

Beauties of the Truth

A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
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The Law of the Offerings

"This is the law of the burnt offering, of the meal offering, and of the sin offering, and of the trespass offering, and of the consecrations, and of the sacrifice of the peace offerings" (Leviticus 7:37).

The book of Exodus closes with a record of building the Tabernacle, almost a year after the Israelites left Egypt. "In the first month, in the second year, on the first day of the month, the tabernacle was reared up" (Exodus 40:17). On this day also the priests were washed, clothed in their official garments, and anointed with oil, to initiate their priestly duties (Exodus 40:12-17).

The opening day of a new year was an appropriate time to initiate the Tabernacle service. In symbol, the Tabernacle and its offerings represent the Gospel Age and its offerings. This began with our Lord's baptism at the River Jordan and his 3½ year ministry until his death on Calvary's cross. Then the way was open for the saints of the Gospel Age to sacrifice with Christ. Thus this first day of a new year represents the opening of a new age — the Gospel Age.

LEVITICUS

The erection of the Tabernacle closes the book of Exodus, and brings us to Leviticus. This book contains instructions for how the priesthood, drawn from the tribe of Levi (thus the book name, Leviticus), were to perform the various offerings which the Israelites brought to God thereafter. The first seven chapters are devoted to the details of those offerings.

There are five kinds of offerings listed. The summary text heading this article mentions "consecration" and "peace offerings" separately, but in fact the consecration offering was a kind of peace offering.

The five basic offerings are presented in Leviticus in one chapter each, except for the trespass offering, whose description spills over into chapter six. Those five, in consecutive order, are — Burnt Offering, Meal Offering, Peace Offering, Sin Offering, and Trespass Offering.

From Leviticus 6:8 through the end of chapter seven we have another pass through these offerings, with a variety of details that apply specially to the priests.

(For some reason, in that second pass through the offerings, the peace offering is changed from the third position to the last position.)

The kinds of sacrifices one might bring, and incidental regulations about them, varied under each category, according to different factors. In those different factors lies a key to the meaning of each kind of offering, and how they relate to each other. Here is a summary list of those factors.

- Burnt Offering — **Ability** of the offerer
- Meal Offering — **Preference** of the offerer
- Peace Offering — **Purpose** of the offerer
- Sin Offering — **Status** of the offerer
- Trespass Offering — **Deed** committed by the offerer

In other words, the kind of sacrifice one brought for each type of offering depended, respectively, upon an individual's ability, their preference, the purpose of the offerer, their status or position in Israel, or the deed done. We will comment on these further as we proceed.

BURNT OFFERING

Leviticus 1:2 says "you shall bring your offering of the cattle, even of the herd, and of the flock." The word "cattle" is from the Hebrew *behemah*, according to Young's Concordance. Strong's Concordance defines *behemah* as "properly a dumb beast; especially any large quadruped or animal."¹

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The two options, “herd” and “flock,” define the kinds of animals. The herd refers to beef cattle, the flock refers to either sheep or goats.²

The offerer would bring this “of his own voluntary will,” suggesting an act of appreciation for what God had done for him and others. He presented the animal “at the door of the tabernacle,” which means in the court (verse 3), on the north side of the altar (verse 11). North in scripture is the direction of heaven, specially of God, whereas the direction south represents earth (compare Zechariah 14:4, Ezekiel 47:1). So the north side of the altar suggests that the offering was presented to God.

The offerer would place his hands upon the head of the animal and we are told that “it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him” (verse 4). Atonement — here is a key word. This animal represents the atonement made on behalf of the offerer. Placing his hands on the head of the animal indicates that this animal is for him.

Atonement, in God’s Plan, is made for us by the ransom sacrifice of Jesus. In the burnt offering we have a recognition by the offerer of this grace. His giving something precious to God, namely the sacrifice, is to express his appreciation. One could offer a bullock, the highest form of offering in the tabernacle services. Or one could offer a lamb or goat, or even a pair of doves or pigeons (verse 14), as the poor might do because it was all they could afford to bring.

The various kinds of animals, and their relative value, suggests the ability of the worshipper to appreciate what God had done for them. In our case, it represents our ability to appreciate the atonement we have in Christ.

As we come to Christ early in our walk, we have not much growth of character perhaps, not much capacity for expressing our appreciation for the remarkable gift of atonement. Later, as we grow — and as the world during the Millennium progresses — we can offer higher forms of service in token of our appreciation. “Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar” (Psalms 51:19).

