

Firstfruits, Forty Years, and the Judaizers

(A Study of the Parenthetical 40 Yrs. between the Death of Jesus and the Consummation of the Age)

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The first generation of apostolic believers are described in scripture as firstfruits.

James 1:18

18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of **firstfruits** of his creatures.

This period of time has been greatly misunderstood in the grand scheme of prophetic study.

There is so much that we can discuss as concerning this era that time would not allow. We will, by the grace of God, confine our study to the themes hereby listed.

To understand “that generation” is to understand:

1. The internal conflicts in the new born church.
2. The analogies that are made by Paul of the 40 year, first generation in the day of Moses and the first harvest of believers in the first century.(leaving work and entering rest.)
3. It identifies who the “son of perdition” was: the spirit of antichrist, the man of sin. We will find that scripture teaches that they are all one and the same thing. Included within this theme would be the falling away or apostasy of that time.

1. The internal conflicts in the new born church

Revelations 14:1-4

1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:

3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the **firstfruits** unto God and to the Lamb.

In the portion of scripture above we see images of the first century church identified by the word firstfruits. Further identification of this group lets us know that they are Jewish apostolic believers, the 144,000, redeemed from the earth.

See Rev.7:2-8

To understand the generation of firstfruits we must look at the feast of Pentecost, the first harvest and picture of the first generation church. This was prefigured in the ceremonial law to be fulfilled in its prophetic time. It was celebrated fifty days after the feast of Firstfruits.

Leviticus 23:16-17

16 Even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall ye number **fifty days**; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD.

17 Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall **be baken with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the LORD.**

This is a prophetic type of the first generation saints and is associated with leaven. Leaven is described in scripture in the negative i.e. as sin or false doctrine. This is key in understanding the internal conflicts which were symptomatic of the first 40-year generation.

The church was birthed in the midst of tremendous political and religious upheaval. That which was written was to be fulfilled and few newly converted Jews desired such radical change in so short a time.

Judaism had been an institution for many hundreds of years. The traditions were deeply ingrained in each of its members.

The transition from old to New Testament ways was slow and painful. Thus the tremendous volume of scripture devoted to the conflict and confusion of “law and grace”.

It was the infusion of tradition, especially the oral tradition of the elders that caused the apostasy of that time.

Jesus used the term “leaven” in referring to the doctrine of the teachers of His time. As usual, it went over their heads and the Lord had to clarify His statements to them.

Matthew 16:6

6 Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.

Matthew 16:11

11 How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?

We may now more readily understand the parables of Jesus concerning the kingdom of God. The great conflict raged between those who

tenaciously held on to the traditions of the Elders and those who desired liberty in Christ.

In effect there were two nations struggling in the womb of the Church, much like Esau and Jacob. In the end only one was to be the victor. This struggle and the identification of these two groups are illustrated in the parables of the wheat and the tares, the leaven hidden in three measures of meal and the mustard seed that grew and the fowls of the air lodging in the branches of it.

(Fowl are depicted in scripture as the devil)

The Lord allows all the above to continue until the time of the harvest, the end of the age.

Another illustration with scripture in reference to leaven and Gods people is found in Hosea 7:3-4. Notice how the Lord refers to his people as adulterers. Israel is portrayed throughout scripture as an aduress.

Hos 7:3-4

3 They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies.

4 They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, who ceaseth from raising after he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened.

Illustrations found in the parables including, fowls, tares and leaven were warning His people about the enemies that would be within. Ultimately, there would be a purging, a deliverance, and a new age.

The beginning of the generation of Law was initiated at Mt. Sinai. The events transpired during that time (40 years) closely paralleled the first generation believers.

There are a number of themes one can recognize in each 40-year period. One example of this is the attempts of a group of people who desire to lead God's people back to a state of bondage as opposed to reaching the Promised Land.

As in the day of Moses, the first generation church experienced an apostasy in its midst desiring to go back to the "work" of the Law.

2. The parallel that is made by Paul of the 40 year first generation in the day of Moses and the first harvest of believers in the first century are evident in the book of Hebrews. (Leaving work and entering rest)

A constant hindrance to the new church was the desire of its membership to observe the "Works of the Law," i.e. Ceremonial Law. The New Testament writers battled this movement in just about every epistle.

The book of Hebrews is a thesis on how the law and the priesthood are fulfilled in the kingdom of God. This book is a straightforward address to the problem.

The third and fourth chapters of Hebrews draw a distinct parallel between the 40 yr. generation in the time of Moses and the first 40 yr. Apostolic generation.

The writer warns the Church not to make the same errors as their predecessors in the time of Moses. They refused to cease from the works of the ceremonial Law and ultimately never entered His rest. This refusal was equated to the sin of unbelief.

Hebrews 3:8-19

8 Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works **forty years**.

10 Wherefore I was grieved with **that generation**, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.

11 So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)

12 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;

15 While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

16 For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.

17 But with whom was he grieved **forty years?** was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

18 And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Hebrews 4: 1-6, 10-11

1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

2 For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

4 For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.

5 And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest.

6 Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:(the remainder of believing jews that still kept the ceremonial law)

10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also **hath ceased from his own works**, as God did from his.

11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

Entering into rest was equivalent to the cession of the ceremonial law. This scripture below points to a time when The sacrificial system was to “cease” or come into total rest or Sabbath!

Daniel 9:27

27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease,

KJV

OT:7673

shabath (shaw-bath'); a primitive root; to repose, i.e. desist from exertion; used in many implied relations (causative, figurative or specific):

3. THE PERSONIFICATION OF THE “SON OF PERDITION, MAN OF SIN, SPIRIT OF ANTI CHRIST.”

Personification is used repeatedly in the word of God. It is overlooked by many in studying the New and Old Testaments. Many times the word identifies a group of people by this method. Unfortunately, many bible students miss this identification and come to the conclusion that the bible is referring to an individual.

