

Why Will the Firstfruits Reign For Only 1000 Years?

James Smyda

Recorded on February 22, 2025

Brethren, as I'm sure most of you are aware, the Bible specifically states that everyone who is called as a Firstfruit, who successfully endures to the end and makes it into the resurrection to eternal life, all those that are included in that group are going to have a role reigning with Jesus Christ as kings and priests. The Bible directly states this for us. It even gives us some details about this particular role and what we'll be doing in that role. But there's a detail of this particular role that oftentimes we just read right over and never really take note of or ever ask the question, why is this particular detail stated? And what I'm referring to is that the Bible a couple of times specifically states that this role as kings and priests reigning with Christ, the role the Firstfruits are going to have, is specifically for 1,000 years.

Now, oftentimes we just read right over that, and we never ask the question. We, quite frankly, oftentimes don't even notice that specific detail to really take note of it. And the reason I mention this is because when we look forward to the future and the fulfillment of God's Holy Days and how He's going to work with the rest of mankind, we know there's two distinct time periods involved. There's the millennium, which lasts a thousand years. That's pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles. And then there's the period of time pictured by the Eighth Day or Last Great Day. And the Bible doesn't specifically tell us exactly how long that period is. But as the Church of God has always acknowledged, that's a separate time frame.

When we look at this thousand years that it's promised that the Firstfruits will reign with Christ for that period of time. Well, that's obviously specifically referring to the millennium, and it says we'll have this role during the millennium. It doesn't specifically say we're going to have that role during the Eighth Day period. And oftentimes we just read right over that and never even really notice that or ask the question, why is that? Why is it specifically stated we'll have this role for the millennium, but it doesn't say that for the Eighth Day? Well, today we're going to take a closer look at that particular subject to see if we can ascertain from the Bible, why that might be. And why does the Bible specify this role specifically for a thousand years, but not for the period pictured by the Last Great Day? So, if you'd like a title for this sermon, it's:

Why Will the Firstfruits Reign For Only 1,000 Years?

Because we're going to see the Bible specifically states that it's for 1,000 years. But why specifically state it like that and limit it to that timeframe? We're going to see today that there is a very specific reason for this, and it's tied to the very fundamental requirements for New Covenant Christianity for pursuing salvation. But just to start off with, let's just notice some of the details that the Bible tells us about this particular role. I'm sure some of this will be a review you're probably familiar with, but let's just notice this before we look specifically at this question about the time frame.

So, to start off with, turn over to 1 Corinthians 6. This is kind of a side reference that Paul makes here, because his focus is really making a different point. But in mentioning this, he makes a side reference to the role that the Firstfruits are going to fulfill in the future when they're reigning with Christ. And this is in 1 Corinthians 6 and verse 1.

1 Cor 6:1 *“Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? 2) Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?”* (NKJV)

Now, obviously, Paul's focus here is he's correcting the Corinthian brethren because they were having disputes with each other and taking those disputes to the civil courts there. And he's saying, “Why are you doing this?” But in addressing this issue, he specifically says the saints will be judging the world. Obviously, he's referring to the role as kings and priests that we will have ruling with Christ. But let's just notice the context here, because the context here is, you might say, in the realm of civil judgments, of resolving disputes and such.

The reason I point that out is sometimes brethren -- and I've even been guilty of this myself in the past. We look at the fact that it says the saints are going to judge the world, and we wonder, “Well, does that mean that the resurrected Firstfruits are going to be involved in determining the salvation for the rest of mankind?” In other words, judging who makes it into the Kingdom of God and who goes into the lake of fire? Well, the Bible certainly doesn't seem to indicate that we're doing that kind of judgment.

Now, if you look at the accounts that directly address the judgment of the rest of mankind. The key chapters are the latter part of Matthew 25 and the latter part of Revelation 20. Now, later in this sermon today, we're going to look at the latter part of Matthew 25. But in those two accounts -- if you put them together -- you have basically the description of how this judgment for the rest of mankind plays out. In Matthew 25, it describes Jesus Christ involved separating the sheep from the goats, but no mention of the Firstfruits being involved in this decision making that He's doing in separating these groups. The righteous in that chapter go into eternal life, the wicked into the lake of fire. If you look at the latter part of Revelation 20, there's a similar account there. There's a lot more symbolic language used, and it's really focusing more on those who go into the lake of fire. But the only individual it describes involved in this judgment, it describes it as “He who sits on the throne”.

Now, that's a reference made multiple times throughout the Book of Revelation, and it always refers to God the Father. An easy way to see that is in Revelation 5. We won't take the time to go through that today. But it describes in that chapter, “He who sits on the throne” has a scroll in His hand. And Christ is the only one found worthy to take that scroll and to open it and reveal its contents. And then Christ takes the scroll out of the hand of “He who sits on the throne”. Well, that tells you “He who sits on the throne” has to be the Father. But the point I want you to see here is in both accounts, you see the

Father and you see Christ involved. There's no mention of the Firstfruits being involved in judging the salvation of the rest of mankind, of making that determination of who makes it in the Kingdom and who goes into the lake of fire. And the reference here that we just read in 1 Corinthians 6 again refers to the saints judging the world. But it's more from an administrative handling of day-to-day disputes. That is the context of what's mentioned. So, we can see here again some of the role of how this will play out with what the Firstfruits will do.

