

THE HOLY DAYS

God's Master Plan



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By Roderick C. Meredith

*What are the most important days on the Christian calendar? Many would say Christmas and Easter. But the first followers of Jesus Christ observed **neither** of those days. They followed His example and observed the **same** Holy Days that Jesus Christ Himself observed!*

*The Holy Days in fact picture, in sequence, the destiny God has planned for **all** humanity. God Himself ordained these Holy Days as part of a sequence of annual festivals for **all** His people to observe.*

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Introduction

Pagan Holidays vs. God’s Holy Days

Why do most professing Christians observe Christmas, Easter, and Halloween, yet fail to observe the very days that the Bible clearly commands? Does it make that much difference which days we keep? Does it affect our hope for eternal life? And does it massively impact our understanding of *what kind* of God we worship and what is the great *purpose* being worked out here on earth?

Sadly, most of us just “grew up” in Protestant churches—or in Catholicism—and basically took for granted all that we were taught about God, Christ, and religion. Very few people usually bother—even after reaching adulthood—to actually study and genuinely prove *why* they believe what they believe. It just seems easier to “follow the crowd” and go along with whatever we have been taught.

Have you been like this?

Have you carelessly *assumed* that the Bible teaches us to observe Christmas and Easter? Have you assumed that Christ, our example, and the original inspired first-century Church observed Christmas and Easter?

If so, you could not have been more *wrong!*

Nearly all honest theologians and historians freely acknowledge that Christmas and Easter were injected into “Christianity” many years after the death of the original Apostles! Under the article “Christmas,” the *Encyclopædia Britannica* states:

The history of this feast coheres so closely with that of Epiphany (q.v.), that what follows must be read in connection with the article under that heading.... The great church adopted Christmas much later than Epiphany; and before the 5th century there was no general consensus of opinion as to when it should come in the calendar, whether on the 6th of January, or the 25th of March, or the 25th of December.... In 1644 the English puritans forbade any merriment or religious services by act of Parliament, on the ground that it was a heathen festival, and ordered it to be kept as a fast. Charles II revived the feast, but the Scots adhered to the Puritan view (vol. 6, 11th ed., pp. 293–294).

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* tells us:

Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the Church. Irenaeus and Tertullian omit it from their lists of feasts; Origen, glancing perhaps at the discreditable imperial Natalitia, asserts (in Lev. Hom. viii in Migne, P.G., XII, 495) that in the Scriptures sinners alone, not saints, celebrate their birthday.... In England, Christmas was forbidden by Act of Parliament in 1644; the day was to be a fast and a market day; shops were compelled to be open; plum puddings and mince pies condemned as heathen. The conservatives resisted; at Canterbury blood was shed; but after the Restoration Dissenters continued to call Yuletide “Fooltide” (vol. 3, pp. 724, 728).

Rejecting the Example of Christ and the Apostles

A vital key to remember in trying to understand what happened is to realize that the vast majority of “Christian” priests and scholars have *not* seriously tried to follow the example of Christ and the original Apostles! As the professing Christian church grew in the Roman Empire, it tried to make its religion more “convenient” to the pagans around it in an attempt to win them over, and, at times, in an attempt to avoid persecution. As Dr. Rufus M. Jones points out:

If by any chance Christ Himself had been taken by His later followers as the model and pattern of the new way, and a se-

rious attempt had been made to set up His life and teaching as the standard and norm for the Church, Christianity would have been something vastly different from what it became. Then “heresy” would have been, as it is not now, deviation from His way, His teaching, His spirit, His kingdom.... What we may properly call “Galilean Christianity” had a short life, though there have been notable attempts to revive it and make it live again, and here and there spiritual prophets have insisted that anything else than this simple Galilean religion is “heresy”; but the main line of historic development has taken a different course and has marked the emphasis very differently (*The Church's Debt to Heretics*, pp. 15–16).

Mainstream Protestant author Jesse Lyman Hurlbut—writing about the period between 313 AD and 476 AD—acknowledges, “The forms and ceremonies of paganism gradually crept into the worship. Some of the old heathen feasts became church festivals with change of name and of worship. About 405 AD images of saints and martyrs began to appear in the churches, at first as memorials, then in succession revered, adored, and worshipped” (*The Story of the Christian Church*, p. 79).

So, although the early “Christian” leaders were accommodative to the pagans around them, God warned our spiritual forefathers against following the customs of the surrounding heathen nations, saying, “Do *not* inquire after their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.’ You shall *not* worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods” (Deuteronomy 12:30–31).

Jesus Christ warned the religious leaders of His day, “All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition” (Mark 7:9). Notice carefully Jesus’ comment about rejecting the commandment of God by keeping human tradition. This is very definitely the case when we consider which days God made holy, for virtually no one keeps the days introduced by the pagans *and* also observes the biblical Holy Days that God commands—and that Christ and the first-century Church observed.

In effect, you have to *choose*.

You have to choose between observing the “mass of Christ”—which pictures Christ as a helpless little child and is filled with pa-

gan concepts of the Yule log, the Christmas tree, Santa Claus, and Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer—or, on the other hand, observing the biblical Holy Days that picture, step-by-step, the awesome *plan* that God is working out here on earth. You have to choose between following Christ and the original Apostles or following the Catholic “fathers” of the Dark Ages who increasingly injected layer after layer of rank paganism into professing Christianity.

Which Will You Choose?

As I explain in the booklet *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?* if you were on the proverbial desert island with only a sacred calendar and a Bible, you would have to observe the biblical Sabbath and biblical Holy Days because these are the *only* days the Bible commands or even directly talks about. For instance, the word “Christmas” is not even in the Bible. And there is not even the slightest hint in the Bible that we should observe the day of Christ’s birth, even *if* we knew when it was—which we do not! And the word “Easter” is purposely not mentioned in any reputable modern translation of the Bible. It is incorrectly mentioned one time in the *King James Version* in Acts 12:4, but all scholars concede that the word “Pascha” from which it is translated is correctly rendered “Passover” and has no relation to Easter whatsoever. And virtually all scholars recognize that the word “Easter” is simply a derivation of the name of the ancient goddess Ishtar or Isis—goddess of sex and fertility of the ancient Middle East. That, of course, is where “Easter eggs” come from—the pagan worship of sex and fertility.

Interestingly, even though we might not have been taught about God’s Holy Days in Sunday School, God’s commanded days are mentioned quite often in the Bible! These days were clearly commanded in the Old Testament, and their observance by Christ and the Apostles in the New Testament certainly ratifies them for the Christian Church.

Luke tells us, “And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover” (2:40–41). Then the account describes how “when they had finished the days... Jesus lingered behind” (v. 43). All scholars recognize that “the days” spoken of here were the Days of Unleavened Bread, which come im-

mediately after the Passover. So Jesus, being “strong in the spirit” and able to discuss spiritual principles at the highest level with the doctors of the Jewish law, kept the Days of Unleavened Bread alongside His parents.

