

## Famine (Part 3): The Abundance of God's Salvation

### **Famine In The Future**

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In part one of this three part series on famine, we looked at "Famine in Retrospect" and saw that in ancient times famine was often the result of natural and economic causes that God sometimes used as a wake-up call for His people to return to Him in fear and reverence. We saw that the famine of hearing the Word is symbolic of the lack of the Word of God as the bread of life. When the scriptures are ruled out, then the people perish; the vision is gone; hope fades; and there is a general apostasy or falling away from the truth. Finally, in that sermon, we saw that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and the whole duty of man. Without the proper fear of God, humankind hungers and thirsts physically and spiritually.

In part two, we looked at "Contemporary Famine" and saw that the sins of humankind have brought devastating famines, killing tens of millions of people. We saw that there are penalties to be paid for sin and that the world is reaping what it has sown. We analyzed the first four seals of Revelation 6 and saw them as recurring cycles that continue to unfold upon themselves as the world's wickedness increases through the history of the world from the time of Jesus Christ and the apostles until now. False religion produces war; war produces famine; and famine produces pestilence and disease. As the cycle begins again, it accelerates on the foundation of the previous cycle. We also saw that if we are overcoming sin, Satan, the world and our own human nature, with God's help through His Holy Spirit, we can, in a sense, laugh at famine.

In this sermon, part three, we will examine "The Future of Famine." We will survey the last three trumpets, including the seven plagues of the seventh trumpet. I said "survey" because we will just rapidly go through those to give you a time sequence. We will touch on the protection of God's people and see the irony of the abundance of Babylon the Great compared with the abundance of the Kingdom of God.

The fruits of nature are withdrawn in times of defiance, when the relationship of God and man is dislocated, separated, or destroyed. For this reason, the curse on the soil was one of the primary and immediate results of sin.

Genesis 3:17-18 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field."

Right off the bat, sin was associated with either a lack of food or the toughness of trying to get

food out of the ground.

In the Old Testament, the phrase *to eat bread by weight* indicates the greatest scarcity.

Leviticus 26:14-16, 23-26 "But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments, and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, but break My covenant, I also will do this to you: I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it...And if by these things you are not reformed by Me, but walk contrary to Me, then I also will walk contrary to you, and I will punish you yet seven times for your sins. And I will bring a sword against you that will execute the vengeance of the covenant; when you are gathered together within your cities I will send pestilence among you; and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. When I have cut off your supply of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall bring back your bread by weight, and you shall eat and not be satisfied. And after all this, if you do not obey Me, but walk contrary to Me, then I also will walk contrary to you in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins."

In verse 26, it is the threat of God that, if the people are disobedient, "they shall bring back your bread by weight." This is the point of God's threat through Ezekiel against Israel and Judah.

Ezekiel 4:16 Moreover He said to me, "Son of man, surely I will cut off the supply of bread in Jerusalem; they shall eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and shall drink water by measure and with dread."

Leviticus 26:27-28 "And after all this, if you do not obey Me, but walk contrary to Me, then I also will walk contrary to you in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins."

What I wanted to establish there was the connection between disobedience to God and sin and that God will cause famine to come on people.

God used famines throughout history as an indication of His displeasure and as warnings to repent and return to Him. Other passages warn of famine-producing upsets in weather; ruined harvests and blighted crops; harmful insect pests such as fire ants, mosquitoes with West Nile virus, and ticks with spotted fever; and non-productive soil. All of these come from sin and not following God's way of life, for example, not letting the land to rest. The way society is set up, we can now have famine in one season anywhere in the world because of the way food is moved and the way it is grown on corporate farms and in areas around the world. More and more, this nation imports its food.

In Matthew 24, we see the severity of the Great Tribulation expressed in such a way that it

gives us the feeling that Jesus was almost at a loss for words to express its horror.

Matthew 24:21-22 "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened."

That is quite a prophecy—a great tribulation worse than anything that came before it or that will come after it.

