

The Magnificent Meaning of God's Holy Days

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The Magnificent Meaning of God's Holy Days

The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be
holy convocations, these are My feasts.
~ Leviticus 23:2 ~

From the beginning of human history, every tribe, nation, and culture has designated certain days to mark special occasions. Commonly known as holidays, these celebrations are designed to commemorate seasonal changes, memorialize historic moments, celebrate a new year, or reflect an anticipated event. Some of the most well-known of these are Christmas, Lent, Easter, and New Year's Day.

Notwithstanding, before any of our modern holidays existed, God commanded His people to observe holy days throughout the year. They are known as Sabbaths and are also called, "the feasts of the LORD" (Lev. 23:2). What few have realized is that these appointed times are the only days that can properly be considered holy days. They are discussed in detail throughout the Bible, and when closely examined we begin to understand that these days are prophetic, profound, and everlasting! What may be surprising to many is that God's holy days do not include Christmas, Hanukkah, Lent, or Easter.

It is our hope that the content of this booklet will help believers understand God's holy days to the fullest extent. The following pages will answer questions such as what they are, how

they are to be observed today, and what their glorious meaning is. Years of faithful observance combined with intensive study have gone into this work to ensure that *The Magnificent Meaning of God's Holy Days* will explain the Almighty's awe-inspiring plan for humanity—a destiny that spans from the beginning of earth's creation, to its end, and beyond!

Holidays or Holy Days

Holidays are enjoyable to nearly everyone. For most, they offer an extended break from work and festive social gatherings with friends and family. It is no wonder that holidays are cherished observances in every culture around the world.

What many do not realize is that the word holiday is derived from the expression holy day—a term used to describe observances considered holy according to the Bible. This fact makes any other religious celebrations counterfeit! Nonetheless, the vast majority have embraced extra-biblical religious holidays that have been promoted as authentic for centuries. Even the cherished observances of Christmas and Easter are not sanctioned by God. Such holidays are deeply rooted in celebrations that the Bible condemns! Therefore, God's true holy days can only be found within the pages of the Holy Bible.

Despite this truth, few accept the Bible as a moral compass by which to guide their lives. Most people around the world deny its validity. On the other hand, among those who do accept its authority, the majority of believers pick and choose certain verses that they want to accept while excusing away the rest as being outdated or “Jewish.” As a result, most denominations of Christianity have embraced holidays created by men instead of the holy days dictated by God. In Christ's own words:

These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. In vain do they worship Me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men (Matthew 15:8-9).

The most well-known and popular holidays observed around the world today are not commanded by God, but are commandments of men. This should be cause for alarm motivating all who believe to ask the following questions: What are the holy days commanded by God? Were they intended for the tribes of Israel alone? What do they celebrate? Are Christians expected to honor them today? If they are required festivals, how, and when, should they be observed?

Required Observances

God requires all believers to make a whole-hearted effort to be holy (Lev. 19:2; 1Pet. 1:16). As will be demonstrated, observing His appointed festivals are an essential part of His process of sanctification. These days are the only times that can be considered holy, and they are to be kept by all who seek salvation. Notice what God instructed the prophet Moses to declare:

The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, these *are* My feasts (Leviticus 23:2).

God declared that His holy convocations are considered “My feasts.” Though meals are often included, the Eternal’s feasts are not defined as a generous banquet. Translated from the Hebrew term *moed*, a holy feast is defined as:

Properly an *appointment*, that is, a fixed *time* or season; specifically a *festival*; conventionally a *year*; by implication, an *assembly* [as convened for a definite purpose] (*Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, H4150).

The definition of this term explains that God’s holy days are fixed times that are *appointments* in which an assembly is convened for a definite purpose. *Moed* is the same word God used on the fourth day when God set the sun, moon, and stars in specific locations and revealed an essential aspect of their purpose:

Then God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for **signs and seasons**” (Genesis 1:14).

