

What Might Have Been

As we have studied Scripture, it has seemed evident that the on-going history it describes contains numerous “forks” in the road, or alternative directions that might have been followed. Of course God knew precisely which of every possible alternative paths each of us would follow, even before He created the heavens and the earth. Nevertheless, these alternative directions were offered as a necessary adjunct to having provided man and angels free will, that is the capability to make choices. How could one choose unless there were alternatives from which to choose? If we examine Scripture from its historical perspective, we see that God has always provided man with clear evidence as to which choice He preferred man to follow.

When man has chosen a direction contrary to God’s will, that choice has always been detrimental, and even tragic. As I have mused on this subject it seems to me that one could express these available choices in terms of God’s Plan (A) and man’s Plan (B). We might say for the sake of this study, that Plan (A) is what God offered as His perfect choice preference for man, and Plan (B) is what His created creatures chose to follow instead. Let us examine a few of these choices that God seems to have made available. In doing so we will affectually do a Bible study discussing many truths that may not have been previously known. Surely, the more we can learn about such things, the more likely we are to seek out and make the right choices.

1. Satan’s Choice – The Angel’s Choice - Man’s Choice - The Very First Choices.

From what we read in Scripture it appears that Satan was the first to rebel, that is make a choice contrary to God’s will. While it seems evident from Satan’s conversation with Eve, we don’t learn of this specifically until we read Isaiah 14:12-14, which says:

“¹² How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! ¹³ For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will

sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.”

Here we see evidence of sinful envy and pride being in Satan’s heart as he lists the five “I wills” whereby he resolves to be like God, and to usurp some of His power and authority, believing that he has all the qualities through which to be like God. We may smile at the ridiculous notion, that Satan, a created being, could ever approach the status of our almighty God. Yet there are man-made religions where men claim that ability for themselves, the ability to attain Godhood. On that basis, such a claim by Satan, a being infinitely more superior than any man, should not seem so absurd. Now we need to go to Ezekiel for further information regarding Satan.

Ezekiel 28:12-17 tells us:

“12 Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the King of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. 13 Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. 14 Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. 15 Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. 16 By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. 17 Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.”

At the beginning of Chapter 28 we see that it is speaking of the King of Tyre. However, in verse 12 the subject changes to Satan, as we quickly learn in verse 13. There we find that he was in Eden, and then that he was the chief cherub that “covereth,” that is; he was the number one person under God who was in charge of all

heavenly beings. He was in charge of the Cherubim and the Seraphim as well as the angels, until iniquity was found in him and he sinned. Then again in verse 17 we learn that his heart was lifted up, that is filled with pride, because of his beauty.

He also corrupted his own wisdom because of his brightness, that is his splendor and beauty. When did this rebellion by Satan happen? Apparently it was very early after creation. We read of him being in Eden and speaking through the serpent, and, thereby succeeding in tempting Eve to join him in rebellion against God.

How could evil Satan have been there, when in Genesis 1:31 we are told that God looked at all of His creation and saw that it was good? It seems evident that it was soon after God finished creation that Satan saw himself so perfect in every way that pride took hold of him. When God called all of creation good by God's standard, it was at that moment perfect. We must keep in mind that both man and all angelic beings were endowed with volition, the power to choose. The facility of free will is neither good nor bad. Only, by its application in a manner contrary to God's will, does it become bad. Where Satan is concerned, he too was created perfect. Yet because he had free will, and saw that he was far superior to any other of God's creation, an element of pride entered his heart. In fact, he felt that beauty, wisdom and power were close enough to that of God, that by his own efforts he could be like God, and actually share God's prominence.

Free will is a necessary aspect of all living beings. The primary reason God endowed man with a free will was so that He could fulfill His desire for something that He couldn't create, or cause to be, in any other manner. God had and has, a much demonstrated great love for all of His creation, and He wants that love reflected back to Him by those whom He made in His own image. However, love is something that can only occur as a result of a free will choice. Even God cannot make you love Him. Every being must make the choice to love or not to love. Genuine love cannot be imposed, implanted or manipulated into existence, even by God. The ultimate purpose of all creation is revealed in the Book of Revelation, chapters 21 and 22. The

culmination of what they reveal is that God will create a brand new earth where all who love Him, that is those who by faith and by trust in His Son Christ Jesus, and have committed themselves to Him, will spend eternity! God will no longer dwell in some remote unknowable place outside of time and space, but instead will dwell, on this new earth with His mankind family!

This eternal family that God so wants and is acquiring, has been incredibly costly due to the inevitable risks that this gift of free will has caused. Free will made it inevitable that, at some point, those who had it would choose a way contrary to God's will. As noted above, the first sin seems to have been perpetrated by Satan, who then successfully sought to bring man into the realm of sin.

After all of this as preparatory commentary, let us go to the Plan A vs. Plan B idea we started with. All things were created perfectly. Had Satan remained satisfied with his already elevated position as number one being under God, nothing would have changed in heaven and the perfect existence would have continued. God knew that Plan A would prevail for only a short time. Because Satan was not satisfied with his position, he rebelled, thus causing turmoil in heaven. One third of the angels, for some mysterious reason, sided with him, and so in choosing Plan B, participated with Satan in his rebellion. Thus the first Plan B was instituted. This included the removal of Satan from his high office and then banishing him out of heaven, along with the rebellious angels.

The second advent of a Plan A reverting to a Plan B occurred on earth soon afterwards. It seems that Adam and Eve were quite content with their lives in the Garden of Eden. And why not, they had everything they could possibly want. Their freedom of choice in all things was almost limitless. Except for avoiding the fruit of the tree of good and evil, there were no restrictions on their use of their God-given free wills. So Plan A seemed like a no brainer that could have been perpetuated for a long time. Without Satan's involvement through the serpent, it could have lasted forever? Who knows, and the answer is irrelevant, because as God knew, Plan B

would soon be activated. This simple, and seemingly innocuous act of eating of the forbidden fruit, was the first and most profound act of disobedience that man would ever choose. We all know what the consequences were.

There is a very interesting situation in this first pair of contrary choices. It seems evident that Satan's sin came first, or else how could he have come to the Garden filled with the evil intent of causing Adam and Eve to sin? Yet it was not this first sin, the sin of Satan that caused the earth to groan, thorns to grow, the earth to start winding down and death to become inevitable. It was man's sin that activated this greatest of all tragedies. This seems to suggest that sin originating in the heavenly realm was dealt with by a different set of rules, or that this was not exactly a sin in the same sense that man's sin was. This may help explain why, even to this day, this thoroughly sinful being, Satan, is yet able to enter heaven and rail against God's people, even though heaven is by necessity a sinless place.

The Hebrew word "chata" which is here translated "sin" is a prime root word which expresses numerous connotations not necessarily thought of as sin, such as "to miss, forfeit, lack, expiate, lead astray, condemn, fault and offend." Whatever the answer is, it seems evident that the wrong Satan did was considered by God to have been a totally different form of violation of God's will, than what Adam and Eve did. Otherwise Satan's earlier sin, instead of Adam's later sin, should have caused the great world-wide convulsions. Upon further consideration, perhaps the answer is the nature of the transgression. Adam and Eve defied a simple direct and very specific order. What Satan did was much different. There is no evidence that he was ever instructed not to see himself pridefully or seek to be like God. While these were acts contrary to what God wanted him to be, they do not seem to have been condemning violations of any specific decrees or criteria of conduct. Notice that it was not until Satan schemed to lead, and did lead Adam and Eve to sin, that God first condemned him. I believe that we find here evidence of a totally different dynamic occurring between God and Satan as compared with God and man. While we can not

understand why or how this is the case, the fact that it is, it helps us to accept this strange and unique on-going relationship between God and Satan.

There is another interesting aspect of this difference between the celestial rebellion and man's rebellion. Man, the only being to have been made in God's image, was destined from the beginning to become a member of His family. The first man and woman were to procreate and thereby provide the vast population He wanted to be His family. However, the first sin not only contaminated this first couple, but it also contaminated all who would ever be procreated by them, and all their progeny, to the end of the earth. Thus Plan B, by necessity, included the providing of a Savior who could remove the sins of all who believed in Him. Otherwise God would never have been able to obtain His desired family. Obviously, if man had never sinned, that is God's Plan A had never been violated, there would have been no need for a Savior, and there would never have been any pain or suffering or death.

There is an interesting point here that may seem to diminish the sharpness of the demarcation between Plan A and Plan B. As noted above, God's creation was for His own pleasure (Revelation 4:11) that pleasure is manifested by those who truly love and worship Him above all else. I wonder what kind of love it would have been had succeeding generations after Adam not sinned. If they all lived in in Eden-like environment where every need and desire were provided without effort, what kind of love for their Creator would have been in their hearts? What would be there that could stimulate the kind of love that God wants from His family? He could not have been! The introduction of sin, which if course God knew would occur, was the only way that the kind of love He wanted from His creation could ever fill man's heart. There had to be a choice whereby man would forsake the many pleasures and comforts of this world, and dedicate his life to the love and worship of God.

Regarding the angels, the sinful choice they made was likely made in unison. All who rebelled, or who ever would rebel, did so at the same time. The consequence also occurred at once, that is their permanent expulsion from heaven. They that rebelled

are the only ones who would ever rebel. Those who chose not to rebel would never rebel, nor would any other cherubim or any of the seraphin. That was a one time event never to happen again. Satan caused that rebellion in a manner similar to that which he used on man. Those who did rebel, along with Satan, have no Savior to save them and so are condemned to everlasting torment as is all mankind who will have refused the blessed gift of salvation provided through faith, in our Savior.

When condemned man is sent to perpetual suffering in the lake of fire, he will not be only a soul / spirit. He will have his body restored to him. It will be undestroyable, just as the burning bush continued to burn but not be destroyed.

2. Cain's Choice:

We next see in Genesis 4:7 another God-given choice to the very first son of Adam. Earlier we learned that Cain “...*brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.*” His brother Abel “...*brought of the first-lings of his flock...*” God “...*had respect unto Abel and to his offering; s but unto Cain and to his offering he had no respect....*” Here we find the first evidence of a God instituted system of sacrificial worship through the shedding of innocent blood that was to continue all the way to the coming of Jesus, who would be the ultimate innocent blood sacrifice.