During His ministry, we find Jesus going up to observe the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem. He told His physical brothers, “You go up to this feast” (John 7:8). Clearly, they were instructed by the Son of God to go up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles! Then, Jesus Himself went up secretly, at first, so as not to arouse persecution (v. 10). Then “about the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught” (v. 14).

At the end of Jesus' human life, Luke tells us, “Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed. And He sent Peter and John, saying, ‘Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat....’ Then He said to them, ‘With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer’” (Luke 22:7–8, 15). So as an adult—setting us an example—Jesus observed the Passover.

Then we find that the inspired first-century Church began on another of God's Holy Days, the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out: “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place” (Acts 2:1). What if the disciples had rejected God's Holy Days and were not even there on the day when the Holy Spirit was given?

Some may assume that this was the only Day of Pentecost the early Church observed. Not so. In Acts 20:16 we read, “For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.” And Paul observed yet another Pentecost in Ephesus: “But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries” (1 Corinthians 16:8–9).

Also, the Apostle Paul clearly commanded the Gentile Church at Corinth to observe the Days of Unleavened Bread. Speaking of these days, Paul wrote, “Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us *keep the Feast*, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians

5:7–8). Paul was obviously speaking of “keeping the Feast” of Unleavened Bread.

All Nations Will Observe God's Holy Days

A powerful *end-time* prophecy makes it exceedingly clear that *all* nations will soon learn to observe the Feast of Tabernacles! Notice what God inspired the prophet Zechariah to write about the years just ahead of us:

Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south.... And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to *keep the Feast of Tabernacles*. And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain. If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to *keep the Feast of Tabernacles* (Zechariah 14:1–4; 16–19).

Since *every* human being on earth will soon learn to observe these biblical Holy Days, why not learn to obey God and start keeping them *now*? Why not become a spiritual “pioneer” and help blaze the trail for the *billions* of others who will come to this understanding soon after Christ's return?

“But,” you may say, “we have been taught that these are Jewish Holy Days! Are Christians to keep the Jewish Holy Days?”

Well, I have just explained that *all* nations, Jew and Gentile, will soon learn to keep the biblical Holy Days—*not* because they are “Jewish,” but because God commands all of His people to observe them. And all of His people did keep them in the New Testament Church and, as we have seen, Christ kept them—setting us an example. The original Apostles kept them also.

True Christians Are the “Israel of God”

A vital key to understanding is to truly grasp Jesus’ instruction to the Samaritan woman. He told this non-Jewish woman, “You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22).

Although they often rejected His teaching, or overlaid it with human traditions, the Jewish people did preserve the knowledge of the Creator God and the only written Bible available to the original New Testament Christians—which we today call the Old Testament. Clearly, the Jews were given the “oracles of God” (Romans 3:1–2), which certainly included God’s Holy Days and the understanding of how to construct the sacred calendar upon which those days are based. So the Jews did “know” whom they worshipped. And through Christ and a correct understanding of the Old Testament, salvation was “of the Jews.” In spite of human weakness and man-made tradition, the Jews have preserved God’s spiritual *law*, the Ten Commandments, along with the true Sabbath and the annual Holy Days that the Creator has commanded. And the Jewish race produced Jesus of Nazareth—the prophesied Messiah.

The Apostle Paul was inspired to write, “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God” (Romans 2:28–29). So *all* true Christians are spiritual “Jews”! And we are bound to keep the spiritual laws and Holy Days that God gave Israel, and that were reaffirmed by the example of Christ and the inspired New Testament Church.

As Paul wrote, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor un-circumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk

according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:15–16).

Clearly, the “Israel of God” are the true people of God—those who are spiritually circumcised and have Christ living His obedient life in them through the Holy Spirit. So, yes, we must get rid of our prejudices and quit calling “Jewish” those things *God* gave for *all* His people of all races and all nations!

True Christians are to keep holy the days God made holy. And we are to follow the example of Jesus and the original Apostles in so doing. Then, as we shall see, the understanding and observance of God's Holy Days will open our minds to the great plan and *purpose* that God is working out here below. Indeed, God does have a great plan in mind for all humanity. God reveals this to us through Paul's letter to the Ephesians: “Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the *purpose* of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will” (Ephesians 1:9–11).

A Preview of the Plan

Most professing Christians observe what they call the “Lord's Supper,” “mass,” “Eucharist,” or some such observance involving the partaking of bread and wine that symbolize Christ's sacrifice. Few even begin to understand why they are doing this and—as I just pointed out—there are several different types of observances involved when you consider the different branches of professing Christianity.

As we shall see, these occasions are memorial observances of only the *first* step in God's plan. For most professing Christians, all the other stages of God's plan are *not* observed in any way—and are therefore not understood in any way! Throughout the Bible, many of the things God does are revealed in patterns of seven. In the beginning, God created the seven-day week (Genesis 1). The seventh day was revealed to be His Holy Sabbath (2:1–3). Later, He gave exactly *seven* annual Holy Days to reveal His overall plan and purpose in dealing with humanity (Leviticus 23). In the New Testament, we find the *seven* Churches of Revelation described (Revelation 2–3). We read of the *seven* seals, the

seven trumpets, the *seven* last plagues, etc. It is not surprising that His plan is revealed in *seven* steps, for seven is the biblical number of completion or perfection.

Therefore, when we understand, it should seem ridiculous to observe just *one* of God's annual Festivals picturing His plan and *omit* all the others! As a "preview" of what is to come, let us very briefly examine all seven of God's annual, spiritual Festivals so we can better understand His plan and *purpose* in these Festivals as we go along.

First comes the solemn observance of Christ's suffering and death on our behalf. The Bible calls this the "Passover." It pictures our acceptance of Christ's broken body and shed blood, which He offered as our Savior. But remember, this is only the first step in God's plan for us! Next, we need to *grow* in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18) and begin to put our old sinful ways and habits completely out of our lives. This overcoming process is pictured by the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Third, all of us together in the Spirit-begotten Church—the "little flock" (Luke 12:32)—are only the "Firstfruits," of the great spiritual harvest that will occur after Christ's Second Coming. So God's third annual Festival, the Feast of Pentecost or Feast of "Firstfruits," pictures the fact that only a very small spiritual harvest is being reaped by God at this time. God is *not trying* to save the whole world now. Otherwise He would be doing so—and the *billions* of unbelievers of past ages and even in our present day in China, India, and other nations would quickly come to full understanding of the true God and genuine acceptance of His Son as their Lord and Savior!

End-Time Events Pictured in the Seventh Month

Fourth, the cataclysmic events at the *end* of this present age leading to Christ's return are pictured by the Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:24). Trumpets were literally used in ancient Israel as alarms of war. In our day, at the climax of a series of wars and worldwide upheavals, Jesus Christ will return and the dead will be raised "at the *last trumpet*" (1 Corinthians 15:51–52).

Then, following Christ's return, Satan is supernaturally bound and put into the bottomless pit "so that he should *deceive* the nations *no more*" (Revelation 20:3). Finally, with Satan bound, man can become "at one" with God. This is clearly pictured by the fifth spiritual Festival—the Day of Atonement.

After Christ's return, God pours out His Spirit and begins to enlighten all humanity with the true understanding of His great *plan*. At that time, God says, "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9). This is pictured by our joyous observance of the sixth Festival in God's plan—the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles or "Feast of Ingathering" (Exodus 34:22).

God's Holy Day calendar is based upon the harvest seasons of Israel. As indicated, this pictures for us the spiritual harvest God plans to reap. First, the small spring harvest pictured by the "Feast of First-fruits." Finally, at the *end* of this age, the massive autumn harvest is pictured by the "Feast of Ingathering."

Now, we come to the seventh and final spiritual Festival God gave His people. "But what part of His plan could still be left to picture?" you might ask. As shown earlier, even at the end of Christ's 1,000-year reign there will be the untold *billions* of people of past ages who *never understood* virtually anything about the true God, about Jesus Christ, or about God's purpose for their lives. What will happen to these "unsaved" billions of human beings since "there is *no partiality* with God" (Romans 2:11)? The solemn seventh Festival of God pictures the time when God will—for the *first* time—open their minds to understand His word and His will and give them a genuine opportunity to have their names written in the "Book of Life" (Revelation 20:11–12).

With the observance of this seventh Festival that we call the Last Great Day (John 7:37), we finish the portrayal of the entire *plan* of our Creator. From our first acceptance of Christ as Savior to the picturing of His Second Coming and setting up God's Kingdom on earth, all the way until the Last Great Day picturing the time when *all* human beings will finally have a real opportunity for salvation, these God-given, God-inspired Festivals picture the *real* plan of God. The pagan religious festivals that Satan has foisted off on a deceived humanity are indeed a cheap substitute. In reality, they picture a false god and a false christ, and lead to the acceptance of a false gospel, which directly contradicts the true message that Christ and the Apostles preached!

These seven Festivals—two lasting seven days and five lasting one day—make 19 annual Feast days each year. Seven of these 19 days are special rest days or "Sabbaths." These seven annual Sabbaths—also known as God's annual Holy Days—are the First and Last Days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Pentecost, the Feast of Trum-

pets, the Day of Atonement, the First Day of the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Last Great Day.

As we will see in this booklet, God's Holy Days are far more than just days on which we cease from our normal work; they are far more than mere civil holidays. Other Jewish holidays, such as Hanukkah and Purim, played an important part in the civil life of the Jewish nation and are important to many Jews today. Yet those civil holidays are not "feasts of the LORD," as listed in Leviticus 23. They may be joyous national celebrations, like the Thanksgiving Day festivities held in the United States and Canada, but just as one would not expect a British citizen to observe Canada's Thanksgiving, one would not expect a non-Jew to find relevance in a holiday established by the Jewish nation-state. And God did *not* command that these civil holidays be kept, as He commanded the observance of the Feasts listed in Leviticus 23.

Now, let us retrace and explore in brief the meaning and purpose of each of the *seven religious festivals* that God gave for all mankind to keep. Remember, understanding and observing these Festivals helps us keep in mind the great *master plan* of our Creator whereby He intends to enlighten and ultimately to save the vast majority of humankind.



Step I

The Passover

God decided to create human beings *in His own image*—having His form and shape—who would become His real sons and daughters, having His divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) and His very *character* placed within them through the Holy Spirit.

Human beings would have free moral agency—the capacity to choose between good and evil. God would allow mankind to *sin*, under the influence of Satan, and to go its own way for 6,000 years. Men and women would learn the lessons of life through experience and suffering, until such time as God would supernaturally call each individual to genuine understanding and repentance (John 6:44).

Since *sin* in any form is rebellion against God, it is a truly horrible thing. And since God has decreed that “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), God decided long ago that only the *death* of His own Son, Jesus Christ, could truly atone for the awfulness of sin. “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.... In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:4, 7).

God told ancient Israel that the “life of the flesh is in the *blood*” (Leviticus 17:11). So God planned that His own Son’s blood would be shed. Christ would be the ultimate Passover Lamb—reconciling all true Christians to God the Father. “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7). “Much more then, having

now been justified by His *blood*, we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (Romans 5:9).

Weeks before they came to Mount Sinai and before the Old Covenant was even proposed, God told the people of Israel to set aside an unblemished male lamb (Exodus 12:3–6). This lamb was to be the “Passover lamb” and was to be slain on the eve of the fourteenth day of Abib—the first month of the year in God’s sacred calendar.

God had determined to destroy *all* the firstborn in Egypt because of Pharaoh’s refusal to let His people go. But God told the Israelites that if they would obey Him by killing and eating the Passover lamb—putting some of its blood on their doorposts and lintels of their homes—then “when I see the blood, I will *pass over* you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. So this day shall be to you a *memorial*; and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an *everlasting* ordinance” (vv. 13–14).

So, more than 1,400 years ahead of time, God guided an entire nation of some three million people to pre-enact the awesome *sacrifice* that His own Son, Jesus Christ, would later make on behalf of all humanity. The slaying of the Passover lamb directly portrays the sacrifice of Christ—the first step in God’s plan to make human beings His full sons and daughters.

The Passover pictures the fact that we are “being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had *passed over* the sins that were previously committed” (Romans 3:24–25).

Every true Christian is commanded by God to *keep* the Passover! It is to be observed once a year as God commanded—on the very night in which Jesus was delivered to be crucified. The Apostle Paul explained, “For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the *same night* in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes” (1 Corinthians 11:23–26).

At the Passover commemoration, Christians wash each other's feet, as Jesus commanded (John 13:5–15). In Jesus' day, a servant would wash the feet of a guest in his master's household. By taking the role of a servant, Jesus called Christians to humility, and gave a reminder of the attitude of loving service that we must have for one another, just as Christ has it for us.

Next in the Passover observance comes the partaking of the bread. This pictures Christ's body, which is "broken" for us (1 Corinthians 11:24). God's word clearly shows that Jesus suffered a horrible beating or "scourging" just before He was crucified. Historians tell us that this Roman scourging was done with a leather whip in which were fastened sharp pieces of metal designed to cut and tear the flesh. Because of the violence of this scourging and resultant loss of blood, many condemned prisoners died of the scourging itself even before they could be crucified.

Why did Jesus have to go through this awful beating?

About 700 years before it occurred, God inspired the prophet Isaiah to describe what would happen and why: "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:4–5).

By Jesus' stripes we are *healed!* And it is more technically correct to translate the phrase "He has borne our griefs" as "He has borne our *sicknesses.*" In the New Testament, Matthew describes Jesus healing many people who were sick, and then cites this as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy: "And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses'" (Matthew 8:16–17).

So when we eat the broken bread at Passover, we are reaffirming our acceptance of Christ's broken body for our physical *healing*. Let us appreciate these vital symbols of our Savior's sacrifice with deep humility, awe, and *faith* in the great God who made our physical healing and our spiritual forgiveness possible!