This verse reveals two important facts. It indicates that our solar system was designed for the purpose of giving mankind a lunisolar calendar enabling us to visually track days, weeks, and years. This is why God said, “Let them be for **signs.**” The word translated as *sign* is the Hebrew *oth* meaning a “signal, flag, beacon, or mark” (*Strong's*, H226). The term rendered as “seasons” is the Hebrew *moed* that also means “feasts”—God’s appointed holy days (H4150).

This shows us that the holy days were not instituted at Mt. Sinai when Israel came out of Egypt. The sun and moon were placed in their respective positions on the fourth day—two days before humanity existed—so that the first man and woman would have a lunisolar calendar by which to determine the times of God’s festivals.

The astronomical effort made by God was so that we could literally see this process of time unfold every year. It displays the importance of His holy days. They must be observed by all who worship Him in spirit and truth, and we are obliged to honor them today at His appointed times (Mat. 5:18).

From the Beginning

Most Bible students believe that God’s holy days did not exist until Israel began their Exodus from Egypt. While it is true that Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were declared by name just before the exodus began, and the terms for the other annual holy days were pronounced at Mt. Sinai, the Bible indicates that God’s commandments and holy days existed as an inseparable part of His law from the beginning of our creation. Notice what the Apostle John wrote when considering the longevity of God’s laws:

Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness... the devil has sinned from the beginning (1John 3:4,8).

Sin is defined as lawlessness, and the devil is known to be a sinner from the beginning of human existence. Therefore, God's laws must have existed before the creation of Adam and Eve. This is also evident when we consider that the first man and woman were deceived by the devil into thinking that sin was a viable way of life. Cain murdered his brother Abel and it was considered a great sin. Eventually, the wickedness of mankind became so great that God destroyed everyone except for Noah and his family. All of this is recorded in the first six chapters of Genesis indicating that God's laws were in effect "from the beginning."

The book of Genesis also provides evidence that the holy days existed from the beginning. It is first declared in chapter two that God sanctified the seventh day. Chapter four also indicates that Cain and Abel brought offerings to God at a specific time of the year:

In the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat (Genesis 4:3-4).

Because these verses state that offerings were brought to the Lord "in the process of time," many think some undisclosed period of time had passed before an offering was given. However, the more accurate rendering is that these offerings were presented, "at the end of days." Many bibles with marginal notes declare this exact interpretation. The fact that this is the correct translation is supported by well-known commentators such as John Wesley, Matthew Henry, John Gill, Adam Clarke, Albert Barnes, E.W. Bullinger, as well as Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown.

The accurate translation is of great importance. At the end of days indicates that both Cain and Abel were accustomed to counting specific days which would conclude at a predetermined time. The brothers would then come before God to present an offering.

Put this in perspective. While all of God's holy days require monitoring the passing of time, the only festival in which there is an actual *end* of counting days is the Feast of Weeks; commonly known as Pentecost. This celebration takes its name from counting a designated number of weeks (Deu. 16:9). The New Testament term comes from the Greek *pentekoste* meaning "fiftieth" (*Strong's*, G4005). Pentecost is a springtime festival where a firstfruit offering is made. The count begins during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:15-16). Seven weeks containing 49 days are numbered and the 50th day is God's Feast of Weeks.

During mankind's early years, Cain brought an offering of produce while Abel offered the firstborn of his flock. This indicates that the first family used God's astronomical process of tracking time in order to observe His holy days.

Another clue to the preexistence of the holy days comes from an overlooked verse describing the faithfulness of Abraham. God promised this patriarch:

I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws (Genesis 26:4-5).

The reason God made this enduring promise to Abraham was because he had proven himself to be faithful in all things. God said that Abraham obeyed His voice and kept His commandments, statutes, and laws. These three words refer to divine instructions for living that includes the Ten Commandments, unclean and clean meats, and God's holy days. We know that this is true when we consider the word translated as laws. It is the Hebrew *torah* that refers to the Decalogue contained in the first five books of the Bible. When we consider that the Genesis account was written by Moses, long after Abraham's death, the author clearly understood that Abraham kept the same laws that were later declared to the nation of Israel.

In fact, it is likely that Abraham's test of being willing to offer Isaac as a sacrifice took place on the day of Passover—the same day that Christ was given by His Father as a sacrifice for the sins of humanity.

