

EndTime Issues....

CHRISTIAN RESOURCE – MINISTERS, TEACHERS, BIBLE STUDENTS

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Responding to Activism

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EndTime Issues... Magazine

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Manuscripts are welcomed for consideration. They should relate to end-time events that have recently been occurred to a clearer view of prophetic truth or have a deep spiritual concern, be simply written and well documented with a focused interest to Christians. Length should be limited to 10 double-spaced pages. The ongoing appeal: "Issues of concern to the last generation."

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Silent, Tolerant, Numb or Lax?

It's too close for comfort. Forty-four senators are supporting Senator Edward Kennedy's (D-Mass) plans to push a bill (S.1145) through the upper house of Congress that would make it a hate crime to speak out against sexual orientation or gender issues (including homosexuality, transsexuals and cross-dressers).

Barrell Duke, Vice President of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission denounced the Senates recent attempts to attach it to an unrelated bill. "The goal of all of their attempts is to one day criminalize speech that denounces homosexuality, including religious speech."¹

Recently, *Time Magazine* (Oct. 10, 2005) promoted "Gay Teens" in a cover story. John Cloud, a homosexual activist wrote the report. Using his own research data he positively portrayed the growing phenomenon of ever-younger children, identifying themselves with the gay lifestyle. He praised the massive proliferation of Gay Straight Alliance Clubs springing up in public schools across the nation. Cloud showcased scholarship funds available from the Point Foundation for "youngsters" who believe they are gay.

He blanketed with guilt psychological and religious efforts to change, treat or moralize such behavior. Joseph Farah of World Net Daily blasted *Time Magazine* for promoting "gay teens."²

The homosexual movement began in February 1988, when 175 brilliant activists met in Warrenton, Virginia, to map out the movement's future. Their sinister tactics called for victimization, propaganda, skillful marketing, invasion of the public school system and public projection of guilt against any opposition.

In their powerful manipulative plans they knew the greatest opposition was the "silent" majority – the Christians who didn't speak out. They banked on that quiet support. Their pressure techniques were already proven from the annals of social and political history: "We can change what people actually think and feel by breaking their current negative associations with our cause and replacing them with positive associations."

They referred to the "gay rights" agenda as "war." That's how the apostle Peter referred to it also: "... abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." I Peter 2:11. And that raises a question – quite serious actually – "Are you or your church silent, tolerant, numb or lax over this issue?"

Kirk and Madson, with the whole gay movement, are using "desensitizing" techniques to create either silence, tolerance, numbness, or laxness among religious opposition. Their organization admits that the gay movement is using "psychological terrorism." They want everyone to "warmly regard" homosexuality "whether they like it or not." Perhaps the most sinister and devilish gay activists admit that they get a mysterious fiendish excitement when they "initiate" an innocent person into their lifestyle. And therein is the growing threat in schools to our children.

That covert hate smacks of the very tactics Satan uses. He subverts the will through carelessness, inattention and sensuous feelings. Ultimately, what was abhorrent becomes acceptable – sin tolerated. Kirk and Madison don't lack for adherents to label Christians who resist.

Gay activism is racking up success on all fronts, including within Christian churches:

from gay pastors and parishioners to gay unions, adopting children, civil acceptance of such "families." The debate has moved away from ethical standards – God's counsel – to social norms. "What should we do to keep peace in the communities?" Shouldn't children be able to express themselves in a beautiful loving way?

What about the Bible and its standards? Do pastors even care anymore what God thinks? Do churches exist to champion spiritual virtues or social trends? *Or* do we have silence, tolerance, numbness or laxness? The gay movement goes forward, championing "love" as the reason for its intimate lifestyle. Jesus urges His followers to love activists enough to speak out against such behavior. An intimate friendship with Him should be our driving force. Has "love" become so secularized that the merits of church has shrunk to only community.

Every conflict has a seed of redemption. God's great redemptive plan was designed that way. That is why loyal adherents to our Savior have an obligation to resist this abhorrent lifestyle. Denial of such problems robs man of healing. *Silence* causes others to think we condone. *Tolerance* encourages continued immoral behavior. *Numbness* mocks the power of the restorative gospel. *Laxness* admits a paltry relationship with Jesus.

Defending evil brings eternal peril. No, we are not to hate the sinner. But if we defend their sin, it is no different. God never invites His church to be enablers of wrong. He wants those representing Him to firmly reveal the excitement of being His follower, apart from sin.

Maybe, just maybe, that is our biggest challenge. How long has it been since you saw someone excited about Jesus? When was the last time you discovered a church that was emotionally thrilled over truth?

Homosexuality is a sin. It's deeply at variance with God and His order. And there's another problem: When is the last time you heard from the pulpit about sin? With daring theology invading our churches, it is often claimed that the cross makes it unnecessary to address sin anymore! Unless we identify with God and His law, we will never know we have sin. Unless the redemptive value of the cross is recognized, man will continue to morally regress.

The solution to sin comes first by recognizing what it is and taking responsibility for it. There is no confession without that. Celestial pleas reverberate to rediscover what God stands for. His lofty ideals transcend all earthliness. He wants us to join His army and His war to fight against such degrading sin.

When, from the ethos, we must move in wars against our souls, God says, "Don't worry, I'll give you the power to fight (I Corinthians 13:10). But where is the church, the person or the Christian militia? Are there no voices to defend God's elevated principles? He goes up and down the street knocking on doors. "Is anyone home?" "May I come in?" "Hello!" Is there anyone who would like to be My witness?

Who will respond? Not the silent, the tolerant, the numb or the lax. There must be someone excited about Jesus – somewhere.

References:

¹www.bpnews.net/printerfradly.asp?10=29919

²www.worldnetdaily.com

³Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madson: "After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the '90's."

WHO IS THE VICAR OF CHRIST?

By Richard Bennett

(www.the-highway.com)

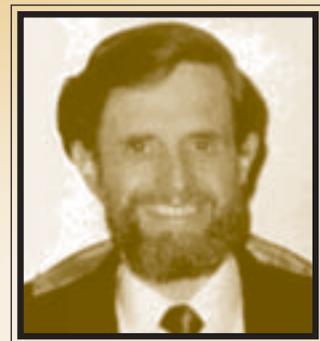
As the world's attention is focused on the new Pope, Benedict XVI, we must study his office since the position purports to take the place of Christ. The Vatican officially teaches that the Pope is the substitute for Christ Jesus; the words of the official pronouncement are,

"The *Pope*, Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor, 'is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful.' 'For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise.'"¹

The world again has a man in position of "Vicar of Christ," so it is the biblical imperative to see the true office of the Vicar of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ entrusted the universal care of souls into the safe-keeping of the Divine Person of the Holy Spirit. Concerning this Third Person of the Trinity who was to be His substitute, the Lord promised that, "*when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.*"² The Holy Spirit convicts of sin as He makes the sinner realize his lost condition and convicts him of his need of Christ's righteousness. He it is who brings a soul dead in sin to life. This miracle of grace is spoken of in Scripture as, "*the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead.*"³ The majesty, greatness and indescribable power of the office of Vicar of Christ are such that a believer stands in awe of His divine Person. That any human being should lay claim to the office of Vicar of Christ seems totally absurd and blasphemous.

