joyous Feasts of the LORD when they enter the Promised Land (Numbers 10:10). These numbers will include those resurrected earlier as the first fruits.

Why did that event occur? May we say that it could be a sign and example for us of these future events particularly in the light that the Sadducees refused to believe in a resurrection? May we also say that in God’s Mercy and Grace He allowed a resurrection of certain souls in order that here, at the very outset of this Covenantal One New Man in Messiah Movement, none would be ignorant of the eschatological teachings that would be outworked in His Time at the End of Times? Let us continue to consider these questions.
Messiah Yeshua and the first fruits

These first fruits are the representative sheaf offering waved before the LORD at this His Festival (Leviticus 23) in order that the harvest, both of barley and of souls, may begin. Yeshua said, when speaking with Mary Magdalene at the Tomb, that He could not be touched before He had been presented as the sheaf of the First Fruits to His Father (John 20:17). Yet it was soon after this, when the angels in the Tomb had sent the women to tell the disciples that He was raised, that they met with Him and held His feet (Matthew 28:9). For forty days Christ and the dead in Christ who were resurrected with Him and the believers alive at that time were together on the earth; a holy convocation of God’s people who begin the One New Man in the Messiah under the Renewed Covenant in His Blood.

More pictures in Scripture

The LORD’s Feast of Unleavened Bread is the beginning of the barley harvest while Shavuot, fifty days later, sees the wheat harvest being gathered in with a wave offering of two loaves of leavened bread, representative of the Jew and the Gentile – the completed Body of the One New Man in the Messiah Yeshua, being presented to the Father. This can be seen in the picture of Joseph presenting his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh to his father Israel (Genesis 48), as Yeshua brings us as a presentation offering to His Father. In this way we have seen the start of the harvest of souls into The Kingdom of God, which is finalised at the resurrection of the completed Body of the LORD’s redeemed people at the end of the age when the fulfilment of the Feast of Ingathering is finally seen.

Scriptural order

Back to our scriptures, (1 Thessalonians 4) having seen the dead rise, “then we who are alive and remain are snatched up together with them”. Then is more usually translated “after these things” which again suggests an order and a time scale. We have the dead risen, we have the living risen but then we need to integrate 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 for at this same event we will “all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump”. This is where we need all of scripture in order to place all the pieces together for the full picture that scripture contains. What we have here is not necessarily a quick snatching away of the people but an almost instantaneous change from the mortal body to the immortal body.

We need to look again at Acts 1:9-11. Yeshua has been with His own for forty days prior to His Ascension. Then He is taken up in the clouds while His disciples stand silently watching Him go. They have been joined by two men who address the apostles and disciples - a representative nucleus of the Body of Messiah - which was referred to as a sect by the Pharisees (Acts 24:5,14) . At this point in time they are Jews but after the episode with Cornelius (Acts 10) the Gentiles, who are born again in Yeshua, are to be grafted into this Body (Romans 11) to become the “One New
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*Man*” (Ephesians 2:15) in the Messiah Yeshua. I believe that this gathering together with the Messiah will be where all God’s glory resides, in Jerusalem on Mount Zion.

**Why the 40th day and not the 50th?**

The interesting detail is in Christ’s departure on the fortieth and not the fiftieth day of this Feast of the LORD. The Crucifixion of Yeshua was on the anniversary of Pesach (Passover), first given by the LORD to His people as they were instructed to place the blood of a lamb on the doorposts of their homes as the Angel of Death passed over. Now Yeshua is the Passover Lamb given for the salvation of His people in His Blood. It was, as the Israelites and the strangers who had joined with them had left Egypt and arrived at Sinai, that the Instruction of the LORD for His Household of Faith was given to Moses on the first anniversary of the LORD’s Feast of Shavuot (Weeks). It is to be on this self-same anniversary, on the fiftieth day, that everyone is to see the Holy Spirit being given to His people gathered together in the Temple precincts as they listen to Peter address them. Thus we see the opportunity, at this time, for all to fulfil the requirements that Yeshua spoke of with the woman at the Well (John 4:22-24) when He said, “… the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth”.

Therefore, rather than seeing Yeshua do something significant on one of the LORD’s Feast Days, as was the pattern, we see Him depart ten days early on the fortieth day before the final wave offering which is due on the fiftieth day. We also need to see that the Second Coming is described by Paul, in his second letter to the Thessalonians, as “with His mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on all those who do not know God” (1:7-8). Yet in Acts 1:9-11 the Apostles were assured “as they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up” that He would “so come in like manner as you saw Him go” in the clouds. The “flaming fire” refers to the Lord’s Judgement, which may be the message of the Coming that Jude credits to Enoch, that when the Lord returns it will be “with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgement on all” (14-15).