First let us look at the definition of the word personification .

per·son·i·fi·ca·tion

*N. the attribution of a personal nature or human characteristics to something nonhuman, or the representation of an abstract quality in human form.

God refers to His people in a corporate manner when He uses this method to address them.

Exodus 4:22-23

22 And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, **Israel is my son**, even my firstborn:

23 And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me:

Hosea 11:1

1 When **Israel** was a child, then I loved him, and called **my son** out of Egypt.

The judgment pronounced below was in reference to Edom, the descendants of Esau. Esau was dead long when this prophecy was written.

Jeremiah 49:7-10

7 Concerning Edom, thus saith the LORD of hosts; Is wisdom no more in Teman? is counsel perished from the prudent? is their wisdom vanished?

8 Flee ye, turn back, dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan; for I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him, the time that I will visit him.

9 If grape gatherers come to thee, would they not leave some gleaning grapes? If thieves by night, they will destroy till they have enough.

10 But I have made **Esau** bare, I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself: **his seed is spoiled, and his brethren**, and his neighbors, and he is not.

In the New Testament God incorporates Jew and Gentile in one body in this reference to “one new man”.

Eph 2:13-15

13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain **one new man, so making peace;**

1 Corinthians 15:21-22

21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die , even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

The Son of Perdition (The spirit of Judas)

Words are utilized in symbolic association to convey very powerful images. The bible is second to none in completing the task.

The association of the words “son”, “perdition” and “apostasy” are revealing in the following scripture.

The scripture itself has an eerie interpretation in the world of eschatology today that has no biblical basis. The verse is taken literally by a majority of bible students. The antichrist, a fictitious individual, is to rise to power and he is to declare himself to be God in a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem.

This defies the fact that no where in scripture do we see God speaking of another temple built after the one he destroyed in 70 Ad.

The bible should be left to interpret itself. The phrase “son of perdition” was used because the church was already familiar with the term used in association with Judas. Judas was a trusted apostle who was a witness to the ministry of Jesus. He ate and slept with the apostles and shared in all the events that transpired at that time but yet he betrayed the Lord.

The term “falling away” is directly associated with the term son of perdition because that is exactly what Judas personifies.

One could say Judas was the first notable apostate in the New Testament church; he became a prototype of all who would “fall away” from Jesus Christ.

The events described in 2 Thes. 2:3-4 declares the events to take place “in the temple of God”. Obviously, Judas was not to be that “person” but

something would re enact his apostasy in their lifetime. (they were warned of the event)

The falling away would be those who were already in the temple, the church. (The temple Jesus built)

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away [apostasy] first, and that man of sin be revealed, **the son of perdition;**

4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

Jesus identified who the son of perdition was. 2

Thes. 4

is a prophetic passage and obviously charged with imagery. We have little choice but to interpret it with the symbols that are given. Judas was dead at the writing of 2 Thes. 4, therefore we are constrained to acknowledge the expression “son of perdition” to be symbolic.

John 17:12

12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but **the son of perdition** ; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

PERDITION:

A. Noun.

apoleia NT:684, "destruction," is translated "waste" in Matt)

Hebrews 10:38-39

38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

39 But we are not of them who draw back unto **perdition** ; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

2 Peter 3:7

7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and **perdition** of ungodly men.

The spirit of perdition and apostasy infiltrated the Temple of God at its inception. Here we see the same elements pictured in waved loaves of leaven on the feast of Pentecost. Foreign 1 John 2:18-19

18 Little youths, it is the last hour; and even as ye heard that the antichrist doth come, even now antichrists have become many — whence we know that it is the last hour;

19 out of us they went forth, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but — that they might be manifested that they are not all of us.

YLT

Elements (leaven) are found working deception in the House (Temple) of God. John identifies this group as antichrists who went out from among the brethren as Judas did. He further identifies the event as happening at “the last time”. (Last hour)

1 Corinthians 3:17

17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are

They were among us but they left us. This identifies who the anti Christ was, not an individual but a

movement of people who obstructed the work of the ministry.

1 John 2:18-19

18 Little youths, it is the last hour; and even as ye heard that the antichrist doth come, even now antichrists have become many – whence we know that it is the last hour;

19 out of us they went forth, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but – that they might be manifested that they are not all of us. YLT

1 John 2:18-19

18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even **now are there many antichrists**; whereby we know that it is the last time. (it is the last hour)

19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

The apostasy reached into every level of leadership.

2 Corinthians 11:13-14

13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

Rev 2:2

2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which

are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles , and are not, and hast found them liars:

KJV

2 Peter 2:1

1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as **there shall be false teachers among you**, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction

This “son of perdition” had supernatural powers that deceived the elect. It is apparent the church was deceived because the apostates were also in the “Temple of God”.

Verse 10 in this passage switches from the term son of perdition to “them” in referring to not having a love of the truth. The truth is Gods word. This further identifies this so called “son”, a backslider, who once had intimacy with the truth, just as Judas did.

2 Thess 2:9-11

9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

KJV

Jesus warned the Apostles of this great deception.

Matthew 7:22-23

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Jesus summarizes his discourse on the Sermon on the Mount in chapter seven in Matthew by warning against false prophets within the church. How do we know that? Everything, including miracles was done in HIS NAME. Only His Church is privy to that. Yet He declares that He never “knew” them. I believe this means there was a lack of intimacy because God knows all things.