That God had instituted this as a manner of worship was known to both Cain and Abel. Perhaps it had even been done properly by both men during earlier times of worship. However, in the described event, Cain chose to rebel, apparently having never appreciated the significance of shedding innocent blood as the only appropriate sacrifice. To him, as a tiller of the soil, the fruit of his efforts should have been just as valuable and therefore equally received by God. Cain's continued anger as a result of God's displeasure over his offering indicates that he never accepted God's way, but instead maintained a religion that we might call destitute of any adequate sense of sin or any need for atonement. In this respect, it is evident that most of the world today follows the way of Cain. That he just “couldn't get it,” we see evidenced in Cain by

what happened after God's appeal to him in verse 7. We see his anger culminate in his killing of Abel.

Is it too much of a stretch to see the similarity of God's earthly punishment of Adam by the taking of the first born, with the punishment of Pharaoh by the taking of his first born, and the first born of all in that sin-filled nation? From the very beginning the first born have been especially dear to God and to the Jews. Exodus 13:12 tells us that all first born males, human and animal belonged to God. Subsequent verses relate this requirement to the Passover, where God, because He spared all first born of Israel, He then chose to claim them. By God having spared them, every father from then on had an obligation to redeem his first born son through a payment of five shekels' to the sanctuary. (Numbers 18:16) The study of how God views the first born of man and certain creatures is by itself an interesting study.

Now let us examine verse 7 and how our loving God sought reconciliation with Cain. *"If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door: and unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him."* What is our God of second chances saying? God is giving Cain a second chance, a chance to repent and to take his rightful place in the family. In the previous verse God asked Cain why he was "wroth" and why had his "countenance fallen." In other words, God is asking him why he is so angry and distraught over this correctable thing. All he needed to do was to repent, come back with the appropriate sacrifice, and it would be accepted. If he had, being the first born, he would be above Abel and rule over him. However, Cain's pride, envy and anger left no room for repentance. Cain's parents rebelled through the influence of Satan. Satan in some other form also compellingly influenced Cain to so rebel and even to kill. Satan's direct and personal influences throughout history are the cause of many of the awful things that man has done and continues to do. Remember, Scripture gives legitimacy to such possibilities when it claimed that Satan "entered" Judas as he left the Last Supper to betray Jesus. (John 13:27) this doesn't mean that the Cherub spirit Satan actually entered the physical body of Judas. While demonic possession is well documented in the New

Testament, this was instead an example of the personal power and influence of Satan over certain susceptible men, whom he chooses to personally use. This doesn't rule out the possibility that this could have been a case of Satan's personally directing one of his demons to first betray Jesus and then destroy Judas.

I believe that we can see here God's Plan A being offered to Cain and rejected. This brought forth Plan B. Plan A was that Cain, as first born, would hold the number one place in Adam's family directly under his father. Abel would have lived and perhaps Seth would have been merely another son and not of the "chosen" line of Messiah's ancestors. Perhaps that honor would have been Cain's. God's offer of Plan A was rejected, so Plan B, the one we all know about was implemented. Could Plan A have been implemented? God knew it wouldn't be.

3. The People's Choice at Kadesh – Barnea

When Moses, through God's guidance, led the Hebrews out of Egyptian captivity, he took them directly to Mt. Sinai which was in Arabia. There they spent two years being prepared for their service to God, and for their conquering of the Promised Land. It was at Mt. Sinai where they were given the Ten Commandments, along with 613 rules of conduct. It was there that through God's direction they constructed the Tabernacle and all of the accoutrements required to carry out God's ordained manner of worship. This was in that period of time when they were to get Egypt out of their hearts, when they were to abandon the pagan gods and embrace the one true God. In Numbers, chapters one through twelve, we learn that after two years at Mt. Sinai, with the Tabernacle, and all of the instructions regarding spiritual matters seemingly having been completed, God then ordered a census of all men twenty years of age and older, which came to 603,050.

Next there was, among other things, considerable instruction regarding the arrangement of the tribes into both their camping and marching positions. When that had been completed, God told Moses to move the whole nation to Kadesh-Barnea, which was adjacent to the southerly border of Canaan. There he was to pick a chief

man from each of the 12 tribes and send them into Canaan to learn what they could about the quality of the land, its residents, their cities, and whatever else they might learn that would be of value when they began their invasion. (Numbers 13) They spent forty days journeying from the south to the northern most part of Canaan, and much of the area in between. Hebron is mentioned. It is there where they encountered the children of Anak, who were one of the tribes of giants that populated Canaan. Upon their return to Kadesh – barnea they reported their findings. What they found was frightening to most of them. All but two reported that many of the inhabitants were giants against whom, they could not possibly win.

Therefore, ten of the twelve convinced the people that to go there was certain defeat and death. Only Judah and Caleb urged otherwise, because only they realized that it would be God, and not their might, that would overcome such odds. However the others, those who thought only in terms of their own strength and not God's, won the day in convincing the people, so the scheduled invasion failed to take place. Scripture tells us that this gross lack of faith so kindled the wrath of God that He decreed that no person 20 years of age or older, except the faithful Joshua and Caleb, would ever move into the Promised Land. Hearing this, the people appeared, repentant and agreed to go. In fact, a few under their own strength did make a foray into the land and were badly beaten. God had removed His blessing and protection. This had been a test of their faith, which they failed. Had they had the necessary faith, Plan A would have been implemented. This Plan was for whole nation to have gone into Canaan immediately, and through God's involvement, quickly conquered and become settled in the land.

Thus Plan B was implemented. After being 2 years of instruction in the wilderness of Sinai, because of their lack of faith, God kept them in the wilderness a total of 40 years. This was a year of punishment for every day they spent exploring the Promised Land. It was also the time required during which everyone who was 20 years old and older would die. This would leave only those who were by then no older than 59 years of age to be led into Canaan by Joshua and Caleb. Those years of wandering in

the wilderness not only removed all of the older people, but also should have seasoned, matured, and strengthened the remainder through the hazards, deprivation and struggles which the wandering provided.

Also, it ought to have even raised their spiritual awareness as they followed God's direction through His visible manifestations as the Shekinah Glory. The proper procedure of worship and behavior were drilled into them during those years as they followed the Shekinah Glory and the Tabernacle wherever it led them. It is difficult to grasp, just how the world might have been different under Plan A. Of this might-have-been benefit of Plan A, there wouldn't have been those difficult wasted 38 years of near useless wanderings.

Surely many, who were twenty and older at that time, would normally have lived beyond that fortieth year. The fact that they all died, indicates that the deaths of many were hastened by God, probably through sickness and other means. That they might have also remained strong and healthy is evidenced by the continued robust lives of Joshua, Caleb, Aaron and Moses. Had they all expressed their faith that God would lead them safely through battles, even against the giants, the invasion of Canaan would have proceeded immediately from Kadesh-Barnea with Moses rather than Joshua as their leader. This is because the circumstances of the second striking of the rock wouldn't have yet occurred, and the punishment that this act caused wouldn't have happened. What we see here is an example of the tangled web of trouble and lost opportunities that always follow when we fail in our trust in God, and seek to go our own way, when it is contrary to God's way. Unless we pray continuously in gratitude and for discernment, as well as carefully and seriously study His Word, it will remain very difficult when we reach forks in the road, for us to determine which one is His way.

4. Moses Choice:

Scripture credits Moses as being the greatest or at least high on the list of greatest men who ever lived. None would be greater until the Son of God/Son of Man, Christ

Jesus came. Moses led the Hebrew nation through those first forty years, which included one of the most turbulent, trying and torturous period of these people's history. Even though the people were originally rebellious and threatening, Moses was impeccably true and obedient to God's Word, and to God's specific instructions. Most of us know his story quite well, so there is little need to repeat it here. The "choice" here under consideration is the one he made only months before he died. Again, we all know the story. It was an impulsive choice with tragic and seemingly excessive consequences. He struck the rock to cause water to flow, when he had been instructed by God to merely speak to it. Early in their exodus from Egypt where water was needed, and God had told him to strike the rock.

Here is the essence of the subject. God wanted Moses to speak to the rock and so instructed him that second time. Had he done so, it seems likely that Plan A, God's offered plan would have proceeded. Instead, Moses "chose" to strike the rock. This act of disobedience immediately cancelled Plan A, and caused Plan B to take its place. However, before we examine the ramifications of this violation, we need to check the context, and also try to put ourselves in Moses place. As noted, his service to the Lord had been as close to perfect, as Scripture has described it, perhaps more so than that of any other man. Just before this event, we find in Numbers 20:1 that his sister Miriam has just died. Additionally, in verse 2, we read that the congregation of people "*...gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.*" How they railed against Moses was just as vicious and absent of faith as their fathers had been forty years earlier, the first time he struck the rock. These verses suggest that they had not learned to trust God or Moses, His appointed.

How frustrating, depressing, and stressful this combination of things must have been, for him to have so lost his "cool." It was very much uncharacteristic of him to be so careless in his adherence to God's instruction. It is in verse 7 and 8 where God instructed Moses to take his rod, and to speak to the rock, and all the water they needed would be provided. When Moses left the Tabernacle, following this conversation with the Lord, he addressed the selfish, ungrateful mob on the verge of

stoning him and Aaron. Verse 10 and 11 make clear the nature of the sin that Moses and Aaron committed, a sin so great that as punishment, neither one of the brothers would be allowed to enter Canaan.

“10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? 11 And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out, abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.”

As we read these verses, two transgressions are evident. First, Moses struck the rock rather than speaking to it, and second he spoke as if it were he and Aaron who were providing the water, rather than God. Thus we have the sins of disobedience and of prideful self-esteem. However, there is even another dimension to this event that greatly displeased God. Had Moses spoke to, rather than struck the rock, an important similitude related to the coming of Jesus would have occurred. The first rock was struck just as, our Rock, Christ Jesus was “struck” (crucified) during His first coming, and whereby “living” waters came forth. Jesus will not be struck at His second coming, but will be spoken to. He will be called upon to return, again with His living waters of eternal life. Having struck rather than spoken to the rock, Moses preempted this beautiful analogy.