For all People throughout Time

God's holy days were not given to the tribes of Israel alone. He intended for all people to honor these days. This is evident after we recognize that the people of Israel were not the only ones who left Egypt during the Exodus. The historical record indicates, "A mixed multitude went up with them also" (Exo. 12:38). The multitude was a large number of Egyptians and other gentiles who witnessed the plagues of Egypt, believed in the God of Israel, and wanted to be counted among God's people. The Almighty would not refuse anyone who desires to follow Him. Thus, when God instructed Moses to declare His laws to Israel, He also expected the mixed multitude to keep these laws as well. The book of Deuteronomy explains that all who believe are required to keep God's weekly and annual Sabbaths. As God clearly stated:

I make this covenant and this oath, not with you alone,
but with him who stands here with us today before the
LORD our God, as well as with him who is not here
with us today (Deuteronomy 29:14-15).

The covenant was not made with the tribes of Israel alone. All of the people standing with Israel at Mount Sinai entered into this covenant. Further, notice that God included all believers who were NOT at the mount. This means that any present or future people desiring to follow God in spirit and truth are required to enter into a covenant with Him!

God's holy days are an inseparable part of this covenant, and the terms are not limited to Israel, nor are they merely for the people mentioned in the pages of the Old Testament. Many might be surprised to find that New Testament Christians kept the same

holy days as ancient Israel. Notice what honest scholars admit about the feasts of the LORD:

There is no indication of the observance of the Easter festival in the New Testament, or in the writings of the apostolic Fathers... The first Christians continued to observe the Jewish festivals, though in a new spirit, as commemorations of events which those festivals had foreshadowed. Thus the Passover, with a new conception added to it of Christ as the true Paschal Lamb and the first fruits from the dead, continued to be observed (*The Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th edition*, vol. 8, p. 828).

There are many historians who will honestly admit that the New Testament Church continued to observe God's holy days. But the most convincing evidence comes from the authors of the New Testament who produced four gospel records, the book of Acts, and twenty-one profound letters. Within those writings, the Church of God is frequently found assembling on God's holy days. Notice the following examples:

- For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath... Therefore, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8-12).
- Now on the first *day of the Feast* of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?" And He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'the Teacher says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples'" (Matthew 26:17-18).
- Now after the Sabbath, as the first *day* of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb (Matthew 28:1).
- Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught (Mark 1:21).
- The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27).

- And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue (Mark 6:2).
- Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath (Mark 15:42).
- His family went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover (Luke 2:41).
- And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read (Luke 4:16).
- Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath (Luke 13:10).
- That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near (Luke 23:54).
- Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment (Luke 23:56).
- Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did (John 2:23).
- So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they also had gone to the feast (John 4:45).
- But when His brothers had gone up, then He also went up to the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret (John 7:10).
- When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place (Acts 2:1).
- Now it was *during* the Days of Unleavened Bread (Acts 12:3).
- On the next Sabbath most of the city came together to hear the word of God (Acts 13:44).
- And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks (Acts 18:4).
- I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing (Acts 18:21).
- But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread (Acts 20:6).

- 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 (Acts 20:16).
- Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast (Day of Atonement) was already over, Paul advised them (Acts 27:9).
- 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 (1Corinthians 5:7-8).
- But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost (1Corinthians 16:8).

The Holy Days are Also Millennial

History reveals that God's people kept the holy days from the very beginning. The Bible also indicates that Jesus Christ and the New Testament Church observed them. It should be of no surprise that these appointed times have continued to be kept by faithful people down through the ages to our day. Further evidence of this is thoroughly documented in a book published by the Eternal Church of God titled *Evidence for Eras*.

In addition, there are also verses in the Bible explaining that, when Christ returns, God's holy days will eventually be observed by everyone. Notice the following words declared by God through the prophets who spoke of that future time:

- Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts; your eyes will see Jerusalem, a quiet home, a tabernacle *that* will not be taken down; not one of its stakes will ever be removed, nor will any of its cords be broken (Isaiah 33:20).
- Also, the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants—everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath (Isaiah 56:6).