We have primarily analyzed famine in this sermon series, and what we have seen is far worse than the worst I can imagine. This time of great tribulation will be worse than anything since the beginning of the world has been or ever will be. That puts the severity of the Tribulation or the Day of the Lord beyond anything that I can comprehend. Since it matches the sins of this world, then God sees far more sin in this world than we can imagine.

Taking into consideration what we have heard about the history of famine in the last two sermons, how can it be worse than thirty million people in China dying from starvation caused by her leaders? How can it be worse than starving parents eating their children, people eating corpses, or men fishing from second story windows with hooks for unsuspecting pedestrians to be caught and eaten? How can it possibly be worse than that? Verse 22 answers these questions with this statement: "Unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved." Famine and the other catastrophic events will be of such a tremendous magnitude and scope that they approach wiping humankind off the face of the earth.

Jesus described an era of human existence that is unique from all others in which widespread famine is only one of many interrelated events. Famine in the future will dwarf what is mentioned in Matthew 24:7 and in the first four seals of Revelation 6. They give us a mere hint of much worse to come in the end times just prior to Jesus Christ's return. The famines, pestilences, and diseases that we have seen have built upon each other. The cycles continue constantly, and they get greater and greater in magnitude and in the numbers that they affect.

In the four seals, history shows that it has been primarily the Gentile nations that have been affected by the seals, especially famine. However, as we get into the time of the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord, we find that the descendants of ancient Israel and Judah are affected in a much worse way than anything they have experienced at any time in history.

Joel gives us an inkling of what the Day of the Lord holds in store for the world:

Joel 1:1-12, 15-20 The word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel. Hear this, you elders, and give ear, all you inhabitants of the land! Has anything like this happened in your days, or even in the days of your fathers? Tell your children about it, let your children tell their children, and their children another generation. What the chewing locust left, the swarming locust has eaten; what the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten; and what the crawling locust left,

the consuming locust has eaten. Awake, you drunkards, and weep; and wail, all you drinkers of wine, because of the new wine, for it has been cut off from your mouth. For a nation has come up against My land, strong, and without number; his teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he has the fangs of a fierce lion. He has laid waste My vine, and ruined My fig tree; he has stripped it bare and thrown it away; its branches are made white. Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth. The grain offering and the drink offering have been cut off from the house of the LORD; the priests mourn, who minister to the LORD. The field is wasted, the land mourns; for the grain is ruined, the new wine is dried up, the oil fails. Be ashamed, you farmers, wail, you vinedressers, for the wheat and the barley; because the harvest of the field has perished. The vine has dried up, and the fig tree has withered; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree—all the trees of the field are withered; surely joy has withered away from the sons of men. Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as destruction from the Almighty. Is not the food cut off before our eyes, joy and gladness from the house of our God? The seed shrivels under the clods, storehouses are in shambles; barns are broken down, for the grain has withered. How the animals groan! The herds of cattle are restless, because they have no pasture; even the flocks of sheep suffer punishment. O LORD, to You I cry out; for fire has devoured the open pastures, and a flame has burned all the trees of the field. The beasts of the field also cry out to You, for the water brooks are dried up, and fire has devoured the open pastures.

This is a prophetic description of both the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord, because these things happen in varying degrees in both, as we will get into later.

As it stands now, descendants of ancient Israel contained within such nations as the United States, Canada, Britain, Australia, Scandinavia, and various parts of Europe, as well as part of South Africa, have not had to deal with very much in the way of horrible famines. They have had famines in the past, but nothing of the magnitude that Israel will receive in the future.

There have been some incidents that came close, such as the Dust Bowl Days of the Midwest and the Great Depression here in the United States. Also, parts of Europe suffered from the Black Death, but nothing like what we have seen on a regular basis throughout the history of the Gentile nations over the last two thousand years. This is because the Israelite nations have had at least some of God's truth, and it has saved us, as descendants of Israel, from much of that famine. The blessing that God promised to Abraham has also kept us from much of that famine.

