THOUGHTS OF OCTOBER, 2011

1. Biblical numerics are interesting and informative. The number 7 indicates perfection, completion, and dispensational fullness. There are many groups of 7 in the Bible, this list being of Earth’s phases: original earth [as shown by science and Scripture – Gen. 1:1], chaotic earth [as shown by science and Scripture – Gen. 1:2], edenic earth [as shown by Scripture – Gen. 1, 2, and 3], antediluvian earth [as shown by Scripture – ending in Gen. 7], present earth [as shown by observation and Scripture], millennial earth [as shown in Rev. 19 and 20], and the new earth [as shown in Rev. 21 and 22].

The 7 phases vary in their durations, but they are distinct.

2. While we are into that Thought, consider the first phase – original earth. In Genesis 1:1, the Lord created the heavens. The plurality of heavens means that there was more than one. In the New Testament we are told that there are 3 heavens – 2 Cor. 12:2. The first heaven is considered to be earth’s atmosphere; the second heaven, space; the third heaven, where God lives at the present time.

In Genesis 1:1, in the beginning God also created the earth. I understand that verse to be a short, “you-don’t-need-to-know-the-details” statement that He created the earth as far back in time as He wanted – back in the beginning of His earth-creative activity.

Earth was not the first thing He created, because He had already created the angels. Satan, then called Lucifer [light bearer], had a/the highest position among the angels. God is light [1 John 1:5], and Lucifer was the/God’s light bearer, that is unimaginably something! It was such a something that Lucifer wanted the whole thing and went for it, trying to be God.

One-third of the angels rebelled with him, but they lost the heavenly rebellion. Lucifer lost his job, his name, and his residence in heaven [but he could occasionally visit, especially to accuse the saints].

He was cast out of heaven, upon the earth, and given the title of Prince of the Earth. With the title came [measured and controlled] authority and [measured and controlled] power, which he still has only through deception [also called unbelief]. Accepting Satan’s deception is one of the worst things a human can do – Heb. 3:7 🡪 4:11. On the other hand, it is impossible to please God unless we reject Satan’s deceptions – Heb. 11:6.

That rebellious 1/3 of God’s angels was sent to earth with Satan, where they are called demons and work under Satan’s directions. One of the first things they did was to ruin the surface of the earth – Gen. 1:2(a). It’s hard to imagine the civil war in heaven, but not as difficult to imagine the continuance of Satan’s rebellion, madness and resultant devastation when he/they arrived on God’s earth. They began destroying it, and the Lord did not stop them. He limited them, as He does now, and used the worst Satan could do for His purposes – Job 1:10; 2:6; Rom. 8:28; 1 Cor. 10:13.

So, God’s long-created earth became a ruin, was formless, a waste and emptiness. Darkness was over the face of the earth/deep. BUT, God the Holy Spirit was working things according to His own schedule. He began hovering or incubating on the earth/waters. The first thing He did was create miraculous light, and things began to be re-created, probably of a better sort than before the devastation.

That’s only Genesis 1:1-2. The same language is used in Jeremiah 4:23-26 where they are primarily addressed to Judah, God’s people. There may be a second reference to the events of Genesis 1:2.

Let’s continue in Isaiah 45:18, where he speaks for the Lord [my paraphrase]: “The Lord created the heavens and the earth. He created the earth and formed it and had it working right, but was not the one who made a waste of it. He had done what was necessary for the earth to be a pleasant and inhabited planet. But when it was made into a ruin, He was still the All-Mighty who was working all things according to His plans.” Read that verse in several translations and see if you don’t get the same or similar understanding.

Our next verses are in Ezekiel 28:12-19. That is addressed to the king of Tyre, but is also broadly accepted as a word about Satan, the rebellion in heaven and its extension on earth.

Enough of that Thought. That sort of Thought stimulates my imagination, exercises my biblical orientation, and tests my spiritual integrity.

3. As far as I know, no one who reads these Thoughts needs to be told that as born again Christians we are actually sons of the All-Mighty God Himself. Even so, it is good to read and re-read Galatians 4:6-7, wherein the Holy Spirit says through Paul [my paraphrase]: Because we have been chosen to be God’s sons, He has sent forth from His throne the very Spirit of His Son, Jesus, into our hearts, which is meant to stir us to call Him, “Daddy!” Therefore, even though those saints of the previous covenant were great, they remained only servants. We have been made sons; and sons are heirs of God’s eternal goodness and substances.

