

God's
HOLY DAYS
or Pagan
HOLIDAYS?

by David C. Pack

Herbert W. Armstrong led the Worldwide Church of God (formerly The Radio Church of God until 1968) until his death in 1986. Hundreds of millions heard his voice and read his literature. God called him in the fall of 1926 and he was converted in the spring of 1927. Over the course of Mr. Armstrong's ministry, God revealed through him a great many true biblical doctrines, which had been lost to the Church through the centuries. After his death, his successors ceased to believe and teach these doctrines. Although copyright law prohibits The Restored Church of God from reproducing and distributing literature produced while he led the Worldwide Church of God, we are committed to the preservation and teaching of all of these truths!

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Does the Bible teach that there are specific days God made holy? If so, what are they—and are they still in effect? And did God only intend them for ancient Israel? Did Jesus do away with these days and exchange them for Christmas, Easter, New Year's and other days of pagan origin? Which days should you keep? Does it matter? Prepare to be shocked by what the Bible *really* teaches!

Most people never reflect on WHY they *believe* what they believe or *do* what they do. In a world filled with popular customs and traditions, few seek to understand the origin of things. Most generally accept common religious practices without question, choosing to do what everyone else does because it is easy, natural and comfortable—they can be “in step.”

Most follow along as they have been taught, assuming that what they believe and do is right. They take their beliefs for granted and never take time to PROVE them.

Nowhere is this more true than in the observance of Christmas, Easter, New Year's, Halloween, Valentine's Day and other supposed Christian holidays. Many millions keep these days without knowing *why*—or *where* they originated. Most suppose that they are “found in the Bible” because they see millions of professing Christians observing them. Surely hundreds of millions of people cannot be wrong.

Or can they?

Here is what Christ said about the popular customs and traditions of this world: “IN VAIN do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men...full well you REJECT THE COMMANDMENT OF GOD, that you may *keep your own tradition*” (Mark 7:7, 9).

The Bible does, in fact, mention Christmas and Easter—and certain other familiar holidays—but it bluntly condemns them as heathen customs. The proof is overwhelming that these days are “traditions” and “commandments of men.” But vast multitudes keep them anyway, seemingly content to worship Christ *in vain*!

Since the Bible condemns these almost universally observed “Christianized” holidays of men, how did they come into popular practice?

Open Your Mind

You must be willing to open your Bible and honestly accept what it says about the holidays of men—and about *God's Holy Days*. It has been almost universally taught that these *annual Sabbaths* of the Bible have been “done away”—that they were only for ancient Israel, or “the Jews.” Many have supposed that Christ “nailed them to the cross” along with most everything else in the Old Testament.

The majority of people stoutly defend what they have merely *assumed* is right or biblical. They will read with prejudice anything that contradicts their assumptions.

If you are going to take the time to read this booklet, should you not at least read it with an open mind—and without bias? Ask God to guide you—to help you *PROVE* what He says in His Word. The Bible is “profitable for correction” (II Tim. 3:16) for all who are willing to accept it—for all who truly want to serve and please God.

The Bible is God's inspired Word—His written Instruction Book to mankind. It answers every important question in life and explains *how to live*—it reveals the road to salvation!

II Timothy 2:15 commands, “*Study* to show yourself *approved* unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” God expects us to *know* His Word so that we can act on it.

Proper Bible study leads to approval from God. Both the Old and New Testaments state, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every word* that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4; Deut. 8:3).

Paul explained that people are the servants of whatever and whoever they obey: “Know you not, that to *whom* you yield yourselves servants to obey, his *servants* you are to whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Rom. 6:16). People either serve and obey God, and are given eternal *life* (vs. 23)—or they serve and obey sin, and earn eternal *death*!

If God once commanded that certain Holy Days be kept, then should you not be certain *why* you choose not to observe them? No matter how comfortable a lifelong practice may be, should you not base your decision to continue doing it on *proof*—hard EVIDENCE—instead of *assumptions*?

God says, “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and *trembles at My word*” (Isa. 66:2) and “*Prove* what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:2).

Will you sincerely, with an open mind, seek and tremble before the truth of God's Word about His Holy Days—or will you go along with the masses and their traditions of men's heathen holidays?

A Prophesied “Little Horn” Changed Time

Daniel 7 contains an extraordinary prophecy. When correctly understood, it reveals exactly *how* the professing Christian world came to celebrate “Christianized” pagan holidays in place of the annual days that God made holy and gave to ancient Israel. The meaning of this chapter is covered in great detail in our free booklet identifying the Beast of Revelation.

When carefully examined and compared to other scriptures, it becomes clear that this chapter pictures four world-ruling Gentile empires, described as four beasts. Beginning with Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian (Chaldean) Empire, they would span the last 2,500 years preceding Christ’s Return.

Virtually all serious students of Bible prophecy recognize that the ten-horned fourth beast is the Roman Empire (vs. 23)—and the ten horns are its ten historic resurrections (or revivals). Verse 8 introduces a “little horn” that arises among the ten horns of the Roman Empire.

Here is what Daniel records: “I considered the [ten] horns, and, behold, there came up among them *another little horn*, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.” Verse 20 describes this little horn as one “whose look was more stout than his fellows.”

Once again, those who understand even the most basic elements of Bible prophecy know that a “horn,” in prophecy, refers to a *kingdom* or *government*. Therefore, they recognize that this little horn is a small kingdom or government that took a prominent position in history within the ten successive resurrections of the Roman Empire. It is also obvious from the description of this “little horn” that it is a small but powerful religious hierarchy and government associated with and controlling Rome.

Now read Daniel’s additional description of what this religious kingdom would do: “And he shall speak great words *against the most High* [God], and shall *wear out the saints* of the most High, and think to change *TIMES* and *LAWS*” (Dan. 7:25).

For those with eyes to see, God gives tremendous insight into the work of this little religious kingdom. Daniel 7 is a remarkable statement about how this “little horn” church sought to alter God’s *LAWS* as they have to do with *TIME*!

It can be proven that the Daniel 7 “little horn,” who “wears out the saints,” is the same as the Revelation 17 “woman,” who is “drunken with the blood of the saints.” This woman is described as fornicating with and ruling over the kings (and kingdoms) of earth. (Our above-referenced booklet explains this.)

Over the last 2,000 years, only one church fits Daniel’s description. Only one church has continually spoken “against the most High [God]” by trying to change the laws and the times that He has made holy! Only one church has continually persecuted the true Church and saints of God, who have not been willing to compromise *His* Law and time.

God's Times and Laws

The churches of this world will often admit to making a half-hearted effort at keeping nine of the Ten Commandments. Typically, they will acknowledge that it is wrong to steal, kill, covet, bear false witness, and commit adultery. They will also acknowledge that honoring one's father and mother, avoiding idolatry and taking God's name in vain—while *claiming* to follow the God described in the first Commandment—are basically good things to do. However, most do a poor job of actually keeping these nine commandments, and teach that Christ officially did away with them and “kept them for us.” But most will agree, at least tacitly, that these nine commandments are “nice principles.”

Consider. Exodus 20:8-11 reveals that Sabbath-keeping is the Fourth *Commandment*—and a fundamental law of God! The Sabbath was hallowed—made into holy *time*—by God at creation. God never authorized or hallowed Sunday, the first day of the week. Christ kept the Sabbath (Luke 4:16; Mark 2:27-28). So did Paul (Acts 13:42, 44; 17:2; 18:4)—as did the New Testament Church. In Exodus 31, it was ordained “forever” and to be kept “perpetually” by all “generations” of God's people.

Theologians and religionists have long taught that the *true* Sabbath of the Bible is the seventh day. Saturday, not Sunday, is the seventh day of the week. A good dictionary reveals this. And the weekly cycle has never been changed. However, the ministers of this world have had to carefully devise “explanations” that dismiss many clear scriptures about God's plain command to keep His Sabbath. Instead of letting God's Word *change their beliefs* to conform with His truths, they change the words or their meanings to make them *fit their beliefs*! They justify Sunday-keeping—even though God's Word has *never* justified Sunday-keeping! The same is true of the annual Holy Days.

God has always said, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep *it* holy” (Ex. 20:8). He has *never* said, “Remember the first day (the pagan *sun's day*) to keep *it* holy,” or authorized His Church or mankind to do this. Nor did He ever command or allow His people to keep numerous other pagan festivals and days of worship. He has always commanded *against* their observance, and the early New Testament Church kept God's Holy Days for over four centuries—with its remnant still doing so today!

Christmas and Easter have nothing to do with God and are both condemned in scripture in the strongest possible terms. (You may wish to read our booklets *The True Origin of Christmas* and *The True Origin of Easter* to learn more about these holidays that men have used to replace God's true Holy Days.)

Many pagan festivals, including Christmas (Saturnalia), Easter (the festival of Ishtar), Halloween, New Year's, Valentine's Day and worship on the day of the Sun, were observed throughout the Roman Empire long before Christ's

First Coming. The apostate false church simply adopted them into practice, and enforced them on all citizens in the empire through the vehicle of the civil government.

The most obvious ways that the little horn has “thought” to change—and *counterfeit*—God’s holy *times* and *laws* has been by replacing His Sabbath with the pagan SUN’S DAY, thus altering His fourth great *law* (many speak of Sunday as their “sabbath”)—and by replacing His annual Holy Days with numerous pagan holidays practiced for centuries by the Romans and Greeks.

But there are other ways that the “little horn” has changed God’s way of marking time. It starts the year in the dead of winter, while God starts His year in the spring, when nature is springing to life. The “woman” begins her days in the middle of the night, while God marks days from sunset to sunset. The Roman church begins the workweek on the second day, Monday, while God begins the weekly work cycle on the first day of the week, Sunday. Pagan Rome has devised an unnatural calendar based solely on the sun, thus having varying lengths for its months, while God bases His calendar on the moon and starts months with each new moon.

God’s sacred calendar—generally referred to as the Hebrew calendar—has never been recognized by religionists, scientists, historians and educators as the way *God* intended to mark and measure time. The Jews did not invent this calendar or contrive it from imagination. Its principles go back to the first chapter of the Bible, where the sun and the moon were appointed “...for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years” (Gen. 1:14). No other calendar *harmonizes the solar and lunar cycles*. Only the Hebrew calendar sanctioned by God does this!

The whole world has been deceived into accepting these and other “changes” and been led away from the plain, clear commands of God’s Word. Billions have carelessly remained ignorant of God’s instructions, content to believe heathen customs, practices, days and times that have been spoon-fed to them.

We will learn that obedience to God’s weekly and annual Sabbaths is intertwined—they cannot be separated. Though they stand or fall together, it is not the purpose of this booklet to prove which day is the Christian Sabbath. This large subject is covered very thoroughly in our book *Saturday or Sunday – Which is the Sabbath?* However, it is impossible to study the subject of God’s Sabbaths without studying both this booklet and that book. (You may also read *The Sabbath – Has Time Been Lost?* for proof of the unchanged weekly cycle since the time of creation.) You are urged to do this, because the arguments and suppositions of those who claim God’s plain commands are no longer in effect are equally applied to the issue of weekly Sabbath-keeping and annual Sabbath observance.

Some claim that Colossians 2:16-17 does away with the Sabbath and Holy Days. (We will see later that it does not.) Others claim that the annual Sabbaths were part of Moses’ law. They were not, because they were observed before

Moses' law of ritualistic orders had been given. Others claim that sacrifices were performed on these days—but Numbers 28:3 shows that sacrifices took place on *every* day of the year.

So then, this all-important question now arises: What were the days that God made holy and commanded ancient Israel to observe? Some important background is essential to properly approach the subject of God's seven annual Feast Days as they were taught in the Old Testament.

They are introduced in Leviticus 23.

The Holy Day Chapter

Leviticus 23 is best described as, and is often called, the "Holy Day Chapter." It contains a brief description of each of God's seven annual Holy Days—also called Feasts or Sabbaths, which we will see are interchangeable terms throughout the chapter. We will later examine the meaning of these days.

Notice: "And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the FEASTS OF THE LORD, which you shall proclaim to be *holy convocations* [commanded assemblies], even these are MY FEASTS" (vs. 1-2). Verse 3 introduces the weekly Sabbath as one of God's Feasts: "Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the SABBATH of rest, an holy convocation; you shall do no work therein: it is the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings." Verse 4 introduces the rest of God's Feasts: "These are the FEASTS OF THE LORD, even holy convocations, which you shall proclaim in their seasons."

With one exception, Feasts and Sabbaths are the same thing.

Verse 5 reveals the first of God's Feasts: "In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD's PASSOVER."