As people continue to flagrantly disregard the laws of our Creator, such conditions will continue to be aggravated. Jesus Christ went on to warn of dramatically increased calamities in the future. In the book of Revelation, He depicts an earth whose entire food-producing ecosystem is

in jeopardy and then eventually destroyed.

The fifth seal pictures a time of Great Tribulation, including a martyrdom of the saints for religious convictions. The New Testament, along with the book of Revelation, emphasizes its impact on the spiritual people of God, His own church. The Great Tribulation also falls on what was God's physical nation, the descendants of ancient Israel. The prophet Jeremiah wrote of this period and the events that immediately follow. He cried out:

Jeremiah 30:7 Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it.

Even though we are told that judgment will come on Jacob's descendants, we are also encouraged that we will be saved out of it. Daniel called it a time unlike any other:

Daniel 12:1 At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book.

It is the same time described by Jesus in Matthew 24: 21. This distress would climax in the death of humankind if Christ failed to intervene in human affairs.

The fifth seal of the book of Revelation is described in the sixth chapter.

Revelation 6:9-11 When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.

There is an encouraging and uplifting spiritual principle here. When a righteous person dies for the sake of goodness, it may look like a tragedy, like the waste of a fine life. It may look like the work of the wicked—and it may be all these things. However, every life laid down for right, truth, and God and God's people is ultimately more than any of these things: it is an offering made to God. We should look at martyrdom and the death of the saints as just that: as an offering. It is something that ends in a good thing. It is not the tragedy that we dwell on but the end result of it that gives us that hope.

The Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord are totally different time periods. In Matthew 24: 3, it is recorded that the disciples asked Jesus when His coming and the "end of the age" would occur. Christ then explained the time order of events that would lead to His Second

Coming.

Leading to the Great Tribulation, the first event would be false prophets (verses 4-5); the second, wars and rumors of wars (verse 6); the third, famine (verse 7); the fourth, disease epidemics (verse 7). These are all pre-Tribulation but will also roll over into the time of the fifth, sixth and seventh seals.

False religion and leadership produces war; war produces famine' and famine produces disease epidemics and death. This is a dynamic cycle that increases and builds upon itself every time it recycles. That is why these events affect more people and are of greater magnitude now than they did in the earlier centuries following Christ. They are events caused by the sins of mankind. As the sins of mankind increase in magnitude and in severity, so do these things that will come as punishments upon the people.

The fifth event or seal corresponds with the Great Tribulation and the martyrdom of the saints. The Great Tribulation is not the time of God's wrath but rather the time of the wrath of Satan. Since he is desperate because he has only a short time left, he causes increased persecution and martyrdom of God's people.

Immediately following the Great Tribulation of the fifth seal come the cosmic disturbances of the sixth seal, the time of God's wrath. The sixth seal coincides with the heavenly signs, also known as the time of God's wrath. Occurring sixth in time sequence is God's supernatural intervention. Now notice what Jesus said would follow the Great Tribulation.

Matthew 24:29 "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken."

The Day of the Lord spoken of in many prophecies is clearly shown here to come after the heavenly signs. The time order is thus: first, the Tribulation—Satan's wrath; second, the heavenly signs; third, the Day of the Lord—God's intervention. The same time sequence is revealed in Revelation 6, speaking of the seven seals. The fifth seal represents the Great Tribulation, followed by the heavenly signs and the Day of the Lord or God's wrath.

Revelation 6:12-17 I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

The prophet Joel put the day of God's wrath into chronological perspective.

Joel 2:1, 30-31 Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand: ... "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD."

Joel shows us an important sequence: The heavenly signs occur immediately after the Great Tribulation (also called Satan's wrath) and before the Day of the Lord. Disturbing signs in the atmosphere and environment begin shortly before the return of the Messiah. Great earthquakes are striking the earth. These are persistent features of divine visitation in the Bible. The atmosphere is darkened as sunlight is blocked out, and the moon appears blood-red.