For this transgression, neither Moses nor Aaron would enter Canaan that they had so eagerly hoped to do. Both died during the year 1452 BC when Canaan was invaded. This was also the same year that Miriam had died. The first rock striking incident (Exodus 17:6) occurred in the vicinity of Rephidim, the last stop before Mt. Sinai on their journey from Egypt. They called the place Meribah which means “provocation, strife or quarrel.” This was appropriate due to what happened there. The next rock striking occurred at Kadash which was also called Meribah for the same reason, because there too, was much strife and quarrels.

This was 40 years, after their wilderness wanderings. (Numbers 19) However, before Moses died, he successfully led the people, not into Canaan, but into an easterly

portion of the Promised Land. He moved northward along the east side of the Jordan, conquering land all the way up to Mt. Herman which is 40 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. This included portions of the Amorite lands north of Moab and all of Bashan, the land of king Og and his giants the Rephidem. The land was so good that the tribes of Ruben, Gad and Manasseh, instead of waiting to get a portion of Canaan, petitioned for, and received, those lands for their inheritance.

Thus we see that Moses did enter and conquer a significant part of the “promised land”, but was not allowed to enter that portion called Canaan. Having conquered those lands, Moses then led the people back southward as far as Mt. Nebo which is on the east side of the Jordan across from Jericho. It would be from there, and not from Kadesh, that the invasion of Canaan would take place. Aaron had died at Mt. Hor right after they left Kadesh and started their northward drive. (Numbers 20:22). We read in Deuteronomy 34:1 that God had led Moses to the “...*mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho:....*” where he could see Jericho, and Jebus, which would become Jerusalem, as well as much of Canaan as far as the great sea. This is where God said that he could see but not enter the land. Verse 7 makes it known that although he was 120 years old “...*his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.*” In other words, he was still strong and capable of having continued effective leadership for several years longer, and could have effectively led the people on into Canaan.

Was this a part of Plan A that God had as His offering, if he had not transgressed? His great and noble stature as a leader, and a man so clearly close to God, might have intimidated the Canaanites more effectively than did Joshua. This is evident by the fact that, as already noted, we find Moses exhibiting outstanding leadership during his last year of life, leading his people out of the wilderness and conquering his way northward through Moab and Amon, through and past Bashan, to a northern limit beyond where David’s kingdom ended. (Numbers 32:33). As already noted, this land was so attractive that Ruben, Gad and Manasseh petitioned for it rather than to seek some portion of Canaan. Notice again that even Bashan, the land of the giants was

conquered by Moses. Absent the act of disobedience, Plan A would have allowed Moses to have conquered Canaan.

Did God take Moses' life there on Mt. Nebo? He did, because Scripture makes clear that Moses was yet well in his physical prime with no evidence of being weak or sick or in danger of dying, because of any other reason. In Deuteronomy 34:6 we read that God Himself buried Moses. Could this unique striking down and burial of Moses' body have something to do with why Satan and the archangel Michael "contended" over his body? (Jude 9)

When Moses died on Mt. Nebo, the entire tribe had assembled in the valley below. It was there that God ordained Joshua to take Moses' place as the leader of the people when they crossed the Jordan, into Canaan. Had Moses been their leader at that time, his fame alone would have put great fear and submission in the hearts of the pagan tribes of Canaan, and his greater wisdom may have saved him from some of the mistakes that Joshua would make. Also Moses's adherence to Numbers 33:51-53 may have been more thorough than Joshua's. Perhaps even the 7 years of war under Joshua might have been much shorter under Moses, and the subsequent conditions more consistent with God's commission. But none of this Plan A potential happened, because Plan B was ordained the very moment Moses struck that rock. What else "might have been" had Moses continued to lead the people? We cannot know.

Joshua led the people through seven years of war all across Canaan bringing various tribes into subjection. However, as we follow Joshua's exploits we find several indications how poorly he fulfilled God's mandate in "subduing the land." Numbers 33:51-53 spell in detail what was to be done in Canaan. *"51 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye are passed over Jordan into the land of Canaan; 52 then ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down*

all their high places: 53 and ye shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein: for I have given you the land to possess it.”

Then verses 55, 56 spell out the consequences of what failure to obey this command would trigger. *“55 But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell. 56 Moreover, it shall come to pass, that I shall do unto you, as I thought to do unto them.”* It’s very clear what the consequences of his failures would cause. We find that in 721BC God removed the people from the Northern Kingdom, and then, in 586BC, God did similarly to the Southern Kingdom. This removal of the Israelites from all of Canaan is exactly what God said He would do in verse 55 and 56, because they failed to do as He commanded them to do in verses 51-53.

Joshua’s first engagement was to take Jericho which we know was all God’s doing through Joshua’s obedience to God’s instructions (Joshua chapter 6) All went well per God’s direction (Numbers 33:51-53) until he encountered the Gibeonites who tricked him into making a “league” with them allowing them to remain, rather than chasing them out of Canaan as God had commanded. The next transgression was his failure to take and hold Jebus, later to be known as Jerusalem. Although Joshua killed the king of Jebus, Adoni-zedec, and burned the city, the actual conquest of the city didn’t take place until King David captured it four hundred years later. In the ensuing years after the burning, the Jebusites returned, and dominated the city, even though the Benjaminites seem to have lived around there as a minority

The fact that Joshua and the tribal leaders didn’t remove all the pagan tribes, but instead allowed the Israelites to only share the land, is evidenced by what happened, just as verses 55, 56 prophesied. Israel turned to paganism and was repeatedly punished. There is much more to be said regarding Joshua’s exploits, however, it is not relevant to our topic. I believe that it will suffice to say, that Plan A would have allowed for Moses’ continuance as the leader, and to be the one to “clean house” in

Canaan, but God was so offended by the striking-of-the-rock incident that He ended Moses' life rather than let him enter Canaan. This, of course brought Joshua in as his replacement and as the implementer of Plan B.

Some scholars have observed significance in the fact that God chose to remove Moses from his leadership before he had completed his mission. They reason that this is one basis for suggesting that Moses will be one of the two resurrected and supernaturally commissioned as one of the two witnesses who will prophecy in Jerusalem during the first three and half years of the seventieth week of Daniel as described in Revelation eleven. The fact that God Himself "ended" Moses' life and then personally buried him seems to have some great spiritual relevance.

As already mentioned, we learn that God Himself buried Moses and that Satan and the angel Michael "contended" over his body. Then we find that Moses appeared with Jesus at the transfiguration. (Mark 9:4) All of this suggests that Moses' service to the Lord was cut short and not really finished, but perhaps it will find its completion when he takes his place as one of the two witnesses. Satan knew that Moses was destined to be one of the two witnesses, and so if he could remove his body from where God Himself had put, that he could somehow prevent the ministry of the two witnesses.

What we can learn from all of this is that God takes very seriously His instructions to His own. Those who have accepted Jesus as their Savior are His own. Failure to obey does have consequences that can be quite grievous. Striking the rock under the circumstances that Moses was under may seem to us, to be rather trivial a cause for such a severe punishment. Not so with God, as His punishment of Moses clearly reveals. I suggest that this is a powerful example of the axiom, that to whom much is given, much is expected. A lesser agent of the Lord might have been less punished for such an infraction. God expected more of Moses. We must never assume that God will not respond to our transgression no matter how trivial we may believe them

to be. As Spurgeon once said, “God will not allow His children to sin successfully”. If you are one of His, this applies to you!

5. King Saul’s Choice:

Saul, the first king of Israel was one of those many tragic figures in history who began exceedingly well, but ended very poorly. All we know about him, is found in First and Second Samuel and First Chronicles. The first we read about Saul is found in 1Samuel 9. In verse 2 we read that he was “*a choice young man, and goodly.*” We also read that there was none “goodlier” in all of Israel and that he stood tall, head and shoulders higher than any of the people. “Goodlier” simply means pleasing. He apparently was tall and handsome and pleasing in his looks and countenance. Then we learn in verses 15, 16 that the Lord had chosen Saul “*to be captain over my people Israel...*” Captain means “prince, ruler, chief,” and thus indicating “king.” Of course Saul was astounded because he realized he had no qualifications for the job. In verse 9 we see him as quite humble. In 1Samuel 10:9, 10 we read that God gave him “*another heart*” and “*the spirit of God came upon him.*” As we read more about him, we learn that the Spirit of the Lord did not reside in him permanently, but would come and leave at various times. His behavior often reflected this unfortunate conflict within his heart.

As we read through these chapters we can conclude that Saul had several good innate qualities related to leadership. However, even though God appointed him to be the first king, Scripture tells us that he was not God’s preferred choice. David had been that choice since creation. God gave them Saul because they cried out to have a human king just as all the other people groups had. Effectually they rejected the theocratic rule they had, as God their King governed them through His appointed judges, such as Samuel. Perhaps this is where we should have started this segment of “What might have been”. God’s Plan A was to have continued the theocracy as it had been, with God using judges as His earthly agents. This Plan A was to continue until the yet-to-be born David would be ready to be king. That was when the dynasty that would end with our Lord Jesus as the ultimate and eternal King, would be initiated.

The people cried out for an earthly king so strongly, and against God's theocratic rule, that God gave them the Plan B as they had demanded. Thus Saul was in fact a Plan B choice, from this perspective.