The True Vicar of Christ

Because there is a direct connection between the redemption of Christ and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, it is a soul-damning error to mistake the work of the Holy Spirit as Vicar of Christ with the position or work of any man. As Christ Jesus had been the Master, Counselor and Guide to the believers, He promised to send the Holy Spirit as His substitute so that He might abide with them for ever."⁴ In believers' lives the Holy Spirit has full, immediate, and universal influence, as the Scripture so wonderfully teaches, "*now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*"⁵ The work of the Spirit is transforming; we are changed from one degree of glorious grace unto another, until by that same grace one day we will be perfect in Him in glory forever. How much therefore should Christians prize the full and complete ministry of the Holy Spirit! In the face of these awesome truths concerning the role and ministry of the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ, it is horrendous to learn that the Vatican proclaims, "The Pope enjoys, by divine institution, supreme, full, immediate, and universal power in the care of souls."⁶ Persuading men and women that Christ the Lord left a mortal man to be His vicar on earth



Richard Bennett

attempts to gainsay the very purpose of Christ Jesus.

History of the claim to be Vicar of Christ

This outlandish assertion came relatively late in the history of the Papacy. To begin with, the Bishop of Rome claimed to be the vicar of Caesar and his successors the rightful heirs to the Caesars. The city that had been the seat of power for the Roman Empire became the city for the Bishop of Rome to exercise his authority. Gradually other Bishops and national monarchs accepted him as vicar and successor to Caesar with the same supreme title of "Pontifex Maximus." Next the Bishops of Rome claimed to be "The vicar of the prince of the apostles,"⁷ that is, the vicar of Peter.⁸ Thus in the early fifth century Bishop Innocent I (401-417AD) insisted that Christ had delegated supreme power to Peter and made him the Bishop of Rome. Following this he held that the Bishop of Rome as Peter's successor was entitled to exercise Peter's power and prerogatives. Boniface III, who became Bishop of Rome in 607, established himself as "Universal Bishop," thus claiming to be vicar and master of all other bishops. It was not until the eighth century, however, that the particular title "Vicar of the Son of God"⁹ was found in the fraudulent document called "The Donation of Constantine."¹⁰ Although this notorious document was proven false in the early sixteenth century, the Bishops of Rome have used the title "Vicar of Christ" since the eighth century. This title has been the Pope's supreme claim to spiritual and temporal supremacy. The taste of divine power, with which the title resonates, has proven to be addictive. The "Vicar of Christ" is able to recognize no authority other than his own. He looks upon himself as Master of all, and boldly proclaims, "The First See is judged by no one."¹¹

It is truly significant that Joseph Ratzinger has been elected as the new Pope as Benedict XVI. Before this he headed up the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith,¹² since he emphatically is dictatorial. Archconservatives in the Church of Rome will warmly welcomed him, however he will not be acceptable to many American Catholics because of his hard-line stance. This rigid position was seen clearly in the document that he issued on September 5th

2000 called, "Dominus Iesus."¹³ In that document, he boldly decreed that the Roman Catholic Church is the only "instrument for the salvation of all humanity."¹⁴ Dogmatically, he also rules out Evangelical Churches from being considered as "Churches in the proper sense" when he proclaimed, "the ecclesial communities which have not preserved the valid Episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery, are not Churches in the proper sense."¹⁵

Counterfeit Vicar of Christ

Rome's alleged office of Christ's Vicar on earth is so all-embracing and complicated that Benedict XVI, as one man, cannot exercise "supreme, full, immediate, and universal power." Thus Joseph Ratzinger, who purports to be invested with the office, needs a vast hierarchy to command. The pyramid of power that constitutes his office of the "Vicar of Christ" consists of cardinals, patriarchs, major archbishops, metropolitans, coadjutor archbishops, diocesan bishops, coadjutor bishops, episcopal vicar, eparches, apostolic vicars, apostolic prefects, apostolic administrators and vicars general.¹⁶

The counterfeit nature of the Pope's claim to be "the Vicar of Christ" is shown by his doctrine and deeds. The key role of the True Vicar of Christ is to glorify Christ, "*He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.*"¹⁷ The sending of the Spirit was the glorifying of Christ. God the Father glorifies Christ Jesus in heaven, and the Spirit glorifies Him on earth. All the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit are to glorify Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ promised the Apostles, "*when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.*"¹⁸ God's truth is an indissoluble, balanced and harmonious whole. In the Bible we have "*all truth,*" in this the Holy Spirit truly glorifies Jesus Christ. In stark contrast, the Pope claims to possess "infallible teaching authority." This neither glorifies Christ nor honors the Spirit of truth.¹⁹ Also the Pope, as "the Vicar of Christ" teaches "rebirth" by baptism, which demeans the glory of Christ.²⁰

By crucifixes, rosaries, and scapulars, the earthly Vicar purports to fortify men and women against the as-

saults of Satan. He also maintains that indulgences can shorten the sufferings of souls in purgatory. While presiding over substantially the richest financial institution in the world, he maintains and advocates vows of poverty. Even as thousands of souls are corrupted by unbridled filthiness, he defends the vows of celibacy for his priests. By autonomous proclamations he releases men and women from their marriage vows in self-declared annulments.²¹ None of these deeds glorify Christ Jesus the Lord. The major enemy of Christ and His Gospel, however, is not materialism nor is it lust, but rather the spiritual pride and the apostasy of the very one who pretends to be His "Vicar." The first lie of Satan, "*ye shall be as gods*"²² reaches its full fruition in the Papal claim to be "Vicar of Christ." By this the words of the Apostle Paul are literally fulfilled, "*who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God... showing himself that he is God.*"²³

"Habemus papam," we have a Papa!

The waiting is finished. The senior cardinal-deacon has appeared on a balcony overlooking St. Peter's Square and has announced: "Habemus papam! We have a Papa!"²⁴ Catholics and the world are told that they now have a spiritual Papa to look after them. Christ Jesus constantly spoke about His Father, the word "Father" was seventy times on His lips to show true believers that they have a Father, a Father in Heaven – "*my Father, and your Father... my God, and your God.*"²⁵ Distinctively true believers have an Abba Father, in the words of the Apostle, "*for ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*"²⁶ It is precisely because believers have an Abba Father that they are commanded not to call any man "Father" in the spiritual sense. Thus the Lord's command, "*call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.*"²⁷ The Lord Christ Jesus prayed to the only "Holy Father" that exists, "*Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.*"²⁸ The Lord used His usual appellation "Father" but prefixed it with the word "Holy." He wanted to emphasize the absolute perfection of the Father's nature. So intimate and worshipful is this, that in a spiritual sense a true believer will only use the words "The Holy Father" of God alone! The Roman Pontiff not

only takes to himself the office of "Vicar of Christ" but also the very title of the Godhead, "The Holy Father." We must therefore ask the question that Apostle John asks: "*Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.*"²⁹ In assuming these titles to himself, the Pope shows that he truly is "a vicar of Christ" in the biblical sense of the Antichrist!

Conclusion

Today some compromised and eclectic "Evangelicals" have stopped their ears and closed their eyes to the true Vicar of Christ and have agreed mindlessly with the festivities that accompanied the white smoke that arose from the Vatican. Ignored once again are the questions: Whom do we honor? Whom do we fear? Is it God or man? As the world and false Evangelicals bow in admiration to the new Pontiff, we might well take a moment to pause and consider where we personally stand as believers in the One Lord Christ Jesus and the One Holy Spirit.