**Are there more than two advents of the Messiah?**

We are studying the Scriptures seeking any information to be gleaned on a possible Rapture event prior to this Second Coming. Should we ask if there is to be a “Coming” other than the expected Second Coming? As we are ten days off the Festival of Shavuot can we even suggest that Yeshua, when He comes for His Body, remains for a period within these ten days, before the actual Return for Judgement, having gathered together all the members of His completed Body? Can we even say that the Lord Yeshua comes to earth more times than just His First and Second Advents?
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It is interesting that Paul’s account of his encounter with the Lord on the Damascus Road is repeated as a three-fold witness in the Acts of the Apostles (9:3-6; 22:7-10; 26:16-18). Paul also suggests that over the three year period when he was in the desert he was being taught by the Lord who told him “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). These words are found nowhere else in Scripture but Paul credits them to the Lord. In this way Paul suggests he has witnessed the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:8) post Ascension. We note that on the Damascus Road Paul’s companions did not witness the person of the Lord, but heard only His voice.

Can we assume, therefore, that the Trump of God may be clear to His own but not necessarily to the natural man who is not yet regenerate in Yeshua (1 Thessalonians 4)? The Letter to the Hebrews speaks of the “general assembly and church of the first born” at Mount Zion (12:22-23). So can we take this event as the first instance of that great congregation coming together at this time?

We are asking the question – Why did the Lord ascend on the fortieth day, which was not one of the Feasts of the LORD but ten days before the LORD’s Feast of Shavuot? As an aside, for a moment, let us look at the Feasts of the LORD, understanding that they are not the Feasts of the Jews or even the Feasts of Israel but of the LORD given by Him in His Instructions to Moses at Sinai, which were to be “statutes forever throughout your generations: I am the LORD your God” (Leviticus 23).

We have to uncover the covert in the First Covenant Scriptures in order to help ourselves with our questions. We have been given to understand that the Lord Yeshua was born at the Feast of Succot (Tabernacles - in the month of Tishrei). John’s Gospel tells us “the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (1:14). With Yeshua’s birth on the Feast of Succot, an eight day Festival, we see Him, according to the Pattern and Instructions set down by His Father, the God of Israel, being circumcised on the eighth day, the great day of the holy convocation according to the Law. Yeshua was born and lived according to Torah (Luke 2:39).

When Yeshua went to the Temple in Jerusalem as a boy with His parents it was in obedience to the LORD’s Instructions that all were to attend at The Temple during His Three Pilgrim Festivals. These Festivals are, Pesach (Passover), Shavuot (Weeks – seven weeks after Passover) and Succot (Tabernacles). The Festivals were celebrated by the early Apostles and disciples in the many congregations of the Lord’s Body until the Church of Rome changed the “times and laws” (Daniel 7:25) when the Church Councils voted to amputate the Body of Messiah from its Hebraic Heritage around AD 325. These decisions were taken in a spirit of Anti-Semitism because of a growing hatred between the Jews and the Gentiles.
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We need to consider this information and seek the Face of the LORD by His Spirit in the Name of Yeshua because the church we see and know today is not the one left behind by Yeshua at His Ascension. Today the church that bears His Name is based on the traditions of man and not the traditions of the LORD, the God of Israel (2 Thessalonians 2:15, 3:6), the foundations (1 Corinthians 3:10-15) on which Paul said he had built. Consequently we are being asked to look keenly into this subject in order to repent, if need be, and return to the Body of Messiah that Yeshua is returning to claim and lead into eternity.

The Feasts of the LORD

Returning to the Feasts of the LORD, we see that Yeshua was crucified at Pesach (Passover – 1 Corinthians 5:7-8) when He completed “once for all” every offering the LORD had commanded His people to obey. “The Burnt Offering”, “The Grain Offering”, “The Peace Offering”, “The Sin Offering” and “The Trespass Offering” (Leviticus 1-5) all types that were consummated in the Crucifixion of the Lord Yeshua. The Sin of the First Adam paid for by the Perfect Atonement Sacrifice of the Last Adam (Romans 5:14-19; 1 Corinthians 15:45-49).