Next, at the Passover service, we should partake of red wine to symbolize the shed blood of Jesus Christ in full payment for our sins. It is important to understand that Christ is our *Creator*. Therefore, His life is worth more than all of ours put together. The Gospel of

John tells us this about Jesus Christ: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.... He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him” (John 1:1–3, 10–11). So the Personality who had been with the Father from eternity “emptied” Himself (cf. Philippians 2:7, *NRSV*) of His divine glory and power and became our Savior. But in the beginning, it was Christ Himself who created mankind and all that is—acting, of course, for the Father. Ephesians 3 tells us that God “created *all things* through Jesus Christ” (v. 9).

No wonder the Bible speaks of the “precious” blood of Jesus Christ! His is the blood of the great Being who acted for the Father in creating the vast heavens, the earth, and all that is.

When we partake of the red wine symbolizing this awesome act of total humility on the part of our Creator, it should fill us with a deep sense of appreciation and *worship* toward our God and our Savior. If we have truly repented of our sins and accepted Christ as our Savior, we should have total *faith* that we have not been “redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18–19).

Step 2

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

Through the Passover sacrifice of Christ, we are justified, forgiven of our past sins, and “made right” in relation to God. “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (Romans 5:9). But even though we are now forgiven of our past sins, how will we become overcomers and put sin completely out of our lives?

The Festival of Unleavened Bread provides the answer, and it pictures the next step in God’s plan. Right after commanding the Passover, God told Moses the following:

Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be done on them; but that which everyone must eat—that only may be prepared by you. So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance (Exodus 12:15–17).

Notice! As the Festival of Unleavened Bread was the time when God delivered Israel from Egypt—a symbol or “type” of *sin*—so the sym-

bolism of this Festival pictures true Christians coming out of spiritual Egypt—*sin*! Leaven itself, of course, is also a symbol of sin. When Jesus wanted to warn the disciples about the treacherous, sinful teachings of the Pharisees, He said to them, “Take heed and beware of the *leaven* of the Pharisees and the Sadducees” (Matthew 16:6). Literal leaven causes bread to rise, to “puff up,” just as the attitude of sin—or self-will—causes us to puff up and “do our own thing.” And leaven tends to spread itself through dough just as unchecked *sin* tends to spread through the Church! Therefore the Apostle Paul told the Corinthians, “Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:6–7).

Many nominal Christians believe that we are “saved” when our sins are forgiven. And, indeed, we are at that time saved from the death penalty incurred by our past sins—but we can still fall away and lose out on salvation (Hebrews 6:4–8; 10:26–31; 1 Corinthians 9:27). Salvation is a process. We are now “being saved” (1 Corinthians 1:18) and ultimately shall be saved—if we endure to the end (Matthew 24:13). Paul explains, “For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His *life*” (Romans 5:10). If we observe just the Passover, we leave God’s plan incomplete. We leave Jesus hanging dead on a cross—end of story! Yet remember—our Savior rose again! And it is through His *resurrected* life that we *shall be saved*.

Jesus told His followers, “If you want to enter into [eternal] life, keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:17). He also told us to “repent” (Mark 1:15)—that is, turn completely away from sin and go the other way, the way of righteousness. In other words, God requires that we make a covenant with Him to put sin out of our lives—to stop breaking His spiritual law and start keeping it. And then He expects us to follow through.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9). Many will say this verse proves that we need not do anything more than receive God’s free gift—that we do not need to keep God’s law. But how shortsighted a point of view this is when you consider the very next verse,

in which Paul explained that we are “created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (v. 10). Indeed, our whole *way of life* must change from disobeying God to *obeying* Him. Of course, He knows that we will not succeed perfectly in this while still in the flesh (Romans 7:18, 24; 1 John 1:8–10). But He still requires that we grow in His character through a process of striving against and overcoming sin (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:24–27; Revelation 2:11; 3:21; 21:7). Our past sinful life must be “crucified with Christ” (Galatians 2:20). We are baptized as a symbol of our old nature being figuratively buried with Christ, then raised from the “watery grave” of baptism as a symbolic “resurrection” to new life in Christ. That being so, we should from then on live according to His way. The Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures this process of living His way, putting sin out of our lives.

So Paul commanded the Gentile Church at Corinth, “Therefore let us *keep the Feast* [the Feast of Unleavened Bread], not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:8).

Obviously, this is a New Testament command to *keep* the Feast of Unleavened Bread! And this command was given to a primarily Gentile Church—so there was not any Judaism here! In verse 7, Paul links the unleavened bread Festival with the Passover that immediately precedes it, since Passover deals with forgiveness of past sins, whereas the Festival of Unleavened Bread deals with the “follow through”—the determination, with God’s help, to *grow* in grace and in knowledge “to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

So how are Christians to keep this Feast? As it approaches each year, true followers of New Testament Christianity are to remove leavening (and bread products that are already leavened) from their homes and property. Then for seven days they are to eat no leaven. (Incidentally, there is nothing wrong with literal leaven itself. It is simply a symbol for sin during this Feast.) And as they go through this Festival, if they happen across some leaven in their homes that they had previously overlooked, they are to put that out as well (Exodus 13:7).

While they search about their property doing this “spring cleaning,” they should remember that, just as crumbs of leavened bread may fall into various nooks and crannies around their homes, so sin

may be lurking in the hidden corners of their lives. Indeed, they may be quite surprised at some of the places they find leavening! Christians should be asking God to thoroughly clean them up and scrub them out *spiritually*—even showing them parts of their minds that they did not know were harboring sin.

For seven days—the number of perfection—true followers of New Testament Christianity are to have leaven out of their homes and off their property. They are to focus on getting completely *rid* of sin. They are to remind themselves through the observance of these God-commanded actions that they have a continuing responsibility before God to overcome themselves, the world, and Satan the devil. This is the true meaning of the Days of Unleavened Bread!

Step 3

Pentecost

As we have seen, each of God’s commanded Holy Days builds on the previous one in picturing for us the great master plan that God has in mind for humanity. Passover pictures our acceptance of Christ’s broken body and shed blood—our forgiveness and reconciliation with God. The Days of Unleavened Bread picture the need to come out of sin and to grow in grace and in knowledge.

In describing how New Testament Christians can go above and beyond the carnal Israelites of old, the inspired writer of Hebrews tells us, “Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it” (Hebrews 4:1–2). Through receiving the promised Holy Spirit, New Testament Christians can have genuine *faith* in God, far more fully understand His purpose, and be given a measure of God’s own character to help them overcome sin and grow in grace and in knowledge.

Speaking of the magnificent promises of God, Peter writes that “through these you may be partakers of the *divine nature*” (2 Peter 1:4). Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God places within us His very own nature—His divine character—as we walk with Him and grow spiritually. This is what enables us to genuinely overcome sin—in contrast to the ancient Israelites, who never received the promise of the Holy Spirit.