But whether one brought something of the herd or of the flock, it must be a male. Males, in respect to livestock, are considered more valuable, perhaps because of their breeding potential. (We will see that relative rank later, in the law of the sin offering.)

A male was not required in all types of sacrifices, but in this case, for the burnt offering, it was. This suggests the inherent worth and value of the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus, who gave his perfect life — his perfect manhood — as a ransom for us.

MOST COMMON TYPE

The burnt offering was the most common kind of offering used in Israel. Every day of the year the priests offered a burnt offering lamb in the morning, and again in the afternoon. In these offerings is a picture of the atonement which Christ gave at Calvary.

True to the type, Jesus was put on the cross in the morning and died at mid-afternoon — the third and ninth hours, respectively (Mark 15:25, 34-37).

The two offerings probably suggest that the ransom provided by Christ covers two classes — Jews and Gentiles. The third hour of the day the blessing of Pentecost came upon the Jews, and the ninth hour of the day an angel appeared to Cornelius to open the call to Gentiles (Acts 2:15, 10:3). Jesus was put on the cross at the third hour for the Jews, to accept the deepest burden of the Law (Galatians 3:10). He died at the ninth hour to pay the ransom for Adam and all his race (Romans 5:18).

These two beneficiaries of Jesus’ sacrifice — Jews and Gentiles — are mentioned by Paul in Ephesians. He says that Jesus has “made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us ... to make in himself of twain one new man ... that he might reconcile both unto God ... you which were afar off [Gentiles], and to them that were nigh [Jews]” (Ephesians 2:14-17).

SWEET SAVOUR

In Leviticus 1:9, 13, 17, the burnt offering is described as a “sweet savour unto Jehovah.” Exodus 29:41, referring to the daily sacrifice, uses this expression also. Paul comments on this expression and applies it to the sacrifice of Christ in Ephesians 5:2. “Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.”

WOOD

Leviticus 1:7 says “the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire upon the altar, and lay the wood in order upon the fire” or coals. The wood ignited from the coals, and “the priests, Aaron’s sons, shall lay the parts, the head, and the fat, in order upon the wood that is on the fire which is upon the altar” (verse 8). The legs and inward parts were washed to remove unclean elements, and then these were placed on the altar with the other parts (verse 9).

Wood is mentioned four times in this chapter, each with the same intent — the burnt offering is placed on the wood, as a means of burning it. It might have passed without mention, but instead the record specifies — wood. Does this have a meaning in the antitype?

Probably it does. It likely represents the cross upon which our Saviour died for our sins, thoroughly and wholly consumed to redeem us. Wood is specified again in Genesis 22:6, which speaks of the offering of Isaac, which represents the offering of Jesus for us. “Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.” The wood borne by Isaac again reminds us of the wooden cross borne by Jesus to Calvary (John 19:17).

Leviticus 6:12 specially associates the wood with the burnt offering. “The fire upon the altar ... shall not be put out: and the priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and lay the burnt offering in order upon it.”



The Altar of Burnt Offering

Wood appears in two other places respecting the offerings of the Law. Leviticus 4:12, “The whole bullock shall he carry forth without the camp unto a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn him on the wood with fire.” This is about the sin-offering. Here the bullock represents our Lord Jesus who suffered on the cross for our sins.

The other place is Leviticus 3:5, “Aaron’s sons shall burn [the peace offering] on the altar upon the burnt sacrifice, which is upon the wood that is on the fire.” This again associates wood with the burnt offering — the cross with the ransom.

MEAL OFFERING

This is termed “meat offering” in the common version, but it refers to grain, or meal. It could be offered as raw flour (Leviticus 2:2), or cooked in any of a variety of ways (verses 4-8), or even “green ears of corn dried by the fire ... beaten out of full ears” (verse 14).

Israel was an agrarian society, and much of the population raised crops of grain. The meal offering was an opportunity for them to devote a token of their crops to God. Part of the offering was burned to “ascend” to God, and the remainder was used by the priests.

This offering was a way for Israelites to recognize God’s blessing upon them and give back some of the good they received of Him, in appreciation.

The lesson to us is that we should also make some return to God of the bounties we have received from him. We have any number of choices on how we can do this, what service we will offer — represented by the array of choices open to Israelites on how to prepare the grain that they would offer. Whatever our natural talents or interests may be, we can give something to the Lord’s cause.

TWO REQUIREMENTS

There were but two requirements when making a meal offering — (1) it must be accompanied by oil, and (2) what-

ever was burned should be accompanied by frankincense (Leviticus 2:1).

(1) Oil represents the holy Spirit. Whatever we offer to God in return for his blessings should be accompanied by a rich measure of the spirit of God as our motivation. (2) Frankincense is the aromatic substance that represents the sweet scent of devoted service. These both should characterize what we yield to God. Proper motivation by the Spirit of God will produce fervent service.

There were also two items that Israel was never to offer on the altar, namely, leaven and honey. “Ye shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in any offering of Jehovah made by fire” (Leviticus 2:11).

Leaven is a picture of sin, which corrupts and infests so readily. We all have sin within us because we inherit a tendency toward it as part of Adam’s race. This is shown by the two loaves waved before God on the day of Pentecost, which were baked with leaven. But we never send leaven — sin — up to God, represented by burning it on the altar. We are accepted by Him because we are justified by the blood of Christ, but sin itself is unacceptable.

Honey represents the richness of our heavenly calling and its spiritual privileges (Exodus 16:31, Judges 14:14, 1 Samuel 14:27, Psalms 119:103, Revelation 10:9). This we do not offer in sacrifice, because it is the blessing of God to us. We sacrifice earthly things, human things, but not spiritual things.

PEACE OFFERING

Because we have been redeemed, pictured in the burnt offering, we have justification. This brings us peace with God. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).

But peace with God is only the beginning. Once we receive this peace, we have an additional opportunity to aspire to the “high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). Some who do not recognize the special and unique nature of the heavenly calling may suppose that being redeemed means a person naturally is on the way to heavenly glory. But there is a distinction between having peace with God and being called to the high calling.

In Romans 5:2 Paul speaks of the second part of our blessing, the heavenly call to glory. “By whom [Jesus] also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” In other words, being at peace with God through the redemption, we are able to go further. We are able to accept the wonderful invitation of the high calling. This additional blessing we have as a unique consequence of having “peace” with God.

The peace offerings express an appreciation for such additional privileges. The various kinds of peace offerings are itemized starting with Leviticus 7:12. It might be a thank offering (Leviticus 7:12), a vow offering (Leviticus 7:16), or an offering in token of one’s consecration to God, as when priests were consecrated to God’s service (Leviticus 7:37, Exodus 29:22, 26, 27, 31, 34, Leviticus 8:22, 28, 29, 31).

The thank offering is referred to by Paul in Hebrews 13:15, “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”

A vow offering applied if, for example, one took the vow of the Nazarite (Numbers 6). This represents our solemn agreement to God to be devoted to His service.

The consecration offerings for the priests apply spiritually to our consecration to God, by which we become prospective members of the royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9). Thus the peace offering depends upon the intent of the individual.

Romans 5:1,2 connects our heavenly call to our justification. Leviticus 3:5 makes a similar connection, for it says that the peace offering is laid upon the burnt offering. “Aaron’s sons shall burn it on the altar upon the burnt sacrifice, which is upon the wood that is on the fire.”

For the peace offering, the fat and cleansing organs (kidneys and liver) were burned on the altar. Fat, which from its oil content would burn well, represents our zeal in the service of God. The cleansing organs represent our sanctification, our effort to cleanse ourselves and seek spiritual values.

The muscle tissue of the offering — the “meat” of the offering — was to be eaten by the priests partly, and the remainder by the offerer, and presumably his family and associates (Leviticus 7:15, 16, 31, 32). So the offerings we make are received by our high priest Jesus, but we share in the blessings incident to our praise and service.

During the Millennium the offerings of the world will be received by Jesus and the Church, the priesthood of the next age, and the world will share in the blessings incident to their praise and service.

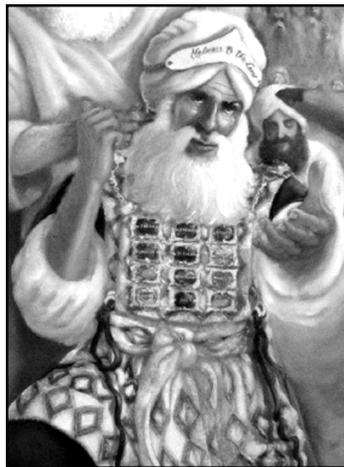
The priest’s portions were the choice parts — the breast and right shoulder (Leviticus 7:31, 32). So we wish that the choice parts of our praise and service will be acceptable to our high priest, at the right hand of God in glory.

WAVED BEFORE GOD

To further show that Peace Offerings express what we give to God in praise, thanks, and devotion, part of the offering was waved before God. This was sometimes called a “heave” offering, for it was lifted high and waved to heaven (Leviticus 7:14). Three items were included with this, an unleavened cake, an unleavened wafer, and a fried cake.

These were to be mingled or anointed with oil, as with other meal offerings (Leviticus 7:12). But there was an additional item also, specified in verse 13. “Beside the cakes, he shall offer for his offering leavened bread with the sacrifice of thanksgiving of his peace offerings.”

This seems to show that while we are here below, offering praise or service to God in appreciation of our redemption, we still recognize the presence of sin within us. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8, 9).



An officiating priest

SIN OFFERING

Though we have been redeemed, still we have the propensity for sin within us. The sin offerings recognize this propensity and our need for cleansing. In the fourth chapter of Leviticus, sin offerings are detailed for four situations of individuals or groups — a priest, the congregation, a ruler, and a common person. In case of sin being committed by a priest or the congregation, a

bullock was offered. When a sin offering was needed for a ruler or a common Israelite, a goat was offered.³

Brethren have learned from Tabernacle Shadows that in the big picture of the Day of Atonement offerings (Leviticus 16), the priests who were atoned for first represent the Church, and the people atoned for second represent the world during the Millennium. For the first a bullock was offered, for the second a goat.

Here, in chapter four, the priest and congregation apparently are separate pictures of the Church class during the Gospel Age, and both require the sacrifice of a bullock. The ruler and the common Israelite take us into the Millennium, representing the Ancient Worthies and the people of the world. These require a goat.

These instructions applied to Israel in the wilderness. Numbers 15:17-24 indicates that when Israel entered the land of promise, the sin offering for the congregation would change. Then, rather than a bullock for a sin of the congregation, they would offer a goat. Coming into the land represents a change into the Millennial Age, so the “congregation” changes from a Gospel Age ecclesia of the Lord’s people, to a congregation of people during the Millennium.

Thus the change from a bullock to a goat for this offering is consistent with the general understanding of Leviticus 16 — a bullock for the Church, a goat for the world.

WHERE THE BLOOD WAS USED

In the case of a priest or a congregation — referring to members of the Church during the Gospel Age — blood from the offering was taken into the holy. Some of it was sprinkled seven times before the vail, some was applied to the horns of the golden altar, and the remainder poured outside at the base of the altar of burnt offering (Leviticus 4:6,7,17,18). In the offering for the ruler or a common person, the blood of the offering was used in the court only. It was put on the horns of the Brazen Altar and the remainder poured at the bottom of the altar (Leviticus 4:25,34).

The Church during this age is represented in the holy — so the blood of the offering is used for them in the holy.

Whereas the world during the Millennium, not called to heaven, are represented in the Court — therefore the blood of that offering is used exclusively in the court.

There is a difference also in how the meat of the offering was used. In the case of the priest and the congregation (the Gospel Age picture) the body of the sin offering was burned. In the case of the ruler or the common Israelite (the Millennial Age picture) the meat of the offering was to be eaten by the priests.

Perhaps this shows that during the present time the offering is “sent up” to God — whereas in the Millennium, the offerings of the world are accepted by the “Royal Priesthood,” Jesus and the church in glory.

TRESPASS OFFERING

The trespass offering was tendered by an offending party based upon the trespass he had done. For normal transgressions, without malice and forethought, the offerer was to bring a “female from the flock” (Leviticus 5:6), either a lamb or goat — or, if he was unable, then a pair of doves or pigeons (verse 7).

Leviticus 5:15 and forward says that transgressions in sacred things pertaining to God, which are more serious offenses, required a ram — that is, a male from the flock — along with a 20% penalty in money according to the judgment of the priest.

Leviticus 6:1-7 shows that deliberate fraud perpetrated upon a neighbor also merited the more decisive punishment — again a ram, that is, a male from the flock — and the fraud was to be reimbursed. In addition, there was to be a 20% penalty.

So with us now, and with the world in the Millennium — when we realize a trespass, we should recognize it, express our regret for it, and make amends as far as possible. In dire cases there may be a penalty as well, stripes or punishments as the Lord sees best, appropriate for our correction. This is in the interest of justice, and in the interest of reforming the offender.

— Bro. David Rice

(1) *Behemah* is actually Strong’s number 929, which he indicates is translated either “beast” or “cattle” in the common version. When one looks under the word “beast” in Strong’s main concordance one finds many cases of word “929” listed. But when one looks under the word “cattle” in his main concordance, for some reason one finds word “930” where presumably word “929” is intended. It seems to be a mistake in the listing. Word number “930” in Strong’s Concordance is *behemoth*, the same spelling in English, “behemoth.” That English word appears but once in the scriptures, namely Job 40:15, as Young’s Concordance agrees.

(2) Even at Passover, when we usually think of a lamb, the Israelites could use a goat, as Exodus 12:5 allows.

(3) A male goat was required for a ruler, a female goat allowed for a common person. This distinction makes it apparent that male offerings were considered of higher rank. This explains why the burnt offering should be a male, to recognize the dignity and value of our Lord Jesus who gave himself our ransom, even if the offerer could not always afford the most costly kind of animal.

From Jordan to Golgotha

“And the holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased. And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age” (Luke 3:22, 23).

How long was the spirit-begotten life of Jesus Christ? Nobody knows precisely. But from Autumn 29 AD to Spring 33 AD is about 3½ years.

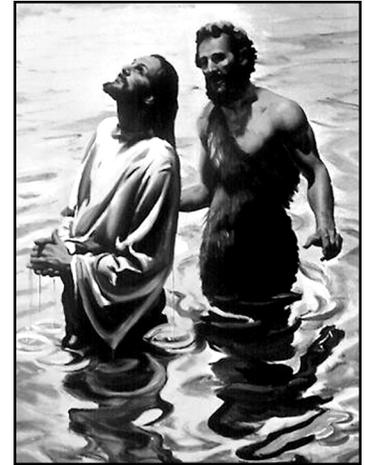
Having acknowledged that no one knows with certainty, we may consider a possibility. That Jesus was born a very few years after 4 BC has been shown by W. E. Filmer, *Journal of Theological Studies*, Volume 17, Number 2, pages 283-298 (October 1966).¹

Zacharias, father of John the Baptist, was a priest of the course of Abijah, which was the eighth course of 24 (1 Chronicles 24:1-10).

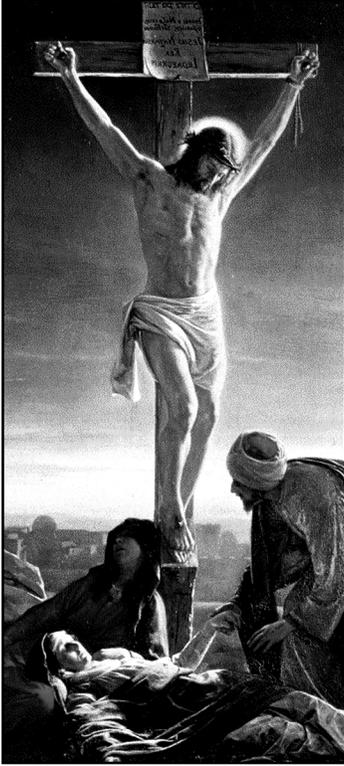
With two courses per month, in 3 BC the eighth course would have been June 30 to July 13 (15 days, based upon Nisan 1 = March 18). Jesus was conceived in the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, which would be about December 8 to January 6. Thus, John was probably born in the second week of 2 BC, April, and Jesus was probably born in 2 BC, September, or perhaps early in October. (In 2 BC, Tishri 1 = October 1. A majority of early Christian commentators say or imply that Jesus was born in 3/2 BC.)

Therefore, Jesus’ baptism cannot have been before 29 AD. Luke 3:1 puts the beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar (14-37 AD), which would be 29 AD. (In 29 AD, Tishri 1 = Wednesday, September 28.) Jesus began to be about thirty years of age (Luke 3:23), therefore, about September of 29 AD. The third of three mandatory feasts that Israelites were required to observe “in the place which Jehovah shall choose” (Deuteronomy 16:13-17, i.e., at the Temple in Jerusalem) was October 12-18 that year.² And Jesus’ family was observant (Luke 2:41).

Unless Jesus were born September 1 or 2, he could not have been baptized at or after his thirtieth birthday, spent forty days in the wilderness, and returned to Jerusalem in time for the Feast of Sukkoth. And Luke 4:13-14 apparently says that Jesus returned from the forty days to Galilee, rather than to Jerusalem; so Jesus’ baptism and



Jesus at Jordan



Christ at Golgotha

the forty days must have come **after** the Feast of Sukkoth (Booths, or Tabernacles).

The single most-likely assumption is that Jesus was baptized on the first Sabbath after the Feast of Sukkoth, or Saturday, October 22. If so, then it follows that the number of days of Jesus' spirit-begotten life to his crucifixion (April 3, 33 AD) was: $(3 \times 365 + 1) + 10 + 30 + 31 + 31 + 28 + 31 + 3 = 1260$ days

That is, (3 years + leap day) + days left in October + November + December + January + February + March + days in April.

So what is the relationship to the 1260 days of the two witnesses and

the celestial woman in Revelation 11:3 and 12:6? This writer does not know. So let the relationship be left as an exercise to the reader.³

— Bro. James Parkinson

Postnote: Josephus' lunar eclipse was followed by Herod, terminally ill of distemper, going to the warm baths at Callirrhoe beyond the Jordan River, calling the eminent men of Judea and interning them in the hippodrome, and having his son Antipater slain. That was followed by five more days until his death, then a 25-mile funeral procession at 1 mile per day. After that Archelaus suppressed sedition at the Temple, and then came the Passover Feast.⁴

To sandwich all this in between the partial lunar eclipse of 4 BC March 13, 3:15 am Jerusalem time (with the umbra just reaching to the center of the moon) and the Passover Feast, April 12-18, strains credibility excessively. (To postulate that the 3 BC Passover is meant, strains credibility to suppose Herod's sons, Herod Antipas and Herod Archelaus, would have waited still longer to go to Rome seeking confirmation.)

However, if it was the total eclipse of 1 BC January 10, 1:28 am (lasting 95% of the maximum duration), to the Passover Feast, April 9-15, then all these events can easily fit into those three months. The 1 BC reckoning of Herod's death is consistent with a birth of Jesus within three weeks of the 2 BC Autumnal Equinox; and Herod's slaughter of babies at Bethlehem during his terminal illness would be in character with his other acts at that time.

(1) Filmer notes that of Emil Schürer's three fundamental assumptions (leading to 4 BC for the birth of Jesus Christ), two are patently false and the third is dubious. Objections that Herod's sons, Archelaus and Antipater, apparently began reigning in 4 BC, need not mean that Herod had died; it may coincide with Herod's demotion from "Caesar's friend" to "servant." (Ernest L. Martin, *The Birth of Christ Recalculated!*, Foundation for Biblical Research; 1978, pages 83-86.)

(2) The solution to the Leviticus 23:39-43 problem of a seven-day Feast of Sukkoth ending in the eighth day would appear to be a feast beginning at sundown at a time when the beginning of the day was being reckoned at sunrise.

(3) Editor comment — If the two witnesses represent the Old and New Testaments, then they are the written Word of God (Mark 7:13). Jesus is the living Word of God (Revelation 19:13). Thus it is engaging to see Revelation 11:3 define a period of 1260 days in the ministry of the two witnesses, and to see Jesus fulfill a period of 1260 days for his ministry.

The parallel is strengthened in Revelation 11:7-12, which depicts a death of the two witnesses, then their resurrection and ascent to heaven, as occurred with Jesus also.

(4) Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 17, 6:1 to 9:3.

Why Waldo?

"I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first" (Revelation 2:19).

Of all the messengers to the seven stages of the Church, one of whom we know little was the fourth, Peter Waldo, for records of him and his work are scant from this dark period of the Church when Papacy was strong. Why Waldo? Our study is to answer that question.

The fourth stage of the church is Thyatira. It covers the period from about 1160 to 1378, around 220 years, and we suggest its messenger was Peter Waldo.¹ He was a wealthy merchant, born in Lyon, France in 1140 and died in 1217.²

WALDO'S LIFE, TWO DIFFERENT ACCOUNTS

There are two different accounts about how Waldo began his Christian service. In the first, Waldo was in conversation with several principal citizens of Lyons, when suddenly one of his companions fell to the ground and died. This experience affected Waldo profoundly. He reflected on the mortality of man and the death penalty upon the human race, amended his life, and became more diligent in the fear of God.

Waldo began to distribute his wealth to the poor and discuss the virtues of goodness with others at every opportunity. He desired to understand the Holy Scriptures better, but he could not read Latin. So he employed a priest to translate the four Gospels and other books of Holy Writ from Latin into French. After diligent study, he concluded that the best way to follow Christ and the apostles was to abandon his business vocation and distribute his riches. He publicly preached the doctrines and precepts of Christianity, emphasizing the importance of doing good and living a pure and simple life as in the early church.

His preaching motivated many of his neighbors and countrymen, who joined themselves to Waldo and followed his example, divesting themselves of earthly riches and devoting their lives to preaching the Gospel. These became known as the "Poor Men of Lyons," and the movement came to be known as the Waldenses.



Peter Waldo

A second, different account, is this. By the year 1173, Waldo at 33 had made a lot of money, possibly much of it by the practice of usury. One Sunday Waldo heard the story of the legend of St. Alexis from a traveling troubadour. Alexis was the privileged son of a 4th Century Roman senator of enormous wealth and power. He left his wealth and his wife in order to embark on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and afterward devoted his life to care for the poor.

Waldo was so smitten by the story that the next morning he hurried to the nearest school of theology to seek counsel concerning his eternal destiny. He learned about many ways of going to God, so he asked what was the most certain one. They directed him to Matthew 19:21, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." Waldo embraced this, so he went to his wife and gave her the choice to keep either his money or his vast real estate holdings. Of course she was much displeased with having to make such a choice, but seeing that she had to choose, she kept the real estate.

From his wealth, Waldo first made restitution to any he had treated unjustly. He then gave a large amount of money for the life-long support of his little daughters, placing them in the exclusive convent of Font Evrard, reserved for the very wealthy. But the largest sum of his money he gave to the poor. During this time there was a famine in the land, and he gave food to everyone that came to him. While he was divesting himself of his wealth, he also paid to have the Latin Bible translated into the common French dialect of his day.

THYATIRA

Thyatira was renowned for its production of costly red and purple dyes for the rich, or royalty. It is interesting that Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots, was "arrayed in purple and scarlet color" (Revelation 17:4). Thus it is appropriate that this city, possessing these characteristics of royalty, symbolized the fourth stage of the church. Papacy had reached its zenith of power, both civil and religious. While the true church suffered hardship in the wilderness, the Papal church sat on the throne with the kings of the earth.

"Thyatira" means "sweet perfume of sacrifice, slow burning incense or sacrifice under duress." This definition fits because God's people during the fourth stage of the church suffered severe persecution. The saints of Thyatira were submissive under these crushing experiences, becoming a sweet incense to God. "I know your works, your love and faith and service and patience endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first" (Revelation 2:18, 19, RSV).

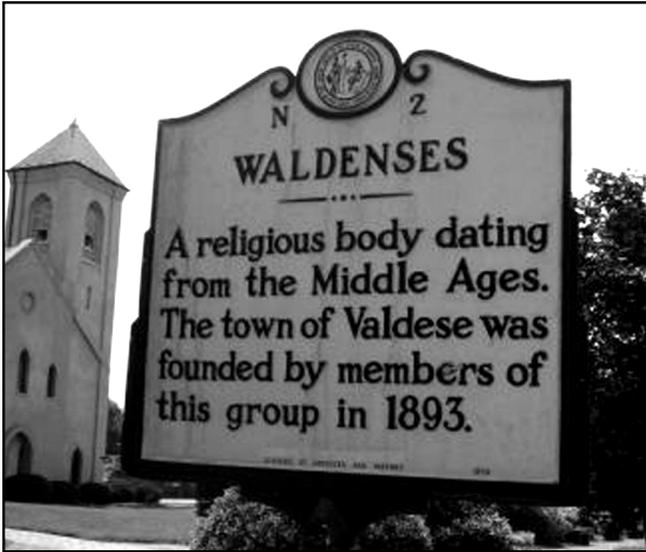
This commendation is similar to that used for Ephesus, the first stage of the church (Revelation 2:2), but supplemented with "your latter works exceed the first." Perhaps in the Lord's estimation the works of Thyatira were even more abundant than the works of Ephesus. Or perhaps that expression means the works of Thyatira near the end of that period exceeded the works done at its beginning. Or perhaps that Jesus valued their patient endurance (mentioned later) even above their charity and service (mentioned earlier). Not that love and faith are less important, but Papal persecutions were so strong, patient endurance was especially difficult and thus more highly appreciated.

At the beginning of Waldo's ministry as messenger to Thyatira, he was not much of a heretic from the Catholic perspective. He was not unique in taking vows of poverty or in devoting himself to the study of the Scriptures. Both of these things had been regular practices in some monasteries for centuries. Like others of their day, Waldo and the Poor Men of Lyons dressed like Monks, lived in chastity, went barefoot or in sandals, and pooled their earnings.

For a while the clergy did not object to this new group. They were even allowed to read and sing in the churches. But when Waldo and his followers began to preach publicly, the Archbishop of Lyons sharply reminded them that only the bishops were allowed to preach.³

But Waldo and his followers wanted to preach freely. Consequently in 1179 Waldo sought official approval from the Catholic Church. He and his followers wanted to be recognized as a holy order, much like other orders of monks who were not full-fledged priests but who desired nonetheless to live a religious life. So a delegation of Waldensians presented themselves before the Third Lateran Council in order to obtain approval for their movement.

An English friar named Walter Mapes examined Waldo's small group and wrote this. "We saw Waldensian men in the Roman council held by Pope Alexander the Third. They were simple and unlearned, and were thus called from the name of their founder, Waldo, who was a citizen of Lyons on the



Interesting sign from Valdese, North Carolina

Rhone. They presented to the Pope a book written in the old provencal language, in which there were texts and comments of the Psalms, and of many books of the Old and New Testaments. They most urgently requested him to authorize them to preach because they saw themselves as experienced persons, although they were nothing more than dabblers.”

He describes the Waldenses as “having no fixed habitation. They go about two by two, barefoot, clad in woolen garments, owning nothing.” Friar Mapes summed up his opinion of them — “Shall the word be given to the ignorant, whom we know to be incapable of receiving it, much less of giving in their turn, what they have received? Away with this, erase it! Let waters be drawn from the fountain, not from puddles in the streets.”

The Waldenses made a pretty poor impression on the council. As part of their petition, they affirmed their belief in transubstantiation, prayers for the dead, and infant baptism. Waldo also signed a confession of faith affirming his belief in the Trinity, and in the one Church, Catholic, Holy Apostolic and Immaculate, apart from which no one can be saved. From this we see that the early Waldenses considered themselves to be Catholic in all matters of theology.

One might ask if this disqualifies Waldo as the fourth messenger. No, because the doctrinal truths that would separate the wheat from the tares were not yet due. Waldo was by all evidence fully consecrated to the Lord, sacrificed all he had in order to spread the Gospel, and lived his life in harmony with the “present” truth.

Seen in this light, Waldo’s efforts to establish the Poor of Lyons as a Catholic order were commendable and even scriptural inasmuch as it was not yet time to come out of Babylon. His petition was considered and would have probably been granted but for one thing: Waldo’s insistence on the right to publicly preach the Word. Neither the Pope nor the local bishops could tolerate this. So Waldo and his disciples were ordered by the council to stop their public preaching.

They refused. Consequently, Waldo and the Poor Men of Lyons brought upon themselves the wrath of the Archbishop of Lyons. Their defiance of the Mother Church ban against public preaching brought them condemnation as heretics, and expulsion from the Church in 1184.

In these early years they had few doctrinal differences with Rome, even accepting all seven sacraments of the Catholic Church. But after being excommunicated and condemned to hell in the next life, Waldo and his followers reexamined such church teachings through Bible study. Not surprisingly, they found differences and began a slow drift away from Catholic dogma.

In the very early stages of their movement, despite opposition, Waldensian churches and schools of learning flourished and spread from France throughout central Europe. Having scripture in their native tongue gave them great influence among the people. In 1220, the Council of Toulouse, trying to suppress this growth, decreed that no lay folk should possess scriptural books. Shortly after this decree the Inquisition began and the Waldenses, while not the sole targets, did not escape. Thousands were burned at the stake — Church and State cooperating in one of the darkest blots on the record of human history.⁴

— Bro. Jerry Monette (to be continued)

(1) Bro. Frank Shallieu’s book, *The Keys of Revelation*, begins Thyatira at 1157, one prophetic time of 360 years before the Reformation date 1517. On page 53, Bro. Shallieu has an extensive footnote giving some evidence for his view that “The Waldensian movement commenced about 1157, not 1170 as is generally recognized ... there is ... evidence that it began just prior to 1160. ... Already in ... 1160 they [Waldenses] had increased to such an extent, that they were summoned to Rome before a Synod, and were condemned as obstinate heretics. ... An item under “Historical Notes” in the Clarendon Press 1886 edition of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* mentions that Waldo wrote *The Last Age of the Christian Church* in AD 1156.”

(2) These dates are not as firm as we would like. If Waldo’s Christian leadership did emerge by 1157, then his birth as late as 1140 would put his age at only 17 at the time. Some references say Peter Waldo died in 1217 in Bohemia, apparently of natural causes. If he was born in 1140, then he would have been about 77 years of age at his passing. Wikipedia gives a death date of 1218, but cautions “the French historian Thuanus dated his death to the year 1179.”

(3) In the late 1100s, not even priests either preached during the mass or instructed the local flock in the practice of religion. Their main duty, besides collecting taxes in the form of tithes for their local bishop, was the administration of the sacraments and to say the Latin mass.

(4) The Waldenses church of today joined with the Methodists in 1974, as a single synod. It differs very much from its medieval origin, but it is still a reminder and a tribute to the faith and labors of Peter Waldo.

Financial Report

1,843.09	Balance January 1, 2010
1,786.79	Donations
- 2,963.04	Expenses
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666.84	Balance January 1, 2011
521	Current Subscribers