- “And it shall come to pass *that* from one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,” says the LORD (Isaiah 66:23).
- They shall keep My laws and My statutes in all My appointed meetings, and they shall hallow My Sabbaths (Ezekiel 44:24).
- Then it shall be the prince’s part *to give* burnt offerings, grain offerings, and drink offerings, at the feasts, the New Moons, the Sabbaths, and at all the appointed seasons of the house of Israel (Ezekiel 45:17).
- In the first *month*, on the fourteenth day of the month, you shall observe the Passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten (Ezekiel 45:21).
- In the seventh *month*, on the fifteenth day of the month, at the feast (of tabernacles), he shall do likewise for seven days, according to the sin offering, the burnt offering, the grain offering, and the oil (Ezekiel 45:25).
- The gateway of the inner court that faces toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the Sabbath it shall be opened (Ezekiel 46:1).
- Likewise, the people of the land shall worship at the entrance to this gateway before the LORD on the Sabbaths and the New Moons (Ezekiel 46:3).
- But when the people of the land come before the LORD on the appointed feast days, whoever enters by way of the north gate to worship shall go out by way of the south gate; and whoever enters by way of the south gate shall go out by way of the north gate (Ezekiel 46:9).
- 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. 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 14:16-19).

- But I *am* the LORD your God, ever since the land of Egypt; I will again make you dwell in tents, as in the days of the appointed feast (Hosea 12:9).

God always intended for faithful people to observe His holy days. There was never a change in these laws after Christ's death. In addition, God has NEVER approved of men creating their own religious holidays, or using pagan celebrations as a means to worship Him. In order to understand the shocking truth regarding the origin of modern counterfeit holidays, please see the last page of this book for a list of other literature available from the Eternal Church of God.

Only God's holy days are unique and required observances. However, the focus of this document is not to explain why the majority of Christian denominations have lost sight of this truth. Our purpose is to help readers understand the marvelous and profound meaning of these days. It is our hope that all who read this material will recognize the transcendent function of God's appointed times. As you read this material, you will begin to see that each day points to a pivotal stage in God's magnificent plan for humanity.

Many who already have knowledge of these appointed times might initially think that this material will only present an introductory understanding. Instead, what you are going to find in this booklet is a comprehensive study of these days. Considerable research and effort have been poured into this work, and the following pages will not only explain the purpose of God's holy days, but will expand the knowledge of those who are already familiar with what the holy days mean and how they are to be observed today.

The Weekly Sabbath

The first holy day revealed in the Bible is the seventh day Sabbath (Gen. 2:3). It was sanctified by God at the beginning, and declared to mankind as a divine gift. However, God's Sabbaths were lost to Israel when they turned away from Him while living in the land of Egypt (Eze. 20:7-10). Therefore, the Almighty had to reinstruct them about His days. The sanctified seventh day was thundered from Mt. Sinai as the fourth commandment when God gave specific instructions regarding how the Sabbath was to be observed:

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates. For *in* six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it (Exodus 20:8-11).

The Ten Commandments were declared to Israel, but were intended for all people. Nonetheless, the Sabbath has been disregarded by many who claim they believe in Jesus Christ. Billions choose to honor God on Sunday instead of the day that He designated. Despite the fact that Sunday was never sanctified as a weekly day of worship, the first day of the week is widely accepted as the primary holy day of modern Christianity. Notwithstanding, nothing could be further from the truth. From Genesis to Revelation, the seventh day is the only weekly observance that is considered holy. God affirmed this over 100 times throughout the Bible. Notice what was said while dictating a list of all holy days and placing the weekly Sabbath at the top of the list:

Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day *is* a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall

do no work *on it*; it is the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings (Leviticus 23:3).

No work is to be done on the Sabbath. This command also prohibits requiring other men, women, children, or even beasts to work on our behalf. Those who observe the Sabbath the way that God commanded literally display their reverence toward Him as well as actively acknowledging God as their Lord and Lawgiver (Isa. 33:22). The seventh day is so important that the Eternal said it would serve as a sign indicating a unique connection between Him and His people (Exo. 31:13-17).