4. It is reported, by a prominent pastor of pastors, that most pastors do not have it easy at home. Their wives and children cause them stress and strain instead of fireside peacefulness. No doubt lots can be said about that situation, but one often-missed Thought is that if they/we do our homework right, our labors outside our homes will be more fruitful. Leaders are made stronger when they are challenged by those close and vital to them.

5. Have you noticed that the Lord doesn’t simply trim on us to improve us? When He begins to work on an area of our souls or lives, although it may be a narrow piece of us, He slices deeply. He puts the ax to the root of the tree – Matt. 3:10; Luke 3:9. He does that with all of His children, He does that with everyone who comes to Him for new life [we must be born again], He did that with Judaism as He brought it to life as Christianity, He did that to the world [Gen. 1:1-2], and He will again do it to the world [Rev. 21:1].

When I began my walk with the Lord at age 33, I told Him that I would go all the way with Him if it would cost all of me. He assured me that He could handle the ax-work.

6. Paul gave good advice [of course] to the Philippians. In 4:6-7 he told them to present their needs to God but to place their attention on the Lord, away from getting answers to those prayers. He told them to worship and live for the Lord and He would give them peace. Notice that Paul did not say that those needs presented in their prayers would or would not be answered. That was almost beside the point. Good focus!

7. “I have a right to my own life.” (signed) Satan He says it many ways: “It’s my life.” “I gotta be me.” “I have only one day off. I need it to myself.” “I don’t need anyone telling me what to do.”

8. If you want God’s peace, let Him be God. Try stopping wondering how He will work everything out, and stop telling Him what is right for you. The first will reduce your fretting; the second will reduce your thinking of yourself as a failure.

9. How are you doing with the same ole manna every day, month and year? Life can seem dull, can’t it. I think it’s that way when we do not realize the Lord’s presence or see His hand at work.

10. A few days ago I was involved in a delightful event in a deli at lunch. A brother and I were chatting after our meal when I noticed an apparently new employee who was going about sweeping the floor. He appeared to lack a lot in regards to effort and job appreciation. His cap pulled down over most of his face, and his clothing under his apron indicated he would be more comfortable “hanging out” somewhere else, doing nothing.

Presently, the boss walked over to him and showed him the considerable litter he had missed. I think it must have been this young man’s first hour on the job, and his first job. After the boss walked away, the young man showed some general displeasure. I walked over to him and compliment him on how good things looked after he had cleaned from place to place. I told him that a verse in the Bible said that goodness and mercy would follow certain people, and that he was an example of one who made things better for having been there. It took about 45 seconds.

About half way through my talk, the boss stepped up into our immediate presence and listened. When he heard what I was saying, he smiled and walked away. I asked the young man if he understood, which he did. That was it. The seed was in the ground, or perhaps a previously planted seed was watered. The Lord will bring the harvest.

11. Music was/is designed by the Lord to bring all of His creation into resonance/alignment with Him. All of creation sings to Him. When King Saul was under the influence of an evil spirit, David’s instrumental playing and singing to him brought him back to peacefulness. Godly music does that. Ungodly music seeks to capture and control the mind.

A particular ministry in the church, which is too uncommon, unfortunately, is that of psalmist [instrument, voice, or writing]. Another term for psalmist is prophetic musician. A brother in a large church here in Corpus Christi is an immediate minister of peace and worship – through his key board and voice.

In another church, a young lady is inspired to write songs as she listens to her pastor’s sermons. She sings them at the next service. Through her the Lord opens minds and fills them with peace; re-preaching certain points that then can be received.

12. Hold onto your chair with this Thought.

It’s not hard to become hardened. Continuing in sin, especially while justifying oneself, will do it. Romans 1:18-32 explains this process.

 A similar problem is being desensitized to sin. Desensitizing comes from being continually exposed to unrighteousness, and tolerating it. Habitually watching certain television, reading certain books, looking at certain internet sites, driving our car just a bit recklessly, being slightly loose with our tongue, etc. will desensitize us to sin.