Yeshua’s Resurrection was on the Feast of First Fruits within the Festival of Unleavened Bread (a type of the sinless/unleavened Body of Yeshua, which we shall all receive in our changed status) and He presented Himself to His Father as the wave offering of the Festival. This presentation, that was commanded to be done, was a singular dedicated act before the LORD God of Israel on behalf of all His people. This Feast is held from the 14th of the first month of the sacred calendar at evening to the 21st at evening with holy convocations at the beginning and end. According to the LORD, for those who keep this Feast, it is “a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes” (Exodus 13:9, 16).

During this Festival we are celebrating what is to come - our sinless bodies like as unto the Lord’s Body. At the end of this period of eight days we begin to count the seven Sabbaths of the seven Weeks until the Feast of Shavuot (Weeks) when two leavened loaves are to be waved before the LORD God of Israel. Not just a few stalks of barley or wheat but two completed loaves of leavened (leaven being equated with sin) bread but made with fine flour. A picture of the One New Man, both the Jew and the Gentile, redeemed and complete in Messiah and awaiting their translation to the perfect bodies promised to us. These two loaves were presented together with animal sacrifices before the LORD but they have now been replaced by the one perfect sacrifice of Yeshua the Messiah so bringing the Head and His Body together. This Festival is to be “a statute forever” for His people.

As we consider the Festival of Shavuot (Weeks) we are confronted with another anomaly; a mistranslation of Scripture. The Gospels tell us that Christ was seen by His disciples after the Resurrection on “the first day of the week” our Sunday. However, we are told the actual translation of “mia ton sabbaton” should read “the
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*first of the Sabbaths* “to be counted from Passover to Shavuot. The early congregation of Yeshua kept the Seventh Day until, like the Festivals, the Church of Rome changed the *times and laws* that affected the Sabbath. Consequently it has been further suggested that by the time the King James Version of Scripture was published the church had been celebrating on a Sunday for so long that it was politic to translate this phrase for the Sunday.

However, we are taking our direction and instructions from the Word of the LORD and His Patterns given to His Household of Faith and the Sabbath is of particular importance to the LORD throughout His Word. In the tradition of Judaism, the Book of Ruth is read at Shavuot. Ruth, a Gentile, was married to the Jewish son of Naomi, her mother-in-law. When her husband died she refused to leave Naomi’s side and spent her days working to provide for their needs. Ruth was allowed to glean the barley and the wheat from the fields owned and harvested by Boaz, her Kinsman Redeemer, whom she eventually marries. We have already said that Boaz is a type of Yeshua.

**Again – why the 40th day and not the 50th?**

In our examination of this subject we are asking why the Lord Yeshua rose on the fortieth and not the fiftieth day of Shavuot. Why are these ten days outstanding? Are there any scriptural examples that could help? When the LORD was about to give His Instructions at Sinai he told Moses to make himself and the people ready. They took three days to prepare themselves, wash their clothes and keep from marital relations. Moses then went up into the mountain to meet with God but he waited a further seven days before the LORD appeared to him – ten days in all. We have said the Feast of Shavuot that we are considering, when Yeshua ascended to sit at the Right Hand of His Father until the Time of His Return, was the anniversary of the giving of the Word and of the Spirit to God’s people. Is this a fulfilment of Jeremiah’s prophecy (31:33) that the LORD’s Instructions would be written on hearts and no longer on stone (Ezekiel 11:19, 36:26) at the giving of this Renewed Covenant?

It has been suggested that the Lord Yeshua might return at the LORD’s Feast of Succot (Tabernacles) just as He came for His Birth. However, we have seen that Shavuot completes the Waving of the Two Loaves, which does signal a completion. Is it the completion of the giving of The Truth, at Sinai, and The Spirit, at the Temple in Jerusalem, which enables all of the LORD’s Household of Faith to be thoroughly equipped to become the disciples He desires (John 4:24) as they worship Him in “spirit and in truth” as the “One New Man” in the Messiah? Not an event that signifies the Rapture. Certainly the Lord said we would not *“know the hour”* (Matthew 24:42) and we would not *“know that day and hour”* (Mark 13:32). However, we are told that it could come suddenly *“as a thief in the night”* (Matthew 24:37-44; Mark 13:33-37; 1 Thessalonians 5:3; 2 Peter 3:8-10). There are very many pieces of information to be weighed in the balances as we seek out the answers to our questions.
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The Holy Spirit was given to enable us, in our salvation, to walk out the Way of the Faith. It had been foretold before the creation of the world that these events were in the mind of The Creator, the God of Israel and that His Son Yeshua was to be the One through Whom all these things would be achieved. “The harvest is the end of the age” (Matthew 13:39) “when the wheat and the tares will at last be separated”. “Now all these things happened unto them for examples ... on whom the end of the age have come” (1 Corinthians 10:11). This has been an age that began with the Resurrection of Yeshua and has gone on to the building up of the living stones (His disciples) into the One New Man, the Body of Messiah.