Some believe that we can no longer trust modern calendars to display the accurate seventh day of the week. While there has been a modern movement to shift the weekly cycle by making Monday the first day of the week, God has not allowed something as important as His Sabbath to be governed by mere men and fade away into the sands of time.

For example, the Julian calendar was widely used for more than 1,500 years and the weekly cycle never changed. After most western nations switched to the Gregorian calendar, ten days were lost in an attempt to bring the calendar into closer alignment with the solar system. This means that Thursday, October 4th, 1582 was followed by Friday October 15th, 1582. The United States switched in 1752 making 11 days disappear, but the days lost by switching to the Gregorian calendar did not affect the weekly cycle. Friday still followed Thursday, and Saturday still followed Friday. The same seventh day remained intact!

Over the last decade, some have begun to print versions of the Gregorian calendar that display Saturday as the first day of the week and Sunday as the last. But this transference is illegitimate and should not be accepted by God's faithful people. The Eternal has never allowed anyone to transfer the Sabbath to Sunday. This is well-known by historians, scholars, and most honest religious leaders. There are hundreds of documents available displaying the admissions of Catholic and Protestant leaders who observe Sunday and yet admit that Saturday is in fact

the Sabbath of the Bible. For more on this subject, read or request our free booklet—*Sabbath Confessions*.

God's Sabbath is observed from sundown Friday evening until sundown Saturday evening. This time frame is understood by God's declaration that each day begins and ends at sunset (Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). The seventh day concludes the weekly cycle and is a day of rest meaning that regular jobs, chores, errands, and the servile work of daily life are to be avoided for a full 24 hours (Isa. 58:13-14). For more information on proper Sabbath observance, please read our book—*The Sabbath Test*.

Why the Sabbath is a Delight

The Sabbath allows believers time to reflect on the reason for our existence. As Christ said, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." It was designed for mankind to know where we stand in our relationship with the Creator. It was not established as a day to do as we please. The regular activities of work and play are to be avoided.

For this reason, a holy convocation is required on this day. While this gathering of like minds may include a worship service where hymns are sung and sermons are delivered, the focus is to convoke with God. There is no specific location or minimum attendance for this type of convocation. The Scriptures indicate that even one person can meet with God on the Sabbath wherever he or she might be located. A few New Testament examples of this include Aquila and Priscilla who met with others in their own home (1Cor. 16:19). The Apostle Paul continued to honor God's Sabbath even when confined to a rented dwelling for two years (Acts 28:30). Nonetheless, we should always try to assemble with those of like mind on the Sabbath as encouraged by the author of Hebrews

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but

exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Christ's concern regarding the Sabbath is that we stop our personal work as well as discontinue seeking our own pleasure on these days. This gives us time to rejuvenate our body, spirit, and mind. With everything that needs to be done in life, it is a time of refreshing to be able to stop worrying about the troubles of this world and refocus our thoughts on what is truly important in life. Were it not for the Sabbath, most people would fill their lives with cares of this world and, bit by bit, lose their regard for God. We need this time to rest and reflect, and God promises to bless those who keep the Sabbath holy!

If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, *from* doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy *day* of the LORD honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking *your own* words, then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken (Isaiah 58:13-14).

The Prophetic Meaning of Seven

One of the most fascinating aspects of observing the Sabbath is that, by doing so, we are led to a deeper understanding of its transcendent purpose. Comprehension begins when we follow God's example in the second chapter of Genesis where He worked for six days, "Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made" (Gen. 2:3). God set the pattern for the weekly cycle. From that point forward, wherever we live on the planet, every week is complete after working for six days and then resting on the seventh day.