The stars, probably meteors, fall to the earth. The sky is receding as a scroll. The mountains and islands are moved out of their places. Everyone still alive by then will be mortally afraid when God's final wrath, or the Day of the Lord, strikes.

*The wrath of the Lamb* is an unusual expression, used only once, here in Revelation. Elsewhere, the Bible calls this time "the wrath of God." This wrath of God is a basic theme in the Bible. The Day of the Lord is a day of wrath and retribution. Isaiah describes this time as a time that the land will be made desolate. This will obviously cause even more famine than is already decimating nations.

Isaiah 13:6-11 "Wail, for the day of the LORD is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. Therefore all hands will be limp, every man's heart will melt, and they will be afraid. Pangs and sorrows will take hold of them; they will be in pain as a woman in childbirth; they will be amazed at one another; their faces will be like flames. Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine. I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible."

A desolate land means a great number of people are suffering from famine. This is not spiteful hate but God's response to stubbornly-unrepented-of sin that has caused untold misery and suffering among human beings.

The sixth chapter of Revelation then takes us right up to the time when God fully intervenes in the affairs of mankind during the last days. He does this by sending plagues and destruction of

increasing severity on the earth. However, God will not send the full fury of His wrath on the earth before He provides protection for His people. At this point in Revelation, the scene temporarily switches to show us what is happening to those who are obedient to Him.

As the seventh chapter of Revelation begins, we find that the wrath of God—the Day of the Lord—is temporarily held up. John sees "four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth." These four winds coming from the north, south, east, and west represent the retribution of God. Specifically, the four winds are restrained from blowing on the earth, sea, and trees. The first three angels blowing on trumpets will strike these ecological targets a very short time later, after God's people are sealed.

To "be sealed" is a symbolic way of saying that these people are identified as belonging to God. They are the servants of God, which means that they obey Him; and they are marked for protection from the afflictions to come. The 144,000 is the first group to be sealed and protected from what is about to come. In the next vision, John sees another group being sealed for protection. This much larger assembly is "a great multitude" which no one could number, and they come from all nations following the Great Tribulation. While some of God's people must suffer through the Tribulation, God protects them from His earth-shattering wrath. Once this protection has been provided to God's true servants, the time for the day of the Lord—God's wrath on a sinning humanity—begins.

We now come to the eighth chapter of Revelation and the opening of the seventh and final seal:

Revelation 8:1-6 When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake. So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

Following a prophetic half-hour of silence, possibly a dramatic pause and time of contemplation, the trumpets begin to herald the day of God's wrath. It is a time of alarm in the world. Lightning, thunder, great noises, and mighty tremors announce the beginning of God's wrath. The first four seals depicted judgments that were the inevitable result of human sinfulness. God now directs the trumpet plagues against a world unyielding in its hostility toward Him. These trumpet plagues affect a significant portion of the earth. These punishments are intended to move the human race to repentance; but tragically, most of humanity still refuses to heed and submit.

John sees seven trumpet visions which constitute the seventh seal. Each trumpet follows the other, representing real world events of the future during the Day of the Lord. The trumpets

depict plagues, afflictions, famine, calamities, and much more that God will bring on a world that refuses to repent. It is the time when God begins to directly assert control over a sinning world. It will be a time of great confusion.

The first four trumpet plagues strike the earth itself, creating an ecological catastrophe of global proportions. One-third of whatever is struck is destroyed.