What did Yeshua teach before His Ascension?

The resurrection of Yeshua with those who were the dead in Christ at that time, illustrates the waving of the First Fruits and the Festival of Unleavened Bread represents the sinless Body of Messiah. The celebration of the Feast of the LORD as a hidden picture in the First Covenant Scriptures now a glorious celebration with the start of this festival in the flesh of the reality of the picture. They had seen the relevance of Passover and the completion of Shavuot, as the giving of Truth and Spirit. They were aware of what the Festival of Succot was to become in its alternative name the Feast of Ingathering. Zechariah tells us that all nations shall go to Jerusalem to celebrate the LORD’s Feast of Succot during the Millennial Reign of the Messiah (14:16-21). Therefore, we could suggest that this Festival has more relevance to Christ’s Return and would continue to be celebrated on that Anniversary. Furthermore, there is an understanding that eventually its relevance will be in its completion when the redeemed are “Ingathered” for eternity.

Were these and much more the types of illustrations and teachings the Lord gave to His disciples during the forty days He was with them? Then, having prepared them He went away in order that the Holy Spirit might come and empower them; continuing to teach them and remind them of all that He had shared with them. Not only from the First Covenant Scriptures, as He did on the Emmaus Road, but the ongoing revelation of The Word as the time for the final harvest “at the end of the age” came round.

Although Yeshua had left on the fortieth day before the giving of the Holy Spirit, He had breathed upon His disciples (John 20:22) and thereby left with them the deposit or the guarantee of that future anointing that was to come (2 Corinthians 1:21-22). In this way He did not leave His people without the spirit and anointing they would continually need over the years before His Return. Yeshua told the authorities, in a covert way, that He was the Temple of the LORD (John 2:19) and Peter tells us that we are living stones being built up, individually, into the Temple of the Lord by His Holy Spirit (1st 2:5), which Paul also refers to in 1 Corinthians 3:16 (also 6:19 and Ephesians 2:1-22).
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My picture of this is of a craftsman built dry stone wall, which is a testimony to the Master Builder, who fits all the stones together, large and small. There are major stones within the body of the wall and those that fit along the top. Then there are many small and insignificant stones, equally essential, to infill the empty spaces for stability. Nothing has been used to cement them together except the skilled and wonderful work of the craftsman. As living stones in the Messiah it is our faith and trust in Him that seamlessly binds us together.

So far everything has been happening on the anniversary dates of the Feasts of the LORD, except that now we have an important event taking place ten days early. Is it possible to know the meaning of this or is it something of the mystery that is only the LORD’s to know (Deuteronomy 29:29)? There will be a time when He will come “with a shout, with the voice of an archangel and with the trump of God” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

**Parousia – what does it mean?**

He will **come** – the word Parousia. This word is translated as “come or coming” in twenty places in Scripture and as “presence” in two texts. In verse seventeen following on from the above quote we have “caught up” – “harpazo”, which is used here and in five other places as an act of the LORD on His peoples’ behalf and only once used as “the wolf catches them and scatters” (John 10:12), referring to the devil who so often counterfeits a work of the LORD in order to deceive – even if possible – the very elect (Matthew 24:24). And now in these End Times the devil will be very busy in the coming age of the Anti-Christ. However, Christ’s Full, Final and Perfect Sacrifice at Golgotha is the keeping of His own in His Hand for all eternity.

Those who teach on the Rapture use this word, Parousia, particularly. Originally Parousia was used in the context of Emperor Worship. When an Emperor came to a city it was called his Parousia – his coming. His arrival was announced with great noise, with shouts, with the sound of the trump and with all pomp and ceremony. Every eye saw his coming and arrival and so everyone was gathered together. He was the ruling and reigning Emperor – the King. Paul has seen fit to use this word in his explanation of the last days when we are to be caught up to be with Him in the air and to return with Him for His Millennial Reign.