Let's notice now that the Book of Revelation gives us what you might call a job title for the role that the Firstfruits are going to fulfill. Turn over to Revelation 1, and we'll see a couple of times here, a couple of verses that give us a specific job title you might say, for this role that the Firstfruits are going to fulfill. We'll start in Revelation 1:4.

Rev 1:4 *“John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, 5) and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, 6) and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (NKJV)*

Now notice he just referred to making us kings and priests, because that's the job title you might say, of the role that the Firstfruits are going to fulfill reigning with Christ. Now turn over to Revelation 5, and we'll see this mentioned again here. Revelation 5:9.

Rev 5:9 *“And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, 10) And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.”” (NKJV)*

So, again, we have this job title of kings and priests mentioned. We also have a location mentioned here. This is going to take place on the Earth is what it tells us. So, see, now we have a job title, we have a location, and even some details because we saw in 1 Corinthians 6 part of this role is judgment. But that's more administrative judgment handling day-to-day disputes and issues of that nature. Again, it doesn't take us into the realm of them deciding the salvation for the rest of mankind.

But now let's notice the detail that oftentimes gets kind of read right over and never really thought about in greater detail, particularly to ask the question why? Turn over to Revelation 20 and we'll start in verse 4. What I want you to notice as we read through these three verses, two times it's going to specifically state that this role that the Firstfruits are going to fulfill reigning with Christ has a time parameter on it and it directly states it's just for 1,000 years. Starting in verse 4.

Rev 20:4 *“And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them.” (NKJV)*

Now again, we just saw the context of what that judgment entails.

"Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5) But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6) Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." (NKJV)

Notice twice here it specifically mentioned that the Firstfruits are going to reign with Christ, but it gave us a time parameter on that. It says it's specifically for a thousand years. Now, again, as I mentioned in the introduction to this sermon, if you look at the meaning of the Holy Days, particularly the fall Holy Days. The Church of God has always acknowledged my entire life that the Feast of Tabernacles pictures the thousand year millennium. But then there's a separate time frame that's pictured by the Eighth Day or Last Great Day. The Bible doesn't really give us details of exactly how long that time period is. But however long it is, that's in addition to the thousand years of the millennium.

But what we just read here is that this role that the Firstfruits are fulfilling, that's specifically for the millennium. It didn't say anything about what they were going to be doing for the Eighth Day. What, if any, role that the Firstfruits have in that time frame the Bible doesn't seem to say much about that or to clarify those details. We just don't really know. But why is it making this distinction and separating them? Because, oftentimes, at least from my experience in my lifetime, we read right over this and we assume, this role that the Firstfruits are fulfilling, that applies to both. That applies to the millennium, and it applies to the period pictured by the Eighth Day. But that's not what we read.

You see, there's another thing that we need to consider as well. Throughout my lifetime, the most common thing that's been taught about the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day -- the millennial period of 1000 years and that additional time frame pictured by the Eighth Day -- is they're typically presented as if they are functionally identical. As if there's really no meaningful difference between the two, except maybe the size of the population. And what I'm referring to here is it's typically assumed that Satan is completely out of the picture in both time frames. As we're going to see here in a minute, we know that's true for the millennial period, because the Bible explicitly states that. But we oftentimes assume that that's true for the Eighth Day period as well.

Because throughout my experience in my lifetime in the Church of God, the release of Satan after the millennium is typically a subject that's for the most part kind of ignored. We just kind of don't really talk about that. And if it ever is talked about, it's very much minimized. We try to kind of sandwich it in between the thousand year millennium pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles, but somehow before the Eighth Day period even

comes into the equation. We try to kind of make it this time frame in between. Well, just look at the layout of the Holy Days. When you get to sundown at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles, at the end of that seventh day, where are you? You're immediately in the Eighth Day. Because there's not a time frame in between. The Bible doesn't give us that. See, we've assumed a time frame that doesn't really exist. So, see, then we assume that both of these are utopian periods.

There's another mistake we've made as well, because these verses that we've just read through -- verses 4 through 6 of Revelation 20 -- they contain two terms that are oftentimes misunderstood. One is "first resurrection" and the other is the "rest of the dead". Now, I'm not going to go into much detail in addressing this. There's a sermon and a study paper on my website that's titled "The First Resurrection and the Rest of the Dead". If you're watching this on YouTube, just look below this video. There's a link there that will take you straight to my website. But just to summarize it for you, "first resurrection" does not establish a numerical sequence. It's not about first, second, and third. Because we've made up these terms "second resurrection" and "third resurrection", which you won't find in the Bible anywhere because they're made up terms. But they're based upon the assumption that "first resurrection" established a numerical sequence of resurrections.