1. In Revelation 8: 7, the first angel's trumpet sounds, bringing about a roaring fire storm destroying one-third of the world's forests and vegetation. This devastating destruction of the earth's cover and forests will contribute to climatic upsets, advance of the deserts, and the loss of valuable cropland. Massive pollution of vital freshwater sources will very likely kill and dry up the fruits of irrigated crop production. Extensive famine will result.
2. In Revelation 8: 8-9, the second angel's trumpet sounds, bringing about what John sees in vision as "something like a great mountain burning with fire" thrown into the sea. One-third of all ocean life dies, and a third of all ships are destroyed. This indicates that the seas will be very turbulent. Pollution of the oceans on an unprecedented scale will undoubtedly cause a dramatic decline in the world's fish harvest. This again will cause famine to coastal areas that depend very heavily on the fishing industry.
3. In Revelation 8: 10-11, the third angel's trumpet sounds, bringing "a great star"—maybe a meteor—falling from the sky, "burning like a torch." It destroys one-third of the world's water supply. Again, widespread starvation will be the outcome.
4. In Revelation 8: 12, the fourth angel's trumpet sounds, bringing about great disturbances in atmospheric conditions.

The final three angelic trumpet soundings are immediately preceded by an announcement. They have come to be known as the "Three Woes" because of their extreme severity.

5. In Revelation 9: 1-12, the fifth angel's trumpet sounds, bringing about the first woe. The power that causes the destruction of the first woe emerges out of the "bottomless pit." We see this later interpreted in Revelation 17: 8 as a final rebirth of a great empire. This force surfaces to take political control of a large part of the world.

A "star" falls from heaven and is given a key to the abyss. This is a reference to Satan himself who is called "the angel of the bottomless pit."

Revelation 9:2-3, 7, 9-10 He opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace...Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power.... The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men...and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots...They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power was to hurt men five months.

Obviously this is an extreme case of war, instigated by Satan. He wants to destroy every human being off the face of the earth before they can become a spirit being higher in rank than he. The fifth trumpet, then, introduces a major cataclysm. It portrays a vast military-political superpower exacting punishment on other nations in war.

6. In Revelation 9:13-21, the sixth angel's trumpet sounds, bringing about the second woe. In his vision, the Apostle John heard that the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million. John sees this army advancing west across the Euphrates River, which runs through Iraq as we know it today. This is symbolic of a major invasion from the east during a world war. This vast horde moves across the Euphrates and toward Jerusalem. One-third of the humans alive are killed.

Can you imagine the amount of food and water necessary to support such an army? As it moves across the continent, it will leave nothing behind it—no food or water. Anyone left alive, within hundreds of miles of its path, would have famine to the point of starvation. No one outside of the army would survive.

It may be that besides vital oil reserves, a lack of food or resources resulting from these global catastrophes may help to explain why a massive army of two hundred million men decides to march on the Middle East, as predicted in Revelation 16. Whatever the reason, Jesus Christ prophesied in Matthew 24:22 that unless He personally intervened in the affairs of men during this turbulent time period, all life would be erased from the face of the earth. Christ's intervention will set off a chain of events that will finally bring a halt to the continuous rounds of famine—hunger and thirst—that the human race has experienced down through history.

7. In Revelation 16:1-21, the seventh angel's trumpet sounds, bringing about the third woe, which is also the seven bowls

pouring out the seven plagues. This is the point at which God is about to completely shatter the tool of Satan, the political and religious power that has dominated the world. Following the prelude in Revelation 15 to the seven plagues, John begins to see in vision a horrendous series of natural catastrophes from the hand of God. These seven last plagues comprise the seventh and last trumpet. They recall the plagues that God poured out on Egypt, virtually destroying the nation. Of a much greater, worldwide magnitude, the end time plagues or afflictions fall on those who refuse to submit to God.

The first plague causes a deadly pestilence that strikes those who have the mark of the beast. The second plague causes the sea to turn to blood and kill every living creature in it. For coastal areas especially, a lack of fish will cause a shortage of food.

The third plague causes the rivers and springs of water to become blood. God's judgments, though horrible, are true and righteous. Earlier, the third angel's trumpet sound brings one-third of the water supply to be unusable. This third plague of the seventh angel's trumpet causes all the natural drinking water to be undrinkable. All fresh water fish will die.