Few realize that this series was designed so that humanity would constantly be reminded of God's perfect plan

where seven represents completion. Even fewer recognize how frequently the number seven is reflected in the creation. A rainbow has seven primary colors in its spectrum—red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. There are seven notes on the musical scale—A, B, C, D, E, F, and G. All other notes are variations of these seven. There are seven directions in life (left, right, forward, backward, up, down, and center). Notice what the respected theologian Ethelbert W. Bullinger wrote while discussing the supernatural design and the spiritual significance of this profound number:

In the Hebrew, seven is *shevah*. It is from the root *savah* meaning *to be full or satisfied, have enough of*. Hence the meaning of the word “seven” is dominated by this root, for on the seventh day God rested from the work of Creation. It was full and complete, and good and perfect. Nothing could be added to it or taken away from it without marring it. Hence the word *Shavath, to cease, desist, rest, and Shabbath, Sabbath, or day of rest*. This root runs through various languages... It is seven, therefore, that stamps with perfection and completeness that in connection with which it is used. Of *time*, it tells of the Sabbath, and marks off the week of seven days, which, artificial as it may seem to be, is universal and immemorial in its observance amongst all the nations and in all times. It tells of eternal Sabbath-keeping which remains for the people of God in all its everlasting perfection. In the creative works of God, *seven* completes the colours of the spectrum and rainbow, and satisfies the music notes of the scale. In each of these the eighth is only a repetition of the first (*Number in Scripture*, pp. 167-168).

Bullinger also wrote, “Thus, the number seven is stamped on ‘the times and seasons’ of Scripture, marking the *spiritual perfection* of Divine Prophecies” (ibid, p. 7). This is truer than most realize. The number seven is used many times throughout the Bible to represent various types of completion. For example, Noah was told to bring seven pairs of clean animals into the ark

before the flood (Gen. 7:2). As is written, "And it came to pass after seven days were complete the waters of the flood were on the earth" (Gen. 7:10). King David wrote that, "The words of the LORD *are* pure words, *like* silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times" (Psa. 12:6). Priests were instructed to sprinkle blood from various offerings seven times (Lev. 4:6, 17; 14:51; 16:14, 19). A woman's menstrual cycle makes her unclean for certain activities for seven days (Lev. 15:19). Christ made seven statements while being crucified, and His seventh sentence was "It is finished" (John 19:30).

The book of Revelation indicates that there are seven Spirits before God's throne, seven lamp stands, and Christ was depicted with seven stars in His right hand. There are seven heads of the beast representing seven eras of a blasphemous empire. There will be seven seals, seven trumpet plagues, and seven bowl plagues. After the seventh bowl plague, God's wrath is considered "complete." There were seven Old Testament eras of Israel that correspond to seven New Testament eras of Christ's Church. These are reflected in the seven letters of Revelation (2-3).

This numerical form of completion was instituted as an inseparable part of our weekly cycle. It is a continual reminder of God's complete plan for humanity.

The Sabbath is Prophetic

God instructed all who believe in Him to rest on the seventh day, and that period of time serves several functions. As Christ said, the Sabbath is physically advantageous (Mark 2:27). Many authors have produced entire books about the refreshing and restorative benefits of observing the Sabbath. What few understand is the *magnificent* meaning revealed by this period of time.

Luke wrote that there will be a restoration of all things when Christ returns to establish God's Kingdom on the earth (Acts 3:21). It is at that time that a millennial rest will occur. The ecosystems of the earth will be restored to a time when the Garden of Eden was created. Deserts will blossom like a rose, animals will become tame, and there will be no venomous snakes

and spiders (Isa. 35:1-7). Even the carnivorous beasts that roam the earth will not rip and tear at each other any longer (Isa. 11:6-8, 65:25). The entire world will experience rest from its current “tyranny of the urgent” and a “survival of the fittest” mentality.

This shows us that the Sabbath represents God's plan for humanity! An important key to understanding this timeframe was revealed long ago through a prayer by Moses who wrote:

For a thousand years in Your sight *are* like yesterday when it is past (Psalm 90:4).

Moses was inspired to write that 1,000 years are comparable to a single day according to God. This is not only an assessment of God's everlasting existence. It is a key to understanding prophecy. The Almighty's timetable for humanity can be understood by recognizing that each day in the weekly cycle represents 1,000 years. A second witness to this prophetic representation was noted in the New Testament by the Apostle Peter who wrote:

But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day (2Peter 3:8).