Saul, with "God's help" did very well at first when he waged war on Israel's enemies and subdued them. Then in his second year, he committed a grievous sin. Only ordained priests were permitted to officiate at the altar of sacrifice. However, Saul knew this, but nevertheless he chose to intrude into this office of the priests and made a burnt offering to God. The seriousness of this is expressed in 1 Samuel 13:13, 14 "*13 And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. 14 But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee.*"

Here is where we discover what appears to have been a strange Plan A and Plan B situation. It seems that Saul's violation was sufficient to cause God to take away what these verses suggest would have been God's "Sub" Plan A, that is Saul's dynasty, would have lasted "forever." God had always intended that David, the "man after God's own heart" would be the first in the line of the eternal dynasty. And so it was, because God knew that Saul would fail to measure up, so God had this other Plan A all laid out involving David. One can only wonder, and barely be able to even conjecture about what might have been if "Sub" Plan A, Saul's eternal dynasty, had actually occurred. From the perspective of this study, the "Sub" Plan A / Plan B analogy in Saul's case is somewhat clouded. Scripture leaves no doubt that the Messianic dynasty was to be through David. That was God's Plan A choice. However, in the sequence of events Saul was offered an eternal dynasty before David was even born, making this seem to be God's Plan A.

Thus we can reason that there could have been two Plan A's. The Plan A for Saul ended when he chose to intrude into the priest's domain as God knew he would. Plan B, if we can call it that, ended Saul's reign and life earlier than might have been expected. In Genesis 3:15 "the seed of the woman" would not have passed through Saul because he was a Benjamite. From Genesis 49:10 we learn that Messiah would surely come through the tribe of Judah. Based on God's commitment to Saul, his descendants, instead of Jeroboam and others would have continued to reign over the northern kingdom. Then David's dynasty would have remained limited to the southern kingdom of Judah. The fact is, that in a way, Saul's dynasty, through his son, did continue over the "northern" tribes for seven and a half years after Saul's death. (1Samuel 15:5) And such a bifurcation of the kingdom did happen after Solomon's death, leaving the dynasty of David unaffected, as it continued in Judea through the line of Judah. Further conjecture is a waste of time because Plan B, regarding Saul, was the way it was always intended to be.

This apparently first transgression by Saul was far from his last. Scripture next records another major failure, which was to obey God's command to kill all of the Amalekite people, destroy all their goods and cattle, and take no spoil. Saul took spoil and took the king Agag as captive. Nevertheless, God allowed Saul to remain king until his death after 40 years of reign. If the Samuel 13:13, 14 event occurred only two years after Saul was ordained, then this occurred eight years before David was born! David was anointed king when he was fifteen years old, twenty-five years into Saul's forty year reign. David came into secret prominence later at age 18 when he slew Goliath. However, that God made David king was not revealed until many years later. Thus David was king only positionally during the last fifteen years of Saul's physical reign. Even after Saul's death, as noted above, David became king of Judea only, while Ish-bosketh, Saul's son was crowned king over all of the other tribes. However, a civil war soon ensued, and it was seven and half years later when Saul's son was removed, and David became king over all of Israel. A study of this chronology tells us that David was positionally king from 1070BC until Saul's death.

He was king experientially over Judea for seven years, and then over all of Israel for 33 years, for a total of forty years.

Thus we see that Plan A, the eternal dynasty that was offered Saul, was doomed from the time it was offered, and would never come into fruition. This particular choice example is different from the others cited in this study in that it seems from our perspective, that God didn't even want this particular Plan A, yet for some reason chose to offer it anyway. In this instance, we see much preparatory work going on to implement God's "other" Plan A involving David, as revealed by numerous earlier prophecies such as the one given by Jacob to Judah. At first thought, it seems that there was no Plan B regarding David's ascending to the throne. Yet as we examine David's reign, we see several Plan B's as David transgressed and did many things contrary to God's will.

6. The People's Land Sabbath Choice:

Am I over reaching by including this piece of Bible history as applicable to the subject of this study? Perhaps so. Nevertheless, I am persuaded to delve into it, if for no other reason than it represents a part of God's Word that seems to be poorly understood, and thus hardly anywhere appreciated. There is no one person to whom God gave a choice in this scenario. It was to a whole nation, and her priests should have been providing greater leadership in seeing to it that this commandment of God was being honored. It was but one of many elements of obedience that God required of His people in exchange for His divine guidance and protection. Their obedience to this one requirement would have been of great significance, because it would have been a very strong and visible expression of their faith in God for all other nations to see.

God's requirement regarding the land was that it would have one year out of every seven to rest, just as man was given one day out of every seven to rest. Man was given every seventh day as a Sabbath, and the land was given every seventh year as a Sabbath. As we read through Scripture, we see evidence of how serious the concept of the Sabbath was to God as it applied to both man and the land. He made

observance of the weekly Sabbaths as one of the Ten Commandments and described in detail how it was to be observed. Failure to properly observe the Sabbath was a capital crime. We also find in God's Word how the land Sabbath was to be observed. We find this in the Book of Leviticus chapter 25. In verse 2 through 7, we find the following:

"2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, when ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the Lord. 3 Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; 4 but in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the Lord: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard. 5 That which groweth of its own accord of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, neither gather the grapes of thy vine undressed: for it is a year of rest unto the land. 6 And the sabbath of the land shall be meat for you; for thee, and for thy servant, and for thy maid, and for thy hired servant, and for thy stranger that sojourneth with thee, 7 and for thy cattle, and for the beast that are in thy land, shall all the increase thereof be meat."

We find further elaboration of the subject in verses 18 through 22. *"18 Wherefore ye shall do my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; and ye shall dwell in the land in safety. 19 And the land shall yield her fruit, and ye shall eat your fill, and dwell therein in safety. 20 And if ye shall say, what shall we eat the seventh year? behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase: 21 then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years. 22 And ye shall sow the eighth year, and eat yet of old fruit until the ninth year; until her fruits come in ye shall eat of the old store"*

What was the purpose of this you may ask? To let the land "rest" might have seemed pointless, to them as well as it may to us. Why does the land need to rest? The land is the soil, and it is the soil that provides the water, minerals and other nutrients that combine with the carbon dioxide in the air, and the energy of the sun to produce nutritious vegetation. Without the replenishing of the elements provided by the soil, the plants, while continuing to grow, will become progressively deficient in the health providing nutrients, which man and animals need to remain healthy.

In this country, it was observed in the 1930's that most of the farmlands soils had become depleted of essential minerals. The soil was becoming less productive each year. The problem was "solved" by applying chemical fertilizer. The most common chemical fertilizer consists of a combination of three minerals, nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. The application of these minerals to the soil produces abundant healthy looking plant growth. However, the depleted soils are usually deficient in many minerals that the plants normally absorb, but don't need to look like they are growing well. These however, are essential for human health. Thus, if the iron, selenium, magnesium and the many other minerals essential for man and animals are not in the soil, they will not be in the plants that we depend on to supply them.

God's solution of letting the land rest for a year allowed the soil to be replenished by natural means. The decay of a year's growth of wild vegetation combined with droppings of birds and animals that would freely pasture in the gardens would produce nutrient loaded compost. Also the uninhibited activity of soil bacteria and worms, along with wind blown mineral-laden particulate matter apparently would have added to the quality of the soil during the year of rest. Did they ever obey this commandment, and if so, when and how long? They did obey, but when and how long can be reasonably well determined. We know with certainty that they ignored it for at least 490 years. For this God chose to punish them by depriving them of the use of the land for the accumulated 70 years of those seventh-years that the soil was to have been allowed to rest.

There was a supernatural element attached to this commandment. It was that in the sixth year of every seven years, the soil would produce triple the normal harvest. This, absent supernatural attendance could not have happened. Again what a splendid on-going confirming evidence this would have been to assure them of God's caring presence. Also, after the work of harvesting, preserving and storing this great abundance, they too would have a year of rest from the tilling of the soil, pruning the vineyards and the tending of the crops. Also for those years they would have been free of any worry about drought, or any other circumstances that could and did often

occur that would leave them greatly deficient of food. One would think that these benefits of obedience would have been a huge incentive to take this commandment most seriously. Who wouldn't have wanted a twelve month vacation from their primary job every seventh year?

Notice, all they needed to do was to simply ask God, at the beginning of the sixth year, to provide for them what they would eat the seventh and eighth year. This would trigger the triple yield that sixth year. Thus it appears that this sixth year bonanza crop would not happen unless they asked for it, but what would happen if they didn't ask? Absent the asking, the sixth year crop would be normal, thereby making it impossible to abstain from tilling the soil during the seventh year. Did some families obey and other not? We are not told. If that was the case, if some did and others didn't, there would have been turmoil within the social order of such a nature that is difficult to imagine. All we know is that the nation as a whole did fail to abide by this land Sabbath commandment for those 490 years, and did suffer the consequences.

I suspect that this commandment, which may have at first been universally adhered to, became totally ignored some of the times and actually applied other times. This would have been consistent with the fact that nearly all of the God given instructions were abandoned when the nation chose to turn to idol worship and accept the ways of their pagan neighbors. Were they punished for this specific violation regarding the land Sabbath? Yes they were. When, how and how long? The answer to these questions begins in 2Chronicles 36:20-21 which tells us: *"20 And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: 21 to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfill three-score and ten years."*

This is referring to the 70 years of captivity or servitude that God imposed on Judea through His "servant" Nebuchadnezzar. Scripture speaks of the "long suffering

nature of God.” Here we see that God long suffered Judea’s apostasy regarding this particular matter off and on for an accumulative total of 490 years, after which He effectually told them that because of this 490 years of neglect of His land, they owed Him a total of 70 years of abstinence from the use of the land.

In what 70 year period of time did God deny them the use of the land? Actually there are two semi-concurrent 70 year periods when they were severely troubled. There is what is called “the Servitude of the Nation” and the “the Desolation of Jerusalem.” The Servitude Nation’s period began in 606BC. Nebuchadnezzar sacked Jerusalem, appointed a puppet king, and took a small contingent of captives back to Babylon. That “servitude” ended in 536 BC as a result of a decree by Cyrus that allowed all who would, to return to Judea. The Desolation of Jerusalem occurred in 586 BC when the Babylonians destroyed the temple and the city. It was seventy years later, in 516 when the second temple was completed by Zerubbabel. While the completion of the restoration of the walls and the buildings in Jerusalem had not yet occurred, it seems that what was called “the Desolation of Jerusalem” ended when the temple had been completed and worship could resume. It took until 454BC, which was another 62 years for the city walls to be completed.