To just kind of give you the moral of the story, "first resurrection" is really just another way of saying "resurrection to eternal life". And the "rest of the dead" is really referring to all those who will receive eternal life at the end of the Eighth Day period. That's what those terms actually mean. But because we misunderstood this term "rest of the dead", we typically insisted that the resurrection described in Ezekiel 37 would have to take place in the Eighth Day, Last Great Day period. Now, if you just read the context around that resurrection being described -- it's described in Ezekiel 37:1-14. But if you read the latter part of Ezekiel 36 and then from verse 15 on to the rest of chapter 37, in other words, noticing the verses before that resurrection and after. It's obviously in the context of the millennium.

Well, see, once you understand and put that together, you don't have a population difference. But then you have to ask the question, why separate these two? What's the point involved here? You know, if they're functionally identical, why even have two? Well, let's notice what the Bible actually says, because as I mentioned, we know for a fact that Satan is not around during the millennial period. The Bible directly says that. And if you just look over at verse 1 here in chapter 20 it says:

Rev 20:1 *"Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2) He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3) 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. But after these things he must be released for a little while."* (NKJV)

So, see, we know for a fact the millennial period. That's a period without Satan. He's not able to affect mankind for a thousand years. And that's what enables this wonderful utopia that we see described in so many scriptures talking about the millennium. But now, notice it said here, he "must be released" when the thousand years were finished. In other words, it's not a situation where the guards that are holding him just weren't paying attention and he escaped. No, he is specifically let out because he has a meaningful purpose to fulfill. And there's no mystery about it. It's the exact same purpose he fulfills today. He provides the trials and the suffering that we have to endure to the end through -- the "much tribulation" -- to enter the Kingdom of God. Those are the terms of the contract. Well, he fulfills that persecution and those hard trials. But now just skip down to verse 7.

Rev 20:7 *"Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison" (NKJV)*

Now again, just follow the layout of the Holy Days. When you get to sundown at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles, where are you? You're in the Eighth Day. When the thousand years have expired. Where are you? You're in the Eighth Day period. This is when Satan's released. They're concurrent. Now, just read on here and we'll notice again a situation described that is very different than our millennial promises. In verse 8.

"8) and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. 9) They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. 10) The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." (NKJV)

Notice here we have a war described. The reason I'm pointing that out is if you look at the millennial promises, you know how that's described. I like to break it down to three major aspects that kind of define this millennial period for being the wonderful utopia that the Bible says it is. One of them is no war. Now, I'm sure most every Feast of Tabernacles you probably ever attended at some point somebody got up and was speaking, and they quoted Isaiah 2 and Micah 4. Again, we won't take the time to go through those at this point, but those are the verses that say they "beat their swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks". They will "not learn war anymore". In other words, it's going to be a totally utopian, peaceful environment.

One of the other things you probably hear described is abundant resources. That's number two. The first is no war. Number two is abundant resources. You read all the verses that talk about the "plowman overcoming the reaper" and all the wonderful abundance of food and resources that everyone will have, and no one will be doing without. Well, the third major aspect is everybody's healthy. I'm sure you've heard many messages that turn to Isaiah, and they read the direct promises of the blind are going to

see, the deaf are going to hear, the lame are going to leap like the deer. Everybody's healthy and everything's wonderful.

Well, again, that all applies to the millennium, and there's lots of scriptures that talk about that. It's very clear that that's a wonderful utopia. But notice what we just read here in Revelation. We get to after the thousand years, the Eighth Day period, and what happens? Satan is released. And what do we have directly described? A war. Okay, we just changed one of those three criteria significantly. Now let's notice the criteria that Christ uses to judge everyone at the end of the Eighth Day period and just use a little common sense. Because when we read the conditions -- the criteria He's using -- the conditions that have to exist to make this criteria relevant. For that to be the case, we're going to see these other two -- the abundant resources and everybody being healthy. That dramatically changes as well. So, turn over to Matthew 25 and we'll pick up in verse 31.

Matt 25:31 *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32) All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.” (NKJV)*

Now notice here, all the nations are before Him. He's not judging the Firstfruits. He's judging the rest of mankind. This is at the end of the Eighth Day period. But now pay attention to the criteria that He uses, because for any of this to make any sense, to judge the population at large on how they responded to these circumstances, you have to have lots of people experiencing a lack of resources. They don't have everything they need. And you have to have people having significant health problems. Otherwise, these statements make no sense.

“33) And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. 34) Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35) for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; 36) I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ 37) ‘Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38) When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39) Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ 40) And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’ 41) ‘Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: 42) for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; 43) I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’ 44) ‘Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’ 45) Then He will

answer them, saying, "Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me." 46) And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (NKJV)

Now, as I mentioned before, in the millennium, what do we have? Three major criteria. No war, abundant resources, and everybody's healthy. But when we consider the Eighth Day period, this is dramatically different. Revelation directly told us we have a war. We won't take the time to go through Ezekiel 38 and 39, but it describes that war in a lot more graphic detail. It's not a small event. It's a very major event that takes place.

But also, just from the criteria that we read over here, obviously the circumstances of abundant resources and nobody doing without -- you couldn't be judging people on "When I was naked, you clothed me". "When I was hungry, you fed me". These things don't make any sense in an environment where everyone has everything they need. You have to have people having shortages. Well, "when I was sick, you visited me". You have to have health problems for that to take place. See, it's a dramatically different setting. So, see, if we start understanding the differences between these time periods, this starts giving us some insight as to why the role of the Firstfruits might be different. Because you can kind of build a picture here. And as we get towards the end of this sermon, this will totally make sense. But we're just kind of building a foundation here to understand the differences.