This verse helps us to understand why God created the seven-day week. When each day represents 1,000 years, we can see that God's plan will be accomplished over a period of 7,000 years. His timeframe can be known by those who have a spiritual understanding of the Scriptures (Mat. 11:15; John 14:26). The early church understood and taught this truth for decades. As *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* explains:

The early fathers most commonly looked for the second advent at the end of 6,000 years of the world's history (Vol. VII, p. 376).

Just as people are given six days to work, God is allowing mankind 6,000 years to work at creating his own governments, religions, and economic systems. After this time has expired, Christ will return with His chosen saints to govern the earth for 1,000 years. During that time, He will establish righteous government, a prosperous and fair economy, and most importantly, God's religion will dominate the earth. That is why the Apostle John wrote that the faithful saints, "shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (Rev. 20:6). The coming Millennium is therefore portrayed by the Sabbath—a seventh day of rest representing 1,000 years of rest from the wiles of the devil.

God's purpose for the Sabbath is to give everyone a habitual period of time to stop focusing on the things of this present world, and to redirect their attention toward what our destiny is in life. In this way, the Sabbath is much more than a required commandment—it is a gift! It is a time for believers to come together and encourage one another as we strive to attain the righteousness of Jesus Christ (Mat. 6:33).

Assembling every Sabbath is considered a holy convocation that facilitates convoking with God. This form of worship is usually done through a meeting of like minds where the Scriptures are read and expounded on by elders and baptized members of the Church of God. As we inculcate biblical principles into our life, we learn to live on the earth as God would have us live in His Kingdom. As Christ said, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as *it is* in heaven" (Mat. 6:10).

The Sabbath rest represents a future millennial rest. The Sabbath is holy time—God's time—and Christ is the Lord of the Sabbath (Mat. 12:8). This reflects the fact that the Millennium will be God's time when Christ will rule the earth as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16).

An Example from Ancient Israel

The Apostle Paul wrote that the experiences of ancient Israel were an example to both warn and teach Christians (1Cor. 10:11). He related that they were baptized in the cloud and in the

sea, that they ate spiritual food, and drank spiritual drink. The food was manna representing Christ which came down like bread from heaven (John 6:58). Israel's drink miraculously came out of the rock in Horeb portraying, "that spiritual Rock that followed them and that Rock was Christ" (1Cor. 10:4). These are just a few of the things that happened to them as examples for us.

When it comes to the Sabbath, Israel was given the opportunity to inherit the land of Canaan just as Christians are given the opportunity to inherit the earth (Gen. 28:4; Mat. 5:5). God promised that Israel would become a great nation, that they would have lasting peace and prosperity, if they would be faithful to Him and keep His Sabbaths.

However, the people had proven themselves unworthy. The entire adult generation, except for Caleb and Joshua, perished while wandering 40 years in the Wilderness of Sin (Num. 14:29-35). Even after their arrival in Canaan, the people repeatedly neglected keeping God's statutes, judgments, and laws. As a result, Israel never fully experienced a national form of "rest" that God would provide if His laws were kept (Deu. 28:1-14). Therefore, the kingdom that He promised to the descendants of Abraham has yet to be realized, and the reason is because the Promised Land is a type of Christ's future Kingdom on the earth (Zec. 14).

The author of the book of Hebrews spoke explicitly about the relationship between the Promised Land, the Sabbath-rest, and a future kingdom. Notice the following comment regarding Israel's failure to enter God's rest:

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested me, tried me, and saw my works forty years. Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, 'they always go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways.' So I swore in my wrath, **'they shall not enter my rest'**" (Hebrews 3:7-11).

God had offered a magnificent future for Israel. If they would have trusted and obeyed Him, they would have become the most prosperous and powerful nation the world has ever seen—a light to all mankind. Tragically, they failed, and did not enter a type of the rest represented by the seventh day. As the author continued to write:

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. **For we who have believed do enter that rest**, as He has said: “So I swore in My wrath ‘They shall not enter My rest,’” although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. **For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all His works” and again in this place: “They shall not enter My rest.”** Since therefore it remains that some *must* enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, again He designates a certain day, saying in David, “Today,” after such a long time, as it has been said: “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.” For if Joshua had given them rest then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. **There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.** For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God *did* from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience (Hebrews 4:1-11).