So which of the seventy years, if either, was it that God kept the land resting? It was the period of Desolation of Jerusalem, from the destruction of the City and temple on 586BC until the temple had been rebuilt in 516BC. The Servitude of the Nations which began 20 years earlier, did not remove the people from the land or from their use of it for 70 years. In 586BC essentially the entire population was killed, removed to Babylon or fled to Egypt. Most of those who fled were also captured or killed. We learn of this from Jeremiah 24:1-10 when the Lord described two baskets of figs representing the individuals who suffered this destruction of the City. The good figs were those who obeyed Him and submitted to Babylon thereby accepting their captivity as God’s punishment. The evil figs were the people who defied God’s way. God said in verse 9 and 10 that they would all be disposed and “be consumed from

off the land.” Therefore we see that the land was depopulated and thus allowed to rest for those 70 years of the “Desolation of Jerusalem.”

Finally, what 490 year period was it during which they violated the land Sabbath? The law was given in 1491BC. However, they could not begin to obey this part of the law until they had land to till and to give rest. If we subtract the 40 years in the wilderness and the 7 years of Joshua’s war before they could settle in the land, and the 6 more years until the first Sabbath of the land could have been applied, we see that the beginning of obedience or disobedience couldn’t have begun until about 53 years after the law was given. From 1438BC to 586BC, when they were removed from the land, amounts to 852 years.

This then provides us with a very specific bracket of time during which all of the obedience as well as the disobedience could have occurred. Given that God punished them for 490 years of negligence, we can assume that they obeyed the law for 852-490 or 362 years. When we read what went on during this 856 year bracket of time, we find that it encompasses the entire period of the Judges as well as the whole time of the Kings of Judah. When, within this time period did the 490 years of neglect occur? Was the whole time of neglect continuous over some 490 year period, or was this the total accumulated time of several neglecting periods? Because there is nothing in Scripture to cause us to believe that it all occurred during one continuous segment of time, we must conclude the latter.

Let us see if the Book of Judges tells us anything that might support that conclusion. This book takes its name from the first 13 judges that God raised up to deliver Israel during the declination and disunion which followed the death of Joshua. Seven apostasies, seven servitudes to seven pagan nations, and seven deliverances are recorded over the 330 years after the death of Joshua and before the anointing of Saul. The fourteenth and last judge was Samuel. His judgeship is described in the two books named 1Samuel and 2Samuel. Samuel was also a prophet, and the first in the line of prophets. His tenure coincides with the first part of the period of kings.

The first judge was Othniel, the son of Caleb's younger brother. We find in Judges 3:11 that under him "the land had rested forty years, until he died." Under the second Judge, Ehad, we are told that "the land had rested 80 years." The third Judge was Shamgar, during which they were oppressed by "Jabin king of Canaan for 20 years. Then came Deborah and Barak as the fourth and fifth judges. The result of their God-directed efforts apparently was that "the land had rest forty years." This followed another period of apostasy causing the Israelites to be severely afflicted by the Midinites, and Amorites who took their crops leaving them to starve. This brought on the sixth Judge, Gideon, through whom God destroyed these oppressors and "the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon."

After Gideon's death apostasy reigned again and Abimelech, Gideon's evil son reigned for three years after which God raised Tola to be the 7th judge. He held that post for 23 years. We know nothing of what transpired during those years. The eighth judge was Jair, a Gideonite who judged 22 years and about whose period we also know nothing. Because this was followed by another period of apostasy and servitude, we may assume that these were not relatively peaceful or prosperous times. Because they served Baal and Ashlareth, and several Syrian gods, as well as the gods of Moab and Ammon, God sold them into the hands of the Philistines and Ammon for a period of 18 years. Again they appealed to God and claimed to have repented. After that God lifted up the ninth judge Jephthal, another Gideonite and "man of valor". He ruled for six years, most of which seems to have been times of successful wars against Israel's enemies.

Scripture tells us nothing useful about the next three judges, except their names and number of years of their stewardships. Ibzan, the tenth judge, officiated seven years. Elon the eleventh judge, ten years, and Abon the twelfth judged 8 years, for a total of twenty-five, apparently uneventful peaceful years. This was followed by another period of apostasy and servitude that lasted forty years under the Philistines. During this time Sampson, the thirteenth judge was born and took his place. We all know

that story. Sampson, being incredibly strong and seemingly invincible, dealt severely against the Philistines for most of his time in office which was twenty years. The final act of Sampson's life was to end the forty year rule of the Philistines over Israel. Sampson's judgeship was followed by a very strange and horrible time, the discussion of which is even further removed from our subject. The one point of relevance during this period however, is that the civil war that occurred reduced the entire population of Benjamin to six hundred men, all of the other men, women and children having been killed.

How the tribe came to grow and be restored as a people is interesting, but again not relevant. What is relevant, is that this is further evidence that Jebus continued to remain under Jebusite occupation and control if for no other reason than there was no significant number of Benjamites there, or anywhere for several generations. I have mentioned this for two reasons. The first is that it is simply a demonstration of the Israelites' failure to drive out the heathens as God commanded. The second is to show that Jebus remained a Jebusite city, and never was affectually under the control of God's people until David conquered it. Therefore, it didn't become Jerusalem until the time of David. This is important as we seek to identify Melechezedek. (See the study called "Melechezedek)

The fourteenth and final judge, who followed after Sampson's death in the year 1101 BC, was Samuel. He was judge until he anointed Saul as king in 1095. However, he remained as a priest and prophet well into the positional reign of David, and until his death in 1060BC.

The purpose of this galloping history of the period of judges was to determine whether or not one could find any periods of time there, when the Sabbath of the land might have been practiced. Scripture tells us when, how and long and by whom it might have been honored.

The total of four periods of “rest” probably was 200 years. Could those 200 years have been sufficiently “law abiding” that the land actually got its Sabbath rest? If these had been years of obedience, then we can rightly assume that the other portion of the 323 year expanse covered by the Book of Judges, that is 123 years, is a part of the 490 years of failure. If we take 123 years from the 490 we still have 367 years to find where they didn’t observe the Sabbath.

Can we, by the same logical assumptions used above, find the remaining 367 disobedient years in the period starting with Samuel’s judgeship and ending with the destruction of Jerusalem that is the 515 years between 1101 BC and 586BC? This requires that we find the 148 obedient years. ($515 - 367 = 148$) Let us start with the first “good” king, king Asa, who “did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God.” As we read of his reign we may conclude that 36 years of his 42 year reign might have been in Land Sabbath conformance. He was followed by his “good” son, Jehoshaphat who reigned 25 years. The next “good” king, Joash came ten years after Jehoshaphat’s death. However, after the death of Jehoiada the chief priest, Jehosh didn’t do so well. Because we do not know when the priests died, we won’t assume any of his years as “good.” He was followed by “good” king Amaziak who reigned well for 11 years. Next came his son Uzziah. He too was a “good” king and he reigned 52 years. Toward the end of his reign, he made the “Saul mistake” and intruded into the priestly domain and burning incense in the temple. For this, God gave him leprosy. Jotham his son was also a “good” king who reigned 16 years, yet the people did corruptly. This suggests that we can’t count his years as Land Sabbath-friendly. His son Ahaz was not good, but his son Hezekiah was another “good king. He reigned for 29 years and officiated over a revival in Judah. The only “good” king after Hezekiah was Josiah who ruled for 31 years. Adding up all of these potentially “good” years, when one might expect the Land Sabbath to have been honored, we get a total of 184 years. As noted above, we needed only 148 years to validate our premise that the 490 years of failure to keep the Land Sabbath occurred intermittently over the total 852 year period, of judges and kings pretty much as here described.

As I read the above, it is evident that it may be too complicated and difficult to easily understand. Hopefully the following summary will correct this.

- God punished Judah 490 years for failing to obey the Land Sabbath.
- Our quest is to determine when the 490 years occurred.
- The bracket of time when this possibly could have occurred is well defined. It is from the year that the Jews settled in the Promised Land, and had tilled the soil for 6 years, until the land was vacated and began its 70 years of rest after the Temple was destroyed. This would have been from 1438BC to 586BC, or over a period of 852 years.
- As we examined that portion of biblical history, there doesn't seem to be any continuous 490 year period of time to which this could apply. Therefore, we can rightly conclude that the 490 years is an accumulation of several or many interspersed periods of violations of the requirement.
- If Judah was punished for 490 years for failure to keep the Land Sabbath, then for 852-490 or 362 of those years, they kept the Land Sabbath.
- In order to solve the puzzle, it appears more beneficial to seek out the years of obedience rather than those of disobedience.
- We found 200 years recorded on the Book of Judges that appears to be years during which the land Sabbath requirement may have been honored.
- Starting with Asa, the first "good" king of Judah, and examining the potential of compliance to Land Sabbaths during the reigns of all to the "good" kings that followed, we concluded that there might have been as many as 184 years of obedience to the law.
- The 200 years from the period of the judges plus the 184 years from the reigns of the "good" kings of Judah, provide us with 384 years of potential adherence to the Land Sabbath law. Since we found that we only needed to find 362 years of obedience, during the period of the kings, it appears that our premise on how the 490 years occurred is quite defensible. To come within 22 years on the positive side, using such evidence, is to me at least a strong indication of the validity of the original premise.

- Just imagine what a powerfully visible evidence of God's love and physical caring this was for His chosen. Realize also what a testimony this must have been, or could have been, to all of the pagan population, as they saw the power of this Israelite God. The harvesting of three years food supply every sixth year before the year of rest, when, if ever, the soil should have been at its least productive state, was obviously a miracle. That the soil should recover fully after such a strain, and produce normal crops for the next 6 years, was another miracle. One can only wonder how any people could abandon a God so wise and caring and faithful! We believe through faith in the Word of this unseen God, and see only His quite subtle workings in our daily lives. Here was a predictable, repeating, overt, and undeniable expression of His presence that everyone could see. Isn't this evidence of the extent of man's overpowering sinful nature and propensity to choose ways contrary to God's ways, even when they can clearly see the wisdom, benefit and righteousness of His way?