Next, we see that the seven Days of Unleavened Bread are introduced. On these days, beginning the day after the Passover, the Israelites were required to eat unleavened bread: "And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD unto the LORD: seven days you must *eat unleavened bread*...in the SEVENTH DAY is an holy convocation: you shall do no servile work therein" (vs. 6, 8). The first and seventh days are both Holy Days.

Verses 9-22 give a more detailed description of the next Feast Day, called Firstfruits—or Pentecost, because one must count fifty days from the weekly Sabbath during Unleavened Bread to determine when it should be kept. This day was observed in the late spring. Now read: "...it shall be a STATUTE FOREVER *throughout your generations* in all your dwellings. And you shall *count* unto you from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall you *number fifty days*... You shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the FIRSTFRUITS unto the LORD" (vs. 14-17).

Verse 21 explains that the Feast of Firstfruits is a commanded assembly and repeats for emphasis that it was ordained by God *forever*: “And you shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be an holy convocation unto you: you shall do no servile work therein: it shall be a STATUTE FOREVER in all your dwellings *throughout your generations*.”

This passage includes a second emphasis by God about the *permanent* establishment of these days so that none can misunderstand what “forever” means. Notice that Israel was to keep these days “throughout your generations” (also repeated twice). There are still generations of Israel alive on Earth today.

The fall season includes the last four annual Holy Days, beginning with the Feast of Trumpets: “In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall you have a Sabbath, a memorial of blowing of TRUMPETS, a *holy convocation*. You shall do no servile work therein” (vs. 24-25).

Next comes the Day of Atonement, which is an annual Sabbath, but not a Feast Day. This was because no food or drink was permitted: “Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a DAY OF ATONEMENT: it shall be an *holy convocation* unto you; and you shall *afflict your souls* [go without food or drink]...you shall do no work...for it is a DAY OF ATONEMENT, to make an atonement for you before the LORD your God...it shall be a *statute forever throughout your generations* in all your dwellings. It shall be unto you a *Sabbath of rest*, and you shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall you celebrate *your Sabbath*” (vs. 27-28, 31-32). Once again, the Day of Atonement was commanded to be observed “forever” and “throughout your generations.”

Five days after the Day of Atonement is the Feast of Tabernacles, which lasts seven days and is followed by the Last Great Day, referred to here as “the eighth day.”

Verses 34-36 describe these Feasts: “Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the FEAST OF TABERNACLES for seven days unto the LORD. On the FIRST DAY shall be an *holy convocation*: you shall do no servile work therein...on the EIGHTH DAY shall be a *holy convocation* unto you...it is a solemn assembly; and you shall do no servile work therein.”

This chapter describes seven Feasts and seven annual Holy Days. Passover is a Feast but not a Holy Day. Atonement is a Holy Day but obviously not a Feast Day, because no food or drink is permitted.

Verses 40-43 further describe the Feast of Tabernacles and what God intended Israel to learn from observing it: “And you shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall *rejoice* before the LORD your God seven days. And you shall keep it a Feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be a STATUTE FOREVER in your generations: you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall dwell in *booths* [temporary dwellings] seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: That your generations

may know that I [God] made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God."

Let's take a moment to summarize. Including verse 41, God states *four times* that His Feasts were ordained *forever!* Twice He declares they were to be observed throughout Israel's generations. God is most serious about obedience to them, because verses 29-30 state that anyone who did not obey them would be "cut off"—"destroyed"—put to *death!*

Verses 37-38, 44 reiterate, "These are the FEASTS OF THE LORD" and are "the SABBATHS OF THE LORD." (Verse 39 explains that the first day of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day are also "Sabbaths.") These are not the "*Jew's feasts*" or "*Israel's feasts,*" as some who are dishonest with the Scriptures assert.

Get this firmly in your mind. These Holy Days are *GOD'S Sabbaths*—they are *Feasts of the Lord!*

Israel Continually Disobeyed

Israel refused to remain faithful to God's Sabbaths—annual or weekly—for any extended time. They had periods when they did observe them, before disobeying God and falling back into the practices of the nations around them.

In Ezekiel, God describes how He gave all of His Sabbaths to Israel—and what they did with them. Notice: "Moreover also I gave them My Sabbaths, to be a *sign between Me and them*, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them. But the house of *Israel rebelled* against Me in the wilderness: they walked not in My statutes, and they despised My judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; and *My sabbaths they greatly polluted*: then I said, I would pour out My fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them" (20:12-13).

A sign signifies. The Sabbaths signify who God's people are and that He is the true Creator God. Israel was unwilling to carry God's "signature" upon them, and rebelled so they could follow the customs and practices of *other* gods. All who observe the weekly Sabbath are compelled to remember (through a *memorial*) the Creation week of Genesis 1:1 to 2:7. Creation identifies God and proves His existence—and Sabbath observance forces people every seven days to remember who the true God is. Those who keep it could not stray into the worship of other gods.

Notice also that God said, "I gave them My Sabbaths." He called them "*My Sabbaths*" because He *never* intended that they be thought of as "*Israel's Sabbaths.*" The word *Sabbaths* is plural because the weekly Sabbath is not the only Sabbath that God said was a sign forever between Him and His people.

Though mankind has been rebelling against God's Sabbaths ever since, they still remain the *sign*—the *PROOF* of identity—between God and His true people today (vs. 20).

If the New Testament Church is still commanded to keep these days, we must understand what the Church is—and when God first used the term.

What Is the Church?

In Matthew 16:18, Christ promised to build His Church. Matthew is in the *New Testament*. But what record, if any, does the *Old Testament* contain of God beginning His Church?

Speaking of Moses, Luke wrote, “This is he, that was in the *church in the wilderness*...and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us” (Acts 7:38). The Jesus Christ (vs. 37) of the New Testament was also among Old Testament Israel, here called “the church in the wilderness.” I Corinthians 10:4 confirms this and reveals that Christ is the God of the Old Testament.

Throughout the Old Testament, the word “congregation” is used to refer to the Old Testament church. It is virtually identical in meaning to the word “church” when it is used in the New Testament, which comes from the Greek word *ekklesia*. And it is this same word *ekklesia* that is rendered “church” in Acts 7:38, when referencing the Old Testament congregation of Israel.

Ancient Israel was a sovereign nation—but it was both church and state in one. Its first leader was Moses, followed by Joshua and others. While it had different kinds of rulers (prophets, judges, kings, priests), the laws of God were also civil laws—they had to be kept as *national law*. Many ritual and ceremonial laws—part of the law of Moses—were, because of Israel’s transgressions, added to teach the *habit* of obeying God’s laws. The ritual laws—intended to be kept until the time of Christ—primarily involved physical ordinances, washings of various kinds, a designation of “uncleanness” for various reasons and several types of meat and drink offerings.

The Sabbath and Holy Days were never part of Moses’ law of rituals, washings and offerings. The Sabbath began at creation and the Holy Days were given well before God commanded burnt offerings and sacrifices (Jer. 7:22-23). The laws of *Moses* were added because people would not keep the already-established laws of *God*. This is the critical point to understand. They were *not* the same. The Holy Days were to be kept forever, but sacrifices were only to be offered until Christ—God’s greatest sacrifice—died on the stake and nullified the need for them.

The New Testament Church is also referred to as “an holy nation” (I Pet. 2:9). But it is a *spiritual* and not a *civil* nation. The laws of God that were given to ancient Israel—the church in the wilderness—must still be obeyed by spiritual Israel—the New Testament Church. This is the primary difference between Old and New Testament Israel.

Everything God does is for a purpose—it has been carefully planned toward and for a specific reason or reasons. This is the case with the Holy Days. God gave them for a reason—a SUPREME PURPOSE!

The purpose of God’s Holy Days is that they reflect and explain the entirety of God’s Plan for mankind! As they are kept each year in sequence, the seven annual Sabbaths or Feast Days are a kind of rehearsal of events God does

not want His people to ever forget. They are a memorial in advance of things that God intends to do throughout the various ages and dispensations of His 6,000-year purpose for humanity.

By keeping these days continually—every year—those who do this are automatically kept in remembrance of what God is doing. They understand that these days symbolize and depict very specific events, timing of events and periods of time within God's Plan.

None of the nations of the world keep God's Sabbath or Holy Days. As a result, none of the nations of the world understand God's purpose—or that He even *has* a purpose. This has been true throughout history. None of the nations of the world know who the true God is—and the result has been that they *all* serve false gods and idols.

Except that they once did have knowledge of God's Sabbaths, the modern nations populated by the descendants of ancient Israel are no different. They have fallen into idolatry and pagan practices along with the rest of the nations—because they have *forgotten* God's Sabbath and Holy Days. They have also lost the understanding of their true identity. Losing God's sign ensured that this would happen. (Our book *America and Britain in Prophecy* will tell you the fascinating story of who they are and what their future holds.)

The churches of this world are ignorant of the most fundamental aspects of God's Plan and teachings. They do not understand the receiving of God's Holy Spirit, the conversion process, what it means to be born again, the true gospel of the kingdom of God, what happens at death, the Bible definition of sin, that heaven is not the reward of the saved, that salvation has to do with rulership (which one qualifies for after a lifetime of overcoming sin and the flesh), the purpose of the Church, the commission of the Church, how world peace will come, the origin of human nature, the origin of the devil, the Bible definition of faith, that the immortal soul doctrine is fiction, etc. Most do not even understand or truly believe that Christ is going to return—or what this means for the entirety of civilization! These same millions believe Christ's crucifixion finished—ended—the plan of redemption. (Actually, we will learn that Christ's sacrifice merely *began* this plan.)

If ancient Israel had remained faithful to God's Sabbaths, they would understand the truth of all these doctrines. And if the world would suddenly begin to keep these days, they would come into this knowledge. But God is not calling the world now. He is calling individuals. Any individual who is willing to investigate and prove God's truth can see *unlocked* the greatest mysteries now unknown to a deceived, confused, blinded world.

Since we have established what God's Holy Days are, we need to examine more of the Old Testament, and the New Testament, to see whether and where they are referred to, and to understand their *meaning*—to understand *WHY* God commanded their observance forever. We must examine each of the annual Sabbaths, starting with the Passover, and learn their meaning.

Israel Had Forgotten the True God

Almost everyone understands that “God led Israel out of Egypt.” But almost *no one* understands that Egypt was a type of sin—and that Israel was in bondage to it. God had to deliver Israel from this bondage—and this took a series of miracles. All those called out of this world are in a modern “Egypt”—a Babylon—of sin, confusion and rejection of the true God. Remember. God poured His plagues on Egypt before delivering His people. The book of Revelation reveals that God will do this again just prior to Christ’s Return.

Hollywood has depicted the Exodus in an embellished and sometimes very inaccurate way. But most are at least vaguely familiar with how God established His power—and *identity*—through MIRACLES. God used them to reintroduce Himself to Israel.

Consider. God gave the Sabbath to ancient Israel through Moses. *Why* did God do this? He had to! Israel had just spent about 200 years of slavery in Egypt. They had not been permitted to worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—their forefathers—for all those years. At the time God liberated them, they had forgotten the identity of the true God and His Sabbath. They did not have access to the Scriptures and were required to worship the false gods of Egypt. Therefore, God had to reveal Himself to them a second time.

This is one reason that the Sabbath command begins with the words “*Remember* the Sabbath day”—Israel had forgotten it. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had kept God’s Law (Gen. 26:5; Deut. 30:20), but the knowledge of the Sabbath had become lost through the centuries in Egypt.

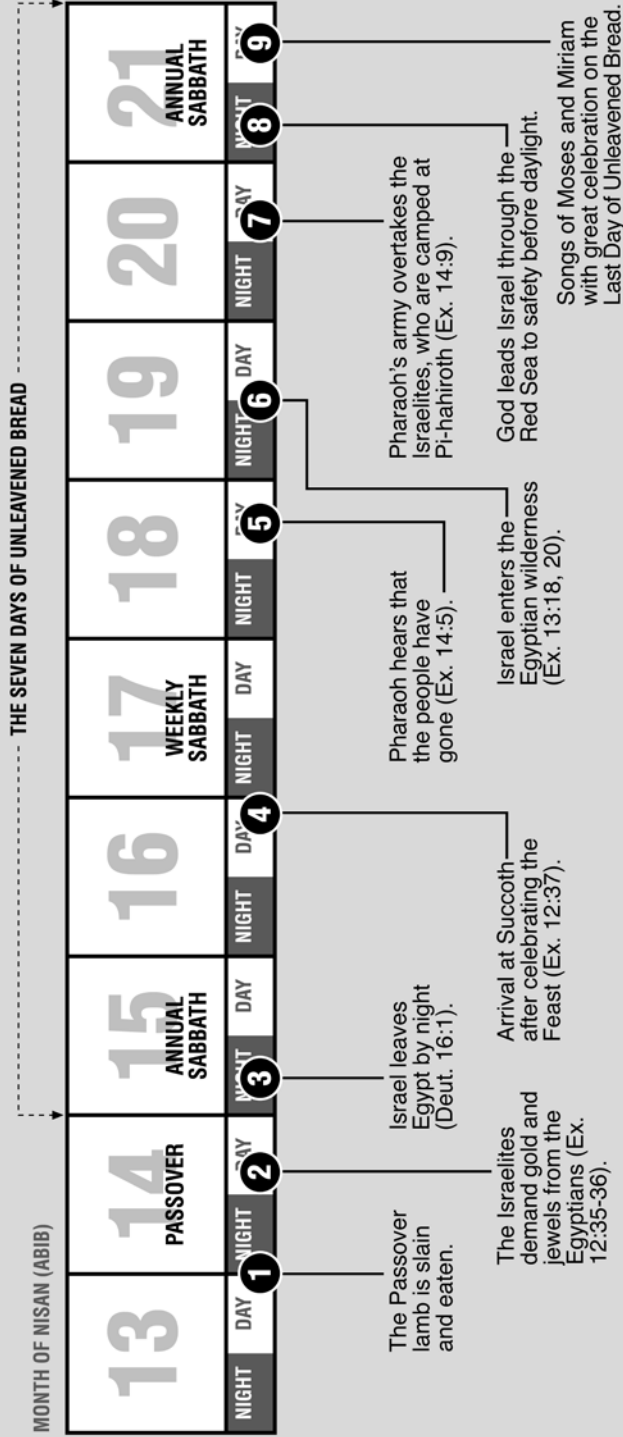
God decided to make the Sabbath command clear to Israel while they were in the Wilderness of Sin (Zin). Israel had left the “flesh pots” of Egypt behind and grumbled to Moses because they lacked food. God had to test whether they would obey His Law. He created a specific test, through *manna*, that was designed to teach Israel the uniqueness of the Sabbath’s holy time. The account is found in Exodus 16. (It illustrates that people will almost eagerly believe that time or God’s laws can change.)

The Passover

God told the Israelites to take a young lamb, without spot or blemish, to represent a type of Christ—the Lamb of God (John 1:29). This was always to be done on the tenth day of the first month of the Hebrew sacred year. Unlike all humanly-devised calendars that begin the year in mid-winter, this sacred year began *in the spring*, around the equinox, with the new moon.

Israel had also lost knowledge of the sacred calendar. Notice what God instructed: “This month shall be unto you the *beginning* of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you” (Ex. 12:2). As Christ’s sacrifice was the *beginning* of God’s Plan, the Passover was to be in the “beginning” month.

Israel's escape during Passover, Days of Unleavened Bread



So many understand some aspects of Christ's sacrifice, but do not see beyond it to the great purpose God reveals in each of the other Feast Days that follow.

On the 10th day of Abib (the first Hebrew month), Israel was to select an unblemished lamb. Four days later, on the 14th day of Abib, the lamb was to be killed. Exodus 12:6 says that it was to be killed "in the evening," but the original Hebrew means "between the two evenings." Some Bible margins plainly state this. The *Jewish Encyclopedia* explains that this is the period commonly referred to as *twilight* or *dusk*. This period is described as the time *after* sundown, but *before* full darkness has occurred. In other words, it was at the very *beginning* of the 14th that the lamb was killed—and soon thereafter, the blood of the lamb was sprinkled above the doorposts of the Israelite's houses. At midnight, the death angel struck dead all the firstborn of Egypt. But God had told the Israelites, "when I see the blood, I will *pass over* you"—hence, the well-known term *Passover*.

The word Passover is found in the New Testament in a most powerful scripture. Paul wrote the Corinthians about how "Christ *our Passover* is sacrificed for us." This verse removes any doubt about who is the centerpiece of the Old Testament Passover observance. It was Christ—and this is one of our first great clues that the Old Testament Feast Days are directly linked to God's Plan. The shed blood of the Old Testament lamb was a *type* of the shed blood of Christ, the Lamb of God. Every professing Christian recognizes that Christ's sacrifice is all-important to salvation. Why can they not see—or be willing to investigate—that the rest of His Feasts might also have great spiritual meaning to their observance?

Exodus 12:6 explains that the Passover lamb was to be killed "in the evening"—at dusk (official Jewish translation). We should briefly explain that some believe that the lamb was killed after noon (around 3 p.m.) on the daylight part of the 14th. It is then thought that it was eaten in the evening of the 15th, with Israel leaving Egypt the same night. This theory is impossible. Let's understand why.

Deuteronomy 16:6 shows that the lamb was always slain as the sun was going down. Yet it was always eaten *during* the 14th, not after (Lev. 23:5-6). God does things exactly on time! The time is once a year, at night, in the beginning of the 14th of Abib—after the sun has set!

Returning to Exodus 12, verses 8-11 describe how it was to be roasted *and* eaten on the night of the 14th. Verse 12 explains how God would "pass through the land of Egypt this night, and...smite all the firstborn." Verse 22 describes what the Israelites were to do with the blood from the slain lamb: "...strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin; and *none* of you shall *go out* at the door of his house *until the morning*."

Make careful note that none were permitted to leave their houses during the night. Verse 29 states that "at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn." Verses 30-31 explain that Pharaoh "rose up in the night" and called for Moses and Aaron to tell the Israelites to leave. The Egyptians tried to get rid of them

(vs. 33) and the Bible records that the Israelites “borrowed of” (vs. 35)—or “spoiled” (vs. 36)—the Egyptian people.

This means that they took gold, silver, jewels and clothing upon demand. This took several, or even many, hours but it could not have been during the night since the Israelites were not permitted out of their homes during this time. Obviously, Israel's seizing of these physical goods occurred during the *daylight* portion of the 14th. Since there were millions of Israelites and notifying them would have been an extensive task, more hours were required just to complete this.

Exodus 12:10 adds proof that the people could not have left Egypt during the night that Pharaoh arose because they were to burn whatever “remained of it [the lamb]” in “the morning.”

Deuteronomy 16:1 adds another important corroboration of when Israel departed Egypt: “...keep the passover unto the LORD your God: for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you forth out of Egypt *by night*.” Clearly, this had to be the night of the 15th because Israel remained indoors through the night of the 14th.

Numbers 33:3 confirms that this was the 15th: “And they departed from Rameses in the first month, *on the fifteenth day* of the first month; *on the morrow after the passover* the children of Israel went out with a high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians.”

Exodus 12:41-42 introduces the “night of the Lord to be observed...” Notice: “...even the selfsame day [the 15th] it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. It is a *night to be much observed* unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that *night of the LORD to be observed*.” (Verse 43 through the end of the chapter is a new section clarifying who was permitted to eat the Passover.)

The Passover was kept on the night of the 14th, but the night that was to be “much observed,” when Israel departed from Egypt by night, was the 15th. God intended that Israel remember their deliverance from Egypt through a special and separate celebration one night later.

The Old Testament Passover always preceded the annual Sabbath called the first Day of Unleavened Bread. This day was a High Day or a Feast Day to be celebrated each year, again, on the day immediately following the Passover. Notice Numbers 28:16-17: “And in the *fourteenth* day of the first month is the *passover* of the LORD. And in the *fifteenth* day of this month is the *feast*.” This Feast was the first Day of Unleavened Bread. Recall that Leviticus 23:5-6 said the exact same thing. The Passover is the 14th and the following seven days are the Days of Unleavened Bread.

The Days of Unleavened Bread

From the 15th through the 21st of Abib—a period of seven days—is a festival called the *Days of Unleavened Bread*. This means that only unleavened

bread—bread made without yeast or other leavening agents—should be eaten every day for this one-week period immediately following the Passover. By the time of the New Testament, the Days of Unleavened Bread were generally spoken or thought of as eight days because leavening was usually put out of homes during the daylight portion of the 14th. Yet the seven-day unleavened bread period begins *after* the Passover—on the 15th.

The first and last of these days, the 15th and the 21st, were to be *annual* Sabbaths. While Leviticus 23:4 plainly includes Passover as one of God's festivals, recall that Numbers 28:17 said, "And in the *fifteenth* day of this month is the *feast*."

Exodus 12:14-16 makes a critical distinction about the importance to God of the Feast kept on the 15th: "And this day shall be unto you for a MEMORIAL; and you shall keep it a FEAST to the LORD *throughout your generations*; you shall keep it a feast by an *ordinance forever*. Seven days shall you eat unleavened bread; even the first day you shall put away leaven out of your houses... the first day [15th] there shall be a *holy convocation*, and in the seventh day [21st] there shall be a *holy convocation*..."

This passage makes plain that the Feast on the 15th was a memorial to God. He intended that *this* day (not the 14th as some claim) be a memorial—an annual reminder—that God had delivered Israel from Egypt. It was to be an "ordinance forever"—"throughout your generations." The Days of Unleavened Bread are important to God, and this repeats what He said in Leviticus 23 about the permanence of this and His other Feasts. Remember that "holy convocation" means *commanded assembly*. God commanded that His people assemble on this day perpetually, throughout all generations—FOREVER!

In verse 17, God drives home His purpose that this day be kept "forever." But this verse also begins to explain *why*: "For in this selfsame day have I brought your armies out of the land of Egypt: therefore shall you observe this day in your generations by an *ordinance forever*." Some translations reflect that God intended this entire "period" as "an everlasting institution." (Verse 24 also repeats the word "forever" in regard to the Passover.)

This ordinance was established *before* the law of Moses had been given. But why was it established?

Why the Days of Unleavened Bread?

Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread stand or fall together. Here is why. Passover depicts Christ's sacrifice so that sin can be forgiven and removed. The Feast of Unleavened Bread does *not* foreshadow Christ's sacrifice.

We ask: What point would there be in observing Passover if those who are cleansed turn right around and go back into sin? Egypt is a *type* of sin. The Days of Unleavened Bread picture God's people being taken *out of sin*—and putting it away from their lives through obedience to God's Law. This is a vitally important point. Consider. Passover is a one-day Feast. In one sense, it

pictures a single event: The forgiveness of sin by the blood of Christ. The Days of Unleavened Bread are a seven-day *period*. They reflect *duration of time*, rather than a moment in time. The Christian practices putting sin out of his life as a *way of life*. God, through Moses, presented all of this institution to Israel before He ever gave a single word of the ceremonial and ritual washings and sacrificial laws referenced earlier!

No honest person can believe that God did not intend all those who serve Him to keep the Passover *and* Days of Unleavened Bread as a perpetual, permanent institution. But *WHY* would God do this?

Eating unleavened bread pictures putting leaven—*SIN*—from people's lives. How do we know this? Does the Bible state this plainly? First notice: "And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day [15th], in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of *bondage*..." (Ex. 13:3). This verse sets the stage.

Now we are ready to understand God's great purpose for this Feast. Let's see it clearly: "Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to the LORD...And you shall show your son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the LORD did unto me [any Israelite parent talking to his child] when I came forth out of Egypt. And it shall be for a *sign* unto you upon your hand, and for a MEMORIAL between your eyes, *that the LORD's LAW may be in your mouth*...You shall therefore keep this ordinance in His season from year to year [memorials are annual]" (vs. 6, 8-10).

This is an extraordinary and powerful verse! Keeping the Days of Unleavened Bread has to do with God's Law being actively at work in our minds and hearts. Again, what is the purpose of Christ's forgiveness for past sins if one continues practicing sin as a way of life? Of course God had to establish the ordinance—the statute—of the Days of Unleavened Bread as a follow-up to the keeping and meaning of His Passover! It is absolutely vital that you see and understand God's mind—His *purpose*—regarding this Feast Day!

The reference to this Feast being a sign "upon your hand" means that it involves actions—our works. The phrase "between your eyes" connotes the mind—the will.

All human beings sin (Rom. 3:23). Christ's blood forgives "sins that are past" (vs. 25). But people do not have the inherent strength to overcome sin by themselves. They must be delivered from it in the same way Israel was delivered from Egypt. Do you see this? Can you grasp more fully the meaning of this Feast?

We earlier referenced I Corinthians 5:6-8 when speaking of "Christ our Passover." This New Testament passage expands upon Exodus 13. Let's now read these verses in their entirety: "Your glorying is not good. Know you not that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven [physical leaven], that you [the Christian] may be a new lump, as you [the Christian] are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore LET US KEEP THE FEAST, not with old leaven [physical leaven], neither

with the leaven of malice and wickedness [spiritual leaven]; but with the *unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*"

What could be plainer? Leaven and sin puff up the mind. Verse 6 condemns *leaven*. Paul even warned the Corinthians of this very thing when he said, in reference to sins committed there, "*you are puffed up*" (vs. 2). This phrase actually leads into verses 7 and 8.