The fourth plague causes increased solar radiation to horribly scorch humans.

The fifth plague causes total darkness to cover the headquarters of the world-ruling beast power.

The sixth plague causes the waters of the Euphrates River to dry up so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared to gather with the world's armies at the staging area of Armageddon.

The seventh plague causes an immense earthquake to shake the planet. It is such a mighty and great earthquake as has not occurred since men were on the earth. As the earth convulses, islands disappear beneath the sea. Mountains are leveled. A great hail shatters everything in its path. The cities of the nations are flattened into rubble. The world's political and economic system is in total ruin.

Although there may be some similarities between the last plagues of Revelation 16 and the first six trumpet plagues of Revelation 8 and 9, Revelation 16 is not a restatement of what happened

earlier. In both scenarios, the first four destructions are visited upon the earth, sea, inland waters, and heavenly bodies. However, there are distinct differences between the two scenarios. For example, in the first four trumpet plague scenarios, only one-third of the affected part is destroyed. The trumpet plagues of Revelation 8 are meant as a warning; they are a sample of the destruction yet to fall on those who refuse to repent of their evil deeds.

The confrontation between the armies advancing on Jerusalem and the Messiah will result in "the battle of that great day of God Almighty." The supernatural Christ will lead His army of resurrected saints to total victory. Zechariah prophesies of this time of the Day of the Lord and the return of Christ.

Zechariah 14:1-5 Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south. Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, for the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the LORD my God will come, and all the saints with You.

Here, we are in the midst of what the Feast of Trumpets represents: the Second Coming of Christ to intervene in world affairs and establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

Zechariah 14:6-19 It shall come to pass in that day that there will be no light; the lights will diminish. It shall be one day which is known to the LORD—neither day nor night. But at evening time it shall happen that it will be light. And in that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea; in both summer and winter it shall occur. And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be—"The LORD is one," and His name one. All the land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be raised up and inhabited in her place from Benjamin's Gate to the place of the First Gate and the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananeel to the king's winepresses. The people shall dwell in it; and no longer shall there be utter destruction, but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited. And this shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on

their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths. It shall come to pass in that day that a great panic from the LORD will be among them. Everyone will seize the hand of his neighbor, and raise his hand against his neighbor's hand; Judah also will fight at Jerusalem. And the wealth of all the surrounding nations shall be gathered together: gold, silver, and apparel in great abundance. Such also shall be the plague on the horse and the mule, on the camel and the donkey, and on all the cattle that will be in those camps. So shall this plague be. And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain. If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

I would be terrified not to go the Feast of Tabernacles at this point, and I suppose you are, as well. I cannot imagine somebody missing it, when scriptures like this explain what happens to those who do not.

These harrowing times occur during the "wrath of God" as the Messiah puts down all opposition to His rule. Christ must replace the world's political, social, religious, and economic systems so that He can begin all things new. There will be some rebellious nations that go on into the millennium, though, and they will be treated according to their sins. Judgment will come upon them.

It is interesting that anyone not taking part in the Feast of Tabernacles receives the curse of plague. Zechariah specifically mentions here that no rain will come upon those who do not keep the Feast of Tabernacles. The result of no rain, obviously, is famine. No rain causes drought conditions, which in turn cause hunger and thirst. This implies that, in the millennium, those nations who continue to refuse to keep the Feast of Tabernacles will receive famine—like conditions as a curse for disobedience to Almighty God.

There is a spiritual principle here that perpetually applies to all people in all eras: Anyone who does not keep the Feast of Tabernacles will not receive the replenishing effect of the wisdom, understanding, and righteousness from above. Hosea speaks of this spiritual application in the same way:

Hosea 10:12 Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD, till He comes and rains righteousness on you.

Next we are going to have a flashback. Let us look back at judgment on Babylon for a moment. Babylon the Great is seen to be a system of abundance; but as its physical abundance is destroyed its, true spiritual abundance is exposed for what it really is: sin!

On the negative side of abundance, the great wickedness of the earth is sometimes portrayed with the descriptions of abundance. In the time of Noah, the wickedness of humankind was great, or abundant, in the earth. Joel speaks of wickedness as ripening the human race for the last judgment. At the end, regarding the sixth plague of the seventh trumpet, Joel says,

Joel 13:3 Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow—for their wickedness is great.

We see the symbolism of how Babylon the great is described as having abundance—an abundance of wickedness. This view persists in the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, where famine is a direct judgment on human sin. It is ironic that abundance of sin brings on physical famine of food and water and spiritual famine of a hearing of the Word of the Lord.

The picture of Babylon in Revelation 18 is understood in the imagery of abundance symbolic of the fullness of evil on the earth. We see that commerce in the Babylonish system ends; all that abundance of buying and selling ceases.

Revelation 18:11-13 "And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore: merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men.

Anything you could imagine to buy you could get in this system of Babylon, including slaves, whether worker slaves or sex slaves or whatever. Everything that is wicked is available through Babylon. The abundant sins of Babylon are "heaped high as heaven." In contrast, famine is to play a part in the end-time judgment upon spiritual Babylon.

Revelation 18:1-8 After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury." And I heard another

voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.' Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her."

The Babylonish world system certainly has abundance—profusion of demons; false religion; war; famine; pestilence and disease; abundance of murdered innocent children by abortion; plenty of adultery and fornication; great quantities of lewd nakedness; abundance of greed, lying and stealing—equaling an overabundance of sin. In contrast, part of God's ultimate blessing for physical Israel is a land that is untroubled by famine. Israel will live in complete security. No longer will she be plundered by the nations.

Ezekiel 34:29 I will raise up for them a garden of renown, and they shall no longer be consumed with hunger in the land, nor bear the shame of the Gentiles anymore.

Never again will the descendents of Israel experience physical or spiritual famine.

Ezekiel 36:29-30 "I will deliver you from all your uncleanness. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations."

We see famine definitely tied to sin and to what came upon Israel and Judah throughout much of its history. He promises there never again to bring that upon Israel and Judah.

The pattern God uses for restoration is 1) return, 2) cleansing from sin, 3) enablement of spirit, and 4) prosperity. This is the same pattern He used when He foretold Israel's restoration after the exile when Moses restated the Mosaic covenant on the plains of Moab. God enables their spirit by writing His laws on their hearts. Spiritually, this is done through the Holy Spirit.

Similarly with us, having to do with God's church, we see the same pattern of restoration: 1) We repent, returning to God; 2) we are baptized and we are cleansed from sin by the blood of Christ; 3) we receive God's Holy Spirit which enables us to live God's way of life; and 4) God prospers us with wisdom and spiritual understanding. We see that God uses the same pattern, both in the physical and the spiritual senses, to renew His people and to bring them back to Him.

God will establish conditions in the millennium and in the coming of the Kingdom of God whereby no human beings will ever suffer from hunger and famine again.

Revelation 7:16 They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat.

The condition described here contrasts to the experience of the human saints who suffer greatly for their faith. For them, starvation, thirst, and the burning desert are forever past. This time of relief from these trials is in the days of the Kingdom of God.

In Revelation 21, John uses a touching metaphor of parental love:

Revelation 21:4 "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

These tears have come from sin's distortion of God's purposes for mankind. They are produced by death or mourning for the dead, by crying or pain. This is a promise for the future; but even in this present world, those who mourn are blessed, for they will be comforted; and death is swallowed up in victory for those who know Jesus Christ and suffer with Him, that they may also be glorified with Him and receive abundant blessings. We, too, can receive encouragement from this.

The imagery of an abundant harvest appears in the Bible as a metaphor for spiritual truths. More often than not, the imagery of abundance is reserved for spiritual goodness. God's steadfast love and goodness are both abundant, as are His mercy and power. Isaiah speaks of the abundance of God's salvation, wisdom, and knowledge. The apostle Paul writes about abundance of grace, abundant consolation through Christ. This abundance is characteristic of God's Kingdom and is in sharp contrast to the world, whose abundance is wickedness, evil, and sin.

The crowning example of abundance appears in Revelation 21: 9-27, where John describes the city of New Jerusalem that God has prepared for those who know him. The great glory of God gives her a brilliance "like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper." It is 1500 miles long and appears like "pure gold, like glass." The foundation of the city wall is equally beautiful, being adorned with every kind of precious stone. In this way Revelation 21 predicts the consummation of the many promises of the Bible: abundant blessings await those who have faithfully obeyed God.

In the Millennium, when perfect accord between God and His people exists, there will be unprecedented fertility of the earth. Fruitfulness will abound.

Hosea 2:21-22 "It shall come to pass in that day that I will answer," says the LORD; "I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth. The earth shall answer with grain, with new wine, and with oil; they shall answer Jezreel."

A time is coming when there will be a superabundance of agricultural produce and wine. In this time, Israel will be restored to the land forever. Amos pictures in a metaphor of new wine flowing from the hills the great amount of wine at this Millennial time.

Amos 9:13 "Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "When the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it."

The fact that the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman in this time implies a great abundance of the produce of the field. Scarcely can the grape vines be planted than the grapes are ready for pressing. Amos depicts a time when God's blessing will be poured out in unimaginable abundance.

Part of what the Day of Atonement portrays is the binding and removal of Satan for a thousand years so that humankind at last may be made at one with God. With him will go the centuries-old system of greed and exploitation that has left many broken, hungry, and destitute people in its wake. It is a time in which we place ourselves under famine so that we can receive spiritual abundance. As God uses famine to cause His people to come back to Him, so hunger and thirst cause us to draw closer to Him.

The dispossessed masses will become a thing of the past as every physical individual will have a chance to own agriculturally productive real estate.

Micah 4:4 But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.

Farming methods will be overhauled until lush crops are considered commonplace, and one harvest follows hard on the heels of the previous one. The earth's arable land mass will be greatly expanded as mountains are lowered. Only then will the age-old problem of famine finally be put to rest.

The fear of the Lord and obedience to Him are necessary before God can work with people to bring peace to their nations. Famine is brought upon people by their own rejection of God and His way of life. Their pride and greed drives them to ignore and reject the way of life that brings abundance and happiness. Obedience is linked to prosperity, as disobedience is linked to want. Both comparisons are biblical inseparables.

Proverbs 3:7-8 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones.

There is an abundance of God's salvation for those who fear Him. The key is to fear God, repent of our sins, and overcome them.

Isaiah 1:19 If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land.

The Creator God possesses and controls the forces of nature, the seasons in their order, and the material foundation of man's life on earth. The exercise of this power by our holy God directly corresponds to the relationship existing between Him and man at any given time. Our relationship with God, in the spiritual sense, is absolutely necessary for everything that we are going to do from here on out, as it should have been for the things that we have already done. Our relationship with God is ultra-important for our future. It determines through how much suffering we will go, and it determines how much blessing we will receive and whether we receive the abundance of Babylon the Great or the spiritual abundance that God has to give to us.

Psalm 104:10-15, 27-31 He sends the springs into the valleys, they flow among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. By them the birds of the heavens have their home; they sing among the branches. He waters the hills from His upper chambers; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of Your works. He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and vegetation for the service of man, that he may bring forth food from the earth, and wine that makes glad the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread which strengthens man's heart...These all wait for You, that You may give them their food in due season. What You give them they gather in; You open Your hand, they are filled with good. You hide Your face, they are troubled; You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth. May the glory of the BRD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in His works.

As you are not partaking of food on Atonement, keep in mind that it is God who gives us everything, absolutely everything.