Given the above, I believe we can say with some level of confidence that the 490 years of Land Sabbaths violation is the accumulated total of numerous choices to violate God's direction, and is interspersed among the numerous times when the choice was obedience, all this during the 852 years, from when they first settled in Canaan until the destruction of Jerusalem. The fact is that Scripture tells us that they violated the law for 490 years, and the entire bracket of time when it was possible for that to occur was the stated 852 years. Therefore, as far as the identified occurrences, and their duration collectively, the identified periods must be representative of how these events took place.

7. Rehoboam's choice

After Solomon's death there were some tragic consequences levied on Israel because of Solomon's many moral and spiritual transgressions. The son who succeeded him as king was Rehoboam the son of Naamah, an Ammonite, of royal birth as a pagan who was one of Solomon's 700 wives. As we read the sordid details of his life, and

how it affected the great kingdom that his father David had given him, we see in advance that God had already prepared the elements of this Plan B, even before Solomon died. This is much like when God created the vast underground reservoirs of water to supply the “fountains of the deep” which would flood the earth 1656 years later. Rehoboam’s choice ended Plan A before it had even been given expression. What was God’s Plan A? I believe that we can reasonably assume that Plan A was for the Davidic dynasty to remain strong and integral. That is, it would continue to control all of the lands that God provided David and that he passed on to Solomon.

Upon Solomon’s death, Rehoboam was crowned king. 1Kings 12:1 tells us that *“Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king.”* At that point it was evident that as far as the people were concerned, he was the rightful successor to the throne of Solomon and to the entire kingdom. At this gathering, the people asked for clarification of how he would govern. They claimed that his father Solomon had extracted extremely heavy taxes from them, and they now petitioned him to lower those taxes to a reasonable amount. His inherited advisors all recommended that he commit to some measure of relief, as had been requested. However, he also sought council from another younger group of his own selection of advisors who told him that he should “turn the screw” even tighter to get more revenue out of the people. He followed the advice of the younger group, and told the people that he would be far more demanding than even his father had been.

This caused the rebellion which divided the country into two nations, the Northern Kingdom of nominally 10 tribes called Israel, and the Southern Kingdom called Judah. Judah consisted of the land occupied by the tribe of Judah and Benjamin. Actually however, the land of Simeon appears on most maps as an isolated portion of Judah which included the City of Beersheba. It seems quite evident, that because Jerusalem and the Temple were in Judea, all from any tribe who wanted to continue to worship in the Temple would have migrated to Judea. This surely would have included many Levite priests. Many in Judea, who preferred idol worship,

migrated northward. Therefore, there would have been some amount of mixture of all of the 12 tribes in both kingdoms.

This arrogant and self-serving choice by Rehoboam was exceedingly tragic all of Israel. As noted, Plan A would have retained a strong unified nation that David and Solomon had built. Instead, the result, because of Rehoboam's choice of action, the kingdom split, resulting in two comparatively weak nations that became easy prey for invaders. In fact, we find that just four years later, Shishak, king of Egypt, invaded Judah. 2Chronicles 12:9 tells us that he "...took away the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house; he took it all:...." This suggests that he took an incredible amount of treasure, perhaps all of the great treasures that Solomon had acquired and that the Queen of Sheba was so amazed by, just 30 or so years earlier. Some scholars suggest that the Ark and the solid Gold Mercy Seat could have been part of the "all" Scripture says that he took.

We should not view Rehoboam's choice as having been entirely his own carnal doing. There was a supernatural element involved as we may deduce from what God told Solomon as recorded in 1Kings 11:11-13 "*¹¹ Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. ¹² Notwithstanding, in thy days, I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. ¹³ Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen.*" God's anger against Solomon's refusal to abandon his worship of idols resulted in a curse against him. However, out of deference to his father David, God chose to "rend" the kingdom from him, but not from him directly while he lived, but from his son. Therefore, we might conclude that Rehoboam may not have had as free a choice as we might think. We might even say that it didn't matter what choice he made in the taxation debate, Plan B had in fact been ordained. It was ordained that the kingdom would be split and that he would only rule over Judah. How often does this type of situation occur,

that God causes a Plan B, rather than simply allow it to occur? It seems evident that this also was in deference to Ham's father Noah.

As is always the case, when we examine these "forks" in the path of time, God already had Plan B waiting to be implemented. Rehoboam's choice not only split the kingdoms, but set the stage for all of Israel's eventual fall from grace and into both physical and spiritual subservience to Gentile rule. From the immediate perspective of that time, God raised up an Ephraimite named Jeroboam. He was the son of one of Solomon's servants and a "*man of valor*" to whom Solomon gave charge over the house of Joseph. (1Kings 11:28) Later the prophet Ahijah, of course, through God's direction, prophesized that Jeroboam would rule over ten of the tribes of Israel. There is much more to the story, but suffice it to say, that Solomon, upon hearing of this, sought to kill Jeroboam, who fearfully escaped to Egypt until after Solomon's death. He returned just as Rehoboam issued his harsh statement against the people. Thus Jeroboam was there at the right moment, and the ten tribes accepted him as their leader of this break-away nation. Is it mere "coincidences" that only a short time after Jeroboam returned from his exile in Egypt that Shishak came from Egypt and invaded Jeroboam's enemy, Judea? Could it be that Jeroboam enticed Shishak to invade Judea by revealing the presence of the great wealth that was in the temple and palace?

There is much more very important information to be gleaned from this portion of Scripture as it relates to God's dealings with His people. However, it is beyond the scope of this study to go any further in that direction. Jeroboam had some good traits (1Kings 14:13) but basically was a very poor spiritual leader. The northern kingdom never had a king that did "right" in the eyes of the Lord, yet it lasted for 254 years before God let Assyria permanently end it and carry away the people. The southern kingdom had a few good kings and lasted another 135 years before God allowed the Babylonians to bring down the kingdom, and take the people into 70 years of captivity in Babylon.

In summary, what we learn here is that even if Rehoboam had chosen wisely, the kingdom that Solomon left him would still have been divided, because that was what God had decreed against Solomon. Rehoboam however, had he refrained from idol worship, might have fared better during his life, and perhaps even after. Thus we can see what Solomon's many years of apostasy did to God's Plan A, that is to have had a long enduring, powerful, and obedient God-protected nation. It didn't happen. God wanted it to be as a blessing to all the peoples of the earth. Plan B that Rehoboam unwittingly chose, to the great detriment of all concerned, was actually the fulfillment by God of Solomon's Plan B choice to enter the realm of pagan worship. This resulted in two weak nations often fighting each other, and continually threatened by their more powerful neighbors. Many times there were even reduced to mere tribute-paying vassal states under the control of their enemies. As a strong single kingdom under godly kings, they could have fulfilled their divine purpose as detailed in Daniel 9:24. This must now await its fulfillment during the 70th week as prophesized in the Book of Daniel 9:24-29, after which the Son of David, Christ Jesus will come and sit on His millennial throne. Perhaps this "What Might Have Been" could have better been called, "Solomon's choice," because that's where this particular drama began. As we have seen the punishment for Solomon's choice of Plan B fell on his son rather on himself, because of the esteem God had for his father David. The fact is that in the final analysis, Rehoboam really had little real choice in the matter any more than Ham's son Canaan had.

8. The Sanhedrin's Choice:

I suspect that second only to Adam's choice, this is probably the most profound choice man has ever made in terms of effecting the last two thousand years of world history. It also has an effect on what will then happen for the next thousand years or more.

It appears that the institution of the Sanhedrin was founded by Moses, at the command of God (Numbers 11:16). They were to be seventy elders under Moses as

their head and number 71. They became the Supreme Court that officiated over all legal and religious matters affecting Israel. This means of governance continued throughout the centuries up to, and for a while, even after the 70 AD destruction of the Temple. Every city had a lesser Sanhedrin body consisting of 23 elders who functioned as the lower court system. The Great Sanhedrin consisting of 71 elders presided over issues of regional and national significance as well as authority to set policy and override the lesser Sanhedrin. We might call this the Supreme Court of the land, and indeed it was until around five or six AD when the Roman authority stripped it of certain legal powers, such as the right to judge capital crimes.

Until Jesus was born, the Sanhedrin was, as noted, the final and unquestionable authority over all religious / spiritual matters. The elders who made up the Sanhedrin at that time were mostly Pharisee with some Sadducees. In later years the Sadducees came into dominance. Moses was the head of the original 70, so also after him, a series of sons of Judah became the head of the 70 Sanhedrin and continued in that leadership position. Otherwise, the prophecy Jacob gave to Judah would have been false. (Genesis 48:10)

Having identified the undisputed authority of the Sanhedrin over the Israeli nation's religious / spiritual matters, what is the wrong choice that they made? It should be no mystery to anyone who has read the Gospel accounts of Jesus' rejection as the Messiah. God's Plan A was to redeem Israel through the coming of the Messiah. The Old Testament was the Book about which their position as religious leaders required them to be experts. This God-breathed Book clearly predicted the coming of the Messiah, and very specifically described all of the evidences that would be required in order to assess the validity of anyone's claim to be the Messiah. Jesus precisely and publically fulfilled every one of those requirements. Given this fact, how could it be that the Sanhedrin refused to acknowledge that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, just as He claimed to be? Those of us who claim to be Christians and have read the relevant portions of Scripture, feel that we know why. Even so, I believe the

reasons for their refusal to acknowledge Him as the Messiah go beyond the Sanhedrin and have been universally applicable to all mankind to this day.