Paul, in the New Testament, instructed the Gentile Corinthians to "keep the Feast," immediately after reminding them that Christ was the Passover. Some believe that this only means *spiritual* leaven. But Paul did not "spiritualize away" the literal putting away of leavened bread from our physical "dwellings"—our homes. He emphasized removal of both "old (physical) leaven" *and* all forms of spiritual leaven—typified by malice and wickedness. Again, He commanded, "KEEP THE FEAST." Christians keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread both physically *and* spiritually. Why does the professing Christian world ignore even this plain *New Testament* scripture?

The world—and human nature—do not want to obey God (Rom. 8:7). Many want to take the name of Christ—to call themselves Christians—but want no obligation placed upon them to actually *do* anything (Luke 6:46)!

Putting Leaven Out

The world's churches always leave Christ hanging dead on the stake. Millions of idols in churches and homes have branded this image indelibly into the minds of all who think of Christ as a "dead Jesus." Yet Christ is ALIVE in the third heaven, at His Father's right hand, serving as our High Priest.

Notice: "Seeing then that we have a great HIGH PRIEST, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an HIGH PRIEST which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may *obtain mercy* [forgiveness for sins already committed], and find *grace to help* [to overcome temptation for any future sin] in time of need" (Heb. 4:14-16).

I John 3:4 states that "sin is the transgression of the law." Exodus 13:9 explained that God wants His Law in our mouths. He wants us practicing obedience to His commandments—practicing RIGHTEOUSNESS (Psa. 119:172). To observe the Passover without continuing to the Days of Unleavened Bread ignores our need to obey God—to stop practicing sin!

Almost all professing Christians believe that "Christ did it all for you," and that you have no obligation to obey God. This makes Christ's sacrifice a license to sin. Yet, sin is what put Christ to death. Do we mock Christ's sacrifice by continuing to do the very thing that brought His death? As Paul said, "God forbid"!

We read, in Exodus 13, that the memorial of the Feast of Unleavened Bread was a *sign*. Exodus 31:12-17 reveals that the Sabbath is also a SIGN—

between God and His people. Both the weekly and annual Sabbaths are rest days. Work is not permitted on these days. The Christian is called to rest from, not freely commit, sin. How plain, how clear, how obvious is the great meaning behind the Days of Unleavened Bread, which are signs pointing us to God!

Having pastored many thousands of people, I have witnessed numerous stories of people discovering pieces of bread, cookies and other leavened products in their homes after the Days of Unleavened Bread had begun. This is so true of sin, and how it creeps up on us and is found in places where we least expect it, *after* we thought it was all gone. Overcoming sin and putting it out of our lives is an on-going process.

The Clear Meaning

We have seen that Egypt is a type of sin. Certainly Pharaoh and his army are a perfect type of Satan and his spiritual army of demons. Supernatural intervention and help was the only possible way that Israel could escape their slave-masters, who kept them in bondage exactly as Christians are kept in bondage to sin by the “god of this world”—Satan (II Cor. 4:4).

Israel had to physically walk out of Egypt. This represents human effort to start the process of delivery from sin. But Israel had made their escape. Bondage was over. Freedom lay ahead. God was with them. No wonder Numbers 33:3 says that Israel left Egypt with “a high hand.” They did not need to fear as long as they depended on His continued miraculous help to sustain them.

But the parallel between Israel leaving Egypt and the Christian leaving sin holds additional lessons. Though still excited with the first flush of freedom, God's assistance almost immediately became necessary when Pharaoh and his army (the devil and sin) fought back to stop them. Some Israelites became so frightened that they thought they were going to die, and cried out to God. Read Exodus 14:10: “And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD.”

God heard the prayers of the frightened Israelites. Notice verses 13 and 14: “Fear you not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD...for the Egyptians...you shall see them again no more forever. The LORD shall fight for you.” This is true of Christians, if they turn their problems over to God. Verse 19 describes how God led Israel: “And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them.”

But verse 22 reveals how the completely unexpected and miraculous delivery took place when surrounded by impossible circumstances: “And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.” Christ taught His disciples that water is a type of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39). Isaiah 55:1 adds, “everyone that thirsts, come you to the *waters*.”

God has repeatedly promised that He will never leave or forsake His servants. With His Holy Spirit within converted minds (Acts 2:38), such have His constant reassurance that He will guide, protect, strengthen and deliver them from their constant adversary—sin. Like the blood of Christ when it covers our sins, the waters of the Red Sea covered the armies of Egypt. When Christ removes our sins, like those armies, we literally “see them no more.”

Sacrifices Came Later

Earlier, we referenced how Jeremiah 7:22-23 revealed that God introduced sacrifices after He commanded Israel to obey His laws. Opponents of the Holy Days argue the opposite—that God created them for the purpose of having a time to offer sacrifices. Even superficial examination exposes this as silly reasoning!

Jeremiah shows that the Holy Days were originally kept *without* sacrificial meat and drink offerings. We have seen that the Holy Days are memorials (Ex. 13:9; Lev. 23:24) of important historic events. Of course, they are also seen to be shadows of future events. God did not create the Holy Days saying, in effect, “I have these offerings that must take place—I better create the Holy Days so that people will have a set time to do them.” The sacrifices were created for the express purpose of pointing to the final great sacrifice of Christ, which did away with the need for them.

Let's examine two more reasons why this thinking is totally wrong!

First, consider the Sabbath, which was created over 2,500 years before God gave the law of sacrifices to Israel. It was kept by His faithful servants *without sacrifices* all through this time! Yet, God later added sacrifices to the weekly Sabbath (Num. 28:9-10). It is impossible that the Sabbath stands or falls with sacrifices that came over two-and-a-half millennia later!

Do you see this point? For the same principle applies to the Holy Days, which appeared before sacrifices were commanded.

Second, the meat and drink sacrifices were added to *every* day of the week (Num. 28:3-8). They were to be done “day by day, for a continual burnt offering” (vs. 3). Surely no one will argue that “days” came into existence 2,500 years after the creation week of Genesis 1. (God also commanded sacrifices on new moons—verses 11-15.)

The Sabbath and Holy Days are memorials. This explains why they are commanded to be kept forever, while physical sacrifices—and ritual washings (replaced by the “washing of water in the [God's] Word”—Eph. 5:26)—were not.

Kept by the New Testament Church

We have already examined I Corinthians 5:7-8 and Paul's command to “keep the Feast.” But are there other places in the New Testament, which reinforce

and make this command absolutely unmistakable? Is there evidence that Paul himself kept them?

Let's review. The Passover lamb was killed and eaten on the 14th and the Feast was kept on the 15th (Num. 28:16-17). Matthew 27:62, Mark 15:42, Luke 23:54 and John 19:14 show that the daylight portion of the 14th was used to prepare for the Feast. Note that the tradition of the elders instructed the Jews to observe *their* Passover one day later than God instructed.

By comparing Matthew 26:5, Mark 14:2 and John 13:29, which all discuss the timing of Christ's crucifixion on the Passover *before* the Feast Day following it, it becomes apparent that at the time of the New Testament period it was still understood that the Passover and the Feast Day were separate days. (You may read our booklet *Christ's Resurrection Was Not on Sunday* to understand this critical point and time period in detail.)

The book of Acts reveals that the early New Testament Church kept the Days of Unleavened Bread. This included Paul. Notice: "And we sailed away from Philippi *after the days of unleavened bread*, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days" (Acts 20:6).

Why would God inspire Luke to record this if Paul and those with him had not just kept these days?

And why would Luke further record, "Then were the days of unleavened bread" (Acts 12:3), if God did not want the New Testament record to show that these days were being kept by His Church? If God no longer wanted these days kept, why would the Holy Spirit inspire these words? What would be the point except that God wanted to inject confusion into the Bible?

All who sincerely want to seek and please God recognize that these references exist because the Old Testament established their observance forever.

The world's churches profess to observe "the death and Resurrection of Christ" in their Good Friday-Easter Sunday tradition. Their tradition is actually deeply rooted in paganism. These were instituted by mainstream Christianity to counterfeit and replace the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread were observed by Christ, the original apostles and the New Testament Church—including Gentiles. God commands His people to observe them today (I Cor. 5:6-8).

God ordained the Passover as a permanent ordinance—*forever* (Ex. 12:17, 24)! Just as Romans 2:29 explains a change in circumcision—in the New Testament it was to be of the *heart* and not the *flesh*—Christ altered the way Passover was to be kept. Christ, the Lamb of God, was slain for us, thus doing away with the need for a *literal* young lamb to any longer be sacrificed. As Christ explained, taking the bread and wine, symbolizing His broken body and shed blood, was to be an annual "look back" to His death—on our behalf!

Jesus kept the Passover once a year at an *established*—a *set*—time (Luke 2:42), and true Christians follow His example (I Peter 2:21). In fact, Christ Himself was following the example of Exodus 13:10, which explained that the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread were to be kept annually. It instructs

Galatians 4:9-10

Some opponents of the Holy Days cite this scripture to prove that the Holy Days were condemned by Paul. Here is what he wrote to the Galatians: "But now, after that you have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn you again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto you desire again to be in bondage? You observe *days*, and *months*, and *times*, and *years*."

Does this passage really condemn keeping the Holy Days and the Sabbath? Many deceived ministers teach that the Galatians were returning to *Holy Day and Sabbath* observance.

This is impossible!

The Galatians were Gentiles and had *never* kept any of God's days, or even heard of the true God before their calling. They could not return to what they had never known or practiced in the first place!

Also, read Leviticus 19:26 and Deuteronomy 18:9-10 to see that God strongly condemned keeping days, times, etc! These were humanly devised "sabbaths" and "holy days." In Leviticus 23 and Ezekiel 20, God speaks of "*My Sabbaths*" and "*My Feasts*." At the same time, throughout the Old Testament, He consistently condemns Israel for rebellion and for observing "*your days*," "*your sabbaths*" and "*your feasts*" instead (Isa. 1:13-14; Hos. 2:11; Amos 8:10, etc.).

Nowhere does God command the observance of *months*. Colossians 2:8 and 20-22 show that the "weak and beggarly elements" (also referenced there) are philosophical forms of *will-worship* and *self-denial* commonly found in certain parts of the world. The word "rudiments" (Col. 2:8) is the same word translated "elements" here in Galatians, and has nothing to do with God's Sabbath or Holy Days.

Throughout the world, almost all Gentile cultures observe numerous heathen days and times, etc. For example, in Paul's time, one-third of all Greek and Roman days were designated as "unlawful for judicial and...business [matters]...on which the state expected the citizenry to abstain, as far as possible, from their private business and labor."

They also set aside specific days and months for the purpose of honoring their many gods: April and October were dedicated to *Apollo*; February and June were dedicated to *Zeus*; *Artemis* was also worshipped in April; *Bacchus* in January. Upon conversion, the Galatians forsook these many festivals, in order to worship the true God "in Spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

In conclusion, the Galatians were forsaking *Sabbath and Holy Day* keeping and turning back—returning—to *pagan festivals*, commonly observed in ancient Greece and Rome, where many Gentile converts lived, not the other way around.

there, “You shall therefore keep this ordinance *in his season* from year to year.”

Do you see these two phrases? This scripture does not say “week to week” or “month to month”—or “pick any season you wish.” All humanly-devised traditions of time violate this basic instruction!

For the Israelites to have kept this at any *other* time would have literally jeopardized their firstborn from protection from the death angel. There was no room for miscalculation on their part or they could not have expected to be “passed over”—protected! (Read our booklet *How Often Should the Lord's Supper Be Taken?* to learn more.)

The Feast of Firstfruits— or Pentecost

Recall that Leviticus 23:9-22 describes the third annual Sabbath or *Feast of Firstfruits*. This day is sometimes called *Pentecost* or the “Feast of Weeks.” Again, this Holy Day was twice commanded to be observed forever (vs. 14, 21). It is not surprising then that we would find the Feast of Pentecost mentioned in the New Testament, in this case, prominently and multiple times. The New Testament Church kept this Holy Day every year.

Christ promised to build His Church (Matt. 16:18). The fulfillment of this promise is recorded in Acts 2—and it occurred on the Feast of Pentecost. It states, “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place” (vs. 1). This verse records a truly historic moment—the birth of God's New Testament Church!

Notice that “they were all with *one accord in one place*” on this annual Holy Day. There was no doubt in anyone's mind that they should be keeping this day. Had any believed that the New Testament did away with the Holy Days, they would have missed out on all that happened. Christ knew exactly what He was going to do on the day of Pentecost. He made sure that the disciples understood what He meant by “...but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence” (Acts 1:5). No wonder the previous verse says Jesus “commanded them that they should not *depart* from Jerusalem, but *wait* for the promise of the Father” (vs. 4).

Peter gave a powerful sermon, followed by miracles and the receiving of God's Holy Spirit by 3,000 who repented and were baptized. This was the prophesied time spoken of in the book of Joel (2:28-29). Make careful note: Christ chose one of the Holy Days to begin the building of the true Church of God. God *began* to work within larger numbers of people in an organized way, by the in-dwelling of His Holy Spirit, on this annual Sabbath and Feast Day!

In ancient Israel (generally the modern land of Palestine), there was an early spring harvest of grain. It was when the *first* efforts of agricultural labor had come to fruition. The Feast of Firstfruits describes this first, small, preliminary “spring” harvest of true Christians, which precedes the great “fall”

harvest prophesied to come later when God calls and judges all mankind. Peter wrote, “judgment must *begin* at the house of God” (I Pet. 4:17). So God is only doing this now *with the Church*.

There were two annual harvests in Israel. The early spring grain harvest was followed by the larger fall harvest. People called by God now, before the Return of Jesus Christ, are few in number. God will later call all mankind during the Millennium and the judgment period that follows. The small spring harvest symbolized the early, small harvest of people. We will later examine what this *second*, great harvest pictures in God's spiritual Plan of salvation.

Most professing Christians have been taught that God is trying to save the world *now*—that this is the only time for salvation. Revelation 12:9 states that Satan has deceived the whole world—and the picture of how God will eventually save all mankind is his greatest deception. Thousands of preachers are trying to “get people saved.” They have come to believe that now is the “only day of salvation.” Christ is prophesied to return soon only to find that most of His creation was “lost” in the titanic struggle supposedly now being waged between God and Satan.

The devil has convinced *most* to believe that God is in a wrestling match with him—a match God is obviously *losing*. The Bible does *not* teach this! All those who properly keep Pentecost recognize that it pictures God's early spring harvest of human beings into His kingdom, to be established on Earth at Christ's Return. Faithfully observing this day *requires* Christians to re-examine this part of God's great purpose on an annual basis. In a sense, forgetting God's purpose becomes almost impossible when one keeps the Holy Days!

Notice what James wrote in his general epistle about who and what true Christians represent within God's Plan: “Of His own will begat He *us* with the word of truth, that *we* should be a kind of *firstfruits* of His creatures” (1:18). Here is what Paul wrote about how all creation is awaiting God's first “crop” of sons: “...but ourselves also, which have the *firstfruits* of the Spirit...waiting for the adoption [sonship]” (Rom. 8:23). Also, the “redeemed” of Revelation 14, who are standing before God, are described as “the *firstfruits* unto God and to the Lamb” (vs. 4). More of this later, but these are very specific *New Testament* passages that amplify crucial understanding, which is lost if Pentecost observance is relegated to merely Old Testament application.

Let's first examine some other vital aspects of the Feast of Firstfruits.

What the Wave Sheaf Pictures

The portion of Pentecost called the Wave Sheaf offering begins in Leviticus 23:10. The day after the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread was the first day that Israelites were permitted to harvest any of their grain crop. In a special ceremony, the Levitical priesthood “waved” (vs. 11) “before the Lord” the very first sheaf of grain that was cut. Verse 11 adds that it was waved “to be accepted for you”—the Israelites. (This is no longer done today

What About Colossians 2:16-17?

Opponents of the Holy Days invariably justify their position by citing Colossians 2:16-17, which states, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ.”

Does this state that *no one* can tell Christians whether they are right or wrong regarding clean and unclean meats, Holy Day observance, Sabbath-keeping, etc.? This scripture is quoted by nearly all “churchianity” in an attempt to prove this.

But the real meaning of these verses is that Christians should not let *people* arbitrarily judge their conduct. Only the Church (Col. 1:18)—“the body of Christ” (2:17)—can do this. Notice that the word “*is*” is italicized. This means that it was not in the original Greek text. By adding it, translators blurred the true meaning of this passage.

The phrase “in meat, or in drink” (vs. 16), translated from the Greek phrase *en broosei ay en posei*, meaning “in eating or in drinking.” Some ascetics in Colosse were teaching that *self-denial* and *will-worship* (vs. 20-22) were God’s Way. (See Galatians 4:9-10 inset.)

Notice that the first phrase in verse 17 uses the present tense in reference to the Sabbath, Holy Days, etc. It says, in effect, “these days *are* [not were] a [fore]shadow of *things to come*.” Christians know that the Sabbath and Holy Days picture the Plan of God, which certainly involves many “things to come.” Verse 18 is a final warning to Christians not to let anyone trick them about these important issues—because it is only the Church that was to judge them (vs. 17, end).

Like the Galatians, the Colossians were Gentiles. They had never known God’s Way, and had not previously kept His Holy Days or Sabbath.

In no way do these scriptures do away with God’s laws, Sabbaths or Holy Days! In fact, the Colossians were being criticized by unconverted *Gentiles* because they *were* keeping His laws—because they *were* observing God’s Sabbath and Holy Days!

because this ritual was a shadow of a far greater offering, which came later and fulfilled it.)

What did the Wave Sheaf offering actually mean? What did it symbolize or picture?

After Christ's Resurrection, He met Mary Magdalene in the garden. This account reveals how Christ had to be accepted by God on behalf of mankind. Notice: "Jesus said unto her, Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God" (John 20:17; also Matt. 28:9).

Christ was a holy sacrifice, the first human being to be resurrected to eternal life. His death (as the sacrifice for our sins) was the fulfillment of the Wave Sheaf offering. This duty was to be carried out only by the high priest. If it were handled by anyone other than the high priest, the offering would have been defiled (impure), rendered unacceptable to God.

At the time Mary Magdalene saw Christ, He had not yet ascended to Heaven to be accepted by the Father as the first person to be born again from the dead (Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:15, 18; I Cor. 15:20, 23). Since Christ was the Wave Sheaf offering and is our New Testament High Priest (Heb. 9:11-12), no one could touch Him before He ascended and God had accepted His sacrifice.

It is not the purpose of this booklet to prove when Christ's Resurrection took place, but suffice to say that it occurred on the weekly Sabbath (Saturday) after a Wednesday Passover crucifixion. Therefore, after Christ had offered Himself, He presented Himself before the Father on Sunday exactly as Leviticus 23 instructs.

Why the Name "Pentecost"?

The Old Testament speaks of the "Feast of Firstfruits" or the "Feast of Weeks," while the New Testament describes this same Holy Day as *Pentecost*. This is actually a Greek word not found in the Old Testament, and it connotes the "fiftieth (day)." The rest of God's Sabbaths and Feasts come on specific days of specific months. They do not involve counting—but Pentecost does, and it is very important that it be counted correctly.

Acts 2:1 makes reference to "when the day of Pentecost was *fully come*..." This means that the New Testament Church knew how to count properly when to keep Pentecost. This left them with no doubt of when it was "fully come." Had they miscalculated, they would not have received the Holy Spirit or witnessed the moment of beginning of the Church of God.

Leviticus 23:15-16 explains how to count this day: "And you shall count unto you from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall you number fifty days..."

In calculating the Day of Pentecost, some have asked, "Why count just fifty days? Why not forty, sixty or seventy?"

The spring harvest followed the winter rains in Israel and ended around the time of Pentecost (the Feast of Weeks or Feast of Harvest; Ex. 34:22, 23:16 and Num. 28:26; also known as the Feast of Firstfruits). Pentecost means “count fifty.” Fifty days represents the span of this early harvest. This generally constituted the firstfruits of barley and wheat, which matured slightly later. This early harvest was relatively small, while the fall harvest was always much larger.

Many err in reckoning the Day of Pentecost because they fail to follow God's instructions in Leviticus 23:14-15. Much of this confusion stems from translation problems—semantics and specific definitions of words. God's instructions, given in Hebrew, were specific and clear.

Not long after the middle of the first century A.D., the Pharisees gained control of all Jewish observances from the Sadducees led by the high priests of the family of Boethus. While the Sadducees had been correctly counting the day, the Pharisees incorrectly began their count one day late, arriving on a Monday. The *Mishna*, written in about A.D. 200, states, “The Boethusians say: ‘The cutting of the sheaf does not take place at the end of the day of the feast [first day of Unleavened Bread], but only at the end of the next regular Sabbath’” (Menahoth, 10, 3).

This is not difficult to understand. But when trying to decipher relatively simple instructions from God's Word, people jump the track.

Consider explicit commands such as “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy...the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God: in it you shall not do any work...” (Ex. 20:8, 10). The vast majority of professing Christians cannot even figure out the difference between the first and seventh day of the week. It should not be surprising that various sects of Judaism disagree with God's instruction on counting Pentecost—while many other sects *correctly* determined it by following Scripture. The Karaites and Samaritans have been correctly counting Pentecost for almost fourteen centuries.

By counting fifty days from the day after the weekly Sabbath (when the Wave Sheaf was presented) that falls during the Days of Unleavened Bread, you can pinpoint Pentecost. At this ceremony of cutting and waving the first barley sheaf of the initial harvest, the fifty-day count would always begin and end on the first day of the week.

Theoretically, the day of the Wave Sheaf offering—the day after the weekly Sabbath—could be any one of the days of Unleavened Bread. That is why a count is necessary. (To understand more about specific questions surrounding the counting of Pentecost, you may wish to read our free article “How to Count Pentecost.”)

Counting Seven Weeks, Always On Sunday

The correct day is clearly “the morrow after the *seventh Sabbath* [Shabbat, meaning Sabbath day].” The day after the Sabbath (not a High Day, but the weekly Sabbath) was, and always has been, the first day of the week—*Sunday*.

This day was determined by counting from—and including—the day of the Wave Sheaf offering. Verse 16 leaves no doubt. Again, “the morrow after the Sabbath” is the first day of the week. According to God’s Word, Pentecost is always observed on a *Sunday*.

Deuteronomy 16:9-10 gives a more basic instruction regarding how to count Pentecost—and explains why it was called the Feast of Weeks: “Seven weeks shall you number unto you: begin to number the *seven weeks* from such time as you begin to put the sickle to the corn. And you shall keep the *feast of weeks*...” The word translated as “weeks” originated from the term *shavuah* or *shabuwa*. Numbers 28:26 adds, “*after your weeks be out*, you shall have an holy convocation; you shall do no servile work.” It was the counting of these seven weeks that caused the day of Pentecost to also be known as the “Feast of Weeks.”

What Does Pentecost Mean?

We have seen that Christ fulfilled the Wave Sheaf that was waved before God. But Leviticus 23:17 also speaks of two “wave loaves” brought from the congregation, which represented “*firstfruits* unto the LORD.” As with the Wave Sheaf being lifted up and waved before God, the same was done with the wave loaves (vs. 20). The Wave Sheaf being lifted up represented the resurrected Christ.

Since we have also seen that God’s Church began on Pentecost, it becomes obvious that the wave loaves represent the New Testament Church being lifted up from the earth in the first resurrection to include all those that God calls prior to Christ’s Return. The wave loaves are then brought back to earth as a type of the saints returning to rule with Christ (I Thes. 4:16-17; Acts 1:11; Zech. 14:3-4). Remember that the *saints* are the *firstfruits* (Jms. 1:18; Rom. 8:23; Rev. 14:4).

Israel, Now Blinded, Shall be Saved

In John 14:3, Christ said, “I will come again.” Revelation 5:10 explains that the saints will rule with Christ. Acts 15:16-17 expands on Christ’s promise to return and what will happen after He does: “After this *I will return*, and will build again the *tabernacle of David*, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: *That the residue* [remainder] *of men might seek after the Lord*, and all the Gentiles, upon whom My name is called, says the Lord, who does all these things.”

This is a powerful scripture, revealing much about God’s Plan to later call the whole world. But before Christ can call all humanity and reveal His truth to it, He must train a small inner team of “firstfruits.” The modern nations that have descended from ancient Israel and Judah are not being called now. They remain blinded.

The entirety of Romans 11 offers much insight into how those blinded now will be saved later. This inspiring chapter should be carefully studied.

It speaks of all the tribes of Israel. Almost none understand who the tribes of Israel are. They suppose that the Jews, just one tribe of twelve, comprise all of Israel today. Because many Jews have continued, to some degree, to loosely keep God's Sabbath and annual festivals, they have retained their identity in a way that the other tribes have lost.

Romans 11 describes how God will one day call and save the entire twelve tribes of Israel. Verse 26 states, "And so *all Israel shall be saved*: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion [Zion] the Deliverer [the soon-coming Jesus Christ], and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob."

The modern-day nations (just tribes grown larger) of Israel have not yet had ungodliness removed from their spiritual condition. Soon they will. They are now blinded. Soon they will see.

Many hundreds of millions of Israelites—past, present and future—will then come to understand the glorious purpose of God's Plan. Though it is coming soon, that time is not yet here. (Ezekiel 37 describes the physical resurrection of all the vast numbers of deceased Israelites.)

God is not now working with the nations of Israel. They are not receiving their chance for salvation. Part of the reason is explained in verse 25, where Paul warns the Gentile Romans to be careful: "For I would not, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits; that *blindness in part* is happened to Israel, *until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in*." Most are "ignorant" of God's Plan, but He does not want you to be ignorant of this "mystery."

God is first dealing with many Gentiles in this age, along with many physical Israelites scattered throughout the nations. But in the future He will deal with "all Israel" to the end that they will be saved! And we will see that later He will also deal with all Gentile nations.

Is God's Plan Failing?

The churches of the world all teach that God is desperately struggling, against all odds, to save the world *now*. If this is true—if this is what God is doing—then He is a complete failure, and His Plan was doomed from the beginning!

Many teach that the world in this age is under a kind of "probation." This idea develops in the following way: The billions now alive must decide whether they will follow Christ or not. Never mind that one-third to one-half of the people on Earth today have never even heard of Jesus Christ! Never mind that most who have heard of Christ have no idea who He was, what He taught or what He did.

Yet it is supposed that God is going to hold all of these people responsible for what they did not understand they were to choose. In other words, God will doom forever many billions of human beings who have been born and died over the last 6,000 years without having chosen to be "Christian." The teaching continues that when Christ returns, the probation ends and all will have made

their “choice.” This belief includes the assumption that God has completely and permanently discarded His first “chosen people,” Israel.

Remember this point. God is not trying to convert the world now! Christ said, “No man can come to Me, except the Father...draw him” (John 6:44, 65). So God is now only calling—drawing—relatively few into His “little flock” (Luke 12:32), which is *His* Church. The true Church of God is not counted among the great churches of this world. It is a small flock that exists for the purpose of preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God to the world—announcing Christ’s Return to establish His kingdom and rule with His saints (Rev. 2:26; 3:21). The book of Acts refers to this as the “restitution of all things” (3:19-21). Take a moment to read these verses carefully.

The festival of Pentecost pictures those *few* who have actually been “chosen” (Matt. 22:14), and who have “endured to the end” (10:22; 24:13). For 2,000 years, God has been selecting His “firstfruits” from among this world in preparation for receiving the great fall harvest of people, represented in the last four Holy Days observed in the fall of the year. After a period of trial and test, those who remain faithful will be kings and priests in His kingdom (Rev. 5:10).

God's Government and Law Established

When Christ returns, He will first gather His people Israel from where they are scattered around the world. Notice: “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set His hand again the SECOND TIME [the first time was the Exodus from Egypt] to recover the *remnant of His people*, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea” (Isa. 11:11).

After God gathers Israel, what happens next? Remember that two-thirds of those alive today are not even *professing* Christians, with half of this number completely unfamiliar with even the *name* of Jesus Christ. If “all Israel” is foretold to be saved, what of the many hundreds of millions and billions who have ever lived, from the time of Adam? Will they also receive an opportunity? If so, when is it? A number of important scriptures must be considered.

The prophet Daniel reveals the scope of Christ’s rule at His Return. Daniel 7:14 speaks of Christ coming to rule: “...*all* people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion.” Verse 18 explains the role of the saints who “take” and “possess the kingdom” with Christ. While verse 22 further confirms this, verse 27 states, “and *all dominions* [rulers] shall serve and obey Him [Christ].” When placed together, it is clear that the kingdom of God encompasses the entire earth. Every nation will be under its authority. Today’s saints are in training for enormous POWER!

A number of other verses speak of the time when all the Gentiles who have never heard of the name of Christ will receive an opportunity for salvation. Let’s examine several.

Now notice Isaiah 11:9-10: “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain: *for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD*, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it [Christ is the root of Jesse] *shall the Gentiles seek*: and His rest shall be glorious.”

Here is how Christ will come—and what He will do: “For, behold, the LORD will come with fire...For by fire and by His sword will *the LORD plead with all flesh*: and the slain of the LORD shall be many...And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations...that have not heard My *fame*, neither have seen My *glory*; and they shall declare My *glory among the Gentiles*” (Isa. 66:15-16, 19).

There is no misunderstanding the clarity of this prophecy. The nations of the earth will seek the true God for the first time in history. The scope of *real* conversions will be unprecedented. But this is not happening now!

It is God's purpose to eventually “plead with all flesh” to obey His Law—and to observe His Sabbath and Holy Days. What a wonderful time this will be for all nations—for all those “among the Gentiles.” All will hear of Christ's “fame” and see His “glory.”

Immediately, the Law of God will be established as international law, applying to all nations instead of just the tribes of ancient Israel. Notice: “And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of *His ways*, and we will walk in *His paths*: *for the law shall go forth of Zion*, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more...In that day, says the LORD, will I assemble her that halts, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted; And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and *the LORD shall reign* over them in mount Zion from henceforth, *even forever*” (Mic. 4:2-3, 6-7).

This verse further confirms that the nations of the earth will seek God. The true knowledge of the right way to live will completely blanket the earth. This passage is plain. It is also plain that the earth is not *now* blanketed by the truth of God. Only when this happens will all nations have an opportunity to understand that to which they are blinded now. These prophecies contain a wonderful picture of universal understanding and the removal of the ignorance, confusion and terrible religious disagreement so prevalent on Earth today.

These last verses show that all nations will seek Christ as their Deliverer. Take time to read this entire chapter. It describes a time of universal peace, when even the temperament of animals will be dramatically changed from their current aggressive and dangerous nature.

As the Law is being established, so will be the keeping of God's annual Feast Days. The whole world will come to understand the Plan of God: “And

it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the *feast of tabernacles*" (Zech. 14:16).

What a glorious time this will be for the whole world! The vast majority that have ever lived are now lying dead in the grave, having lived their lives in complete ignorance of God's purpose for mankind. Even the many millions of professing Christians will come up in the resurrection and learn that it was never God's purpose to save the world during their lifetimes. They will learn God's true Plan of salvation and be taught all of the great doctrines of God for the first time. They will learn the real truth of the Bible and why Christ said that knowing it will "make you free" (John 8:32).

All of this could have been known *if* the churches of the world faithfully kept God's Holy Days year-by-year.

The New Testament Church *did* faithfully teach and observe the Feast of Pentecost. Take time to read Acts 20:16. It speaks of Paul's urgency "to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost." In I Corinthians 16:8, Paul told the brethren there, "But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost." Why would Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, tell several *Gentile* congregations about the importance of keeping Pentecost with them, if they were not *also* keeping it? The answer is simply that God ordained that all of His people, including Gentiles, keep the "holy convocation" (commanded assembly) of Pentecost!

How many will be willing to observe Pentecost today?

The Feast of Trumpets

In the fall season of the year, there are four more annual Holy Days that complete, in type, the rest of God's Plan. The first of these is described in Leviticus 23:23-25, and is called the *Feast of Trumpets*. Moses referred to it as "a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation." As with the other of God's Sabbaths, the command explains that no "servile work" was permitted on this day.

We have discussed the Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread and the spring harvest of all God's spiritual "firstfruits" who will return with Christ. What about the Feast of Trumpets? How does it fit into God's Plan?

Here is what Paul wrote about the meaning of Trumpets. He is describing the very moment of Christ's Return: "Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the LAST TRUMP: for the TRUMPET shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (I Cor. 15:51-52). I Thessalonians 4:14-17 also speaks of this same event and uses the term "the trump of God."

In the book of Revelation, John records in detail about seven angels blowing seven different trumpets (Chapters 8-9), which have a catastrophic impact on the planet.

Chapter 11 describes the blowing of the seventh trumpet, and what it means for all nations. Notice John's description of this glorious moment and what it signifies—and how the single greatest moment in world history is fulfilled: “And the seventh angel sounded [his trumpet]; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, *The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever.* And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshiped God, saying, We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which are, and was, and are to come; because You have taken to You Your great power, and *have reigned.* And the nations were angry, and Your wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should *give reward unto Your servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear Your name, small and great;* and should destroy them which destroy the earth. And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail” (11:15-19).

This is an astonishing prophecy. The implications for the inhabitants of earth are beyond words. This is the moment in which Christ expands His Plan of redemption beyond the few firstfruits that He has been working with and training for the last 6,000 years. It is not surprising that Nehemiah 8:2, 9-12 describes this day historically as celebrated with great joy and rejoicing.

But as the prophecy explains, the nations of earth will be angry because they will not be ready for, nor will they understand, what is happening. But it is at this time that Christ will begin the work of gathering and returning the remnant of His people Israel to their land, and to “build again the tabernacle of David” (Acts 15:16).

The ministers of this world have utterly failed in their responsibility to teach the nations of the world God's precious truth. They have deceived and deluded the masses with false doctrines and gross misunderstanding of God's supreme purpose!

The entirety of Ezekiel 34 describes the actions of this world's collective “ministry” that serves itself while claiming to represent God. This chapter concludes with a description of how David will be resurrected and placed over the tribes of Israel. However, a deceived and ignorant world will be completely confused at Christ's Return, not recognizing that He is about to impose—literally *force*—world peace upon *all* nations.

Here is how Isaiah describes the fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets—and that it signals the gathering by Christ of the remnant of His people: “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the *great trumpet shall be blown,* and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem” (Isa. 27:13).

This prophecy involves far more than a return of Jews to Palestine. Modern “Zionists” terribly diminish the vast scope of this prophecy by restricting it to

the Jews in this way. Christ will gather all twelve tribes of modern Israel, then to be in captivity, to their land.

Though we cannot be sure, Christ's Return may even occur on the very day of the Feast of Trumpets. He was crucified on Passover and the Holy Spirit was given, in fulfillment of Joel 2:28-29, on the day of Pentecost. It is certainly *possible* that Christ could return on the day of Trumpets—and all those who are not keeping it, who have ignored His instruction to “watch” (Luke 21:36), will miss out on this greatest of world events. All are admonished to bear this very real possibility in mind as they prepare for the end of this age.

The Day of Atonement—the Fast Day

The fifth of God's seven annual Sabbaths is not a feast, but rather is a *fast* day. Known to the world as Yom Kippur, this day is most properly referred to as the *Day of Atonement*. It is described in Leviticus 23:26-32.

The Day of Atonement (“at-one-ment”) pictures the whole world finally “at one” with God, because Satan will have been bound and cast into “the bottomless pit” (Rev. 20:2-3), where he can no longer deceive the nations.

This Sabbath holds much important symbolism. The entirety of Leviticus 16 (34 verses) is devoted to this day. Verses 29 and 31 state, “And this shall be a *statute forever* unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls [fast], and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourns among you...It shall be a *sabbath of rest* unto you, and you shall afflict your souls, by a *statute forever*.”

Leviticus 23:32 adds, “from even unto even, shall you celebrate your sabbath.” This is the Old Testament passage that Sabbath-keepers always cite to prove that the weekly Sabbath should be kept beginning and ending at sundown. Yet most all “Sabbatarians” are unwilling to keep the very Day of Atonement that this verse references.

As with all the other understanding that flows from keeping God's Holy Days, the world is ignorant of the fact that it will one day be “at one” with the true God of creation. By keeping this day, they would understand that God's plan of redemption involves far more than those who think that “now is the only day of salvation.” They would recognize that God is “not willing that *any* should perish” (II Pet. 3:9)—that He would “have *all* men to be saved” (I Tim. 2:4).

The sins of the world have cut it off from God (Isa. 59:1-2). It is now impossible for humanity to be at one with the God of the Bible. But God has a very specific plan, symbolized in the Day of Atonement, for redeeming mankind to Himself.

Examining the key verses of Leviticus 16 is important in understanding the purpose of this Holy Day. Verse 5 states, “And he [the high priest] shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering.”

What Days Are Referenced in Romans 14:5-6?

Some conclude that Romans 14:5-6 authorizes people to observe any days they choose. By taking these verses out of context, and applying their own meaning, they assert that it makes no difference to God which days we keep.

In order to grasp the true intent of this passage, we must start reading where the context of the subject begins. Verses 1-4 identify the subject in context as *vegetarianism*—not which days should be kept.

Notice: “One *man* esteems one day above another: another esteems every day alike. Let every man be *fully persuaded* in his own mind. He that regards the day, regards it unto the Lord; and he that regards not the day, to the Lord he does not regard it. He that *eats*, *eats* to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he that *eats not*, to the Lord he *eats not*, and gives God thanks” (Rom. 14:5-6).

Does Paul state here that Jesus, by His death, did away with the very days He kept during His entire life? No! Does he say, “*GOD* esteems one day above another” and “*GOD* esteems every day alike?” Again, no! The verse says, “One *MAN* esteems one day above another.” This is telling us that it was what *men* were teaching, not what God instructs.

Christ is not going to judge us by what any *man* believes. He will judge us by His Word, the Bible: “...the *word* that I have spoken, the *same* shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

Notice that the saints at Rome were forbidden to *judge one another*. “Who are you that judges another man’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Yes, he shall be helped up: for *God* is able to make him stand” (Rom. 14:4).

Paul is not condemning or endorsing a particular period of time for Sabbath observance or worship, but he *is* warning the saints not to *judge* one another and cause strife by having differing opinions about when people choose to semi-fast. Those in Rome were weak in the faith. They had not yet matured spiritually. Paul says, “For I long to see you, that I may *impart unto you* some spiritual gift, to the end that you *may be established*” (Rom. 1:11).

This scripture in no way gives license to believe whatever you want. God commands, “...and lean not unto your own understanding” (Prov. 3:5). Until you *know what God says* in His word, how can you be fully assured in your own mind what is right? Paul stated, “the holy scriptures...are able to make you wise unto salvation” (II Tim. 3:15).

Paul is writing to both Jewish and Gentile converts at Rome. He advised them to accept those who were “weak in the faith” (Rom. 14:1), and to not “dispute” insignificant matters with them, nor sit in judgment of them. Some of these newly converted Gentiles, being weak, were still vegetarians and refused to eat meats.

The reason they did not eat meat is explained in I Corinthians 8. Most meat available for purchase at the market had been previously offered to idols at pagan temples. Therefore, some, with conscience of the idol, ate it “as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being *weak* is defiled. But meat commends us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse” (vs. 7-8). Some of the converts at Rome, who had given up idolatry, were Gentiles. Still being superstitious, they thought the idol had defiled the meat.

What were these days Paul was referring to? Why did Paul break into this thought—about eating meat—and mention “days”? The answer is found in the Moffatt translation: “Then again, this man rates one day above another, while that man rates all days alike. Well, everyone must be convinced in his own mind; the man who values a particular day does so to the Lord. The *eater eats* to the Lord, since he thanks God for his food; the *non-eater abstains* to the Lord, and he too thanks God” (Rom. 14:5-6).

Notice! Not only were there weak converts who avoided eating meat offered to idols, but others customarily *abstained* from particular foods. They semi-fasted on certain particular days. Still others refused to practice a semi-fast or abstain from foods, *but regarded every day* in the same way!

A number of Jews of that time held semi-fasts twice in the week (Luke 18:12). Some would also fast during the fifth and seventh months (Zech. 7:4-7). They were divided as to exactly when to fast. The Gentile converts were also divided as to what days to abstain from certain foods. Because of the differing backgrounds of these people, they could not agree on which days to do this. There were divisions in the congregation. Jesus taught us that fasting is something that is done without making it obvious to others (Matt. 6:16). It is a personal matter—between an individual and God.

The subject of this question surrounded the matter of *abstinence* on particular days—upon which days many voluntarily abstained from certain foods. It did not involve whether or not to keep pagan holidays or God’s Holy Days.

Nowhere in this passage is there any reference to “Sabbaths,” “Holy Days” or “Feasts”!

Next, the high priest “shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house.”

Verses 7-8 show that lots were to be cast over these two goats. Continue: “And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron shall CAST LOTS upon the two goats; *one lot for the LORD*, and the *other lot for the scapegoat*.”

The original Hebrew word, here translated “scapegoat,” is *Azazel*. This symbolism of Azazel has generally not been understood. It is crucial we recognize what—actually *who*—God is speaking about.

It is plain from the text that one goat represents the Lord, or Jesus Christ. But why would God have a second goat represented in the symbolism? While some explain the second goat as also referring to Christ, virtually every respected commentary affirms that the Jews and knowledgeable Bible students recognize Azazel as the devil.

The *One Volume Commentary* states that “scapegoat” is not actually a translation, but rather an attempt by the translators to *interpret* what they think the second goat means. Remember, the actual Hebrew word is Azazel and not scapegoat. And let us understand that a scapegoat is one who is blamed or bears the burden for something that he did *not* actually do. We will learn that the second goat does not in any way symbolize a scapegoat. Suffice to say, the Azazel goat does represent Satan the devil.

Of course, both goats are types. But why is it that lots must be used—which are a solemn appeal to God in any doubtful matter—to determine which goat should be Satan and which should be Christ? Should it not be obvious which is which? Consider! The world has not known the difference between Satan, who is called “the god of this world” (II Cor. 4:4) and who has “his ministers” (II Cor. 11:13-15), and the true God of the Bible and Jesus Christ! On this, and every other doctrinal truth of the Bible, Satan *has* “deceived the whole world” (Rev. 12:9).

God has to *reveal* the truth and proper understanding of every small and great doctrine. God has to *reveal*—and He will to the world one day—the great difference between Christ and Satan the devil, the god this world now obeys!

Men were not capable of discerning the difference between the two goats. The casting of lots is a very solemn occasion. It is a sincere appeal to God to intervene and reveal the truth of an unclear matter.

In verse 9, the goat upon whom the lot fell to represent “the Lord” was to be “offered”—sacrificed. This is an obvious *type* intended to represent the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the sins of the world.

In verse 10, we see that the high priest was instructed to send the other goat “alive...into the wilderness”—where it was “not inhabited.”

The high priest was then instructed to offer a bullock for himself and his family in verse 11. This was done to purify himself, since, as the high priest, he represented Christ going before the mercy seat—the throne of God. This was why he was to sprinkle the blood of the bullock on and before the mercy

seat of the tabernacle. This completed the steps necessary for the high priest to carry out the remainder of his duties on the Day of Atonement.

The High Priest Represented Christ

The high priest was then to offer the goat that represented Christ: “Then shall he *kill the goat* of the sin offering, that is *for the people*, and bring his *blood within the veil*, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the *mercy seat*, and before the mercy seat: And he shall make an ATONEMENT for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their *transgressions in all their sins...*” (vs. 15-16).

After Christ's Resurrection, He ascended to heaven. Some have misunderstood the Azazel goat to be a representation of one who, as a type of Christ, went to heaven. This is plain wrong. Heaven is certainly not an uninhabited wilderness. It is inhabited by God and hundreds of millions of holy angels, and is far from being a wilderness. It is clear that the high priest represented Christ's role as High Priest in bringing the offering of the slain goat (Christ, the Lord) before the mercy seat of God.

Let's establish this: Christ now sits at the right hand of God as our High Priest. Peter wrote, “Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him” (I Pet. 3:22).

It is important to understand the role of each goat—and the Levitical high priest. This allows us to be able to properly identify who the Azazel goat represented. Paul gives explanation that clarifies how the Levitical high priest was a type of Christ's role as High Priest on behalf of Christians: “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil; where the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a *High Priest forever* after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 6:19-20).

The goat that was offered cannot be a type of Christ *as High Priest*. This goat was slain each year for centuries until the real Christ was slain and went to heaven to *become* our High Priest. Until that time—until Christ's actual sacrifice—the Levitical high priest was a type of Christ as the High Priest.

This much is plain. The high priest went, *in type*, before the mercy seat as Christ offering His own blood on behalf of all those God redeems. The Azazel goat is then eliminated as a representation of the high priest, because he did not take the blood “within the veil”—a type of going before the Father in heaven.

In summary, the first goat is the sacrificed Christ. The Levitical high priest fulfilled the role of Christ, as our resurrected High Priest, offering His sacrifice to the Father. Finally, we will see more about why the second goat must be the devil. But understand that Satan certainly would want to be thought of, not as the devil (Azazel), but as the glorified Christ (High Priest) at God's right hand.

The Role of the Azazel Goat

Here is what the high priest did next: “And when he has made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall *bring the live goat*: And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, *putting them upon the head of the goat*, and shall *send him away* by the hand of a *fit man* into the wilderness: And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a *land not inhabited*: and he shall let go the goat *in the wilderness*. And Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of the congregation...and he shall wash his flesh with water in the holy place...and offer his burnt offering, and the burnt offering of the people, and make an ATONEMENT for himself, and for the people...And he that let go the goat for the [Azazel] shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward come into the camp” (vs. 20-24, 26).

We have explained that the Azazel represents Satan. The New Testament shows that he will be placed in a “bottomless pit” (Rev. 20:2-3) for 1,000 years, before being released for a “little season,” (same verse) and eventually sent into “the blackness of darkness” (Jude 13) for all eternity. The Azazel goat is a perfect type of being sent (the “fit man” is an obvious type of a mighty angel) into outer darkness.

Make this critically important distinction: Christ willingly bore our sins, even though He was completely INNOCENT. The devil is *not* innocent! He is a *murderer* and a *liar* (John 8:44), a *deceiver* (Rev. 12:9) and a *destroyer* (Rev. 9:11, see margin), and *far* from innocent. As the author of confusion, he is guilty of enormous transgressions and has much to be indicted for.

The devil is the one who is truly the ultimate author of the world's sins. The true God is a God of justice and equity—a God who is fair in all things. He would never require an innocent Christ to die for sins that He had not committed, and, at the same time, require no accountability on the part of the devil. God always places blame squarely on the shoulders of him to whom it belongs.

Of course, all human beings have sinned (Rom. 3:23) and are responsible for these sins. None can say that he is innocent because, as some say in partial jest, “the devil made me do it.” The devil influences and tempts all those who *willingly* commit sins of their own volition.

The world could never be at one with God if Satan remained free to roam the earth, tempting, deceiving, confusing, destroying, lying and murdering. As the ultimate cause of the world's sins and problems, he must be removed from earth, from heaven (Job 1:6 and 2:1 show that he does have free access to heaven *now* to “present himself before the Lord,” as happened to both goats) and any part of the inhabited universe.

Christ bore our sins. There is no doubt of that! But must He bear them for all eternity? The answer is a resounding NO! The high priest confessed the

sins of Israel over the head of the Azazel goat and sent him away bearing those sins.

Do we see the marvelous Plan of God at work here? Can we see the deep meaning of this part of the Day of Atonement? Can we recognize that the devil will carry the sins of mankind to the nethermost part of the universe—and keep them there with him for all eternity?

The Accuser

The world is filled with accusation. Politicians accuse each other endlessly. The press accuses politicians of every possible evil. Countries do the same to each other. Husbands and wives often fall into this practice, usually springing from an argument. Neighbors and co-workers constantly accuse each other.

The greatest accuser of all is the devil. And he is the source of the spirit of accusation that permeates the world. Once he is bound and removed, all opportunity to continue doing this will disappear.

Revelation 12:10 calls Satan “the *accuser* of our brethren.” John records that he “*accused* them [Christians] before our God day and night.” The devil hates those who have escaped his captivity (II Tim. 2:26) and reserves his greatest accusations for those who serve God.

Christ was hated! He was persecuted! He was put to death by crucifixion, which is one of the most painful, torturous deaths ever devised by human beings—because of *false accusations*! The devil used Judas to do this.

Wherever the true Church is found, accusation and persecution are seen. The devil seeks to thwart, hinder and falsely accuse the Church. When Paul wished to come to the Thessalonian Church, he stated that “Satan hindered us” (I Thes. 2:18). Satan hinders God’s purpose by using counterfeit human agents and instruments. This very work of God has endured many such hindrances and persecutions. They will continue until the establishment of the government of God replaces this world’s system. Satan will then be banished.

Satan constantly attacks and accuses God’s true servants. The devil’s endless pattern of accusation will only cease at the Return of Christ.

The devil must be removed for the world to escape the incessant accusation of the great accuser. Charged as guilty for all he has done for 6,000 years, Satan must be sent out of the way—sent to prison for his spiritual crimes against humanity. Only then can the world possibly be at one with God.

The “fit man” had to wash his clothes after having had contact with the devil. Otherwise, he could not re-enter the presence of the people. Also, recall that the high priest placed the forgiven sins of Israel on the Azazel *after* leaving the Holy of Holies (“within the veil”). The forgiveness of the sins was complete before God required the devil to be held accountable for his actions. This is obviously a type of Christ returning to earth and binding Satan (Rev. 20:3).

It makes absolutely no sense for the live goat to represent the resurrected Christ having the sins of mankind placed upon Him a *second time*! The devil would love for people to believe that he is a “scapegoat” who is being picked on unfairly by God. Satan is both deceiver and deceived. He would be only too happy for people to misunderstand his role, which is so clearly revealed within the symbolism of the Day of Atonement. We must be consistent. Christ cannot bear the sins of mankind *twice*, while the devil bears no responsibility at all.

We must ask: Does the New Testament record show that God's Church kept the Day of Atonement? It does. Notice: “Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because *the fast* was now already past, Paul admonished them” (Acts 27:9). Focus your attention on Paul's reference to “the fast.” The margin of most Bibles reveals that this is a direct reference to the Day of Atonement.

When the timing is carefully checked with the understanding that Paul was referring to a time of dangerous sailing—the autumn in the Mediterranean Sea—it becomes apparent that the New Testament Church was, in fact, marking time by this day. This could only be because they were OBSERVING it. It would make no sense for God's Holy Spirit to inspire a reference to a day that God wanted people to understand had been *done away*!

Accept the plain meaning of God's Word for what it says!

The Feast of Tabernacles

Two annual Holy Days remain. The sixth festival, the *Feast of Tabernacles* (also lasting seven days), pictures the last 1,000 years of God's 7,000-year Plan, when Christ and the resurrected saints will reign on the earth. This Feast is described in Leviticus 23:33-35. Like the Days of Unleavened Bread, this Feast was to last seven days because it pictured a *period of time*—1,000 years—instead of a *single event* such as Passover or Pentecost.

Leviticus 23:40-41 explains God's intention regarding how His people should keep this Feast: “...and you shall *rejoice* before the LORD your God seven days” Verse 41 reiterates that this Feast was commanded as “a statute *forever*.”

The book of Deuteronomy gives additional overview of God's instruction for how to keep the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles: “You shall observe the *feast of tabernacles* seven days, after that you have gathered in your corn and your wine: And you shall *rejoice in your feast*, you, and your son, and your daughter, and your manservant, and your maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within your gates. *Seven days* shall you keep a *solemn feast* unto the LORD your God in the place which the LORD shall choose: because the LORD your God shall bless you in all your increase, and in all the works of your hands, therefore *you shall surely rejoice*. Three times in a year shall all your males appear before the LORD your God in the place which He shall choose; in the *feast of unleavened bread*, and in the

feast of weeks, and in the *feast of tabernacles*: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty: Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you” (16:13-17). (Notice that a special offering was taken up from all those who kept the Feast of Tabernacles—as well as the other annual Feast Days.)

This festival pictures the Millennium—Christ’s 1,000-year reign on Earth with the saints. Exodus 34:22 states that this Feast was to be kept “at the year’s end,” because it begins the culmination of the last great steps within God’s Plan. Let’s read this verse: “And you shall observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the *feast of ingathering* at the year’s end.”

Recall that Pentecost was the early spring harvest of barley and wheat, with the great fall harvest to follow. Notice that the latter is also called “the feast of ingathering.” This is when God will begin to literally *gather in* the vast billions who have not been part of His Plan up to this time.

The book of Zechariah holds many clues to how the latter stages of God’s Plan will unfold. Chapters 12 and 13 describe the world coming to be at one with God after the completion of the seven trumpet plagues of Revelation 8 and 9, and the time of God’s Wrath and punishment upon a rebellious world, which follows.

Now notice Zechariah 14:9, 11: “And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and His name one...And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; *but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.*”

Jerusalem today is one of the most *unsafe* places in the world! What a total change this will be—and it is a type of how the whole world will one day dwell in peace and safety. Verse 8 describes literal waters, and what must be the waters of God’s Spirit (John 7:38-39) going forth from Jerusalem.

All Nations Keep Feast of Tabernacles

At this time, all nations will learn to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. There will be no exceptions. Notice this plain prophecy: “And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of *all the nations* which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from *year to year* to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to *keep the feast of tabernacles*” (Zech. 14:16).

Before continuing, we must ask directly, why would God require that the Feast of Tabernacles be kept in the Millennium if it is not incumbent on Christians today to observe it? Remember, we have seen that He ordained it—and *all* His annual Feasts—to be observed FOREVER. What honest person can believe that Christians do not now need to do what every human being on Earth will be required to do for *1,000 years*? However, some will continue to believe that Christ “nailed them to the cross.”

Isaiah 66:23 shows that the weekly Sabbath will also be kept during the Millennium. Yet, many who know of this verse, and its plain meaning, refuse

to keep God's Sabbath today. They would rather find excuses to explain why God has no such requirement during the "Christian age" or "dispensation."

We next ask: What will happen to those nations that refuse to obey God's command to assemble at the Feast of Tabernacles? Now continue in Zechariah 14: "And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of *all the families* [nations] *of the earth* unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the *feast of tabernacles*. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of *all nations* that come not up to keep the *feast of tabernacles*" (vs. 17-19).

Some nations will dig in their heels and refuse to obey God. The punishment will be severe for those who think it not necessary to keep the Feast. Eventually, the whole world will learn the benefits and experience the joy that comes from celebrating the wonderful meaning that this Feast represents. They will learn why God instructs His people to rejoice when they observe it.

Christ is training His saints to be kings and priests. Now think for a moment. All of John 7 describes Christ's observance of the Feast of Tabernacles. Christians are those who "follow His steps" (I Pet. 2:21). All should give serious pause when tempted to believe that they can qualify to teach, with Christ, all nations to keep the Feast of Tabernacles, while ignoring God's plain commands to keep it themselves now.

The Meaning of the Feast

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived in tabernacles or booths during their time of sojourning in the land that ancient Israel later inhabited. Notice: "By faith he [Abraham] sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, *dwelling in tabernacles* with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise" (Heb. 11:9). These men understood that this life was temporary. They were heirs only, and not yet inheritors of salvation and eternal life. They understood that their body was a physical, temporary dwelling, like a booth or tabernacle.

Leviticus 23:42-43 says this of Israel's time in the wilderness—and how it relates to the Feast of Tabernacles: "You shall dwell in booths seven days...that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt." Hosea adds more to the understanding of how every person is required to go through trials, tests and difficulties to become inheritors of God's promises. This next verse uses Ephraim as a type of all the Israelite tribes: "And I that am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt will yet make you to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast" (12:9).

During Israel's time in the wilderness, they had no permanent home. They wandered for 40 years before entering the Promised Land of what is now Palestine. This carries important symbolism. During the millennium, the

nations of the world will all remain mortal human beings, and therefore merely HEIRS of salvation, not yet INHERITORS. Inheritance will come later.

Paul wrote, “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption” (I Cor. 15:50). How do some say that those who live during the Millennium will remain mortals forever? The whole picture of salvation is summarized in Christ’s statement to His disciples: “Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, you blessed of My Father, INHERIT THE KINGDOM prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:34).

The goal of all human beings on Earth is to one day “inherit the kingdom.” It starts by receiving the Spirit of God at baptism and repentance (Acts 2:38), is followed by a lifetime of growing, overcoming and qualifying, and culminates in hearing Christ say the words “inherit the kingdom.”

When properly understood, God’s Holy Days are marvelous, wonderful blessings given by a loving God to His people. They are full of rich, inspiring meaning, and observing them year by year keeps this meaning alive and real for those who do it!

Ponder these words as you consider what *you* will do!

The Last Great Day

Finally, there is one last Holy Day in God’s Plan—the seventh festival—which is called the *Last Great Day*. It pictures the Great White Throne Judgment, when the BOOK OF LIFE (Rev. 20:12) will be opened to all human beings who have ever lived—beginning with Adam. At that time, everyone will eventually receive an opportunity for salvation!

Revelation 20, verse 10 describes Satan being “cast into the lake of fire” and, once again, removed from all possibility of deceiving and injecting his spirit into the nations (Eph. 2:2). Continuing in Revelation 20, verses 11-13 describe this wonderful period *after* the Millennium when all who have lived prior to Christ’s Return will be given an opportunity for salvation. Those born during the Millennium receive their opportunity at that time.

Most people *will* eventually receive salvation—eternal life—because the influence of Satan will have been removed from the earth. They will not have to overcome either his influence or the pulls and enticements of his world, by then long gone.

One More Festival

At the conclusion of his booklet *Pagan Holiday – or God’s Holy Days – Which?*, Herbert W. Armstrong, describing the seventh annual Sabbath—the Last Great Day—wrote this under the subhead “Yet Another Festival”:

“Did you notice that the Feast of Tabernacles is only the sixth festival? There is yet another—the seventh!

“The Feast of Tabernacles is, strictly speaking, seven days long—to picture the entire Millennium. Seven is God’s number of completeness. Therefore, there must also be seven festivals. Let us notice where it is mentioned: ‘The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord...on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you... it is a [day of] solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein’ (Lev. 23:34, 36).

“This eighth day, technically a separate feast, is called ‘the last day, that great day of the feast’ (John 7:37).

“What does this final holy day represent?

“Notice what Jesus preached about on that day: ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink...out of his belly [innermost being] shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive...)’ (John 7:37-39).

“This was Jesus’ sermon giving the meaning of the last great day!

“Now turn to Revelation 20. After the Millennium, what happens? A resurrection! The dead stand before God. This couldn’t include true Christians today, as they will appear before the judgment seat when Christ returns. It couldn’t refer to those converted during the Millennium. They have already inherited the Kingdom during the Millennium, after living out a normal life-span. Those in this resurrection must be those who died in ignorance in past ages! They are not brought to life until after the Millennium (Rev. 20:5).

Pictures the Day of Judgment

“This is that judgment day mentioned in Matthew 10:15. It is a time when Gentiles who died in ignorance will be given an opportunity to receive salvation. Ezekiel 16:53-55 makes this very plain. Even those in Israel who died in their sins will be given their *first* opportunity to understand the truth of God and His way (Ezek. 37). The prophet wrote that God would pour out His Spirit on those resurrected (verse 14). This is precisely the salvation that Jesus mentioned in His sermon on that great day of the feast in the autumn of A.D. 30.

“This eighth day, which immediately follows the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles, pictures the completion of the plan of redemption. It is just prior to the new heaven and the new earth. All—parents and children, young and old—will be resurrected.

“Notice that the ‘book of life’—typifying salvation—is opened (Rev. 20:12). Revelation presents the final view of the ‘judgment day’ as the present material heaven and earth are perishing—and the faithful are receiving their eternal reward at the throne of Christ. The wicked—those who disobey—are seen perishing in the lake of fire!

“What a marvelous plan! All will have an equal opportunity.

“And finally, notice in Leviticus 23:37-38. After describing these annual holy days, it says: ‘These are the feasts of *the Lord*, which you shall proclaim

to be *holy convocations...beside the sabbaths of the Lord.*' We are, then, to keep these *besides* the Sabbath of the Lord.

"SUNDAY is the weekly rest day of this modern churchianity, but the Sabbath is the day of the LORD.

"Christmas, New Year's, Easter, and a host of others are the holidays that have come directly from paganism, but these seven annual holy days are the holy days of God! Let us forsake the pagan holidays of this world, and observe the true holy days of God."

A Serious Matter

In the Old Testament, ignoring the Holy Days was punishable by death (Lev. 23:29-30). So was Sabbath-breaking (Ex. 31:14-15; 35:2). II Corinthians 3:7-8 describes the Old Testament administration of a civil death penalty, which is no longer applicable. This is because God is now building the nation of SPIRITUAL Israel (Rom. 2:28-29; 8:9; 11:24-26; Gal. 3:29; Eph. 2:11-13, 19; I Pet. 2:5, 9).

The Holy Days were to be kept perpetually, forever and throughout the generations of Israel. There are still generations of Israel today—and there is spiritual Israel (the Church) today, which also keeps the rest of the commandments of God (Matt. 19:16-17; Rom. 2:13; Jms. 1:8-12; Rev. 12:17).

It would be terribly inconsistent of God to require the *death penalty* for those who ignored the Holy Days in ancient Israel, and to severely punish entire nations for disobeying them during the Millennium—yet declare that He does not care whether His people keep them during the Christian era!

Christ observed the Holy Days—and Paul wrote, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). In Malachi 3:6, God [actually Christ, the God of the Old Testament] says, "I am the LORD, *I CHANGE NOT!*" Powerful words!

Take heed whether and how you will obey God. For "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant, where-with he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. 10:28-29).

The seriousness of this warning cannot be overstated!

Now, what will you do?

Festival Information

Many people around the world observe God's annual Holy Days with others every year. Others observe them by themselves. You may be wondering where there are others near you who are convicted about God's Plan and the role of His feasts within it.

The Restored Church of God has representatives in many parts of the world who are available to answer your questions about where you can meet with others who are determined to obey God and observe His annual Sabbaths—as well as His weekly Sabbath. Our Headquarters can help all others where no representative is available. But you must contact us—you must request information and assistance from us because no one will ever call on you unless you have contacted us of your own volition.

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