Presented to the world is the office of Pope. The one who holds the office claims to mediate between God and man and to hold the keys of heaven and hell. Most appallingly, he takes to himself the office of "Vicar of Christ," adding even the attribute of infallibility to his position,³⁰ demanding that "a religious respect of intellect and will be paid to his teaching."³¹ The Papal arrogance tallies well with the Scripture's prediction for such claims, "*I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.*"³² The words inscribed on the Pope's official miter are "Vicarius Filii Dei," Latin for "Vicar of the Son of God." Since there can be but one Vicar of Christ who is infinite, supreme, omnipotent, and all sufficient, the earthly pretender can be none other than a self-energized apostate system and will eventually be judged and utterly condemned by the Lord.³³ Although the ecumenical allies of the earthly Vicar multiply like mushrooms, yet we need not become fearful because we know that in Him we are "*more than conquerors through Him that loved us.*"³⁴ Our victory is assured "*for whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*"³⁵

The self-importance of the Vatican is proverbial. It attempts to establish its own righteousness by devising the importance of merit, indulgences, purgatory and the observance of its sacraments. The folly is that Christ Jesus has come and has brought in an everlasting righteousness. He is the object of faith, and His followers belong to fellowships of believers, comprising His Church. No assembly of believers can ever substitute for the Lord, and no group of believers can assume onto themselves His authority. In history, this attempted replacement has been the key factor in the life of Catholicism and its hierarchy. It is the very same issue that negated the way of salvation to the Pharisees and their followers, *“for they being ignorant of God’s righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”*³⁶

As human creatures, each one of us has a supernatural and eternal end. We are therefore bound to answer to the Lord God in the total obedience that He requires. We soon discover, however, that all our efforts at achieving perfect obedience are fruitless, and that of ourselves it is impossible to meet the standards of divine perfection. This righteousness is found in the Lord Christ alone, who in the words of the Apostle, *“is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”*³⁷ Christ Jesus the Lord totally satisfied the justice of God so that we might be partakers of righteousness by faith, *“for he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”* It is insufficient to be found not guilty; we must also be actually righteous in God’s sight. Not only all sin must be forgiven, but also all righteousness must be fulfilled. All the perfection that God requires of us is found in Him on whom we trust. The actual obedience, which Christ lived in keeping the whole law of God, is the righteousness whereby we are saved. If you are found in Him, which means that you do not have your own righteousness but rather have the righteousness that is of God by faith, then indeed your life is hid with Christ in God; and when Christ shall appear, you also shall appear with Him in glory. Because Christ Jesus was both God and man, His transcendent excellence is such that it not only satisfies for the sins of believers but it also bestows on them His righteousness.

It is the will of God that every true believer *“should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”*³⁸ Those of us who cling to Christ and His Word alone and who are saved before the all-Holy God by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, with all glory and praise to God alone must give voice to our profession of faith. At the time of Elijah there was a call to the people of God to make a stand for the true God or to follow Baal. In a similar way Joshua asked the people to decide between the gods of the land and the true God of Israel. In our day, much more than at the time of Elijah or Joshua, it is urgent that we take seriously the command our Lord gave us to personally give witness as to where we stand.

Endnotes:

¹Catechism of the Catholic Church Catechism of the Catholic Church, Second Ed. (Wash DC: US Catholic Conf., 1994, 1997) #882

²John 16:8

³Ephesians 1:19, 29

⁴John 14:16

⁵II Corinthians 3:17-18

⁶Catechism, Para 937

⁷“Vicarius principis apostolorum” the official title in Latin.

⁸This has been a long-standing contention, since Scripture never mentions Peter as ever residing in Rome.

⁹“Vicarius Filii Dei” is the official title in Latin.

¹⁰“The Donation of Constantine” states *“as on earth he (Peter) is seen to have been constituted vicar of the Son of God, so the pontiffs, who are the representatives of that same chief of the apostles”* <http://www.jmgainor.homestead.com/files/PU/PF/doco.htm> 3/9/05

¹¹*Code of Canon Law*, Latin–English ed. (Wash. DC: Canon Law Society of America, 1983), Canon 1404. All canons are taken from this volume unless otherwise stated.

¹²Formerly known as the Office of the Inquisition, then the Holy Office, it is still housed in the same building in Rome as it had been during six horrendous centuries of torture and death when it carried out the papal decrees.

¹³http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/

¹⁴"Dominus Iesus," Para. 22 DI hereafter.

¹⁵DI, Para 17. Bolding not in original.

¹⁶For more details, see *Our Sunday Visitor's Catholic Almanac* 1998 (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc) pp. 141-142.

¹⁷John 16:14

¹⁸John 16:13

¹⁹"The Supreme Pontiff, in virtue of his office, possesses infallible teaching authority when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful...he proclaims with a definitive act that a doctrine of faith or morals is to be held as such." Can. 749

²⁰"Through baptism men and women are freed from sin, are reborn as children of God, and, configured to Christ by an indelible character, are incorporated in the [Catholic] Church." Can. 849

²¹The Catholic Church has taken the Divine institution of marriage and used it for its own purposes. The Catholic Church has granted hundreds of thousands of annulments and allowed remarriage. Vid *Code of Canon Law* #1684

²²Genesis 3:5

²³II Thessalonians 2:4

²⁴In Latin, the full proclamation is "Annuntio vobis gaudium magnum. Habemus Papam", "I announce to you great joy, we have a Papa."

²⁵John 20:17

²⁶Romans 8:16

²⁷Matthew 23:9

²⁸John 17:11

²⁹I John 2:22.

³⁰"The Supreme Pontiff, in virtue of his office, possesses infallible teaching authority." Can. 749

³¹"A religious respect of intellect and will, even if not the assent of faith, is to be paid to the teaching which the Supreme Pontiff..." Can. 752.

³²Isaiah 14:14.

³³Revelation 18:8 "Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her."

³⁴Romans 8:37

³⁵I John 5:4

³⁶Romans 10:3

³⁷I Corinthians 1:30

³⁸Jude 3



Prophecy Unfolds

The Seven Trumpets of Revelation

CHAPTER 2

Seven Angels and Their Trumpets

“And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.” Revelation 8:6.

John describes seeing “angels” often in Revelation. Each time he does they are active with a special mission. How God directs their amazing roles will be an exciting question to pose to Him someday. We presume billions of angels are assigned just to this world. In this verse our attention is called to only seven with an amazing mission.

Something most fascinating is found in the record of these angels. Notice the first part of verse 2 along with 6 to see if you can discover what it is.

“And I saw the seven angels ... And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.” Revelation 8:2, 6.

John could have said, “I saw seven angels,” but he didn’t. He said, “the” seven angels (*tous hepta angelous*). That makes them a special group. What group? We really aren’t told. But they are singled out to:

Receive the trumpets
Prepare to blow them
Sound them one by one

The record tells us that they prepared (*hetoimsan*) to sound. One can imagine a relaxed stance, simply holding the trumpets. Then, suddenly, they lift their instruments to their lips. Now they are ready.

IT’S IN THE NUMBERS

God is not only animated by the number seven, He frequently divides it into three parts: 4 – 2 – 1.

The first four prepare for the next two. The final one relates in a special way to God, a finale’ or a sacred time. It prepares for the eighth – a new beginning.

Let’s see how that works:

Creation

- 1
- 2 Preparation for
- 3 Animal Life
- 4
- 5 Animals, Birds and Sea Life
- 6 Man
- 7 Sabbath – in His Presence
- 8 New Week

Seals

- 1
- 2 End-Time
- 3 Players
- 4
- 5 Faithful Harmed / God Reacts
- 6 Wicked Harmed
- 7 Heaven Bound – in His Presence

Millennial Clock

- 1
- 2 Pre-First
- 3 Advent
- 4
- 5 Pre-Second
- 6 Advent
- 7 Heaven – in His Presence
- 8 New Earth

Trumpets

- 1
- 2 God Reacts
- 3 Earth Harmed
- 4
- 5 Satan Reacts
- 6 Wicked Harmed
- 7 Kingdom Victory – Christ Reigns Forever

WHAT TRUMPETS PORTRAY

One of the early instructions given to ancient Israel was how trumpets were to be used. By this

we are given a little window into God's use of trumpets!

- In special times of happiness
In solemn Feast days
At the beginning of each month
When burnt offerings were made
At the time of peace offering
- Announces judgments to come
- Announces basis of judgments
- At the time of war
Provokes God to save
Israel from enemies!
- Final warning that end is coming
Important? Comes right from
God's throne.
- At judgment

Examples

Numbers 10:10 (commemoration and praise)
Leviticus 23:24

Isaiah 26:9 (warning)

Ezekiel 33:4-5 (justification)

Numbers 10:9 (battle)

Zephaniah 1:14-16, Joel 2:1 (last warning)

II Chronicles 13:12 (will not prosper)

Can you see the awesome power and even wonder found in the Trumpet messages? As Israel worked their way through the barren wilderness, they had the unending visual presence of God. But He invited them to add auditory spiritual passion to certain times of their lives – even adding sound effects to their monthly calendar!

Did you note, however, the warning times the Trumpets came? They were declarations that judgment was to come. They also, and this is incredible, sounded the alarm of battle. Now, that sounds strange. Why would one do that and take away any surprise from the enemy that they were attacking? It sure doesn't sound like a battle plan! But it was.

God said that when Israel blew the trumpets, that was when He went into action. And what did He promise? Amazing! *"Ye shall be saved from your enemies"* (Numbers 10:9). Do you think the trumpets there represented faith and great confidence by God's people that He would intervene? It seems that way. Could the Trumpets here in Revelation be the same? The Seven Trumpets are being blown by angels. They are a dramatic warning to all that mercy is about to flee forever, just like the Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:24-26, Numbers 29:1) of old were. They are also a promise that God's people will soon be saved. They visibly assure every committed lover of God that wickedness will soon be totally destroyed. Victory over the enemy is about to occur.

THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS

In various ways God presents a message to provoke a chord of loyalty in our hearts. Through symbols, stories and prose He brings warnings that judgment will come to everyone. In mercy He cries, "How shall I give thee up?" Hosea 11:8.

God often brings these warnings through conviction, a preacher or trials. But at the end – and He is so caring – through piercing Trumpets. It is as though His final appeal must be heard by all in the loudest and most unmistakable way. A great example of how He prepares people for judgment came through the ancient Feast of Trumpets.

Israel was given six annual festivals. Three were in the spring and three in the fall. These were divided into two types:

Feasts (celebration)	Holy Convocations (dedication)
Feast of Unleavened Bread	Passover
Feast of Weeks	Trumpets
Feast of Booths	Day of Atonement

The holy convocations were times when God dealt with some aspect of sin in His great redemptive plan. At Passover the price was paid – in blood. At the Feast of Trumpets the final call to repent was given. On the Day of Atonement judgment came, sealing one's destiny.

How gracious. For ten days trumpets signaled to the people that probation was about to close. There still was a chance to turn from evil. Sin could still be put away. If it wasn't, they would be destroyed on the Day of Atonement.

God has always given warnings before He executes judgment. He warned before the flood. Jonah brought a dire message to the inhabitants of Nineveh. The events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem were explicitly outlined by Jesus. The Seven Trumpets are the great antitype of the Feast of Trumpets. But – this is the last warning to ever be given to earth's inhabitants.

The event that will determine man's final destiny is the final judgment. The Trumpets urgently plead with everyone: Judgment is just about here – get ready, prepare! "Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming, it is *near*." Joel 2:1. "The great day of the LORD is *near*, it is *near*, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced

cities, and against the high towers." Zephaniah 1:14-16.

We saw how the coals brought sealing to God's people and judgment on the wicked. The first four Trumpets bring *that* judgment on the wicked – the same message, the same warning. To those who survive, they are the most dramatic and urgent appeals that will ever come to man. It is during this period that the Loud Cry also comes – the final invitation by God's messengers.

"The time of God's destructive judgments is the time of mercy for those who have no opportunity to learn what is truth. Tenderly will the Lord look upon them. His heart of mercy is touched; His hand is still stretched out to save, while the door is closed to those who would not enter. Large numbers will be admitted who in these last days hear the truth for the first time (RH July 5, 1906)."¹

God designed all end-time events to polarize the whole world. Either unswerving dedication is made or irrevocable rebellion. How solemn is this thought! What decision one makes, then, will not come impulsively at the last moment! It will be the result of the decisions we make now day by day. God longs to have us decide to be His. But that is more than mental assent. It goes beyond desire. It means action and firmness of purpose – right now.

Jesus said: "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer *is* nigh:" Matthew 24:31-32.

"Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." Daniel 12:10.

THE TRUMPET MESSAGES – LITERAL OR SYMBOLIC?

This is an important question. If they are symbolic, it means that we must analyze *what* they are symbolic of. God always gives to us special clues to remove all opinion and guesswork. The Old

Testament story of the Egyptian plagues tells us that they are literal. How do we really know? God said so.

In Exodus 7:17 He had Moses tell Pharaoh that when he saw the plagues it signified the God of Israel was at work. "In this thou shalt know that I am the Lord." Literal harm came to the Egyptian people.

In unmistakable language the "finger of God" will touch this earth through the Trumpets. As distinctive warnings in the ancient world came step by step, so it will be when the Trumpets sequentially blow. In Egypt the outcome finally led to the death of the wicked. So it will be at the end. Destruction and want spreads – then, finally, in the Vial Plagues (Revelation 15–16) and at Christ's coming (Revelation 6:16, II Thessalonians 2:8), death comes to the rebellious.

PURPOSE FOR THE TRUMPETS

For Jericho the trumpets announced the coming of decimating judgments. There was no redeeming message or opportunity. The plagues on Egypt, however, were filled with mercy! Again and again time was given to respond to the warnings. Isn't that just how God is? To erring, wayward man He waits, He prods and He invites "Come to Me." "My way is carefully designed to bring you the highest good."

"And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." Exodus 34:6.

"Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. And account *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;" II Peter 3:14-15.

Well, the Trumpets are horribly destructive and even lethal. But for those undecided and left behind, mercifully, another chance to repent is given. God's great tools that bring the world into

¹ White, Ellen G.; *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 979.

two classes are the Latter Rain and the Trumpets. God's followers will be empowered. Those still indecisive will be given the same Spirit – if they accept. What a time! God pulls all stops. Everything

is at stake now! It is His way of bringing the great controversy to a close.

The angel just raised the first Trumpet to his lips. It's going to sound. Let's see what happens!

CHAPTER 3

Trumpet One – Desolation and Amazing Mercy

“The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.” Revelation 8:7.

John gives us no clue as to what the Trumpet sounded like. It certainly wasn't a plaintive sound or a sweet melody! If you could imagine having to warn someone far away and had only a trumpet, what would it sound like? How long would you blast it?

The immediate result of that trumpet sound was devastation. The way this occurs is interesting. First, what God's destructive weapons were are described. Then, the nature of the destruction is presented. To understand what God is telling us, we must look at those issues in just that order.

Before we do that, it is important to grasp *when* this comes in the end time. The Bible is clear. The Seals occur in sequence (they are numbered) – and – you will soon note how the Trumpets come in order, meshed with them:

- Seal one Beginning of Latter Rain (144,000)
- Seal two Persecution begins (Babylon)
- Seal three Saints waiting to be called out of Babylon
- Seal four Babylon prepares to kill God's people
- Seal five Martyrs cry out for vengeance of their blood

THEN – DIVINE RESPONSE
Trumpet One: Hail – fire – blood

- Seal six Earthquake – celestial signs – coming of Jesus
- Seal seven Silence in heaven – saints en route to their celestial home

How do we know that this is accurate? Let's first remember the coals in verse 5. They were cast to the ground in a dramatic commentary insert. The coals purified. They also brought judgment. What judgment? It was the “Preface” to the

Trumpets. That imagery was telling us that this will be the overall outcome of the Seven Trumpets. We also learned that the Altar setting from which the coals came was in sequence with the Altar setting of the fifth Seal. Thus, the weight of evidence would now suggest that it is between Seals five and six.

But – God has given us another clue in the Old Testament:

“And it shall come to pass afterward, *that* I will pour out my spirit [Latter Rain / first Seal] upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke [Trumpets]. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood [sixth Seal], before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come [sixth Seal].” Joel 2:28, 30-31.

Now we know that the Seals and Trumpets have a partial overlap. Before the sixth Seal, where probation has closed, comes the final Trumpet warnings – just like ancient Israel acted out in the Feast of Trumpets. And – that was 1500 years before!

Well, what about those tools God used?

HAIL – FIRE – BLOOD

These weapons struck a large part of the earth – “they were cast upon the earth.” For a final appeal to be effective, the world must see that such a scourge is supernatural. It must be seen as *God’s* wrath. It has to appeal to the dullest imagination as to how helpless they are in face of such terror. But why hail, fire and blood?

Here is an interesting principle that expositor White gave to us over a century ago:

“God has a storehouse of *retributive judgments*, which He permits to fall upon those who have continued in sin in the face of great light. I have seen the most costly structures in buildings erected and supposed to be fireproof. And just as Sodom

perished in the flames of God’s vengeance, so will these proud structures become ashes. I have seen vessels which cost immense sums of money wrestling with the mighty waters, seeking to breast the angry billows. But with all their treasures of gold and silver, and with their human freight they sink into a watery grave. Man’s pride will be buried with the treasures he has accumulated by fraud. God will avenge the widows and orphans who in hunger and nakedness have cried to Him for help from oppression and abuse.

“The time is right upon us when there will be sorrow in the world that no human balm can heal. The flattering monuments of men’s greatness will be crumbled in the dust, even *before* the last great destruction comes upon the world [Seven Vial Plagues]....

“Only by being clothed with the robe of Christ’s righteousness can we escape the judgments that are coming upon the earth.—Letter 20, 1901.”¹

As in the plagues of Egypt, God has an arsenal of supernatural ways to punish and wake up the evil heart. It also brings to an end part of their earthly treasures.

HAIL – FIRE

There are many illustrations in the Bible where God warns and punishes using fire, hail or both. Fire and brimstone destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24). Hail was an essential part of God’s war against wickedness (Job 38:22-23; Isaiah 30:29-32; Haggai 2:14-19).

Occurring together, they are portrayed in many references. “He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land” (Psalm 105:32; Exodus 9:23-24). The imagery is one similar to the Egyptian plagues.

It is most interesting to listen in on an observation E. G. White made over one hundred years ago. “Egypt was nearly ruined by lightning. And the hail mingled with fire [from the lightning] had broken down their forests,” and destroyed their crops and cattle.²

¹White, Ellen G.; *Selected Messages*, bk 3, pp. 418-419 (emphasis added).

²White, Ellen G.; *Spirit of Prophecy*, bk 1, p. 193.

BLOOD

In Egypt the great Nile River was considered sacred. Pharaoh revered that river. Each morning he punctually came to its banks and offered praise and thanksgiving to it: "telling the water of its great power, and without it they could not exist."³

Moses met Pharaoh at the river in the morning hours, just as God commanded, and it became blood. In this first Trumpet, why is the hail mingled with blood? The martyrs had just cried out, "How long? ... dost thou not judge and avenge our blood" (Revelation 6:10). Recall that the two altar messages were sequenced together – now, the blood imagery.

In a terrifying rebuke, the wicked are not only scourged with hail and fire but, in a stinging reprimand, blood surrounds the hail. We recently saw that these Plagues had to be literal. Thus, the first Trumpet sound begins one of earth's most frightening calamities.

THE CONSEQUENCES

TREES AND GRASS BURNT UP

John was introduced to the Trees in the interlude between Seals six and seven (Revelation 7:1). Four angels were holding the four winds of strife back to prevent hurting the:

- Earth: literally and symbolically (the wicked)
- Sea: literally and symbolically (peoples, nations and lanes of commerce – Revelation 17–18)
- Trees: literally and symbolically (leaders, especially of the wicked in Revelation's context)

Here we see destruction of one third of the trees and all of the grass. Does this picture the four winds

of Revelation 7 being loosed? At first it seems that way. But – there is something most important to observe.

When the four winds are fully let loose, terrible destructions then fully comes. "The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than came upon Jerusalem of old."⁴ In the first four Trumpets, only a portion of the earth is destroyed.

That distinction – partial ruin, warning / complete ruin, final punishment – helps us to grasp what now unfolds.

"Four mighty angels are still holding the four winds of the earth. Terrible destruction is forbidden to come *in full*. The accidents by land and by sea; the loss of life, steadily increasing, by storm, by tempest, by railroad disaster, by conflagration; the terrible floods, the earthquakes, and the winds will be the stirring up of the nations to one deadly combat, while the angels hold the four winds, forbidding the terrible power of Satan to be exercised in its fury until the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads. Get ready, get ready, I beseech you, get ready before it shall be forever too late! The ministers of vengeance will pour all the terrible judgments upon a God-forsaken people."⁵

"The time of God's destructive judgments is the time of mercy for those who have no opportunity to learn what is truth. Tenderly will the Lord look upon them. His heart of mercy is touched; His hand is still stretched out to save, while the door is closed to those who would not enter. Large numbers will be admitted who in these last days hear the truth for the first time (RH July 5, 1906)."⁶

What is destroyed, then, in this first Trumpet plague? The setting invites us to view the havoc as mainly literal, as we talked about on page 13. Based on the ten plagues in Egypt, we must conclude that this Trumpet describes real fire, hail and blood that destroy one third of the trees and grass.

³White, Ellen G.; *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 4A, p. 54.

⁴White, Ellen G.; *The Great Controversy*, p. 614.

⁵White, Ellen G.; *Review and Herald*, 06/07/1887 (emphasis added).

⁶White, Ellen G.; *The Seventh-day Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 979.

Gardens, vegetation and trees that support mankind are lost. The food supply is disrupted. Is it any wonder that one of the restrictions that is placed on God's people is to prohibit them from buying and selling (Revelation 13:17)? "Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her." Revelation 18:8.

The story of the "grass" doesn't stop there. Grass symbolically represents people (Isaiah 40:7, 51:12; I Peter 1:24). It says that the "green" grass was burned up. The Greek word here for "green" is *chloros*, suggesting pale green. Amazing! That is the same color given the "pale" horse of Revelation 6. They represented the people who brought harm, even death, to God's people.

Do you think – just maybe – that God is now reacting to the martyrs cry and their destruction has now begun (especially of their leaders, represented by trees)? The evidence supports that conclusion.

"To our merciful God the act of punishment is a strange act. 'As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.' Ezekiel 33:11. The Lord is 'merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, ... forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.' Yet He will 'by no means clear the guilty.' Exodus 34:6, 7. While He does not delight in vengeance, He will execute judgment upon the transgressors of His law. *He is forced to do this, to preserve the inhabitants of the earth from utter depravity and ruin. In order to save some He must cut off those who have become hardened in sin.* 'The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked.' Nahum 1:3. By terrible things in righteousness He will vindicate the authority of His downtrodden law. And the very fact of His reluctance to execute justice testifies to the enormity of the sins that call forth His judgments and to the severity of the retribution awaiting the transgressor."⁷

Literal (famine)

1/3 trees destroyed (famine)
1/3 grass destroyed (famine)

Symbolic (judgment)

1/3 apostate leaders destroyed
1/3 apostate wicked destroyed

Do both occur? The contextual imagery and exegetic ties invite this conclusion.

Revelation 8:7 "echoes Ezek. 38:22, which refers to the final end-time defeat of Gog by the Lord: 'I will judge him ... with blood, and sweeping rain, and hailstones. And I will rain fire on him.' Jewish exegetical tradition used Ezek. 38:22 in connection with the hail-plague imagery of Exodus and applied it to end-time events.⁸

THAT STRANGE THIRD

The destruction of one third of vegetation draws on the influence of Ezekiel 5:2, 12 (cf. Zechariah 13:8-9). There, the judgment is symbolically related to "scales for weighing." Israel's fate is divided into thirds:

- 1/3 burned with fire
- 1/3 struck by the sword
- 1/3 scattered into captivity

This prophetic fraction usually alludes to the *wicked*. In the Trumpets alone it is used twelve times:

- 1/3 of the earth will be burned up
- 1/3 of the trees will be burned up
- 1/3 of the sea will turn into blood
- 1/3 of the sea creatures will die
- 1/3 of the ships on the sea will sink
- 1/3 of the rivers and springs will become contaminated
- 1/3 of the light from the sun will be taken away

⁷White, Ellen G.; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 628.

⁸*Pesiqta rabbati* 17.8; *Pesiqta de Rab Kahana* 7.11; *Midr. Rab. Exod.* 12.2.

- 1/3 of the light from the moon will be taken away
- 1/3 of the light from the stars will be taken away
- 1/3 of the day will be without light
- 1/3 of the night will be without light
- 1/3 of the troops will be killed in the sixth Trumpet war

This unveils two divine messages:

1. God's wrath has begun
2. God's mercy is still extended to *two thirds*

If the Trumpets could be explained by natural phenomenon, then the reason for God's authoritative intervention would be lost. There is now only a few months remaining in man's probation. Opportunity is closing. The eternal destiny of the world is about to be fixed. Through the first four Trumpets God is nudging the minds and senses of man toward an irrevocable decision.

Like Pharaoh of old, the opportunity to repent was wide open. But – and here is a sad commentary – with every resistance made he only hardened his heart more. So it will be at the end. The Trumpets are so dramatic, so devastating, so final that they are designed to bring man to a decision that will never again change.

"The time of God's destructive judgments is the time of mercy for those who have no opportunity to learn what is truth. Tenderly will the Lord look upon them. His heart of mercy is touched; His hand

is still stretched out to save, while the door is closed to those who would not enter."⁹

"The purpose of this Trumpet demands that it be viewed as an act of God on the people of the earth, so that they will turn from ignoring Him, get 'off the fence,' and begin to make a definitive decision to follow God or to reject Him. Since it occurs in close conjunction with the Latter Rain, it is accompanied by the beginning of the Loud Cry of the 144,000. As God uses this natural disaster to get the attention of the people, He sends them a call to repentance through His prophets."¹⁰

Are you surprised at what God is doing? Don't be. Ever since sin broke its unwelcomed way into our space, God has had a plan to bring it to an end. In the dramatic story of the Trumpets the curtain is drawn back and we are given a preview of just how He will do that.

Can't you see Him, however, so painfully slow, releasing the wicked to their doom? We can hear His heart throb extra hard now. He let's us even glimpse into His thoughts of anguish, "How can I let thee go?" But He does – little by little. He yearns and watches a lover leave, trying to get a last glimpse. As she almost disappears into the horizon, what does He do? Uses a Trumpet call – "Come home!" "I'll take you back!"

Well, He's not satisfied with one Trumpet. A second one is about to sound. Is it louder, more shrill and penetrating? It seems that way. Let's see what that call does.

Frank S. Fowler Jr., M.D.

⁹White, Ellen G.; *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 97 (1903).

¹⁰Canter, Bryan; *Revelation – A Study of the Eschatological Application of Prophecy – Part 4 – The Seven Trumpets* (Prophecy Research Initiative document – 2003), p. 55.



FOCUS ON THE *Sabbath*

[This section is devoted to news, articles, special messages, laws, sermons and political events that draw attention to the Sabbath. We are especially interested in how the Christian world views a weekly "rest day" – a pivotal prophetic end-time issue.]

Legal questions are beginning to arise over Sunday laws. Here are two reports of recent interest:

Town's Sunday construction ban could affect do-it-yourself work

TENNESSEAN
Every day matters. .com

Associated Press

Published: Monday, 10/17/05

SPRING HILL, Tenn. (AP) — Spring Hill aldermen are facing a decision over whether to go after do-it-yourself enthusiasts who violate an ordinance banning construction work on Sundays.

According to city code in this Nashville suburb, no construction work of any kind can be done on Sundays. Spring Hill aldermen are now debating just how strict that ordinance is.

"The ordinance reads no building operations, including erection, excavation, demolition, alteration or repair of any building in any residential area in the city, can be done on Sundays,"

Codes and Inspections Director Ferrell White said.

The ordinance came up for debate last week after Codes Enforcement Officer Beau Herring ordered some contractors to stop working on a Sunday, only to find a family doing similar work on their home nearby.

City Administrator Ken York said he needs direction from the Board of Mayor and Aldermen on whether it is illegal for residents to

paint or do other home improvement projects on Sunday.

"Can we specify no commercial work on Sundays?" Alderman Miles Johnson said.

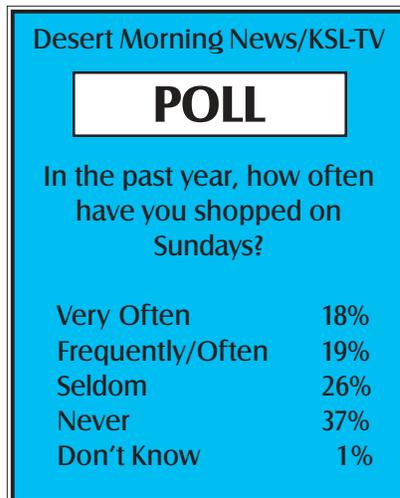
"What about Seventh-day Adventists?" Alderman Charles Raines said. "They go to church on Saturday."

"What about stating that anything that requires a permit can't be done on Sundays?" Alderman Brandon McCulloch said. "That would take care of larger jobs."

Not necessarily so, according to White.

"Permits are required for most stuff," White said. "Fences, decks, patios. But right now, if a homeowner wanted to build an arbor or a patio or a deck, he could not do that on a Sunday."

The aldermen instructed City Attorney Tim Underwood to research the matter and return to them with suggestions.



Open on Sunday? 84% of major Utah stores do business on the Sabbath

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By Lee Davidson

Fifty years ago, almost every major shop and store in Utah was closed on Sundays, according to an old, yellowing study by the Utah Council of Retailers.

Times have changed radically. But they have changed less in Utah County than in other parts of the state.

About half of the major stores in Utah County now open on Sundays, a significant increase from 50 years ago. But elsewhere in the state, nine of every 10 stores now open on Sundays — a monumental increase.

Those findings emerge from Deseret Morning News research of 2,476 retail stores statewide, including nearly all grocery and convenience stores in the state plus larger retailers, chain stores and businesses in the state's major shopping malls.

It suggests that to a majority of Utahns, the Ten Commandments may have shrunk to just the Nine Commandments — with many discounting Jehovah's biblical command to Moses to, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," or at least interpreting it to mean that Sunday shopping is OK.

In fact, a new Deseret Morning News/KSL-TV poll by Dan Jones & Associates found that two of every three Utahns report shopping on a Sunday sometime during the past year, with more than a third of Utahns saying they shop frequently or very often on Sundays. (Also, two of every five main breadwinners report they had to work on Sundays sometimes.)

Only 6 percent of Utahns surveyed say they will never shop on Sundays, while 87 percent said they will shop under varying circumstances. And nearly a third of all Utahns say they would shop on Sunday as they would on any other day of the week — and do not do it just to meet pressing needs.

It was not always that way.

All were closed

A study written in 1962 by the Utah Council of Retailers, designed to help legislators examine a then-proposed Sunday closing law, describes what

business on Sundays was like in Utah during different eras.

It noted that during pioneer days, the territorial Legislature did not bother to pass Sunday closing laws "since practically all businesses were closed on Sunday anyway."

But two years after statehood, in 1898, the Legislature passed a law forcing most businesses to close on Sunday — or face a now-quaint fine of at least \$5 and up to \$100. (That law exempted several types of businesses, including hotels, restaurants, gas stations, livery stables, drug stores, theaters and bathing resorts.)

That law remained on the books until 1943, when it was successfully challenged by a Carbon County fruit market. The Utah Supreme Court ruled the law was too arbitrary because it allowed some businesses (such as resorts or gas stations) to sell the same types of commodities (such as fruit) that forced-to-close markets could not sell that day.

After that, Salt Lake City adopted its own, separate Sunday closing law in 1946. But the Utah Supreme Court struck it down in 1948, also for being too arbitrary.

Even with no law banning Sunday openings, the 1962 retailers' report still said, "Only scattered facilities were open prior to 1959."

For example, a 1953 Deseret News story reported that 150 out of 910 "small grocers" (16 percent) in the state were open on Sundays that year when then-Gov. J. Bracken Lee vetoed a mandatory Sunday closing bill. Virtually all larger supermarkets were still closed on Sundays then.

Change begins

The old retailers' report says that Sunday openings began to skyrocket after 1959, when then-Gov. George D. Clyde, like Gov. Lee before him, also vetoed a mandatory Sunday closing law, calling it an unwise intrusion on personal liberty.

"This seemed to be a green light to retailers to go ahead with Sunday selling," the 1962 report said. It

added about the situation in late 1962, “Today over half of Utah’s grocery stores are open on Sunday; all of the drug-department (super drug) stores; practically all corner drug stores; about 80 percent of the gasoline service stations; the large discount stores, and numerous other stores in various retail groups.”

Many legislators in the ’60s found such growth in Sunday openings alarming, and news reports said proposed Sunday closing laws were debated repeatedly for years.

The Legislature passed a Sunday closing bill in 1967, but then-Gov. Calvin L. Rampton vetoed it. It passed another in 1970, which Rampton allowed to become law without his signature. But 3rd District Judge Leonard W. Elton ruled it unconstitutional in an oral announcement. He died the next day without having signed his orders.

The Utah Supreme Court later upheld Elton’s ruling that the Sunday closing law was unconstitutional. No other statewide Sunday closing bill has ever again become law in Utah, even though a 1961 U.S. Supreme Court decision allows “secular” mandatory day-of-rest closing laws.

Currently, the only institutions now mandated by state law to close on Sundays are state liquor stores, courts and depository institutions.

Situation now

If legislators in the ’60s thought too many businesses were open on Sundays — when half of grocery stores did business — they had not seen anything yet.

The Deseret Morning News found that 84 percent of the 2,476 major stores it contacted statewide are now open on Sundays.

The News found that 100 percent of major drug stores it contacted are open Sundays; 97 percent of convenience stores; 91 percent of larger food supermarkets; 82 percent of major retailers; 82 percent of stores in malls; and 53 percent of small grocers.

Stuart Johnson, Deseret Morning News

(The Deseret Morning News researched Sunday opening data for all grocery and convenience chains and stores listed in the online Utah Food Industry Directory; all stores listed in directories of major shopping malls; retailers listed in state Yellow Pages; and other well-known, major retailing chains.)

Little difference was found between rural and urban areas. About 86 percent of rural stores contacted were open Sundays, and 84 percent of urban stores were.

But going against statewide trends is Utah County, part of the urban Wasatch Front. About half of the stores contacted there — 47 percent — are closed on Sunday.

That is four to six times more than in other urban counties. For example, only 11 percent of major stores contacted in Davis County are closed Sundays; only 9 percent in Salt Lake County; and just 8 percent in Weber County.

Also in the new poll, 54 percent of Utah County residents say they never shopped on Sunday during the past year — far higher than the state average of 37 percent.

Why the difference?

Officials in Utah County, population 400,000, make some obvious guesses about why more stores are closed there on Sundays: Fewer residents seek to shop on Sunday because of

Closed Sunday – Utah			
	Stores Contacted	Stores Closed	Percent Closed
Rural	445	63	14%
Urban	2,031	329	16%
COUNTIES			
Utah (Closures)	386	181	47%
Davis	203	23	11%
Salt Lake	1,232	109	9%
Weber	210	16	8%
STATEWIDE	2,474	392	16%
OUTSIDE UTAH	2,079	200	10%
Type Store			
Small grocers	126	59	47%
Mall stores	1,307	231	18%
Major retailers	1,371	243	18%
Supermarkets	214	20	9%
Convenience stores	548	15	3%

strong religious convictions; and, as home of the LDS Church-owned Brigham Young University, it may also attract some of that church's more committed members.

"I had a variety of businessmen tell me through the years that they don't do well on Sundays in this market, so they close," Provo Mayor Lewis Billings said.

Utah County Commission Chairman Jerry Grover, in turn, says he believes fewer people shop there on Sundays "probably because they are religious, and Sunday is just not their shopping day. . . . I wouldn't guess it is anything beyond that."

Grover said a former Utah Valley State College president, who himself liked to shop on Sundays, actually liked living where large numbers do not. "He loved it because he could golf on Sunday without waiting in lines, and go shopping without lines." (However, most municipal recreation facilities in the county are also closed Sundays.)

Rob Kallas, general manager of the University Mall in Orem where all stores but one are closed on Sundays, said some of the larger national stores there have sometimes studied or experimented opening Sundays but usually end up closing for lack of business. An exception is Mervyn's, which he said remains open on Sundays there because of a national policy to have all its stores open on Sunday.

Even while the newer Provo Towne Centre mall across town is open on Sundays, Kallas said he expects most of University Mall to remain closed on Sundays for the foreseeable future. "We find that many of our (smaller) tenants have chosen us and not other malls because we are closed on Sunday, and that is important to them."

LDS difference?

One way that Utah County is different, which may contribute to why more stores close there on Sunday, is that its population has the highest percentage of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints among the state's counties.

About 88 percent of Utah County residents are LDS, according to Brigham Young University geography professor Sam Otterstrom, who adds there may be some correlation between that percentage and the high numbers of Sunday closings.

Other counties with high percentages of LDS members do have higher-than-average numbers of Sunday closings but not as high as Utah County.

For example, in Morgan County, where the LDS population percentage is nearly identical to Utah County, 25 percent of its stores contacted close on Sunday. That's about 67 percent higher than the state average but still far lower than Utah County.

On the other end of the spectrum, Grand County, where Otterstrom said only 25 percent of the population is LDS, the lowest in the state, 87 percent of its stores contacted open on Sundays — just a bit above the state average.

In Summit County, where 36 percent of the population is LDS, the second lowest, 95 percent of stores contacted are open Sundays. But it is also a ski resort area.