Coming soon after the Days of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Pentecost or Feast of Firstfruits (Exodus 34:22) reminds us that God is now calling only a small “firstfruits” spiritual harvest, but that He will bless this small harvest by *empowering* us with His Spirit so that we can overcome and grow spiritually even though living in “this present evil age” (Galatians 1:4).

In commanding the Feast of Firstfruits to ancient Israel, God told the Israelites to bring a sheaf of the “firstfruits” of the spring grain harvest to the priest (Leviticus 23:10). He was to wave this sheaf in a solemn ceremony to be accepted by God and thus obtain God’s blessing on this spring harvest and spiritually depict the resurrected Christ being accepted by the Father as the first of the “firstfruits”—the first human to be actually born of God by a resurrection. The “waving ceremony” always took place during the seven Days of Unleavened Bread, on the first day of the week following the weekly Sabbath (v. 11). If you compare Matthew 28:9 with John 20:17, you will see that Christ presented Himself to the Father after His resurrection the previous evening (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23; Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:15, 18).

The Israelites were to count 50 days beginning with this Sunday: “And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD. You shall bring from your habitations two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the LORD” (Leviticus 23:15–17). Pentecost literally means “fiftieth.” By counting exactly 50 days, beginning with a designated Sunday, they would always end on a Sunday seven weeks later—but not, obviously, on any particular day of the month. If Pentecost had been commanded to be kept on a particular day of the month, the Bible would have clearly said so—and there would be no need to “count”!

Then, on the day of Pentecost or Firstfruits, they were to offer two “wave loaves.” It was stated that these wave loaves “are the *firstfruits* to the LORD” (v. 17). These “firstfruit” loaves evidently pictured both the Old Testament and New Testament people of God—since even the Old Testament prophets had the Holy Spirit of God (cf. 1 Peter 1:10–11).

One vital lesson of the “firstfruits” is that God is only calling out a small number of people—the “firstfruits”—in this age. As we have stated, the early spring harvest in Israel was a small harvest compared to the major harvest that came in the autumn.

So it is today, spiritually. Jesus Christ said, “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are *few* who find it” (Matthew 7:13–14). And John reports Christ’s powerful warning, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.... Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father” (John 6:44, 65).

Strange as it may seem to millions of mainstream “Christians” who have been taught that God is trying to save the world now, *the true God of the Bible is trying to do no such thing!* If He were, then the vast *billions* of human beings who have lived for millennia in India, China, Africa, and elsewhere would have been called to Christianity. But the vast majority of them lived and died never hearing the name of Christ!

The Feast of Pentecost or “Firstfruits” reminds us, year by year, that those few called out of this world today are only the “firstfruits” and that a *far larger* harvest of souls will occur later—as we shall see. And as we read of the “outpouring” of the Holy Spirit on the first New Testament Day of Pentecost, we can be inspired that—though small in number—we “called out ones” today have the *power* of the Holy Spirit to do the Work of God, as well as overcome ourselves with help never before given to human beings.

The inspired Peter proclaimed, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:38–39). Then we read Paul’s inspired words in Romans 5: “Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (v. 5).

And what kind of love is this poured out by the Holy Spirit? The Apostle John clearly stated, “For this is the love of God, that we *keep*

God's Annu

Passover*	Feast of Unleavened Bread	Day of Pentecost	Feast of Trumpets
Old Testament meaning			
A lamb was sacrificed and its blood placed around the doors of Israelite houses in Egypt, which God "passed over" when slaying the Egyptian firstborn (Leviticus 23:5)	A seven-day festival during which leavening (such as yeast, which causes bread to rise when baking) is not kept in dwellings and is not eaten (Leviticus 23:6-14)	A day celebrating the gathering in of the first and smaller of the two annual harvests; observed 50 days from a fixed point in the previous Feast (Leviticus 23:15-22)	Called Rosh by the Jews; of rejoicing by the blowing of trumpets (Leviticus 23:24)
New Testament meaning			
Pictures Jesus Christ's shedding His blood for the sins of human beings	Pictures the Christian's duty to "put out sin" from a life yielded to Jesus Christ	Pictures the Christian's receiving God's Holy Spirit	Pictures a time of judgment and plagues; ending with Jesus' Second Coming
2020 April 8	April 9-15	May 31	September 7
2021 March 27	March 28-April 3	May 16	September 21
2022 April 15	April 16-22	June 5	September 5
2023 April 5	April 6-12	May 28	September 19
2024 April 22	April 23-29	June 16	October 3
2025 April 12	April 13-19	June 1	September 17
2026 April 1	April 2-8	May 24	September 7
2027 April 21	April 22-28	June 13	October 21
2028 April 10	April 11-17	June 4	September 18
2029 March 30	March 31-April 6	May 20	September 4
2030 April 17	April 18-24	June 9	September 23

*Observed the previous evening

Major Festivals

	Day of Atonement	Feast of Tabernacles	Last Great Day
<p>Hashanah ; a day marked ing (Leviticus 23:23-25)</p>	<p>A day of fasting and repentance, known to the Jews as Yom Kippur (Leviticus 23:26-32)</p>	<p>A seven-day celebration of the great fall harvest, observed by living in temporary dwellings for the duration of the Feast (Leviticus 23:33-43)</p>	<p>Adjacent to the Feast of Tabernacles, this eighth day is considered a separate Feast (Leviticus 23:36, 39)</p>
<p>Time of war s, conclud- us Christ's ing</p>	<p>Pictures the binding of Satan at the beginning of the Millennium and the world becoming at one with God</p>	<p>Pictures the Millennium, when the earth will be ruled by Jesus Christ and His saints</p>	<p>Pictures the coming "Great White Throne Judgment" at which all of humanity not previously called will have the chance to hear the true Gospel and accept salvation</p>
September 19	September 28	October 3-9	October 10
September 7	September 16	September 21-27	September 28
September 26	October 5	October 10-16	October 17
September 16	September 25	September 30-October 6	October 7
September 3	October 12	October 17-23	October 24
September 23	October 2	October 7-13	October 14
September 12	September 21	September 26-October 2	October 3
September 2	October 11	October 16-22	October 23
September 21	September 30	October 5-11	October 12
September 10	September 19	September 24-30	October 1
September 28	October 7	October 12-18	October 19

His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3). Through the Holy Spirit, we receive the spiritual love of God—the kind of love we must have to fulfill God’s great spiritual law, the Ten Commandments, and build the very character of God. Yearly, the Day of Pentecost reminds us of our unique calling and of the strength we are given through God’s Spirit to make our “calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10).

Step 4

The Feast of Trumpets

The first three of God’s commanded Festivals picture spiritual aspects of the plan of God. The last four Festivals all fall in the seventh month—the month of finality or completion—and picture the completion of God’s plan on earth.

The Feast of Trumpets occurs on the very first day of the seventh month of God’s sacred calendar. It ushers in the final events of God’s plan. It pictures the *massive* intervention of God in human affairs—climaxing in the Second Coming of Christ as King of kings. Notice God’s original command to ancient Israel: “Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of *trumpets*, a holy convocation’” (Leviticus 23:24).

In Israel, the blowing of trumpets was used as a signal for the people to assemble, to take some action—or as an alarm of *war* (Numbers 10:1–10). Therefore, being placed as it is just before the final events of this age, the Feast of Trumpets clearly signifies the soon-coming time of world upheaval, chaos, and war that virtually all the prophecies of the Bible show will immediately precede Christ’s return.

It should be noted that trumpets were also used to herald the coronation of a new king, as in the case of Israel’s King Solomon (1 Kings 1:34, 39). And the peaceful rule of Solomon, following the wars of his father David, was a type of the coming rule of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Kings 4:25; 1 Chronicles 28:5).

This evil age of human self-rule will end with the human race standing on the very threshold of mass extinction. Indeed, the Bible has much to say about a terrible World War to come that will engulf the whole earth in the near future. To learn about this horrific time called the “great tribulation” (Matthew 24:21) and the circumstances that will bring it about, please request our informative booklets *The Beast of Revelation: Myth, Metaphor, or Soon-Coming Reality?* and *The United States and Great Britain in Prophecy*. Both are available free of charge.

Thankfully—before it is all over—God’s intervention will prevent humanity from utterly destroying itself (v. 22). Then the day of man will be over—and the Day of the Lord will commence. Yet it will not begin with peace and joy for everyone. Rather, the Almighty will have to enforce peace upon rebellious humanity—by first breaking its stubborn will.

Notice Joel’s inspired prophecy: “Blow the *trumpet* in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand” (Joel 2:1). So the blowing of trumpets here sounds an “alarm” that the prophesied “day of the LORD” is “at hand!”

Picturing the time when the Israelites are released from captivity at Christ’s Second Coming and are brought back to the land of Israel, the Prophet Isaiah proclaimed, “So it shall be in that day that the great *trumpet* will be blown; they will come, who are about to perish in the land of Assyria, and they who are outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem” (Isaiah 27:13).

Of course, the “trumpet plagues” are described in Revelation 8–9. Coming after the Great Tribulation, these awesome plagues will literally *shake* this earth like *nothing ever has before*. At a time when the prophesied beast and false prophet (cf. Revelation 13:15–18) have just destroyed millions of lives with awesome technological weapons of war, the great God intervenes to show *His power* and remind a rebellious civilization that He is the ultimate *Ruler* of heaven and earth. “So the seven angels who had the *seven trumpets* prepared themselves to sound. The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up” (8:6–7).

Finally, the living Jesus Christ supernaturally intervenes to *save* a rebellious humanity and to bring genuine *peace* to the world. “Then

the seventh angel sounded: and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” (11:15).

So Christ will return at the seventh trumpet!

Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a *trumpet* and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (Matthew 24:29–31).

What is the significance of Christ sending angels to gather His elect at this time? The Apostle Paul wrote regarding Christ’s return at the last trumpet, “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20). But notice what he further stated: “For since by man [Adam] came death, by Man [Christ] also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits [i.e., the first of the firstfruits], afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming [i.e., the rest of the firstfruits]” (vv. 21–23). And when will it all happen? Paul wrote, “Behold, I tell 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 trumpet*. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (vv. 51–52). Perhaps there is nothing more encouraging than this amazing fact.

Can we picture a great blinding *light* so radiant that humans cannot even look at it? That is how the risen Christ’s face will look as He returns in *glory*. Can we picture a massive *trumpet blast* literally *shaking* the earth to announce Christ’s return as King of kings? Can we picture the true saints of God—who follow Him wherever He goes (Revelation 14:4)—rising to meet Christ in the air, to join forever with their Savior and assist Him in *ruling* this rebellious planet (Revelation 2:26–27)?

All of these things will be heralded by the seventh trumpet! For although the Feast of Trumpets pictures the horrifying upsets, *wars*, and *plagues* at the end of this human civilization, it also pictures the glorious *divine intervention* of the Creator God who will finally restore order and bring genuine *peace* and *joy* to a chastened humanity that is finally ready to listen to God and follow His righteous ways.

Step 5

The Day of Atonement

Following the enormous “shaking” of the nations and Christ’s return in mighty power, the next step in God’s master plan is for the peoples of the earth to become “at one” with God. Then they can willingly learn God’s ways and be blessed.

But today, the nations are rebelling against God and His ways because they have been *deceived*. In His wisdom and infinite mercy, God has made all human beings free moral agents. He knew that mankind would desperately want to try to do things its own way before finally learning that *God’s* way is right. Therefore, God has allowed humanity to be deceived—to be mainly “cut off” from God through these past 6,000 years of human history.

In His revealed word, God clearly tells us that Satan the devil is the “god” of this present world. “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them” (2 Corinthians 4:3–4). Paul was inspired to write, “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:1–2).

Satan the devil, the “prince of this world,” as Jesus called him (John 14:30, *KJV*), is working overtime to deceive humanity. Being the “prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2), Satan “broad-

casts”—just like radio and television. But he spiritually broadcasts wrong attitudes and ideas. He makes mankind feel that God is either “dead” or not “real”—that He is an ethereal God, a “blind force” way off somewhere and, always, that mankind does *not* need to obey God’s law and literally follow His ways, the Ten Commandments, and keep holy His weekly Sabbaths and annual Festivals like Christ and the original Apostles did, setting us an example.

The beloved Apostle John wrote, “So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who *deceives the whole world*; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Revelation 12:9).

The Apostle Peter was inspired to warn us, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a *roaring lion*, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world” (1 Peter 5:8–9).

Therefore, at the beginning of Christ’s reign—*if* there is to be genuine peace and a right spirit among men—Satan the devil must be banished! Notice the commandment regarding the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 23:27–28: “Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall afflict your souls [abstain completely from food and drink], and offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. And you shall do no work on that same day, for it is the Day of Atonement, to make atonement for you before the LORD your God.” This day was to be a “statute *forever*” to the people of God (v. 31). Even the Apostle to the Gentiles was obviously *keeping* the Day of Atonement in a Roman prison ship in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea (Acts 27:9)—years after some say that observance had been “nailed to the cross!”

A very clear indication of the real meaning of the Day of Atonement is given in Leviticus 16. Here we find an Old Testament ritual wherein two goats were to be presented before the High Priest. In Israel, “casting lots” was an appeal to *God* to decide a matter. So Aaron was to “cast lots” to find what each of these goats represented (Leviticus 16:8). One was to represent “the LORD”—the God of Israel who later emptied Himself and became our Savior (1 Corinthians 10:4). The other goat was to represent Azazel, which is a term—as many Hebrew references explain—for the “adversary,” Satan the devil!

The goat representing “the LORD” was to *die*. God told Aaron to “offer it as a *sin* offering” (Leviticus 16:9) just as Jesus Christ gave His life for our sins. But regarding the “adversary goat,” God commanded, “Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the *iniquities* of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness” (vv. 21–22).

Then the man who led this goat symbolizing Satan into the “wilderness” was to bathe his body and even his clothing (v. 26) for, symbolically, he had come into direct contact with the very embodiment of evil—Satan the devil! He had been used to separate Satan from the people of God. He had led the “adversary” goat to a wilderness, *far away*, where he—Satan, symbolically—could not hurt or deceive God’s people anymore!

When was this ceremony and day of fasting to occur? “This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month” (v. 29). Though the ancient Israelites understood that this ceremony was to be part of the observance of the Day of Atonement, very few grasped the real spiritual meaning this should have for New Testament Christians. And how could they, since they were blinded even to the meaning of the first goat—the Messiah—when He came to this earth to die for their sins?

Yet the New Testament shows that this is exactly what happens when Christ returns. Jesus’ return as King of kings is described in Revelation 19:11–21. Then, in Revelation 20, we read that a mighty angel is appointed to remove Satan. “He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while” (vv. 2–3). Clearly, Satan—the “Azazel” or adversary—will be *cut off* from humanity so he is unable to *deceive* mankind during the thousand-year reign of Christ!

That is why humanity will quickly become “at one” with God’s ways—*no more Satanic influence*. That is why, during the glorious reign of Christ, no one will “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” (Isaiah 11:9).

And Isaiah further explains how, at that time, the blindness of humanity will be fully removed. “He will destroy on this mountain the surface of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; the rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken” (25:7–8). With “Satan’s Broadcasting System” shut down and the *blindness* of humanity removed, man can indeed become “at one” with God. Christ will have paid our part in our sins, and Satan the devil will be utterly banished to a symbolic “wilderness”—a “bottomless pit” (Revelation 20:3)—and be restrained in this condition for his part in our sins.

God is just! He will place on Satan’s own head the enormous *guilt* he bears for stirring up mankind against God, for *deceiving* humanity into thinking God is “unfair” and that His laws and righteous ways are not good. Finally, humanity will learn to *appreciate* God and His ways, to genuinely *love* and *worship* the true God of the Bible, for at this point, the “atonement” for humanity’s sins will be complete.

Step 6

The Feast of Tabernacles

After Satan is put away, the next stage of God’s plan is the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ as King of kings. This involves Christ and the resurrected saints teaching *all* of humanity the ways of God. It involves the *massive* “fall harvest” of saints—the time when everyone then living will finally learn the ways of God and have full opportunity, without Satan’s deceptions, to serve and obey the Creator.

In Leviticus 23:34, God commanded this Festival to ancient Israel. “Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the LORD.’” So the Feast of Tabernacles was to last seven days. It pictures the seventh millennial “day” or 1,000-year period of human history—coming just ahead of us. In Leviticus 23, it is called the Feast of Tabernacles or “booths”—to remind Israel that they were “sojourners” in the land. Spiritually, it reminds Christians that we—as our father Abraham—are “strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Hebrews 11:13) looking forward to the Kingdom of God.

But in Exodus 23 we find an autumn Festival described as “the Feast of *Ingathering*, at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field” (v. 16). So it also pictures and celebrates the great fall harvest in Israel—picturing for Christians the great spiritual harvest of souls to be reaped during the thousand-year reign of Christ!

As we have already seen, at that time the earth will become “full of the knowledge of the LORD” (Isaiah 11:9). And “they shall not hurt

nor destroy in all My holy mountain.” There will be an outpouring of peace and *joy* such as the world has never experienced: “No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up on it; it shall not be found there. But the redeemed shall walk there, and the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain *joy* and *gladness* and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (35:9–10).

The inspired Peter called this period the “times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of *all* His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21). Indeed, literally scores of prophecies throughout the Old and New Testaments speak of the time of Christ’s return, of all the world coming to understand, and of genuine peace and safety permeating the earth because humanity will be learning God’s righteous *laws* and practicing His entire way of life:

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, “Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the *law*, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore (Isaiah 2:2–4).

When the modern Israelites return from their end-time captivity, they “shall rebuild the old ruins, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations.... Instead of your shame you shall have double honor, and instead of confusion they shall rejoice in their portion. Therefore in their land they shall possess double; *everlasting joy* shall be theirs” (Isaiah 61:4, 7).

The millennial reign of Christ is definitely the time prophesied by Jeremiah:

Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put *My law* in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people (Jeremiah 31:31–33).

God’s magnificent spiritual law, the Ten Commandments, has *never* been done away! God’s law has been “magnified” by Jesus Christ and made even more binding, so that we are to keep not only its letter but also its spiritual intent; we not only refrain from murder, but also refrain from enmity, hate, and the attitude of murder (Matthew 5:21–22). We are taught not only to forsake adultery, but also to not even “look on” a woman to lust after her (vv. 27–28)!

During the Millennium, God’s laws are to be written in the hearts and minds of His people all over the earth. God’s laws express His very *character*—the character He demands that we develop in order to be kings and priests forever in His Kingdom! This blessing will be afforded to *all mankind* during the wonderful “Feast of In-gathering,” the 1,000-year reign of Christ here on this earth. Revelation 20 tells us, “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years” (v. 6).

So all true Christians should be preparing *now* to learn and *practice* God’s laws and His way of life so that they will be able to *teach* these things to others in Christ’s soon-coming world government. The inspired Apostle Paul admonished true Christians, “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?” (1 Corinthians 6:2–3).

Will just the “true Christians” or the Israelites observe the Feast of Tabernacles? Notice Zechariah 14:1–4:

Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives.

Then read verse 9: “And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be—‘The LORD is one,’ and His name one.” And read verses 16–19:

And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain. If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of *all* the nations that do not come up to *keep the Feast of Tabernacles*.

The above verses should make it very clear that *all* nations will learn to keep the Feast of Tabernacles in a very few years under the immediate direction of Jesus Christ. Even the Egyptians, who may at first have resentments against anything “Jewish,” will learn to *observe* the Feast of Tabernacles—and *all* of God’s commanded Festivals.

Step 7

The Last Great Day

Is this the *only* day of salvation? The overwhelming majority of ministers, priests, and mainstream “Christians” would resoundingly answer, “Yes.”

But these same people utterly fail to realize the depth, breadth, and length of the massive *deception* Satan the devil has perpetrated on a confused humanity. As we have seen, the Bible clearly says that Satan “deceives the *whole world*” (Revelation 12:9). Satan is the “god” of this present age (2 Corinthians 4:3–4). People generally follow Satan’s ways—not God’s.

The Last Great Day pictures the amazing truth that God is *not trying* to save the world now! If the great *God* who made the universe were actually trying to save humanity, He would succeed. The *billions* of people in Asia, Africa, and elsewhere would all become good Christians in short order! Yet the fact is that the *overwhelming* majority of people throughout human history have *never* subscribed to—or even been exposed to—*any form* of Christianity. And so it remains until this very day!