Both hardness in sin and desensitized to sin are soul-destructive. Preaching of the gospel, the needs of others, and separation from regular spiritual involvement with other believers will not move us. We cannot hear what the Spirit says to us. Calamity can be at our door but we do not know it. Although we are children of God and are offered life in the light, we walk in darkness.

The problem at that point is not weak preaching, but spiritual deafness. The sense of and knowledge of God’s presence has left us.

Choose life. The Lord’s return is soon.

13. This dark world needs light. We have problems that only the Lord can solve: moral decline, economic collapse and military/terrorist dangers are just the beginning of a possible long list. The Lord has all of the solutions, which start with the “R” word – repentance. Then comes confession and obedience.

A common obstruction to obedience is the thought that God is mean, He won’t let us have fun, and He won’t get involved in our lives if we need Him. Wrong, wrong, and wrong. God’s leadership produces freedom – the ability and opportunity to do what we should do, and He gets involved with us to accomplish His will. We have been trained by our previous father [the devil] to do what we want to do, but that life and its outcome is dull, painful and deadly.

I’m not saying this to you; I’m rehearsing it to me and letting you listen in.

14. Parents name their children. A name often means something, and has an effect upon a child all of his life. A child’s name can help its parents manage it, especially in its younger years, like; “Johnny, you are brave, just like your Uncle John.”

Adam was told to name the animals. When he did, he imparted a specific character to each animal [my Thought]. When some persons are born again, they are re-named – like Jacob’s name [meaning “cheat”] was changed to Israel [“Prince with God”], and Saul’s [“a grave” or “a destroyer”] was changed to Paul [“a worker”]. The person who named another had responsibility and authority in the life of the one being named.

So, who named Jesus? Joseph and Mary were not allowed to name him. Only His Father had that right, responsibility and authority. So He did.

15. A good rule for teachers and the rest of us: “We need to spend more time studying and learning about things we have already mastered.” That’s a reminder to go along with 1 Corinthians 8:2.

16. Herod the Great, who reigned at Jesus’ birth, was much like Joseph Stalin of our days. They were both mass murderers, apparently without conscience. Herod killed two brothers-in-law, his own wife and two of his own sons. Five days before his death he ordered the arrest of many citizens and decreed that they be executed on the day he died – to guarantee a proper atmosphere of mourning that day. For someone like that, it had been no problem to order the killing in Bethlehem of all children Jesus’ age.

That stirred me to thinking about my conscience, which has become both more sensitive and less sensitive during my years of walking with the Lord. I am more sensitive to conviction [quicker and deeper], and after being forgiven am less bothered by my sinnings [due to quicker repentance and less lingering guilt, fear and shame].

However, back to Herod the Great. He did have some regrets; his heritage – that over which he had no control. What else to do? He had his genealogical records destroyed out of vanity because he wanted no one to compare his simple background with others.

So, how about my and your unchangeables? It may be the unchangeables in ourselves, our children, our jobs or our ancestors. I’m proud of my ancestors, who were of low or moderate estate because they were people of faith and character. I have not been proud of some of the things my offspring have done, but I have done as bad or worse. That softened my attitude and helped me be patient with them and the Lord.

17. Have you wondered how God the Son looked when He was a microscopic-sized fertilized egg inside a teenage girl? And, have you pondered on how dependent He was upon that teenage girl for food, warmth, protection and love?

18. The Holy Spirit is the servant-arm, third person of God who is at work on earth. Over the past 2,000 years, as He has worked to build the church/kingdom of God, He has given us spiritualities which build up the church and assure the Bible-minded saint that episodes of spiritual outpourings are of God. Those outpourings have many positive things in common, but one significant lack stands out; a lack of leadership or government.

The Lord established His kingdom. He scheduled outpourings which bring His church to life and power, and then comes a gradual fadeout of the life and power. Why? My answer today is that the kingdom is indeed established but leadership/government of the kingdom is not established.

We cannot pour out God’s Spirit; only He can do that. I’ll add this: God commands that we have kingdom government but He will not establish it; we must. Without kingdom government, every person or congregation of an outpouring does its own lively and spiritually powerful thing, and then fades.