Paul’s use of Parousia as ‘presence’ is used once in the context of his having been with the disciples, “therefore my beloved as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). And again when Paul is referring to his critics who have sought to disparage him he recounts their comments, “for his letters” they say “are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible” (2 Corinthians 10:10).
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Parousia is the word used very frequently by many who teach on the Rapture to describe “the coming alongside of” those being caught up by the Lord in the Rapture event. Paul however, seems to use this word in two very interesting ways which do not necessarily suggest the Rapture to me and therefore, I am suggesting, there is more digging to be done with the help of His Holy Spirit.

Reference has been made to the Letter to the Hebrews, “and the coming to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church (the ekklesia - those called out of the world and set apart unto the LORD) of the first born (Yeshua) who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Yeshua the Mediator of the New Covenant and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel” (12:22-24).

Again - those 10 days - and some more pictures to consider

This is an event of the final days which would seem to be when the two loaves are complete and all are gathered in. Therefore, Yeshua had to leave before the last day of the Festival of Shavuot in order for time to elapse between the first stirrings of The Body of Messiah, born again in Christ the Lord Yeshua, and these final scenes at the end. A time known only to the LORD the God of Israel and which Yeshua said, “It is not for you to know times and seasons which the Father has put in His own authority” (Acts 1:7). Paul repeats this with a warning, “But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the Day of the LORD so comes as a thief in the night ... but you brethren are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief” (1 Thessalonians 5:1-4).

Paul entered into conversation with those that were gathered on Mars Hill, around the different altars to their gods, when he referred to their altar to the ‘Unknown God’. He said that this God was the Creator of all men, the LORD of heaven and earth, who has determined man’s appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, in order that they come to seek Him. Paul said that the LORD had overlooked their ignorance up to that point but now the God of Israel was calling all men to repent because He has appointed a Day on which He will Judge the world in righteousness by The Man whom He has ordained (Yeshua His Son). In assurance of this fact God raised the Man from the dead (Acts 17:22-32). Repentance is an important part of this End Time event if we want to be numbered with the saints in that Day. Repentance is Yeshua’s first and last commandment to His Body and it was Moses’ last commandment and pivotal teaching.

We have noted there are ten days between the fortieth and the fiftieth day of this Feast of the LORD at the time of Yeshua’s Ascension. Are there any ten day periods to help with our quest to understand this point? We have the ten days when God called to Moses to meet with Him on the Mountain in order to hand him His
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Instructions. We have the picture of the servant (the Holy Spirit) being sent to find the bride for Abraham’s son (God looking for a bride for His Son) and her family wanting her to stay with them for ten days before taking up this role as the bride but agreeing to her leaving straight away. We have the ten days after the Feast of Trumpets and before the Day of Atonement within the Festival of Ingathering or Succot. Paul tells us that all Scripture is useful for all our needs and our understanding (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Although many people have come to Faith in the Lord Yeshua and have been born again into the Family of God, as the One New Man in Messiah, according to many of the Prophets, it is not until the last scenario that the LORD whistles for Israel from north, south, east and west and they “look on Him whom they pierced and mourn for Him as for an only son” (Zechariah 10:8 and 12:10; Isaiah 5:26; Mark 13:27). They realise that He is, was and always will be their Messiah and at this time the fountains are opened (Ezekiel 37:23; Zechariah 13:1; Revelation 7:17) for their cleansing just prior to the Millennial Reign of the Messiah (Zechariah 13:1).

Back to that first Shavuot period of ten days and we see the disciples dealing with themselves in prayer and fellowship awaiting the Feast of the LORD. The subject of Judas was dealt with and a replacement selected. There was a preparedness to be single-eyed and obedient before the LORD. According to the Chronologists, who have studied the timescales of scripture, Enoch’s life span showed them a birth and a removal (without death) on this date that was to become the anniversaries of the giving of the Truth and the Spirit to God’s people. Enoch is the one that Jude tells us had a very lively understanding of the Lord’s Return with many myriad thousands of the saints to execute His Judgements.

Could the LORD change His Calendar back again? At the time of Moses the seventh month became the first month with Passover as the start of a sacred calendar while the civil calendar continued on as normal. He who has changed the times and seasons could change them again but we are told it is not our prerogative to know the times and seasons which belong only to the LORD God of Israel. However, should we not be expecting His Return at any moment and live our lives accordingly, always repentant and looking up?