First, we should realize that they held coveted positions within society. They were seen by the Jewish people as God's ordained, and endowed by Him with divine judgment and wisdom. (Numbers 11:25) Their leadership, their ordinances, and their judgments regarding religious matters were to be accepted without any doubt or question. This unquestioning acceptance of their views is well expressed by the fact that when the people did recognize Jesus for who He was, the "truth" decreed by the Sanhedrin, was that Jesus' workings were from Satan rather than God. This negated all of the conclusions they had reached from their own observations and biblical knowledge. To retain a belief other than what the recognized authority on the matter claimed to be the truth, was putting one's own obviously flawed logic above that of the "ordained," and that was simply not acceptable. Has anything changed that much? When Science, the recognized infallible supreme authority on such matters claims that life came into being by accident, and evolved over billions of years, who has the right to question that expertly "established fact"? Laws are passed to prevent any alternatives from being taught in schools.

Second, even though the nation was under Rome's totalitarian yoke, and very distressed by it, the Sanhedrin lived privileged lives, exempt from most, if not all serious aspects of that yoke. Tyrants always find useful tools among their subjects. These they reward by exemption from the more onerous aspects of their subjection. We are today governed by a similar tyrant elite. For instance the U.S. government has required the imposition of a punitive inadequate and more costly system of "health care" on the entire population. Then they voted to excuse themselves from it! As the spiritually governing leaders of a spiritually minded people, the Sanhedrin was of great use to the Romans as affective means of people control. The Romans had but two major interests in Israel, or any other of their colonies. These were to simply control so as to satisfy their thirst for power, and to extract as much tribute, that is wealth, as possible from the population. We live under such rule today.

In order to maintain control and maximize tribute, peace was essential. That is because, the Roman military was spread so thinly across the vast areas they had conquered, that any serious uprising could easily exceed their local ability to control it. Therefore it was essential that where possible, some segment of the indentured population could be counted on to help keep the peace. Because of the strong religious component of the Jewish culture, the Sanhedrin provided an ideal group to favor and thereby control, the beliefs and conduct of the people. The Herodians, those who led the civil government for the Romans were the other favored group. Thus both groups were collaborators with the nation's foreign masters. When Germany conquered Norway at the beginning of WWII, the German's set up a puppet government under a man named Quisling who was willing to compromise his people's welfare for his own well being. For many years the name Quisling was synonymous throughout the world with traitor, or collaborator with a nation's enemies. Human nature has not changed for the better!

Thirdly, as the highly privileged group, it was greatly to their benefit to keep the peace in order to keep their status. To give credence to anyone calling Himself Messiah the coming King, an obvious threat to the sovereignty of Rome, was a sure way to incur the wrath of Rome, and undermine their privileged status. Fourthly, while they certainly expected the Messiah to come one day, they expected Messiah to come as the King, the one who would show evidence of His kingly power and authority. That way they could be certain that He would surely overthrow Rome. This lowly, humble, meek man, no matter how else He had proved Himself, could not in any way be the King Messiah, who could accomplish this. Therefore, all these "proofs" of His validity were judged to be fraudulent, and for the Sanhedrin, the only way that Jesus could have done what He did was to have been empowered by Satan, rather than God. That conclusion, because it came from experts, who denied Him, satisfied the people's concerns, and thus closed their minds and hearts to the truth they had first believed. The Sanhedrin actually believed that of which they accused Him, that is of being of the devil.

That choice of rejection of the Messiah, I believe was, as previously noted, the most devastatingly wrong choice ever made by man, since Adam! Here had been given them the sweetest most profound, universally benevolent, and redeeming choice ever offered to mankind. It was to choose God's plan A that is to accept Jesus, and thereby spare all of mankind what followed, that is millenniums of pain and suffering. Instead of accepting Jesus as being Messiah, they choose their Plan B, and thereby cause all of the horrors that have, and continue to have, dominance over all of mankind. Had they known Scripture as they should have, they would have seen this Jesus was not the expected King, but instead was the Suffering Servant Messiah that Scripture clearly revealed would also come, but by there logically would come first!

Common sense by anyone pondering the likely sequence of these "two" comings, even believing that there were two individual Messiahs, should have realized that the Suffering Messiah would have to come first and die for their sins, before the King Messiah could come. It should have made no sense to them that the king would come first, and be ruling "with an iron rod" over all the people of the earth, and then for the Suffering Servant Messiah to come. Through His death and resurrection to the living, there would then be two Messiahs on earth at the same time. One would had to have questioned the omniscience of our God, if this had been the plan.

I am strongly persuaded to believe that in this case, we have much opportunity to see some of "what might have been" a little more clearly, and over a longer period of time than in any of the other Plan A choices that God offered. Plan A, of course had been that Jesus would be fully accepted by the Jewish nation as their long predicted Messiah. This simple rejection of Jesus was all that was needed to end Plan A, and all of what could have been. However, the reason that they used for rejecting Him, resulted in the blaspheming of the Holy Spirit, and compounding the damning effect of that rejection many fold. It rendered corporate Israel guilty of the unpardonable sin! Because of this one act, God effectually "disowned" Israel, as He had previously done when He "divorced" her. (Jeremiah 3:8, 14)

The first expression of this disowning is found in Matthew 13:10-17, 34-35. Chapter 12 ended Jesus' presentation of the kingdom to Israel. Jesus' rejection caused Him to end His teaching to those who had rejected Him. While He continued to speak to the multitudes, He never again spoke publically except in parables. These were given to be understood only by those who were spiritually enlightened. They would now learn the mysteries of the kingdom, but those who had rejected Him, those in spiritual darkness would remain so, and not understand. Before His rejection, His teachings and prophecies were primarily explanations and elaborations of Scripture, at which time consisted only of what we call the Old Testament. The parables revealed, to those who understood them, certain things about the coming kingdom that had never before been revealed. We can conclude, that had they accepted Plan A, and not denied Him, these mysteries would have been fully described in a manner that would have been easily understood by everyone. After all, that is part of why Jesus the Son of God/Son of Man, came to earth. He came to fulfill prophecy and reveal to all of His people that He came to first die for their sins, and after that to become their eternal King. Under Plan A, this would have come about without His having to go away and then return at some later time. It's difficult to understand how the Jews could have believed that there were 2 messiahs rather than one coming twice. If there were 2 different genuine messiahs, that is eternal sons of God, then God would have to have had 2 sons. Furthermore, where would the "lowly" one go after the king came?

Can we look any further into the future of what might have been if the Jews had fully accepted Jesus as the Messiah in accordance with God's Plan A? I'm persuaded that we can, even though at first it may not seem very likely. However, we do run the risk of delving into scripturally unsupportable contrivances and conjectures. As I now attempt to advance these thoughts I have no idea where I am going, or what the result will be. What I do know is that I have been strongly persuaded to look into the matter, to pray for guidance and to report on what may come to me as a result.

It seems appropriate to start with a list of random thoughts as they have come to me:

- Right after His formal rejection by the Pharisees and Sanhedrin, some even feigned reluctance to totally rejecting His claim. They asked for a sign, as if He hadn't already provided all the signs that they could possibly have needed regarding His identity. (Matthew 12:38) His response was to point to the story of Jonah and to claim that He, Jesus, would spend "*three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*" If they had been at all sincere in their query, they would have thought about it, and recognized this as a powerful claim to His being the predicted Suffering Servant Messiah. This they should have put together from the many prophetic verses such as found in Isaiah 53 and Daniel 9. At His death on the cross they could have seen that this was foretold in great detail in Psalm 22. Then after His resurrection, during the 40 days He walked the earth and was seen all at once by at least 500 people, why didn't they then recognize and admit to His suffering Servant Messiahship? Because of their rejection of these powerful evidences of Who He was, none of these "should haves" were then available to them because once they rejected Him, their hearts had become hardened to any such subsequent evidence. That initial rejection, which blasphemed the Holy Spirit, had ended any and all possibilities of the modifications or reversal of Plan B.
- As we observed at the beginning of this study, God's first Plan A began by creating a perfect world and a perfect man, with whom God had an intimate Spiritual connection and on-going communion. God also gave Adam full reign over the entire world and its creatures, imposing on him only one restriction. But even that Adam could not handle. It all came to a halt when Adam sinned, causing Plan B to commence. Similarly here, God instituted Plan A when He sent His Son to the earth to redeem man by removing the curse of that original sin, and all subsequent sins. This was so that man could be rejoined to God through the renewing of that Spirit-to-spirit connection he once had.

- Had the spiritual rulers accepted Jesus in His very evident Suffering Servant capacity, this would not have been viewed as a threat to Rome, nor to their status within the hierarchy. Instead it would have greatly enhanced their ministries, sparked a reformation, and a wonderful confirmation of biblical truth.
- Jesus' death was a necessary aspect of why He came, and so even under Plan A, it would have taken place in some manner, but not necessarily on the cross. Remember, it wasn't the suffering of the man-administered stripes, or the hanging on the cross that took away our sins, it was His having been made sin, the sins of the whole world, that only His spiritual suffering and death could cleanse. Jesus was also endowed in Spirit, with the Son aspect of the Triune Godhead. This is what God meant when through Isaiah He said in Isaiah 9:6 "*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: ...*" The son born was the flesh and blood of man, while the son given was the Son aspect of the Triune Godhead. This I believe is how Jesus became the Son of God and the Son of Man.
- Jesus had the mortal flesh of man and the Spirit, which was the Son of the Triune Godhead. The Son of Man had to be born sinless and remain sinless throughout His life. How could it be otherwise as long as He had as His Spirit the Son of the Godhead? In order to take away the sins of the world, all sins were imputed to Jesus, so effectually, He was made sin. Because sin cannot exist anywhere in the Godhead, I believe that Jesus' indwelling Son of God Spirit could not remain part of the Godhead. For those latter three sin-filled hours on the cross, He could not be part of the Godhead. The tearing away from His position within the Godhead was the most painful suffering ever to have occurred, infinitely more painful than any human could imagine. The awfulness of sin is so repugnant to God that no amount or intensity of purely human suffering could ever erase the tiniest bit of sin. Therefore only God Himself was capable of sufficient suffering, and that tearing apart the Triune Godhead was what could and did accomplish that feat.