At least a contribution to that fadeout is the fact that those on whom new and powerful life is granted do not know their essential need for being governed, including self-governed. They are ALIVE TO JESUS and FREE OF RELIGIOSITY and are REAL HUMANITY for the first time! They won’t tolerate anything that they consider that puts a damper on their new life and power.

Another negative contribution is made by the established church leaders in the times of Holy Spirit outpourings. They usually reject those of the outpouring and their giftedness, removing prepared stability and maturity unavailable to the new “fanatics.”

An additional negative contribution to kingdom leadership, especially during Holy Spirit outpourings, is that people fear authority – for many personal reasons. Not the least reason is that many have suffered under unrighteous authority, and the area of spirituality and church life is one wherein submission to authority is thought to be “not necessary.” In our modern western world, religion is an individual matter. Subsequently, religious birds of a feather flock together outside of the established church structures.

However, there is hope. Fear is removed by love. In fact, perfect love removes all fear – 1 John 4:18. Even our imperfect love removes a significant amount of other’s fears. Without the love of Jesus at work [and growing] in and among us, the only church government we have will be formal, official, shallow and dead.

Love does more for the kingdom than remove fear. It also frees wisdom to do its work among the saints. Wisdom without freedom becomes stifled and the kingdom dumbs-down.

19. The Wall Street Protestors movement is for “liberation.” It has been said that they want liberation from hegemony, patriarchy, oligarchy, poverty, bigotry, usury, antimony, simony, parsimony, parsnips, passports, indentured servitude, ignorance, bad credit scores, college loans, interest on college loans, paying back college loans, thinking about paying back college loans, the minimum wage, the maximum wage, really bad bridges that fall down, and not enough free swamp land. They demand to be paid for simply existing, while insisting that those who actually have a job get less money in order to support their freedom to choose indolence over work.

Who would be so insolent as to accuse anyone of those things? Surely not the Lord – 2 Thess. 3:10-12.

20. When we worry we imagine that God is incapable [and that He is also worrying].

21. What does it take to be a spiritual father? How about this little list:

 a. Individually – 1) Holds himself responsible before the Lord for personal righteousness.

 2) Has a strong sense of responsibility for being an example and a leader of the

 flock of God.

 3) Knows that the Lord is displaying him before those who need to see Christ and

 His way of life.

 4) Knows that his abiding determines the strength of his standing before the

 Lord, and that it enables or disables his fatherhood.

 5) Knows that all of the above supersedes anything he could do called “ministry”

 for others’ sakes.

 b. Corporately – 1) He is not a loner. He knows better, he desires better and he has chosen to not

 be an independent loner. He has probably experienced some of the loneliness

 and fruitlessness of being the opposite – a lone and loose cannon. That

 experience is golden to him.

 2) He is appropriately open with others, and appropriately confidential.

 3) Both 1) and 2) have enabled the Holy Spirit to develop his Father’s answer to

 Jesus’ prayer in John 17, that our unity would enable Him to form us into

 functional units. David saw this in Psalm 133.

 4) There is a strong and high level of understanding and trust of other fathers.

 His and others’ marginal attitudes and weaknesses, as well as his strengths, are

 displayed and shared, yet he continues honoring the weaker without requiring

 honor in return.

22. It has been said that what man wants more than anything else is to worship that which is established beyond dispute, such as would be an all powerful, palpably present, looking-after-me god or gods. The Lord God is not such a god, but Communism was and dictatorships are thought to be. Of late, earthly wealth has faded a bit. However, to worship that kind of god is to pamper mankind’s flesh; to give us that kind of god that we desire. That sort of god gives us what we want in a god; what our flesh desires and can create and control.

The Lord would not tolerate His creatures having that sort of god, so first He made Himself invisible to humanity. That shook up those who needed palpable, visible substance in their gods and introduced mankind to the necessity of bare faith – if we were to worship our true Creator.

But that was not enough. He wiped out the last vestiges of our imagined need for a human-made, human imaginable, human-dependable god by making Himself weak before our eyes. Man then had to choose freely and in faith what to do with Him who was of such poor report and was defeated by His enemies. We have to believe. Without faith it is impossible to please Him.

23. Due largely to the Holocaust, the number of world Jewry is approximately the same today as it was during Jesus’ days; and the same proportion [1/4 of them] lives in Palestine.

24. God’s great ability to exercise restraint creates opportunity for faith, does it not? It creates opportunity for those opposed to Him to flourish. All types of tares seize their opportunity and become bolder in the face of others’ righteous suffering.

God did not destroy Satan when he rebelled in heaven, nor did He prohibit him from tempting Eve and all of humanity. Jesus did not remove Satan from being the prince of this world when He was tempted by him in the wilderness.

Instead, He warned us that there would be tares among us, and that they would not be removed until they had done that which had been God-purposed. Jesus loved the rich young ruler and allowed him to leave, without any apparent effort to change his mind. Satan asked to shake Peter, and was allowed. Jesus allowed many disciples to leave Him during His 3 years of ministry, allowed Judas to betray Him, and allowed the remaining eleven to forsake Him.

Yes, the Lord exercises great restraint, and the faithful grow in faith.

25. Under any form of law, including God’s Old Testament Law, we always know where we stand with God and man. On the other hand, grace is so hard to get our mind around and it can become so thin, cheap and “at our command.” Grace disregards justice, or appears to, and seems light on both good works and bad works. Who would have thought that our God would so clearly define for us the difference between holiness and mercy in the matter of our acceptance by Him? He knows no undesirables.

26. Therapists tell us that a child from a healthy family receives two kinds of love. Mother’s love is unconditional, accepting the child no matter what. Father’s love is conditional, giving approval as the child meets certain standards. Children should receive both, of course. That combination prepares us for understanding God’s love.

27. When we love the unlovable, we become lovable.

28. From the beginnings of my walk with the Lord I noticed that faith produces miracles but miracles do not produce faith. That amazed me at the time, when close friends did not believe their eyes or my and others’ reports. Then I slowly began to realize that I had the eyes and mind of faith, and that others, even of the church, did not.

29. Jewish writers report that the name of God could be uttered once a year, on Yom Kippur, by the high priest, in the Holy of Holies, in the temple, in Jerusalem. That name is understood to be the condensation of three verbs: “He was, He is, He will be.”

30. The Lord Jesus, Son of God and King of Israel, avoided acknowledging He was their Messiah until doing so would not lead to His acceptance as their Messiah. He did not want to form another religion, or to simply give His then-present religion the preeminence over all others. No; He delayed His announcement until it was too late for that to happen. When He announced Himself, He acknowledged to the Jews that He was God, and to the Romans that He was a king. The cross was inevitable at that time.

31. What did Jesus mean when He said on the cross: “My God, My God; why have You forsaken Me?” Most believe, probably rightly, that He meant that He was exactly that – forsaken, alone, not being attended in any way by His Father, and that for the first time.

But also consider this. He knew that He was the fulfillment of the prophetic event of Abraham sacrificing his son, Isaac. Isaac was not forsaken by God to die at the hand of his father, Abraham. You recall that God stopped the sacrifice at the last second. However, in Jesus’ case His Father continued the sacrifice and its pre-death accompaniments – pain, thirst, humiliation, judged a failure, Satan telling Him it was not too late to accept his offer, etc., etc. He had to endure all of that alone and separated from His always-present and always-helpful Father.

Some of that which He went through at that point is shown by His choice of names for His Father. He called Him “God,” revealing the depth of true separation He was experiencing. That word “God” is a formal word, vastly different from the word/title He used for His heavenly Father everywhere else in the gospels – “Abba” or “Father.”

32. This Thought intentionally follows No. 31. Some say that faith is an insurance policy, keeping you safe from danger. How can that be? Jesus’, Paul’s, Peter’s and most early Christian leaders’ lives say that is not true. Saints’ lives all around us say it is not true. Faith is not an insurance policy – at least not of that sort. It does not prevent those events, but does give us a secure base so we can face those consequences. After all, our common insurances do not prevent events, but do help us as or after we go through them.

33. And here is another possible readjustment of our thinking. Jesus’ miracles are thought to be wonderful interruptions of the normal processes of life, of the physicality of the universe, whether it be raising Lazarus from the dead, or healing leprosy and blindness. Might it be more accurate to consider those diseased conditions to be the interruptions of God’s flow of life on earth, and that Jesus’ actions were early glimpses of earth’s eventual restoration as in Revelation 21? In that case, His miracles then and now were/are the only truly natural/normal things/events in this fallen world.