We can look back but can we look forward?
We are happy to look back to history and believe what we are told. But can we look forward to these awesome illustrations that are to come? Are they really able to be grasped? Can we have faith in these things? Scripture tells us that Philip was ‘taken’ after the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:39-40). Why is this written? How is it to affect our understanding? Obadiah expected Elijah to be spirited away instead of meeting with King Ahab (1 Kings 18:12) and Elijah was ‘taken’ before death to be with the LORD (2 Kings 2:11-17). Noah went through the Flood protected by the Ark
and Lot was removed from Sodom and Gomorrah before the fire fell. Yeshua spoke of it all “as in the days of Noah and Lot”.

Isaiah exhorted the people as the LORD directed him regarding the Kingdom and the End Times (55 & 56). Then it would appear that Isaiah is suggesting that the LORD takes the righteous out of The Way before the coming evil (57:1-2). Is this a much overlooked scripture that should be part of our consideration of the Rapture theory? Does it even confirm the theory?

Enoch walked with God and was ‘taken’ before the Flood, yet he knew about its coming because he named his son, Methuselah which translates ‘when he is dead it will come’. He knew of Judgement and of the Second Coming (Jude 14-15). Is he a classic picture of the body of Christ? Enoch and God walked together for three hundred years before he was ‘taken’. Is this a picture of the ekklesia set apart unto God?

The Spirit will give us warnings and prepare us - Praise His Name!
Paul said that he had been told “by the word of the LORD” (1 Thessalonians 4). He had advance warning and I believe we too will know as we draw close to this orderly event. This is the work of the Truth and the Spirit, given so that we are in understanding as these events unfold. So much has been revealed to us through the ages already but will we have all the information or will there still be mystery before all is revealed to us by the Lord Himself on His Return? We cannot assume that we know everything because Yeshua said that one of the tasks of the Holy Spirit was to take us on with teachings and understandings we are not able to deal with at the beginning of our walk of Faith. Maturity brings greater and deeper knowledge of the Truth so that we will always be warned and informed, ready and prepared for events as they unfurl before us.

The Parable of the workers in the Vineyard speak of those chosen to work in the fields regardless of whether they are the first fruits of those chosen or those chosen in the eleventh hour – all receive the same salvation reward. We have looked at many examples from the First and Renewed Covenants but I am not entirely convinced whether there is an early Rapture or if all these events are a sequence of the actual Return and Judgement by the Messiah Himself. I do believe that we can expect ongoing revelations as the Last Hour draws nearer and nearer. The Holy Spirit has been given in great measure to alert us to the Time and the Hour but we should always be ready. Our lives should be lived in listening obedience to the Word of Truth and the Spirit of God alone for these are the ones, the disciples, that He desires (John 4:23-24).

In this Paper we are asking about the Rapture which is taught and believed by many of the national and international Teachers and Preachers today. As I already said we may need to reconsider the teachings and conclusions reached by others and allow
the Spirit of God to reveal The Truth in order to prepare us for Today. We want His Truth and not the traditions of man because we do not want to be a party to the deceptions both Yeshua and Paul say will be rampant in these days. The Gospel was given as a light to lighten the darkness in which many are happiest, according to Yeshua (John 3:19-21). Peter says, “We are a chosen generation ... His own special people ... called out of darkness into His marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9-10).

I can only bow before the LORD God Almighty, at His Throne of Mercy, Grace and Truth. I have found this an interesting excursion into His Word. There has been so much to discover and interpret. The Rapture was not a teaching of the early church; but was taken up by J N Darby and the Schofield Bible from an utterance during one of their meetings which has since then been taken up by many others.

I do believe, however, that as we move through Time and History we will see the Spirit of God making revelations to us, whether as a group studying these things or as individual students of the Word of the LORD. We will not be left without understanding, “if we have eyes to see and ears to hear and hearts open to believe and turn in order to be healed”. My walk has required me to make my notes with the use of a Pencil and an Eraser so that as I have received deeper and deeper understanding I have been able to make the necessary alterations to my journey of Faith. Yes, it is a journey, a pilgrimage, and as such there will be events along The Way that will be highlights and crossroads that will need assessing, understanding and testing.

The LORD instructed Jeremiah to tell us, “Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls” (6:16).

And Yeshua confirms, “Come to Me all you who labour and are heavy 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. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

As we part and go on to consider all we have shared together we can also see ten as being symbolic of Divine Provision and Perfection; the ten days which culminate in the completion of everything our Heavenly Father gave through His Son, Yeshua. A Body of Disciples who will Rest forever with Him at His Festival of Ingathering. God’s Timing for this is unknown but the promise of its completion is within these ten days. Let us all be there with Him.
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