But there's another important difference between these as well. Turn over to John 7. It's a scripture that I like to have a little fun with. I have kind of a sarcastic sense of humor. But because some of the obvious implications of this section of scripture we're about to read are oftentimes not thought about or considered, I like to kind of sarcastically joke about it and refer to these verses as "the radical notion that Christ actually understands the Holy Days". And again, obviously, He would understand the Holy Days and He would teach it exactly right. I'm not suggesting otherwise, but what I want you to do is just think through the obvious as we read through this. This is John 7:37.

John 7:37 *"On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. 38) He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." (NKJV)*

Now, we don't need to speculate in any way whatsoever what He's talking about. All we need to do is read verse 39.

"39) But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." (NKJV)

In other words, He's directly stating that now everyone can come to Him and receive the Holy Spirit. They can come to Him as the High Priest. You know, as the Book of Hebrews tells us, He's our High Priest, and He'll apply His atoning sacrifice to us and

reconcile us to the Father. Now we can enter the New Covenant and receive the Holy Spirit. This is what He's saying. Now just make a very common sense observation. He's saying this on the Eighth Day. That's something the Church of God has taught my entire life. Now just ask a very common sense, logical question. Why skip the Feast of Tabernacles? Why did He wait until day eight? Because if you read through this chapter, you know, the previous verses that we're not going to take the time to go through. But if you just read through those verses -- the first part of this chapter -- He's in Jerusalem at the Temple throughout the whole Feast of Tabernacles. He's even teaching there. He has the opportunity to make this announcement during the Feast of Tabernacles. Yet He chooses to wait until the Feast of Tabernacles is over and then get up on the Eighth Day and make this announcement. Does He know the right time to make the announcement? Does He understand the meaning of the Holy Days?

Again, if we just think it through, there's an obvious implication here. He's saying it's during the Eighth Day period. That's when salvation can be offered to the rest of mankind. Because if you think about it, how does the New Testament describe the requirements for salvation? It's he who "endures to the end" who receives salvation, right? It's through "much tribulation" you enter the Kingdom of God. It's "all who want to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution". That's 2 Timothy 3:12. And there's scripture after scripture after scripture after scripture that all matches that. It's a very clear picture throughout the New Testament. But oftentimes we look at the millennial promises and they just sound so wonderful. Then we assume, well, everybody gets to live in a utopia where they don't have to suffer. They don't have to endure through anything, because you don't endure through wonderful circumstances that are not painful. You endure through something that's unpleasant. That's what you have to force yourself to endure through. We think, well, you get to live in a utopia, and you get to slide in the Kingdom of God and receive salvation at the same time. Well, who wouldn't want to have that deal? That sounds fantastic!! It doesn't match the Bible, but it sounds fantastic.

And the reason I mention that is because for over a decade. I kind of came to see the obvious contradictions with this, back around 2010, 2011. When I started putting those pieces together. But oftentimes when I would point this out, I would get a lot of resistance from people. But I always noticed that the counter argument was always based on emotion. You know, when I would say, okay, here's the big stack of scriptures that say everyone has to suffer to make it into the Kingdom of God, and you have to successfully endure through that. It's a clearly stated fundamental requirement. The Bible even describes that's how our character is developed. It just describes all of this in great detail. And there's no verses that say it's an exception, and the rule is that everybody else just gets to slide into the Kingdom. It just doesn't say that.

What I would find is nobody would come to me with a Bible and say, well, here's all the scriptures that define this easy path to salvation. No, they would just tell me it's just got to be true because of warm, fuzzy stories and love. And it really just kind of became a mental block for people. Well, I'd like to read to you a quote from Dr. Thomas Sowell that I think very much speaks to this. You might have heard of him. He's kind of

considered the guru of conservative intellectual thought. He's obviously not coming from a Church of God perspective, but I think he has a lot of meaningful things to say. And one of my favorite quotes from him is:

"The reason so many people misunderstand so many issues is not that these issues are so complex, but that people do not want a factual or analytical explanation that leaves them emotionally unsatisfied."

See, the issue here that we're going to look at is not that hard to understand if we just take what the Bible directly says. It just takes away this emotionally satisfying picture of everyone getting to slide into the Kingdom with no resistance. *Because that's just not how the Bible describes the fundamental requirements for salvation.*

But we're also going to see here, in addition to the fundamental requirements of enduring to the end and successfully making it through much tribulation to qualify for the Kingdom of God, there's also a fundamental requirement of living by faith. And you're going to see here in a minute why I mention that. Because when you put these together, we understand how different the Eighth Day period is to the period pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles, the millennial 1000 year reign, and why these would be different. And if you understand this, this then gives us a clear explanation as to why the role that the Firstfruits fulfill in all of this might be fundamentally different as well. Because we noticed Christ was directly saying in John 7, this is when the Holy Spirit will be offered to the rest of mankind during the Eighth Day period. Again, if we just consider "the radical notion that Christ understands what He's talking about", He knew when the right time to make the announcement was, then that's rather clear.

Let's also take note of some of the details of what Christ said about the Holy Spirit coming for the New Covenant Church when He was with the Apostles. There are some important details He laid out for them that if we understand this clearly again it's going to help us build a foundation to understand our original question. Which is again, why this role of the Firstfruits reigning might be different for the Eighth Day period as compared to the millennial period. So, to look at this, turn over to John 16. Now this is obviously towards the end of Christ's ministry on earth living as a physical human being. But take note of some of the things that He explained to the Apostles about what was going to be required for them to receive the Holy Spirit. In other words, for New Covenant Christianity to be offered to them. What was going to be some requirements that were going to take place here. So, let's start in John 16:5.

John 16:5 *"But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' 6) But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. 7) Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you."* (NKJV)

Now pay attention as we read through the next several verses here because we're going to see a criteria of exactly what He means by Him "going away" and "departing".

Because we're going to see this is more than just the issue of He had to die and be the sacrifice for mankind. Of course, that was a fundamental requirement as well, but there's a different meaning. There's a deeper meaning He's getting at beyond just the fact that yes, He has to die and be the sacrifice for mankind.

"8) And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9) of sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10) of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more;" (NKJV)

Now pay particular attention to that there in verse 10, because the definition of "departing" and "going away" is "you see Me no more". Because we're going to see here a little bit later as we read through several verses here, He does make reference to the fact that yes, He's going to die. And yes, they won't see Him for several days because He'll be in the grave. But then He comes right back, and they see Him again. But that's not the definition of "I go away, and you see me no more". That's getting at something different here. But pick up in verse 11.

"11) of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. 12) 'I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13) However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. 14) He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. 15) All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.'" (NKJV)

Now notice verse 16, because again, this is going to refer to the fact that yes, He's going to die and be in the grave. And they won't see Him for several days, but then He's going to come back and interact with them. But again, this is something different than "I go away, and you see Me no more".

"16) 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father.'" (NKJV)

Here He's referring to the fact that He's going to die. He's going to be in the grave for several days, but then He's going to come right back and interact with them. But now turn over to Acts 1, because what I want you to see here is yes, He comes right back on Wave Sheaf Sunday. You know, He's interacting with them and then He spends about 40 days with them before He then ascends to the Father. But that's the point where He goes away and they "see Him no more". But I want you to notice here, when we read through part of Acts 1 here, that it makes it very clear they haven't received the Helper yet. Because notice He said He had to "depart" and "go away", which is defined as "you see Me no more". That had to happen for them to receive the Helper, which is the Holy Spirit. Now Acts 1 in verse 4 says:

Acts 1:4 *"And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; 5) for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." 6) Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7) And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. 8) But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (NKJV)*

See He's made it real clear in all of His statements here, they have not received the Holy Spirit yet. So, they have not received the Helper. You know, the Helper has not come to them yet. And again, just to make that very clear, if you just understand what the "promise of the Father" is -- now there's a sermon on my website and YouTube channel titled "The Promise of the Father", if you have any questions about that. But the promise of the Father is the promise that God the Father made to Abraham, that Christ would be his descendant. And through Christ salvation, the opportunity for eternal life, would be offered to all mankind. So, if the Apostles had received the Holy Spirit at this point, they would have already received the promise of the Father. And He's clearly saying that they haven't. So, we know the Helper has not come yet. But now let's notice the next few verses here, because this speaks to when He "goes away", and now they "see Him no more". This is in verse 9.

Acts 1:9 *"Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10) And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 11) who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." (NKJV)*

You see, this is the point where He ascends to the Father's right hand and sits down next to Him. See, now He "goes away" and they "see Him no more". But just to clarify one other detail here, turn over to Mark 16. As we'll see a reference here to the same event where again Christ ascends to the Father after the 40 days He spends with the Apostles. This is Mark 16 in verse 19.

Mark 16:19 *"So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God." (NKJV)*

Take note of the fact that this is the point where He sits down at the right hand of the Father. And it'll make sense why I'm pointing this out here once you turn over to Acts 2. Acts 2 is the account of Pentecost, when they actually do receive the Helper. This is when the Holy Spirit is poured out on the New Covenant Church, and conversion is now officially offered to all the New Covenant Church. This is Acts 2 in verse 32.

Acts 2:32 *“This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. 33) Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.” (NKJV)*

They were seeing and hearing dramatic miracles that were basically just showing them evidence that the Holy Spirit was being made available to everyone. But notice here it gave a sequence of events. It says, Christ sits down at the right hand of the Father, He receives the gift of the Holy Spirit, and now He's pouring it out. So, you can see, He had to go sit at the Father's right hand. He had to “go away and you see me no more” for this to happen.

But there's another fundamental reason why this is the case as well. Because a fundamental requirement of the New Covenant is to live by faith. And, as you know, that is based upon what we can't see as we're going to see. The Bible directly defines faith as “the evidence of things not seen”. It makes a very big deal about living by faith and not by sight. This is why Christ has to “go away and you see Me no more”. Because now the requirement is to live by faith. Notice this in Romans 1. We're just going to scratch the surface on some of the scriptures that make this point, but I just want you to see several here, that this is a big deal that the New Covenant the New Testament talks about is the requirement for New Covenant Christians -- those offered salvation -- to live by faith. This is Romans 1 in verse 16.

Rom 1:16 *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17) For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.” (NKJV)*

And again, we're just going to scratch the surface on all the scriptures in the New Testament that talk about this. But you'll see this point is repeatedly hammered. This is a fundamental requirement. When salvation is on the table and you're being offered eternal life, living by faith is an absolute requirement. Turn over to Galatians 2.

Gal 2:20 *“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 Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” (NKJV)*

Having faith in a Savior that you can't see. and you can't directly interact with to perceive through our physical senses. That's one of the requirements. Trusting in Him through faith. Now turn over to Hebrews 10. We'll see this mentioned again. It's Hebrews 10, and we'll start reading in verse 35.

Heb 10:35 *“Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. 36) For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 37) “For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. 38) Now the just shall live by faith; But if*

anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.” 39) But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.” (NKJV)

Now we'll notice if we just continue reading into the next chapter here in Hebrews 11, it directly defines for us what faith means. The Bible directly tells us it's all about believing in what you can't see. What you can't perceive through our empirical human senses. It's Hebrews 11:1.

Heb 11:1 *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2) For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. 3) By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.” (NKJV)*

Okay, now skip down to verse 6.

“6) But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” (NKJV)

Notice this is an absolute requirement to please God and to pursue New Covenant Christianity and make it in the Kingdom of God. You must prove that you're willing to live by faith. This is again a fundamental requirement, just like overcoming adversity and persecution is. This is another one of those fundamental requirements that New Covenant Christians have to meet. And let's also just notice a few other scriptures that emphasize how this is about living by faith as opposed to what we can see. What we can perceive with the physical senses. Because we're going to see, once we fully understand this and then compare it to how the millennium is going to play out, then we can understand why the Eighth Day period would be different. Why the role of the Firstfruits would be different just by necessity, based upon the requirements that the New Covenant requires everyone to meet. Now, turn over to 2 Corinthians 4:16.

2 Cor 4:16 *“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17) For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18) while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (NKJV)*

Again, it's very important that we're willing to follow and obey – have faith -- when we cannot see the God that we're following. We cannot interact with our Savior through our standard, physical, empirical senses. God the Father and Christ are actively involved in our lives, but we don't see Them. We don't hear Their voice audibly and interact with Them as empirical physical human beings would think of interacting with someone. We have to believe in someone we can't see, and we can't audibly hear. Now just jump over to chapter 5 and verse 7. Again, it emphasizes this.

2 Cor 5:7 *"For we walk by faith, not by sight."* (NKJV)

Now let's also notice this lesson in John 20. Now John 20 is, as I mentioned, after Christ was crucified and was in the grave three days and three nights. Well, by the day of Wave Sheaf Sunday, He's back interacting with the Apostles again. And we'll see here in John 20 after He starts interacting with them again that they believe Him. You know, that He is who He says He is. But only after He shows them the holes in His hands where He was nailed and the hole in His side where He was pierced. After they see it and their empirical senses are able to interact with this they believe. But He makes the point that the blessing is for those who believe and who have not seen. This is John 20 in verse 19.

John 20:19 *"Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you." 20) When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord."* (NKJV)

Notice they were able to perceive Him through their physical senses. They were able to see the evidence that He's the guy that was pierced. He's the guy who was hammered up on a cross. You know, they've had that reassurance due to physical empirical means. Notice in verse 21.

"21) So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." 22) And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." (NKJV)

Now obviously He's referring to what's going to happen to them on Pentecost. Because, again, we've already read in Acts 1. At the end of the 40 days He spent with them, He's telling them at that point, you haven't received the Holy Spirit yet. Wait around until Pentecost and you will. So, that clears up any misunderstandings people sometimes have over this statement here. But continue on in verse 23.

"23) If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." 24) Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25) The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."" (NKJV)

He's not willing to live by faith at this point. He has not yet received the Holy Spirit. He's wanting empirical evidence. And verse 26.

"26) And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" 27) Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My

hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.” 28) And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” 29) Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”” (NKJV)

So, you can see here, the Bible is repeatedly making this point. It's a fundamental requirement for New Covenant Christians that we live by faith. And faith by definition is believing and trusting in something we cannot see. We don't have that empirical evidence of God and Christ's existence and Their involvement in our lives. We have to believe in what we don't see. The reason I've emphasized this is if we look at how the millennium and the Eighth Day play out in this regard, we can see this big difference in how this particular issue applies there. And this can give us some great insight as to why the hands on role that we see with the Firstfruits that's described specifically for 1,000 years -- for the period of the millennium -- would obviously be different for the Eighth Day period.

Because see, when Christ returns to set up the millennium, it's going to be a very visual thing. And what I mean by that is, everyone's going to see Him. It's not going to be a situation where they're required to believe in Him with no empirical evidence. That's not going to be the case. Every eye is going to see Him. It's going to be a very direct, interactive situation where the empirical senses show you He's here, He's involved, we all see Him. It's Matthew 24. We're going to read verse 30.