34. How deep, broad and high is your vision of what the Lord is doing and will do with us. That’s a big and little “us;” so big that it encompasses the whole church and so little that it would apply even if there were only 2 of us. In Ephesians 3:8-10 Paul writes that the things of God through Christ Jesus are too deep, broad and high for us to get our minds around. Yet, it is through us that those things are being/will be made known to His and our spiritual enemies. It’s not the Lord who will personally do that, but it is us. Yes, He will be doing it, but using his loving, obedient, faithful, self-responsible sons.

Then, in Romans 8:18-23 he tells us that whatever it costs, the results will be well worth it. In fact, all of creation is aware of its fallen condition and is anxious for us to become whom we should and will be – so that it also will be redeemed. If we think we are the only part of God’s creation eager for full redemption [meaning our new bodies and heavenly abode in God’s presence forever], we are reminded that all of creation is equally eager. That’s great!

35. Why not believe and obey God fully? Is it because world situations such as food, clothing and shelter are necessary and we do not believe He knows we need them, or perhaps He will or cannot supply them? Why do we think that way? Possibly because we have adequate evidence all around us that we may be right!

It is because of this overwhelming contrary evidence, with the reality of its possible or probable application to us, that faith was created. Then we were told that without faith we do not please Him. The Lord put forth that overwhelming evidence against Him, and gave us our choice: trust Him or not. We must take our chances on how He will respond. It is His good pleasure.

36. It has been said that cheap grace is the cause for problems of the organized church. Grace that is thought to be readily available simply through acknowledgment of one’s wrongness is giving the Bible and God away wholesale, without condition. Why do we delve it out? It may be our concern for humanity. We do it without realizing that we are giving holy things of God to the scornful and unbelieving, while not calling them to the narrow Way.

Cheap grace is thought to open widely the way to Christ, but it actually closes it. Grace is given to bring us to follow Jesus, not to allow us to abide in disobedience. If the world and the church do not know better, through cheap grace we are led to believe that mediocrity is life at its best. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, communion without confession, baptism without instruction in church discipline, preaching forgiveness without requiring repentance, belief without obedience, hearing without doing, and intellectual assent without life commitment.

Costly grace is discipleship. It condemns sin and justifies the sinner. It costs our lives and is the source of the only true and complete life.

37. Politics is a useful process. It can produce and maintain liberty, or it can produce and maintain bondage. Undergirding politics, religion maintains that liberty or bondage – depending upon the religion. Religion creates and strengthens moral obligations. The political system is kept in place by either fear or by that sense of duty. The more that fear is the controlling factor, the less the people are free. The greater the strength of duty, the greater the liberty.

38. Lastly, a heads-up on Israel’s coming war with her neighbors. Syria has brutally cracked down on peaceful protestors. Turkey and/or NATO started to move against Syria but Syria stopped it by saying it would blast Tel Aviv with missiles if attacked. The U. S. moved in with Defense Secretary Leon Panetta on October 3rd. Syria, Iran, Hizballah, Hamas, and Jihad Islami have a coordinated military operation plan for flattening Tel Aviv. Israel has verbally retaliated with a warning of its own: If a single Syrian missile explodes in Tel Aviv, Damascus will be the first to pay the price. If the missile offensive persists, one Syrian town after another will be destroyed. Also, says Israel, Beirut and all of Lebanon will go up in flames if Lebanon engages in missile attacks against Israel.

Isaiah [17:1-4] spoke by the Spirit about Damascus being destroyed and uninhabitable, which has never happened, yet. It must happen. The cities of Aroer mentioned therein are in the territory south of Damascus, along the eastern side of the Jordan River, all the way down to Amman in Jordan. Israel also suffers in this battle, because Isaiah said “the fortress also shall cease from Ephraim, which is north of the territories of Judah, Benjamin and Dan.

A number of prophecies make it clear that Israel will stave off the invasions that are sure to come, and in the near future. Zechariah [12:5-10] said that the “governors” [military commanders] of Israel will lead a massive defense with distinction in defense of Israel. Yet, Israel will suffer.

The Jews are about to engage in the greatest battle of their history. They will be bloodied but they will be successful. Pray for Israel.

Until next time; live for the Lord.