We should realize that it was not only the Son of God, but the entire Godhead, that is, the Father Son and Holy Spirit that participated in that three hours of unbelievable suffering. This was the only affectual sin-cleansing suffering that occurred. It is subtly evidenced in Isaiah 53, and punctuated by the fact that on the cross He could not, for the first time ever, call Him Father, but referred to Him as God. This is the way that the impeccably just Godhead determined for there to be an equitable and sufficiently painful way to pay for the sins of all mankind. I see this as the ultimate expression of both His justice and His love for man, elevated to a level infinitely above our comprehension. How incredibly blessed we are to have such a God!

- Had they not rejected Him, the Roman's form of torture and execution on the cross probably wouldn't have happened. This is because, as noted, this wasn't the lashes, or the physical impalement on the cross that took away our sins.

If the governing religious authorities had accepted Him as the Messiah, the man-inflicted suffering would probably have been far less or probably not at all. It is possible also that the circumstances of His execution would have been different. Of course, we know that Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection had to take place in some manner, because that had been an essential component of God's overall Plan A, from the moment Adam ate of the tree of good and evil. Jesus' acceptance by the Jews could have caused His death to have occurred in any number of different ways, which God might have chosen. The execution under Plan B was instigated by those who rejected Him and coerced the reluctant Romans to perform the heinous act. Had He been accepted as the Messiah, there would not have been that coercion, and so some other basis for His death would have had to have been provided.

Whatever the manner of the Plan A way of His death and resurrection would have been played out, the Isaiah 52 and 53 description of His suffering would

had to have been somewhat modified. Remember that it still was the stripe that God Himself inflicted on Jesus that was the real and ultimate punishing payment for the sins of mankind, not what man did to Him. This is clearly evidenced by verse 4, 5, 6 and 10 of Isaiah 53. How the human component of this alternative manner of implementation might have taken place is well beyond my willingness to speculate.

- Let us project a little further into how Plan A might have continued, absent Jesus' rejection as the Messiah. After Jesus' resurrection in His then glorified, incorruptible Body, the road to His Kingship, the second major reason for His coming, could have proceeded almost immediately. No longer would He be the suffering Servant. That aspect of His coming would have been fulfilled. With His people knowing without question who He was, He could have, and I suggest, quite likely would have then taken on His preordained kingly role and proceeded against the Romans and all others who might resist His authority.

Remember, when they came to take Jesus while He was at Gethsemane, He told the crowd that He needed only to pray to the Father and He would send twelve legions of angels if need be to defend Him. (Matthew 26:53) After His resurrection, He was the same Person who, under Plan B, will single-handedly destroy Antichrist and his huge armies at Bozrah. Therefore He wouldn't then have needed any such help. (Isaiah 61) Something similar to what He will do at Bozrah under Plan B, might have happened under Plan A, but without the over 2000 years of wars, starvations, plagues, executions, suffering and grief that have resulted so far under Plan B. The continued declination of man's moral and spiritual character, and his continuous departure from having been in the image of God, would have been halted at least 2000 years earlier than it would have been.

- We learn in chapter 9 of Daniel, all of the things the Jews were to have done, but failed to do during those 69 weeks of years, or 483 years prior to the coming of Jesus. By then they had only one week of years, or seven years to

fulfill that mandate. Under Plan B we read that this will surely be fulfilled after a delay that so far has amounted to 2000 years. They will fulfill that calling through the seven years of evangelism by a God-selected 144,000 Jews as we learn in Revelation 7. Under Plan A, I suspect that these years of evangelism would have begun right after Jesus' resurrection and His assumption as Messiah the King. It would have, in some other way, involved the great mass of believers that would have resulted from their acceptance of Him as Messiah, thereby negating the need for a specific 144, 000.

- I don't believe that any Gentiles would have been left out of the redemption process. This would seem to be the case, because we call the 2000 years the church age, and this would not have happened, at least in the way it has. However, I am certain that God would have created His "church" in some even better way, which would have been a less painful and protracted way than what Plan B has been. With the whole Jewish population evangelizing and leading people to Him, the population of saved souls would not have been a continuously small remnant as they are, and have been throughout the ages. Instead, they would have been a large rapidly growing majority.
- Under Plan A, as we have observed, there wouldn't have been this two millennium of years of exile of the Jews as a dispersed people. Nor would there have been any need for the coming Great Tribulation which will result in the killing of two-thirds of the entire then world population of Jews.
- As noted earlier, it was because the Jews rejected Him that caused Him to begin speaking only in Parables. This was because they had forsaken their privilege to understand the many mysteries regarding the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God. These truths were only for the ears of the faithful. Had they accepted Him, they would have been among the faithful, and would not have been denied this knowledge. Just as this information was instrumental and greatly contributed to the founding of the church, so also it would have been of great benefit in what, under Plan A would have been the fulfillment of their world-wide evangelical mission.

- As conclusive evidence of how incredibly tragic their rejection of Jesus was, we find Son of Man weeping because of their decision (Luke 19:41). Jesus cried of course, because He knew of how many great blessings they had lost, and of all of the horrible things that would ensue because of their rejection of Him. He predicted the 70AD destruction of the temple as one of the first results of the Plan B implementation. This destruction probably would not have happened, through violence, under Plan A. It is possible that the Temple might have been replaced or perhaps “retrofitted” into the millennium temple which Ezekiel describes in chapters 40-44. With this I am suggesting that a millennial-type of world might have come into being early on, rather than yet in the future.
- What would have been Satan’s involvement under Plan A? To begin with, Jesus’ death and resurrection vanquished Satan’s power over death. (Hebrews 2:14) This would have been true under Plan A, as well as under Plan B. The Jews rejection of Jesus was a major achievement for Satan and his continuous plan for their elimination. From forty days after His resurrection, Jesus has been in heaven waiting for the time when the “*fullness of the Gentile be come in*”. (Romans 11:25)

This will end the Church Age, culminating with the Rapture. While Satan would have continued to be a counter force to God’s purpose, the Jews acceptance of Jesus would have greatly diminished his powers and effectiveness, and even ended his reign over the earth whereby he might have quite soon went to his permanent home in the lake of fire. Also it’s hard to believe that under Plan A, situations such as the Holocaust would have occurred, or would well over fifty million babies have been killed in their mother’s wombs in this country alone. That number continues to grow as the social structure collapses. Under Plan A there would have been a continuous ascendancy of righteousness as compared to the descendancy into evil and deprivation that has occurred under Plan B. Again, I believe that these conditions would have greatly diminished Satan’s powers, as well as his

longevity. There would have been no Antichrist, no False Prophet, No “Mystery” Babylon and no “City of Babylon” as the capital of Satan’s world empire. God’s truth would have spread so rapidly and powerfully that all of the false religions of that day would have dissolved, and those we see today would have been “still-born,” never to have risen.

- Would there have been the destruction of this earth and the formation of a new heaven and earth, as will happen under Plan B? (Revelation 21) I suspect that this would have happened even under Plan A. While it is obvious that God can do anything, I suspect that to refurbish or retrofit this already sin soaked earth would not have been appropriate even under Plan A. Revelation 21 tells us that the New Jerusalem on this new earth will be a full cube 1500 miles on a side, and will need no sun or moon light to shine on or in it. It will be the home of the Triune Godhead as well as the whole host of angels, along with Jesus.

The saved souls of man will live elsewhere on this new earth, outside the city gates which will never be closed to them. While Scripture tell us that the city will have no need for the sun and moon, it doesn’t say that the rest of the new earth will not need this light. If the sun and the moon are eliminated, and I don’t believe they will be, then a whole new set of physical laws would replace the current laws of physics. I believe that Revelation chapter 21 is a description of what will be, as well as what would have been under Plan A.

With the thirteen examples of what might have been, I end this excursion into “biblical fantasy.” There are numerous other examples in Scripture that speak of man’s wrong choices. However, the need in me that prompted this effort seems to have been satiated. As these few examples reveal, God, through His word and through prayer, and through the many gifts of the Spirit that He has made available, should cause at the least, the faithful remnant to seek, and to hereby to make only Plan A choices. Throughout each of our lives we are confronted with choices, many times each day. Most are relatively minor and mundane. However, there are others

that may seem to be of those minor types, but are, in fact, far more encompassing and of eternal significance than any of us are aware at the time. The primary remedy for avoiding a Plan B choice is to be one who “prays unceasingly” and one who prays to our Lord in single-minded sincerity to give him/her the wisdom, discernment, knowledge, strength, understanding, patience and love to faithfully deal with all choices.

As I look back at what I’ve written, I suspect that some who may read this will wonder why I made such a big deal of this hypothetical issue of what might have been. I hope if nothing more, it may be of some use to have simply drawn attention to where some of man’s more significantly poor choices were made, and how they may have influenced history. However, why even waste a moment on what might have been, when it never happened, and never could have happened, because of God’s perfect foreknowledge of all things? That’s a good question, and one that I had asked myself, until I was relentlessly persuaded to study, ponder and record what is here written. As I now look back on this study, I see aspects of God’s character that I didn’t appreciate as much as I do now. Also as I look back, I see many more what-could-have-beens that perhaps should have been included. The major one was the reaction to the removal of the staff of authority that had been given to Judah until it could be given to the One to whom it belonged, namely, Jesus. They believed and still do, that God had broken His promise, because the Messiah had not yet come. The truth was that He did come, as the then 7 years old son of Mary.

In giving man that essential free will, He set Himself up for what must have been, if it can be put this way, a very disheartening six thousand years of seeing His beloved mankind use that free will in just about every manner grossly contrary to His will. In honoring the sovereignty of that free will, all he could, or perhaps all He choose to do was to point out to man at about every “fork in the road” the one He preferred man to follow. Here we have called this God’s Plan A’s. As we can see, perhaps nearly all of history as recorded in Scripture is made up of man’s alternative choosings, which we have called man’s Plan B’s. Rather than dismissing without further thought, what

might have been, this study, for me at least, has given me a better and most precious understanding of God's caring love, His involvement, His patience, and His unrelenting effort to point out the divine way, while for the most part permitting man to pursue his way to wherever it would lead. As disastrous as this had been, I believe it remains the only way God has been able to sanctify, that is separate out a genuine family for Himself. I pray that you are a member of His glorious family.

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