Matt 24:30 *“Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” (NKJV)*

Notice again, this is not about the evidence of things not seen. This is we can all see Him. He's right there. He's coming down. Every eye is going to see Him, and this is what revelation tells us as well. Turn over to Revelation 1 and verse 7.

Rev 1:7 *“Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.” (NKJV)*

What we're going to see here is if we look at the role of Christ, the role the Firstfruits are going to fulfill, and even the Father's involvement, there's visual evidence of all of it in the millennial period. Because again the terms of the Old Covenant -- the Mount Sinai Covenant is probably a more accurate Biblical term, but we oftentimes refer to it as the “Old Covenant”. But the terms of that covenant did not require believing in what you couldn't see and what you didn't have empirical evidence of. Because we're about to see that God gave them very graphic empirical evidence of His existence in that covenant relationship. And that's what's going to happen during the millennium as well.

But again, obviously as Christ told us in John 7, when is salvation and the Holy Spirit offered to mankind? On the Eighth Day, the Last Great Day of the Feast, that's when

that's fulfilled. Well, that is when you have the requirement of living by faith of what you cannot see. So, see now it's not the same hands on role. When Christ returns, it's very visual. No one's got to take His word for it because they can see Him. Everybody sees the dramatic display of Him showing up. Well, they're going to directly interact with the Firstfruits reigning as kings and priests as well. And we can see this in Revelation 3:9. This is the letter to the Church in Philadelphia. But just notice what's stated in this verse.

Rev 3:9 *"Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you."* (NKJV)

Now obviously the only way that this could happen is this has to be referring to Firstfruit Christians who've now received the resurrection to eternal life. Because even righteous angels in the Bible do not allow human beings to bow down and worship them. They always correct them and tell them that that's not appropriate. It's only a God being that's appropriate for humans to bow down and worship. Well, this has to be after the Firstfruits have been resurrection to eternal life. But if they're bowing down at your feet to worship you, they see you. This is a very hands on approach. It's very Interactive. That's what's taking place here.

Well, see, the same can be said of the Father's involvement because He's going to be involved in the temple that's described in the Book of Ezekiel. Because, as you can see throughout the Old Testament prophets, it's very, very clear there's going to be a physical temple. There's a Levitical Priesthood, there's animal sacrifices, there's everything you would associate with the Old Covenant system that's in place during the millennium. The Bible very clearly explains that. And again, if you want more information on exactly how all these details play out, I did a sermon for the first day of the Feast back in 2024. It's titled "Why Will There Be Animal Sacrifices in the Millennium?" Now that'll cover a lot of questions you might have about that particular subject. I won't go into that today.

But let's just look at the description in Ezekiel 43 of the temple that's going to exist. Because God the Father is going to dwell in the Most Holy Place in that temple, just like He did with ancient Israel. Because remember, how did Christ refer to the temple? My Father's House. The house where His Father dwelt. Because that's the presence that was there. And if you just look at the meaning of the Atonement ceremony, what it was about was going before the feet of the Father to atone for the sins of mankind. Because who's behind that veil? It's the Father. That's what the whole symbolism of the tearing the veil was about.

But just notice here that even though you can't see the face of God the Father, in the temple in the future -- during the millennium -- and even as we're going to see in just a moment here in Solomon's temple, they could visually see the cloud, the presence of God coming into it. They had visual evidence to verify that He's there. This God is real. They're not having to believe in something they can't see. This is in Ezekiel 43. We'll start reading in verse 1.

Ezek 43:1 *“Afterward he brought me to the gate, the gate that faces toward the east. 2) And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east. His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory. 3) It was like the appearance of the vision which I saw—like the vision which I saw when I came to destroy the city. The visions were like the vision which I saw by the River Chebar; and I fell on my face. 4) And the glory of the LORD came into the temple by way of the gate which faces toward the east. 5) The Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple. 6) Then I heard Him speaking to me from the temple, while a man stood beside me. 7) And He said to me, “Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever. No more shall the house of Israel defile My holy name, they nor their kings, by their harlotry or with the carcasses of their kings on their high places.” (NKJV)*

Now, obviously, this is the vision that Ezekiel is seeing of the future. But you can see here he's perceiving God the Father's presence there in this temple. And we'll see here in a minute in 1 Kings, when Solomon established his temple, they literally saw the cloud coming down into it. They saw the presence of God. Again, they didn't see His face. Even Moses doesn't see God's face. You can see that in the Book of Exodus where he literally asked, “Can I see your face?” And God told him, “No, you can't see My face and live to tell the story.” So, obviously they didn't see that, but they still saw the physical evidence that He's there. They're not being asked to believe in what they cannot perceive through the empirical senses. And see, this is going to be something very actively involved with the millennium. Just turn over to Isaiah 2. This is a very common millennial scripture. But notice here how it describes people from all nations coming up to this temple. You know, the temple that's described in great detail there in the Book of Ezekiel. This is Isaiah 2 and verse 1.

Is 2:1 *“The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. 2) Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the LORD'S house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. 3) Many people shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob;” (NKJV)*

Again, that's the temple. The house of the God of Jacob is His Temple.

“He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 4) He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; 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.” (NKJV)

As I mentioned before, this is just like Micah 4. It says the same thing. That during the millennium there's no wars. But what did we read in Revelation 20:7-9? We see that

there's a war involved. That's the Eighth Day period. See, there's a dramatic difference between the Eighth Day period and the millennial period. Oftentimes we just kind of assume it's all the same and lump it all together. We don't notice those differences in the same way that we read over the role of the Firstfruits reigning as kings and priests. And we assume that's all the same. And we don't make note of the fact that it specifically says that role is for 1,000 years. *It doesn't say that that role applies to the Eighth Day, because there's a difference here.* And it's just based on the fundamental requirements for salvation.

But let's just notice here, even if we look back at how it worked with ancient Israel, it was the same thing. Turn over to 1 Kings 8. Now, this is the dedication of Solomon's temple that we're about to read here. And as you know, God the Father basically dwelt there. His presence dwelt there. This was the place of His footstool, as He describes it. That was in the Most Holy Place, that was separated from people by the veil. Only once a year on the Day of Atonement could that area be accessed. But they could visually see the cloud inhabiting this area. They had visual evidence that His presence was there. They weren't having to believe in things they could not see. Now notice 1 Kings 8 in verse 10.

1 Kings 8:10 *"And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, 11) so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD. 12) Then Solomon spoke: "The LORD said He would dwell in the dark cloud. 13) I have surely built You an exalted house, And a place for You to dwell in forever." (NKJV)*

Notice again, they can't access the Most Holy Place and go be close to Him, but they can visually perceive His presence was there. Again, they're not being asked to believe in that which they cannot see. That which they cannot perceive through the five senses. And this was true from the very establishment of the Mount Sinai Covenant.

Turn over to Exodus 20 and we'll see here that God went to great lengths to give them lots of empirical evidence of His presence. Now, we won't take the time to read through Deuteronomy 4 and 5, but it makes it clear there that He made sure that they didn't see His face. They didn't see any visual representation of His form, because He knew they would make an idol out of it, and they would worship it. But He does obviously give them lots of empirical evidence of His presence there. It was so much so that the people were frightened, and they wanted God to go away, and they just wanted Moses to interact with Him. So, they're not being asked to believe in a God that they can't see. That they can't perceive through the physical senses. That just wasn't the terms of the deal. But just notice here in Exodus 20:18.

Ex 20:18 *"Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. 19) Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." 20) And*

Moses said to the people, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin." 21) So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was." (NKJV)

So, see, they can see the dark thickness. They know the presence of God is there. And they have seen such a dramatic display and a booming voice that they're frightened by it. They're not having to believe in something that they can't see.

But now contrast that with the experience of what we're required to do as New Covenant Christians. We have to believe simply because we've read it in a book that God and Christ exist. And we have to believe that They are faithful, and They are going to do what They say They are going to do. And They are going to deliver us through whatever trials that we go through. And it's all based upon the evidence of what's not seen. Because we can't sit down and have an interactive conversation with Them as we would with another human being. Now, we can pray to Them. And They answer our prayers through the Bible, through inspiring our thoughts or events in our lives and things of that nature. But we don't get to sit down and have a face to face conversation with Them and have that empirical evidence. Why? Because the just must live by faith. The evidence of things not seen.

Well, see, if you just think about the role that we read here of the Firstfruits and particularly in Revelation 3:9 talked about others worshiping before your feet. Well, they have to see you. It's very hands on. It's very interactive. See, that's why the Firstfruits are very involved in helping to administer and to work with the people during that period. But then during the Eighth Day period, it doesn't mention anything about what we're doing there. Again, I'm not saying that the Firstfruits don't have a role during that time period. The Bible just doesn't specify one there. But the reason that that's different is again, salvation is going to be offered to the rest of mankind during that time period. Again, we just have to consider the radical notion that Christ knew when to make the announcement because He got up on the Eighth Day and said, "Now everyone can receive salvation. Now they can receive the Holy Spirit." Well, if we just make the radical assumption that He knows what He's talking about. Which I think is pretty safe. That's when it takes place.

Well then not only is there a requirement for suffering -- that's why Satan is released again -- now there's a requirement for living by faith and trusting in what you cannot see. So, there's not that direct, you might say "hands on" type of role. Obviously, the Father and Christ are still involved like they are in our lives today. But it's not something we perceive through the physical senses. We have to trust in that with faith -- the evidence of things not seen. So, once you understand that subject, then we can realize why the role of the Firstfruits is different in the Eighth Day than it is as described during the millennial period.

Again, what if any role do we play in working with the rest of mankind during the Eighth Day period? I don't know that the Bible tells us what that is. We'll have to wait and see. What is described in great detail is the role that we fulfill during the millennium. And if

we just pay attention to those details, then we can have a better understanding of what our future role is. So, brethren, going forward from this Sabbath, we can look forward to our future role reigning as kings and priests with Jesus Christ. But we can correctly understand that that's a role that we will fulfill during the millennium. What if any role do we play working with mankind during the Eighth Day? We'll have to wait and see.