What stands out in these verses is that the author distinctly speaks of the Sabbath created by God on the seventh day of creation and connects it to God's rest which ancient Israel failed to experience because of their disobedience. Finally, the comparison encourages Christians to be faithful and thereby

assured that they will enter God's future rest. The future rest that Christians ultimately seek is His Kingdom. As Christ related:

Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...
(Matthew 6:33).

It is worth noting that there is one word mistranslated in chapter four of the book of Hebrews that has resulted in many simply reading over the passage without understanding its vital message. Throughout these verses there is frequent use of the word rest. In most cases, "rest" was translated from the Greek *katapausis* simply meaning to relax. However, in Hebrews 4:9 where it states, "There remains a **rest** for the people of God," the author used the term *sabbatismos* which refers to the Sabbath. *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* explains that *sabbatismos* literally means:

To keep the sabbath; **1.** a keeping sabbath. **2.** the blessed rest from toils and troubles looked for in the age to come by the true worshippers of God and true Christians (p. 565).

Marvin Vincent's *Word Studies of the New Testament* adds the following commentary in regards to the author of Hebrews use of this term:

The *Sabbath* rest points back to God's original rest, and marks the *ideal* rest - the rest of perfect adjustment of all things to God, such as ensued upon the completion of his creative work, when he pronounced all things good. This falls in with the ground-thought of the Epistle, the restoration of all things to God's archetype (volume VI, p. 424).

The words of many respected Bible scholars agree that the Sabbath could not have been done away, and it was not replaced with the first day of the week—Sunday. Both the Old and New Testament prove that Christians are required to keep the

Sabbath. In fact, the only way we can be assured of attaining God's Kingdom in the world to come is if we prepare for that Kingdom today!

A Day of Preparation

The seventh day is a commanded day of rest. What many do not realize is that a measure of work is also required during the first six days of the week. This is clearly stated in the instructions that follow the fourth commandment where God said:

Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God (Exodus 20:9-10).

Exactly what kind of work does God expect each of us to do during the first six days of each week? Well, the answer may vary depending on individual responsibilities and abilities, but nobody is exempt from the various forms of work found in the needs of daily living. Those who support the family are required to work for food, clothing, shelter, and to pay a variety of bills. Students are required to work at graduating from grade school, high school, or college in preparation for life as an adult. Homemakers must prepare meals, do laundry, and support the entire family in order to accomplish its goals. Even retired folk have a measure of work to do.

All this work is done in anticipation of a future benefit. We prepare in the fall for winter, in the winter for spring, and in the summer for fall. Throughout our entire lives there is work to be done and there is great value in both learning and practicing honorable work ethics. Weekly work is also a reflection of works of faith relating a vital lesson.

In order to attain the Kingdom of God, we are required to work and prepare ourselves for it. The example was written into the days of each week where God instructs people to work for six days in anticipation of the Sabbath. Those who desire to become citizens of that Kingdom will be preparing each week to properly

observe the Sabbath just as they will be preparing themselves for the return of Christ. As the Savior said:

Blessed *is* that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes (Luke 12:43).

For six days we make the best use of our time so that we will be ready for Sabbath. Every chore necessary for Sabbath observance must be completed the day before it begins. All unfinished work is to be set aside. This final day of preparation is therefore called the preparation day—a time to make ready for Sabbath. Notice what God commanded Israel to do the day before the Sabbath begins:

And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily (Exodus 16:5).

The people were told to gather enough food on the sixth day to satisfy their need for two days. They were also instructed to prepare this food ahead of time so that they would not profane the Sabbath. The instructions continue:

“Tomorrow *is* a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake *today*, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning...” Then Moses said, “Eat that today, for today *is* a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will be none” (Exodus 16:23-26).

The instructions God gave to the people of Israel have an enduring principle. He told them to prepare ahead of time so that they would be ready to observe the Sabbath. This precept of preparation is expressed throughout the entire Bible where every word either directly or indirectly relates to preparing for the Kingdom of Heaven.

From a youth, