

JOURNEY 3

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THE PLAN  
OF GOD

[LifeHopeandTruth.com](http://LifeHopeandTruth.com)

God has a plan for the human race, and it's unfolding all around you. Don't miss out. In this seven-day Journey, you'll discover God's plan for the entire world—and where you fit in it.

*Life* Hope & Truth

## GETTING STARTED

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# HOW TO USE THIS JOURNEY

Dear Reader,

You've learned about who God is. You've learned why evil exists and why God allows it. And most important, you've learned that He has a plan to end evil, once and for all.

But how?

In "The Plan of God," we'll answer that question by digging into the pages of the Bible and seeing what God Himself has to say on the subject. Each day's content will consist of the following:

- That day's reading.
- Recommended verses and chapters from the Bible relating to that day's subject.
- Supplemental material from Life, Hope & Truth for digging deeper into that day's subject.

We encourage you not to start "The Plan of God" until you've made it through our first two Journeys, "Knowing God" and "The Problem of Evil." This Journey is going to build on concepts presented in the first two, so it's helpful to go through them in order. By the end of this Journey, you'll have a solid framework for understanding what God is doing, why He's doing it, and where you fit in all of it.

Let's begin!

All the best,

Your friends at [LifeHope&Truth](http://LifeHopeandTruth.com)

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## DAY 1

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# UNDOING SIN

How do you undo a sin?

When you've gone too far, when you've crossed the line, how do you make things right again? How do you fix it?

The simple answer is this:

You can't.

Sin requires a life. *Your* life. It's not a bank account where one bad deed can be canceled out by a certain number of good deeds. Ezekiel tells us, "The soul who sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4), and Paul tells us, "All have sinned" (Romans 3:23). To sin is to forfeit our lives, *and there's no way to undo that*. The penalty must be paid.

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Thousands of years ago, in the nation of Israel, Israelites were expected to make regular trespass offerings (Leviticus 5:6) to seek forgiveness for their sins (verse 10). But, as the author of Hebrews would later observe, "In those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins" (Hebrews 10:3-4).

The Israelites' sacrifices were not enough to blot out the ultimate penalty for sin—but they did serve as an ever-present reminder that "according to the law almost all things are purified [cleansed] with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission [forgiveness]" (Hebrews 9:22). These constant sacrifices made it impossible to forget that sin requires a life. And the Israelites may not have known it, but those sacrifices were pointing toward another, far greater sacrifice:

The crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

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The Bible tells us that Christ was "slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8). Before they ever created the human race, God the Father and Jesus Christ had a plan: They were going to build a family.

The first step was creating mankind in Their own image (Genesis 1:26) and equipping people with free will, which introduced a major hurdle. The freedom to choose means the freedom to make the *wrong* choice, which meant it was only a matter of time before sin entered the picture. Humans were going to disobey at some point. Someone was bound to choose sin over God's way, and then what?

God's refusal to allow sin into His family and His desire to make us part of that family seem at odds with each other. If there are no sinless humans, if the penalty for sin must be paid, how can God's plan possibly reach fruition?

But the beauty of Christ's sacrifice—and the reason it was planned “from the foundation of the world”—is that the penalty already *has* been paid on our behalf. We just have to be willing to accept the terms and conditions.

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When He came to earth as a human being 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ did what no one has been able to do before or since: He lived a sinless life (1 John 3:5). He kept God's law perfectly and set the standard for obedience—and then He died a gruesome, horrific death, offering Himself as a sacrifice on our behalf. As They had planned from the beginning, God “made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

That's worth expounding on. The blood of bulls and goats was never enough to pay for sin, but the blood of the sinless Son of God *is*.

Not that we automatically receive the benefits of that sacrifice. Christ's death isn't a blank check that allows us each to do as we please. On the contrary, accepting that sacrifice requires something of us. When some of the Jews in Jerusalem came to acknowledge their role in the death of Jesus, they cried out, “What shall we do?” Peter urged them to “repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:37-38).

That template still applies to us today. When God shows us our sins, repentance requires us to acknowledge and admit our fault before Him, and then turn from those sins and seek forgiveness. Baptism is a formal commitment to give ourselves fully to God—a figurative death that signifies the end of living for ourselves and the beginning of living for God. It's an acknowledgment that our ways aren't working, that our lives are forfeit, and that we want God actively molding and shaping us into something better.

## DAY 1

### UNDOING SIN

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Paul writes, “As many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death,” adding, “our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin” (Romans 6:3, 6). He continues the thought in another epistle: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in [the faith of, King James Version] the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

Sin can’t be undone; it’s true. The penalty must be paid—but it *has* been paid, if we’re willing to accept it. The Son of God poured out His blood to pay the price of our sins, giving us the opportunity to live a new life in Him.

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The festival of Passover—often written off as a strictly “Jewish” observance—was instituted by God thousands of years ago in the nation of Israel. It was to be observed every year as a memorial of the day God freed Israel from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 12:12-14), and at the core of that memorial was the annual sacrifice of the Passover lamb—a lamb “without blemish” (verse 5) offered by every household in Israel. During the very first Passover, the blood of that lamb was used to mark the dwellings of God’s people, protecting them from the final, devastating plague that would bring Egypt to its knees (verse 13).

But Passover was pointing to something far greater, and it wasn’t until Christ’s sacrifice that the bigger picture became clearer. He was the true Passover lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7), and it was His spilled blood that was destined to protect and deliver us from our captivity to sin.

During His final Passover on this earth, Jesus instituted new symbols to drive home this meaning—wine, to represent His blood; unleavened bread, to represent His broken body; and foot washing, to emphasize the need for Christians to serve (Luke 22:19-20; John 13:14).

The most interesting part is that Jesus instituted these symbols at all—clearly, this new format for Passover was something He intended His followers to continue observing, or else He wouldn’t have told them, “Do this in remembrance of Me” (Luke 22:19). To this day, faithful Christians around the world *do* continue to keep the New Testament Passover, annually reflecting on the sacrifice that made it possible for all of us to be free of sin.

But Passover is only the beginning. It marks the start of God’s annual festivals—days that spell out the very plan of God, teaching us why we’re here and what God has in store for the entire human race.

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### UNDOING SIN

Passover reminds us that we can be free of sin. But then what? Where do we go from there?

The plan of God only *begins* with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We're going to spend the rest of this Journey discovering where it ends.

## FURTHER READING

### Scriptures

- Galatians 2:17-21 [↗](#)
- Romans 7:7-12 [↗](#)
- Romans 5:6-11 [↗](#)

### LifeHopeandTruth.com

- Passover: What Did Jesus Do for You? [↗](#)

## DAY 2

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# NEWNESS OF LIFE

So now what?

Let's say you've been forgiven—let's say you've repented, you've been baptized and the blood of Jesus Christ has paid the penalty for your sins. What happens next? Or is that the end goal of Christianity—to be forgiven and then to carry on with business as usual?

Far from it. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17, English Standard Version). Baptism changes things. You're not who you were before. You're a new creation; you were crucified with Christ and things can never be the way they used to be.

The forgiveness made available to us through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is only the first step in God's plan for us. Granted, it's a vital first step—the step that makes everything else possible—but still just a first step. We learned yesterday that Passover commemorates that sacrifice and marks the beginning of God's annual festivals—festivals that spell out God's plan and teach us about our role in it. The next festival, the Days of Unleavened Bread, keeps us focused on what we need to be doing with the forgiveness we've been given.

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In preparation for one week of the year, God commands His people to put leavening—the ingredients that cause bread and bread products to rise—out of their home and out of their lives. “Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the LORD. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters” (Exodus 13:6-7).

As with most of the festivals celebrated by ancient Israel, many modern-day theologians are quick to write off the Days of Unleavened Bread as either “Jewish,” “done away with” or “fulfilled.”

But writing off these days would mean turning a blind eye to an important message from God—a message the apostle Paul wasn't prepared to ignore. He urged the New Testament Church to “purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ,

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### NEWNESS OF LIFE

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our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore *let us keep the feast*, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the *unleavened bread* of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:7-8, emphasis added throughout).

If Paul believed God’s festivals were strictly Jewish, done away with or fulfilled, why was he using these days as an illustration for an audience largely filled with non-Jewish converts? It doesn’t make any sense.

Here’s what *does* make sense: Paul was talking about something the Corinthians knew and understood. The New Testament Church knew that these holy feast days belong to *God*, not to the Jews or any other group. When God commanded these days to be kept, He told His people, “The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are *My* feasts” (Leviticus 23:2).

Since the day they were revealed to the ancient nation of Israel, the holy days have been *God’s* days, each of them pointing toward some aspect of His grand master plan. And, as we saw in his letter to the Corinthians, Paul revealed that the Days of Unleavened Bread are heavily focused on what we need to be doing about sin.

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Being forgiven of our sins doesn’t change the fact that sin still exists. It doesn’t prevent us from sinning a second time or a third time. The human nature that made it tempting the first time is still there, still tempting us, still fabricating excuses and inventing justifications.

That’s why the lessons of Unleavened Bread are so important. Once Paul ties leaven in with sin, the message becomes extremely clear:

*Put it out.*

Put it out of your home. Put it out of your life. *Get rid of it.* Passover reminds us of the destructive power of sin, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread reminds us that it cannot have any place in our lives.

It was Paul again who asked, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:1-4).

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### NEWNESS OF LIFE

It's not that we're never going to mess up again. It's not that we're never going to have to call on the sacrifice of Christ to make us clean again. But it is a reminder that our forgiveness is not a license to continue making bad choices—a reminder that, as Christians, we must be actively committed to *driving out* the sinful behaviors in our lives, just as we spend one week every year driving out the leaven in our lives.

A life of sin is no longer an option for Christians. With the power of forgiveness on our side, the Days of Unleavened Bread turn our attention to walking in newness of life—putting out the leaven of malice and wickedness while taking in the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Except ... we've already run into another problem. It's easy to *say* we need to pursue righteousness, but we've already learned the hard way that the way of God does not mesh well with our human nature: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be" (Romans 8:7).

What's to be done, then? Are we doomed to fight a losing battle between the calling of God and the pull of our own human nature?

If the plan of God stopped at the Days of Unleavened Bread, the answer would be yes. Thankfully, God *doesn't* stop here. Far from it! The truth is, we *are* engaged in a tremendous battle—but not a losing one. God has not sent us out to fight this battle empty-handed. The next holy day, Pentecost, brings into focus the tools we've been given that will enable us to win the most difficult war ever waged:

The war against ourselves.

## FURTHER READING

### Scriptures

- [2 Corinthians 10:3-6](#) 
- [Romans 13:11-14](#) 
- [1 John 1:5-10](#) 

### LifeHopeandTruth.com

- [The Feast of Unleavened Bread: Pursuing a Life of Righteousness](#) 

### DAY 3

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## THE POWER TO OVERCOME

The apostle Paul was a key player in the first-century Church. He was the most prolific writer of the New Testament, and God used him to spread the gospel throughout the known world. He endured shipwrecks and beatings and scourgings and all manner of humiliations—all for the sake of spreading the message Christ had commissioned him to spread (2 Corinthians 11:23-28).

But Paul was human. Like us, he struggled with living up to God’s standards. Like us, he made mistakes. Like us, he had a human nature that resisted the power of God’s life-changing Word.

Paul wrote to the congregation in Rome, “For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do” (Romans 7:15). Paul understood what it meant to strive for godliness and come up short. “I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. ... O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (verses 21, 24-25).

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The life of a Christian is not an easy one. God calls us to do battle with our own human nature—a nature that, as we learned in our previous Journey, is quick to justify and excuse the sins that are tearing our world apart. Couple that with the fact that we have a spiritual enemy who will seize every opportunity to destroy us, and things start to look a little grim.

On our own, we’re outnumbered and outmatched. On our own, we’re not equipped to do battle with the forces that oppose us. On our own, we’re underpowered and overwhelmed—destined to lose before the battle even starts.

But we’re not on our own, are we? If the Son of God was willing to die a horrible death so that we can be forgiven, do you think He intends to abandon us as we strive to overcome the sins that necessitated His death? On the contrary!

Paul writes, “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? ... For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor

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### THE POWER TO OVERCOME

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powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:31-32, 38-39).

We’re not on our own. This battle is not impossible. The God of the universe and Jesus Christ His Son are with us every step of the way, providing us with exactly what we need to hold our own—and not just to hold our own, but to *win*.

The Feast of Pentecost reminds us of just what we need.

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In ancient times, the Feast of Pentecost was marked by an offering of the firstfruits of that year’s spring harvest. It was a time to honor and thank God for the blessings He had provided—and for the blessings He would continue to provide as the harvest continued to ripen and grow.

Today, we understand that the imagery of the firstfruits of Pentecost was pointing to the modern-day Church—a small gathering of what will one day become a far greater harvest. James writes, “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures” (James 1:18).

The first Pentecost after the death of Jesus Christ marked a turning point for the New Testament Church. Christ’s disciples were gathered together to observe the day, when “suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:2-4).

The Holy Spirit. The life-changing, universe-altering power of God. That’s what the Church received after Christ’s death, and Peter made it clear that it’s what *we* receive too when we repent of our sins and commit ourselves to God through baptism (Acts 2:38).

Since that day almost 2,000 years ago, God’s people have had access to the power that reshaped the world at the dawn of human history (Genesis 1:2)—but today, God isn’t using it to reshape the world.

He’s using it to reshape *you*.

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### THE PLAN OF GOD

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### DAY 3

## THE POWER TO OVERCOME

If we want to have any hope of winning this war, God’s Holy Spirit is what we need to make it happen. It’s a tool that changes us the more we use it, *and that’s a good thing*. “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit [itself]\* makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Romans 8:26).

The Spirit changes how we interact with God, and it changes who we are. Paul urges, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2).

But the Spirit does more than that: “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

None of this is going to be easy. It’s not supposed to be. It was never intended to be. But with the Holy Spirit of God, it becomes *possible*. Christ’s sacrifice makes it possible to be forgiven; the Holy Spirit makes it possible to *overcome*. To improve. To become more than we are on our own; to enter into battle with our flawed human nature and allow God to reshape it into something He can work with.

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit [which] is in you, [which] you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

God did not call us to fail. When we repent and die with Christ through baptism, we begin a new life—a life fueled by the Holy Spirit, the power of God. There’s a lifetime of work ahead of us as we strive to put out sin and grow in righteousness, but thanks to the Holy Spirit and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, *it’s work we can accomplish*.

Even then, the plan of God is a long way from over. We know God is a family, and we know He intends to *grow* that family—and the Feast of Trumpets, the next holy day, is a vital part of accomplishing that goal.

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\* While most Bible translations render this word as “Himself,” the original Greek of the New Testament uses a gender-neutral pronoun, which means the Spirit of God is actually an *it*, not a *He*—a thing, not a person.

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### THE POWER TO OVERCOME

## FURTHER READING

#### Scriptures

- [John 14:15-27](#) 
- [Romans 8:12-27](#) 
- [Galatians 5:16-26](#) 

#### LifeHopeandTruth.com

- [Pentecost: God Gives the Holy Spirit](#) 
- [The Sermon That Launched the Church](#) 

## DAY 4

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# A DAY OF REVEALING

Until now, the pieces of God’s plan we’ve been looking at have had a largely personal focus: What can *you* do about sin? How should *you* be living your life? How can *you* overcome?

The next piece of the plan, as pictured by the Feast of Trumpets, is a perspective change. Suddenly, the lens of God’s Word zooms out, and we discover that we’re not on center stage anymore. This isn’t just a story about *our* sins and *our* redemption—this is the story of the entire world. It’s the story of thousands who have accepted God’s calling and are seeking to change their lives, and it’s the story of untold billions who have never truly understood God and His Word.

Trumpets represents the day the world changes forever.

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The Feast of Trumpets pictures a dark time. The world will be at its absolute lowest. The human race will be experiencing “great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24:21). There will be “wars and rumors of wars. ... And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places” (verses 6-7).

People will be “lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power” (2 Timothy 3:2-5).

The world we’re seeing in these prophecies is a world drenched in sin and self-indulgence, a world coming apart at the seams while its inhabitants celebrate themselves—a world, one might argue, not too far removed from the one we live in today.

But the focus of the Feast of Trumpets isn’t the future state of the world—that’s only the backdrop. The focus of the Feast of Trumpets is on what happens *next*.

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## DAY 4

### A DAY OF REVEALING

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A key fixture of this end-time world will be a powerful leader who seizes control over “every tribe, tongue, and nation” in the world (Revelation 13:7). He will have “opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven” (verse 6), establishing himself as a god to be worshipped and obeyed. And for a while, it will work: “All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (verse 8).

Then God steps in.

The prophetic book of Revelation talks about “seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets” (Revelation 8:2). At God’s signal, the seven angels will sound the seven trumpets one by one, with each successive blast raining down judgment from God on a rebellious and sinful world.

The earth will shake. Trees will burn. Ecosystems will collapse. Rivers will be poisoned. Stars will be darkened. Humanity will be nearly decimated—and after six devastating trumpets, nothing will change. “But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts” (Revelation 9:20-21).

That’s how bad things will be. In spite of divine intervention, the human heart will set itself against the very hand of God. Even with the world falling to pieces around them, mankind will continue to do what mankind wants to do.

That is, until the seventh trumpet.

When the seventh angel sounds, voices from heaven will proclaim, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” (Revelation 11:15). At that announcement, Christ will “descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God” (1 Thessalonians 4:16), and the world will be changed forever.

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For thousands of years, humanity has debated the existence of God—and nestled within that discussion is another debate over which religion’s version of God is the *right* version. Trumpets pictures the day when those debates will come to an end. The heavens will open, “and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges

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and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire. ... He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God” (Revelation 19:11-13).

Jesus Christ will reveal Himself to the human race—and in response, the human race will attempt to attack Him.

Not bow down. Not repent. The world will be so twisted and corrupted by sin that many will attempt to stand and fight the Lord of all creation. They’ll gather together “to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army” (verse 19).

It won’t work, of course. Christ and His heavenly army will make short work of the would-be rebellion, and the Creator of the universe will assume control of a very broken, very misdirected world—a world that insisted on doing things its own way and reaped the consequences.

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Christ won’t be alone, though. When the seventh trumpet sounds, another facet of God’s plan will come to fruition:

“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, *at the last trumpet*. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and *we shall be changed*. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:51-53).

In the very first Journey, we discovered that God is a family, and that we were created with the potential to *join* that family. In the second Journey, we learned that sin bars us from God’s family—and in this Journey, we’ve seen how Jesus Christ paid the penalty for that sin and how God the Father is now working with a small group of firstfruits who will ultimately become His children.

*Christ’s return is the day that happens.*

John wrote to the Church, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, *we shall be like Him*, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).

When the heavens open and the glorified Christ rides out on a white horse, all of God’s people throughout the ages will *become like God*—full members of the God family, spiritual beings who know the mind of God and share His power. Those of God’s servants who died in the faith will be restored to life and transformed alongside the living. In a single moment, the family of God will have grown considerably—but not completely.

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### A DAY OF REVEALING

Even after reaching such a tremendous milestone, the plan of God will be far from complete. The earth will still be in ruins. Billions and billions will have died without knowing God, without having repented and without understanding their potential to join His family. The survivors of the events pictured by the Feast of Trumpets will be completely bewildered and in desperate need of guidance. Worst of all, Satan the devil, the deceiver of the world, will still be on the loose, actively looking for ways to derail God's plan.

The next step of God's plan, depicted by the Day of Atonement, shows us how God intends to overcome those hurdles—and He'll start by dealing with Satan.

## FURTHER READING

### Scriptures

- [1 John 3](#)
- [Zechariah 14:1-5](#)
- [John 16:22-33](#)

### LifeHopeandTruth.com

- [The Feast of Trumpets: Alarm of War, Announcement of Peace](#)

## DAY 5

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# SILENCING THE LIES

Since the dawn of human history, Satan has been busy. He was there in the garden, persuading Eve to disobey God, and he works behind the scenes even now, selling sin as something good and acceptable and desirable. He is “the great dragon ... who deceives the whole world” (Revelation 12:9).

But not forever.

Satan’s game has a time limit. As cunning and powerful as our adversary may be, God will always be smarter and stronger. In our previous Journey, we looked at how sometimes God takes advantage of Satan’s appetite for destruction to actually strengthen and refine His people. We also saw that the world at large is much more eager to listen to Satan’s lies than to God’s truth—and, at least for now, God allows it.

Yesterday we saw that God will continue to allow it until the world brings itself to the very brink of self-destruction. If the human race is so determined to embrace those lies, then God won’t stand in our way. He’ll let us take that path to its logical conclusion, only putting an end to the experiment just before everything falls completely apart.

The Feast of Trumpets pictures the moment God steps in. The Day of Atonement pictures the moment the dragon is silenced.

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Satan wasn’t always Satan. The Bible tells us that once, long ago, he was known as “Heylel”—Hebrew for “Day Star” (Isaiah 14:12). We’re only given a few snapshots of Heylel (or, as most translations render the name in Latin, “Lucifer”), but it’s enough to paint a picture of his story. He began his existence as one of God’s high-ranking angels—“the anointed cherub who covers” (Ezekiel 28:14), “the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty” (verse 12).

But that wasn’t enough for Lucifer. God laments, “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor” (verse 17). God’s anointed cherub wanted more than perfection—he wanted to be God. “For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into

## DAY 5

### SILENCING THE LIES

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heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, *I will be like the Most High*” (Isaiah 14:13-14).

In taking that stance, Lucifer became Satan. The Day Star became the Adversary. He set himself against God and against God’s plan—all because he believed his own God-given perfection entitled him to be the one in charge. Instead, God says, “You shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit” (verse 15).

Satan began his existence as an angel of God; a favored servant of the Most High. His own pride was his undoing. He wanted more. He convinced himself he *deserved* more, until his warped train of thought led him to launch an assault on the very throne of God. And although the assault failed (Jesus would later remark to His disciples, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” [Luke 10:18]), Satan continues to invest his time and energy into doing everything within his power to derail the plan of God. He won’t ever stop trying either. Until the dragon is removed from the picture, true, lasting peace will be impossible.

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On the Day of Atonement, God commands His people to “fast”—to go 24 hours without eating or drinking anything (Leviticus 23:27). It’s not an easy day, but it does serve to remind us of how weak we are without the physical nourishment God provides us. It also reminds us that “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). In short, it’s a day that helps us cultivate humility—the antidote to the pride that turned an angel of God into the enemy of God’s people.

When Atonement was observed in the Old Testament, the high priest would take two goats. One goat would become a sin offering to “make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins” (Leviticus 16:16). The other he would take and “confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land” (Leviticus 16:21-22).

Today, we understand those two goats to represent Jesus Christ and Satan the devil—one goat whose blood would “make atonement” for the sins of Israel, and another goat who would “bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land.”

Compare that with what happens shortly after Christ's return: "Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished" (Revelation 20:1-3).

A thousand years. When Christ returns as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Revelation 19:16), Satan will be bound and humanity will be free of his wicked influence for *a thousand years*. No more cunning lies. No more crafty deceptions. The dragon will be locked away while the human race spends an entire millennium getting to know the God they never truly understood.

And *that* is where the Feast of Tabernacles comes in.

## FURTHER READING

### Scriptures

- Psalm 52 [↗](#)
- Ephesians 4:17-32 [↗](#)
- Colossians 3:1-17 [↗](#)

### LifeHopeandTruth.com

- The Day of Atonement: Removing the Enemy, Reconciling All to God [↗](#)

## DAY 6

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# REBUILDING A BROKEN WORLD

When Christ returns as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the world is going to be in rough shape. Even after Satan is bound, things won't be perfect. The planet itself will be a wreck, with ecosystems in shambles and populations decimated. Everything the human race has spent the last 6,000 years building will be in ruins, and a small remnant of survivors will be without direction and without hope. They'll have witnessed an incredible amount of death and destruction. Friends, family, strangers, world governments—all gone. All claimed by the single greatest catastrophe the human race will ever know.

There will be pain. There will be suffering. There will be a world crying out for help and healing, and Jesus Christ will be there to provide both. The world will be broken, but it will finally—*finally*—be ready to listen to the God who can heal.

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For a thousand years after Satan is bound, Jesus Christ will reign on earth—and not by Himself either. The Feast of Trumpets pictures the day when all of God's people from all of history will be transformed into members of the God family, and the Feast of Tabernacles pictures the thousand years that those saints will live and reign with Jesus Christ (Revelation 20:4).

Some of the Bible's most beautiful prophecies are set during this millennial period. Under the leadership of Christ, the human race will begin to grow and blossom—and this time, they'll have the divine guidance they rejected in the past. "Your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it,' whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left" (Isaiah 30:20-21).

The result? "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9). During the thousand years of Christ's leadership, people are going to get to know God. They're going to learn His laws and His way of life. And they're going to live by those laws, and that's going to change *everything*.

"Many nations shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths'" (Micah 4:2). God

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### REBUILDING A BROKEN WORLD

will take a hands-on approach to governing the world: “He shall judge between many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and *no one shall make them afraid*; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken” (verses 3-4).

That is not the world we live in today. Today there is violence and fear and a great many people who couldn't care less what the God of Jacob has to say about anything—and that's why the Feast of Tabernacles matters so much. It pictures the time when a bruised and broken human race will begin to rebuild under the guidance of a God who loves and cares for them, who knows what's best for them and who seeks their good.

There will be resistance, of course. Even with Satan out of the picture, human nature is still human nature, and some people will still refuse to obey God's commands. They'll realize the error of their ways in short order, though: “And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain” (Zechariah 14:16-17).