What is the *real* answer to this dilemma?

First of all, the Son of God stated plainly, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.... Then Jesus said to them again, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep’” (John 10:1, 7). And He inspired the Apostle Peter to declare about Himself, “This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which

has become the chief cornerstone.' Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is *no other name* under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:11–12). So you either accept Christ—the *true* Christ of the Bible—or you do not. And if you truly accept Christ as your Savior *and* your Lord, you will *surrender* to Him and let Him *rule* your life. As Christ commanded, you will *keep* the Ten Commandments as a way of life (Matthew 19:17). You will let Christ live His *obedient* life in you through the Holy Spirit (Galatians 2:20). And if you do not, you are *not* a Christian and you yourself may be *blinded*. It is just that simple.

The overwhelming majority of mankind has been *blinded* to the knowledge of the true God and the true Christ. Yet again, God's inspired word tells us, "For there is *no respect* of persons with God" (Romans 2:11, *KJV*). And the Apostle Peter stated, when God began to call a few Gentiles to repentance, "Of a truth I perceive that God is *no respecter* of persons" (Acts 10:34, *KJV*).

Is God contradicting Himself? Of course not, for God has *never* said that He is trying save everyone now! God has said, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). It is God's will that *all* "come to repentance"—but they certainly *have not* done so in this age! Notice also how the Apostle Paul wrote of "God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3–4).

It is simply a matter of *timing*.

In God's time—as we shall see—all humans who have *ever* lived will be given a real understanding of God's master plan and purpose, and the vast majority will *accept* God's truth once their eyes are fully opened. No, it is *not* a "second chance," as some would like to protest. It will be the first genuine opportunity for these people to come to understand the true God, the true Jesus Christ, and Their great *purpose!*

The Bible speaks time and again about a time of "judgment" for *all* humanity. And as used, the term "judgment" does *not* usually mean condemnation, but, rather, a time of decision—a time of trial and testing (cf. 1 Peter 4:17). Notice Jesus Christ's own statements to those cities of His own day who *rejected* Him and His teaching: "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works

which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the *day of judgment* than for you” (Matthew 11:21–22).

The pagan cities that *never heard* of Christ will have a “more tolerable” opportunity in the coming day of judgment. Notice how even the city of Sodom was included in this category: “But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for you” (v. 24).

If God judges these people by the same standard as others—which the Bible clearly indicates He will—then the ancient pagans would have *no chance* for eternal life because they clearly did *not* accept Christ as their Savior or obey God’s ways. The *only* answer is that they *will*, in a coming judgment period, be given the opportunity to really understand God’s great *purpose* to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and then, at that time, be “judged” by how they respond based on this genuine *first opportunity* for salvation.

But does the Bible indicate that such a time is coming?

Yes, it does! In Revelation 20, after describing the Millennium and the short period after the Millennium—when Satan is released for a “little while” (v. 3)—God goes on to describe a time of “judgment” for the people who died before the Millennium began and had never been converted. After describing a great “white throne,” notice what the Apostle John wrote under inspiration: “And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works” (vv. 12–13).

When these dead people are seen “standing,” this involves a resurrection! And notice that verse 12 also says that the “books” were opened. The Greek word *biblia*, from which the word “Bible” is normally translated, is used here. So these people—for the first time—have their minds and hearts opened to the Bible. They also have opportunity to obtain salvation—to have their names written in the “Book of Life.” In this “Great White Throne Judgment” period, they are truly being “called.” Satan has once again been banished. Their

minds are now opened to real understanding. In this judgment period, even the inhabitants of Sodom and hundreds of other pagan or deceived cities of the past may have a better opportunity than some who lived at the time of Christ, as these ancient pagans never before understood virtually *anything* about the true God or His ways. They were *not* responsible for being “blinded”!

Countless millions of these men and women of past ages may zealously grasp the truth when they fully understand. They may become better Christians—better servants of God—than many of us who sometimes take God's precious truth for granted and are not as zealous as we should be.

How clear!

God will resurrect the countless millions who lived and died long before Christ came and brought the full understanding of salvation. Additional *billions* who have lived and died since Jesus Christ, or who *now live* but are *blinded* to the knowledge of the true God and His purpose—all these will be brought to *real* understanding and repentance! They will be given God's Holy Spirit—the very nature and character of *God* will be imparted to them after real repentance and baptism, just as it is to us today. Then they, too, will have an opportunity for some years to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

They will have an opportunity for full salvation—eternal life in the very Kingdom and Family of *God*. It is only a matter that the *time* of their calling is later than many of ours—but it is *sure* to come!

Then, finally, every single human being who has *ever* drawn breath will have had a genuine opportunity for salvation! And so the *seventh* of God's Holy Days, the mysterious “eighth day” coming immediately after the Feast of Tabernacles—but as a separate Festival (Leviticus 23:36)—pictures this wonderful time soon after the Millennium when *all* humanity will finally be given an opportunity to understand the truth.

This is obviously the time Jesus was referring to in John 7: “On the last day, that *great day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water’” (vv. 37–38). In the Great White Throne Judgment, “*anyone*”—*everyone* who has ever lived—will finally have his or her eyes

opened and be given the opportunity to respond to God and to receive His Holy Spirit.

With this seventh God-commanded Festival, the picture of God's plan is now *complete*. In realizing the marvelous wisdom and mercy of God in all of His plan, we may truly say with the Apostle Paul in Romans 11:32–33, “For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!”

Conclusion

Follow God's Plan!

If the living God is opening your mind to His truth, then you have the responsibility to act on it (James 1:22; 4:17). And to help you in doing so, please be informed that the Living Church of God—which sponsors this booklet and the *Tomorrow's World* magazine and telecast—has ordained ministers and local congregations or video groups throughout the world. They meet together for worship regularly each Sabbath and on the annual Holy Days as well.

If you are interested in observing these days with us, please write or phone the Living Church of God office nearest you. Our Regional Offices and phone numbers are listed at the end of this booklet. Be assured that no one will call on you unless you request it. If you desire, one of our representatives will set up an appointment at a time and place convenient for you. You will *not* be pressured to “join” anything. In fact, our minister or local representative may suggest that you do further reading, take your time, and be sure that you truly want to live by every word of God.

Then, once you do start attending services with God's people and truly observing His weekly and annual Sabbaths, you can expect to be amazed at how spiritually uplifted you will feel.

Attending services, hearing God's truth spoken each week and having the opportunity to fellowship with happy, forward-looking people of like faith will truly be a delight. In all of this, you will be a spiritual pioneer. You will have shown your Creator that you are will-

ing to step out in faith to obey His inspired word in spite of possible obstacles and opposition.

In so doing, you will be preparing for the first resurrection, the “better resurrection” (Hebrews 11:35). And, if you stand firm in this way of life, you will in the end hear these encouraging words from Jesus Christ: “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you *ruler* over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” (Matthew 25:21).

We hope to hear from you soon!

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