The new poll shows that LDS members surveyed in Utah are more reluctant to shop on Sundays than others.

The new poll showed that 48 percent of LDS members surveyed said they had shopped on a Sunday during the past year. In comparison, 100 percent of Catholics surveyed said they had shopped on Sunday, as did 97 percent of Protestants surveyed and 100 percent of those who belonged to other churches or no church at all.

Activity levels in the church also make a difference. Among LDS members who described themselves as "very active," 64 percent said they had never shopped on Sunday; only 12 percent of those

Closed on Sunday

Major chains in Utah that close stores on Sunday

Allen's Food Markets
Macey's Food Stores
Chick-fil-A
Christensen's Department Stores
Deseret Book
Dressed In White
Franklin Covey
Furniture Warehouse
John Paras Furniture
Mr. Mac
R.C. Willey
Seagull Book
Winegar's Supermarkets

“somewhat active” had never shopped on Sunday ; and only 5 percent who said they are “not active” had never shopped on Sundays.

Why open?

Stores that open on Sundays say it is for the convenience of modern customers who now do more weekend shopping, especially in a time when both spouses often work all week. Some also say competition virtually requires Sunday openings.

For example, Brenda Romero, spokeswoman for JC Penney stores, said, “We decided to keep our store open on Sundays because many of our customers can only do their shopping on Sundays.”

She adds, “Since our customers are our No. 1 priority, and also one of our priorities is to provide convenience to our customers, we decided it was just the best thing for us to do. It is something we do nationwide unless there is some kind of mall regulation that keeps us from opening on Sunday.”

When Dan’s Foods chose to open its stores on Sundays in 1992, chairman Dan S. Gardiner Jr. said then that the chain had long remained closed “because of my deeply held conviction that Sunday has been set aside as a day for rest and worship.”

However, he said, “It became clear there is a wide difference between my perception of Sundays and that of a majority of our customers.”

Dan’s said surveys it conducted in 1992 indicated nearly two-thirds of its Utah customers sometimes shop for groceries on Sunday — as did 56 percent of Dan’s customers. So when it was closed on Sundays, Dan’s customers went elsewhere.

“In this extremely competitive market, this puts Dan’s at a significant disadvantage,” Dan’s Vice President Dan Parris said at the time: “It is also an inconvenience to those local Dan’s shoppers who, for whatever reason, choose to shop on Sundays.”

Those who close

While the large majority of retailers in Utah are open Sundays, several still choose to close.

Some major retailers that close all their Utah stores are: Allen’s Super Save Markets, Chick-fil-A, Christensen’s Department Stores, Deseret Book, Dressed in White, Franklin Covey, Furniture Warehouse, John Paras Furniture, Macey’s (food

stores), Mr. Mac, R.C. Willey furniture, Seagull Books and Winegar’s Supermarkets.

Also, University Mall in Orem and Salt Lake City’s ZCMI Center are closed on Sundays.

The ZCMI Center and Deseret Book are owned by the LDS Church, which urges members not to shop on Sundays. Businesses such as Dressed in White and Seagull Books also almost exclusively target active LDS members.

However, Salt Lake City’s Crossroads Plaza, which the LDS Church recently purchased, is open on Sundays. (Taubman Centers — one of the nation’s largest retail developers — announced this week that it is also buying into those downtown malls.)

LDS Church spokesman Dale Bills said Crossroads is currently open on Sundays because of “contractual obligations from leases signed under previous Crossroads ownership. ZCMI Center, constructed and continuously owned by church-affiliated businesses, has always been closed on Sundays.”

Bills added, “The future of Sunday closing policy for Crossroads Plaza stores is yet to be determined.”

Why some close

Reasons those stores close vary from religious to saying that offering Sundays off helps them attract higher-quality employees. Most say it does not really hurt their businesses.

Mac Christensen, founder of Mr. Mac clothing, who is also president of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, explained why his family’s stores close on Sundays.

“We are Mormons. We believe in being closed on Sunday. It gives our people a chance to be home with their families, take care of church responsibilities and have a day of rest.”

He adds, “It hasn’t hurt our business.”

It also has not hurt the Atlanta-based Chick-fil-A, which has reported 36 consecutive years of sales growth and now has 1,150 restaurants in 37 states. Its founder, S. Truett Cathy, a devout Baptist, requires all its restaurants to be closed on Sunday.

He has been quoted saying, “Our decision to close on Sunday was our way of honoring God and directing our attention to things more important than our business. If it took seven days to make a living

with a restaurant, then we needed to be in some other line of work.”

Sunday closings also have not hurt the fast-growing, locally based Franklin Covey time management stores, which are closed nationally. Spokeswoman Debra Lund said one of the seven habits of highly successful people espoused by founder Stephen Covey is to take time off “to sharpen the saw,” which is important for employees.

“It is important to take time off for renewal and renovation,” she said. “Most employees like to try to take off on the weekend. Saturday is too high a traffic day to give up,” so the chain closes on Sundays, she said.

Scott Hymas, chief executive officer of R.C. Willey furniture, said, “Retail hours are tough. But if our associates know they will at least have Sundays off to spend with their families, it allows us to attract a higher quality associate. . . . When they get a day off, they come back refreshed, and we get a better work force.”

Dave Davis, human resources director of Macey’s food markets, said his chain remains closed Sundays, even though Sundays are considered the second-biggest day for grocery shopping.

“It could put us at a competitive disadvantage, but it is important enough to our team members, our communities and our guests that we maintain that closure policy,” he said.

What churches say

Some churches leave it up to individuals to decide whether shopping on Sunday breaks the Sabbath, while others more directly discourage or condemn it.

“Beyond keeping the Sabbath holy and attending Mass either Saturday evening or sometime on Sunday (which usually lasts about an hour), the Catholic Church has no specific instruction about participating in specific activities on Sunday,” said Monica Howa-Johnson, director of communications for the Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake City.

She adds, “People are encouraged to avoid working if possible and devote the day to God and

family, but the church realizes that is not always possible.”

The Rev. Daniel Webster, director of communications for the Episcopal Diocese of Utah, says, “Episcopalians, as part of our ethos, leave it to people to decide, but to discern through scripture and teaching and through their own discernment what is keeping holy the Lord’s Day.”

However, he adds he has taught from the pulpit that “we have to be very careful on how we live our lives on what is traditionally the Christian Sabbath on Sunday. If we contribute to more stores being open, we put more people to work on what should be the Sabbath day,” he said. “The whole point of the Sabbath was to give animals and servants who work for you a day off.”

LDS Church President Gordon B. Hinckley said in a talk, “There is no need for people to shop and desecrate the Sabbath day by buying things on Sunday. That is not the time to buy groceries. You have six days of the week, and you all have a refrigerator.”

He added, “You do not have to shop on Sunday. Do not buy furniture on Sunday; buy it the other days of the week. You will not lose anything if you do your shopping the other days and do not do it on Sunday. Let this be a day of meditation, of reading the scriptures, of talking with your families, and of dwelling on the things of God. If you do so, you will be blessed.”

Varying views among churches on Sunday shopping seem to be reflected in the new poll.

It showed that 76 percent of Catholics surveyed would shop on Sunday as if it were “any other day of the week,” as did 61 percent of Protestants, 73 percent of those who belong to other churches and 91 percent of those who said they belonged to no church.

Meanwhile, only 13 percent of LDS members surveyed said they would shop that way. Meanwhile, 59 percent of them said they would shop on Sundays only for pressing needs such as medicine; 11 percent would shop for items needed that day, such as food; 2 percent would shop after attending to religious duties; and 8 percent said they would never shop on Sundays.



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