No rain means no crops. No crops means no food. No food makes it extremely difficult to ignore God's role as Creator and Sustainer of the universe, and even harder to insist that He has no right to tell us what to do. As the thousand years continue, more and more people will come to see that God's way *works*—that it really is the only way to lasting peace and a life full of meaning.

For the first time in human history, mankind will live life as it was always meant to be lived. They will know peace, they will know their purpose, and they will know their Creator: “No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jeremiah 31:34).

In the Old Testament, the Israelites were commanded to observe the Feast of Tabernacles by traveling to “the place which the LORD your God chooses” (Deuteronomy 12:18) and then building a temporary dwelling (or “tabernacle”) to “rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. You

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### REBUILDING A BROKEN WORLD

shall keep it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations” (Leviticus 23:40-41).

Today, God’s people continue to observe the Feast of Tabernacles by gathering together in hotels and other temporary dwellings, spending seven days worshipping and rejoicing before God. The temporary nature of these dwellings reminds us that we are “strangers and pilgrims on the earth” who “seek a homeland” (Hebrews 11:13, 14). That homeland is pictured in part by the Feast of Tabernacles—a time when all the world will come to know and be led by the God who made the universe.

And yet, even with everything that the Feast of Tabernacles pictures, we haven’t reached the end of God’s plan just yet. Tomorrow, we’ll bring this Journey to a close as we explore the final entry of God’s holy day plan.

## FURTHER READING

### Scriptures

- [Micah 4:1-5](#)
- [Isaiah 11:1-9](#)
- [Hebrews 11:13-16](#)

### LifeHopeandTruth.com

- [The Feast of Tabernacles: A Bountiful Harvest](#)

## DAY 7

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# THE END OF THE BEGINNING

For a thousand years, mankind will experience life as it was always meant to be lived. The whole human race will operate according to the same core principles—“to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8)—and the world will be transformed.

War will cease. Glaring issues like racism, poverty and inequality will be solved. The world will be just and fair and filled with people learning firsthand the difference it makes when we all obey our Creator: “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).

But God’s plan doesn’t end here. God is a family—a loving, all-powerful family. God the Father and Jesus Christ created us with the potential to *join* that family—and when Christ returns, tens of thousands of faithful Christians will be resurrected into that family.

But what about everyone else? Tens of thousands pale in comparison to the billions and billions who have lived and died throughout human history. What happens to them? Is all that potential wasted forever?

Not even close. The last holy day—what the Bible calls “the eighth day” (Leviticus 23:36) and what we’ve come to call the Last Great Day—reminds us that God’s plan is grander and more spectacular than we can really comprehend.

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At the end of the thousand years, Satan “must be released for a little while” (Revelation 20:3). Mankind will have lived God’s way of life for a millennium, but when Satan is free, people will have to make a choice. It’s the same choice each of us has to grapple with today: Trust God and obey, or buy into Satan’s lies and rebel.

Sadly, a great many people will be eager to turn against God’s way of life—even after seeing firsthand the blessings that come from it. Satan will “go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth” and gather together an army “whose number is as the sand of the sea” (Revelation 20:8).

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### THE END OF THE BEGINNING

The attempted coup will end as quickly as it begins. The army will march against “the camp of the saints and the beloved city,” only to be obliterated in an instant by fire from heaven (verse 9). Satan will be removed from the picture forever, and then, at long last, the events of the Last Great Day will begin to unfold.

The Last Great Day immediately follows the Feast of Tabernacles, although the Old Testament spends very little time talking about it. Aside from setting it apart as “a holy convocation” (Leviticus 23:36) like the other holy days, we’re not given many hints about what it pictures in God’s plan.

The New Testament gives us a little more information, though. After the thousand years of Christ’s reign on earth, the final stage of God’s plan is set in motion. In the prophecies of Revelation, John tells us, “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it. ... And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life” (Revelation 20:11-12).

“The dead.” It’s almost mentioned in passing here, but these verses are telling us that the billions of men, women and children who have died throughout the course of human history will *live again*—and what’s more, they will come to know their Maker.

God’s intention is to offer *everyone* the chance to join His family. That includes the small flock He’s been working with in this life, but it also includes the untold billions who have died without receiving and accepting that calling.

The prophet Ezekiel was shown a vision of the bones of “the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, ‘Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!’” (Ezekiel 37:11). But hope is not lost—not for Israel, and not for the billions of other lives that have ended without truly understanding the plan of the God who created them.

The prophecy of Revelation tells us that “the books” will be opened—which appears to be a reference to the books of the Bible. Some of these newly resurrected billions will have seen and even read the Bible before—but because God was not actively opening their minds to His truth, they won’t have truly understood it.

The Last Great Day pictures the moment that changes.

We’re not told exactly how long this segment of God’s plan will last, but we do know that the Book of Life will be opened, which means that God will be offering these billions of people the same thing He offers His people today: eternal life in His family. This Great White Throne Judgment period (see

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### THE END OF THE BEGINNING

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Revelation 20:11-12) will provide everyone a chance to accept God's offer of salvation. Because these billions were not called by God in this lifetime, this will be their very first opportunity to understand and join the family of God.

That's the goal. That has *always* been the goal. It's where the plan of God has been heading since day one—since *before* day one, really—and it's the crowning moment that the Last Great Day pictures. Peter meant it when he wrote that God is “longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). And everyone—*everyone*—will eventually get that opportunity.

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Unfortunately, that doesn't mean everyone will take it. God doesn't want anyone to perish, but some still will. Some, with their eyes open to who God is and what He's offering, will still reject Him. There are those who have made that choice in this life, and there will be those who will make that choice during this Great White Throne Judgment period. They'll refuse to live by His perfect standards, insisting on a life that will bring pain and suffering to themselves and others.

Those people will be destroyed forever. God, who is love (1 John 4:8), will obliterate them from existence because the way they insist on walking can only cause suffering. God will not allow it. Not anymore. The only merciful outcome for someone so bent on evil is to simply stop existing. “Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:14-15).

It might sound harsh, but there's no alternative. It comes down to a choice—a choice everyone must face, either in this life or the next.

God tells us, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Revelation 21:6-8).

Eternal life or destruction. God's family or oblivion. That's ultimately the decision we all have to make—the decision pictured by the Last Great Day.

And then?

And then comes the *real* end of the world.

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### THE PLAN OF GOD

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As the book of Revelation draws to a close, we're given the briefest glimpse of what comes next—and that brief glimpse is absolutely incredible:

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away’” (Revelation 21:1-4).

The world we know is a temporary one. It was never designed to last forever. What's coming, though, is eternal and beyond our comprehension. As physical human beings, it's impossible to wrap our minds around what God has planned for eternity, but we do know this: The God who sculpted and designed the wonders and marvels of this physical universe is the same God who holds eternity in His hands.

Whatever's coming is worth the wait.

“And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever” (Revelation 22:3-5).

We've covered a lot of ground in these three Journeys. We've gotten to know the God of the Bible, we've wrestled with the problem of evil, and now we've explored God's holy day plan. You now have a framework of who God is, what He's doing and why He's doing it. There's still so much to learn, but there's really only one big question left to tackle:

Where do you fit in all of this?

This isn't just head knowledge. These aren't just interesting factoids we've been exploring. There's a story unfolding all around you—a story that is going to change the world forever—and *you have the chance to be part of it.*

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### THE END OF THE BEGINNING

God is building a family, and He wants you in it. You. Not just your friends, not just your family, but *you*. Because He loves you. Because He cares for you. Because He created you with a purpose that is so much greater than anything you could ever accomplish on your own.

But that purpose isn't going to just happen. All of this, everything you've just read, is completely worthless unless you choose to take the next step—to repent, to be baptized and to seek to become the child of God you were created to be.

You've completed this Journey, which means you don't just know what God is doing—you also know that He expects something from you. Now you have to choose whether you'll put that knowledge to use—or let it all pass you by.

Make no mistake: What's in motion is in motion. God's plan *will* come to pass, and nothing—"neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing" (Romans 8:38-39)—will be able to stand in its way.

But God created you for a purpose. He created you to be His child, and He has every intention of guiding you toward that future, if you're willing. So yes, God's plan will continue without you if need be—but He'd much rather have it continue *with* you instead.

The choice is yours.

## FURTHER READING

### Scriptures

- [Romans 8](#)
- [Revelation 22](#)

### LifeHopeandTruth.com

- [The Last Great Day: The Final Harvest](#)

## WHAT NEXT?

Continue your studies with **"Journey 4: The People of God,"** available from the Life, Hope & Truth Learning Center.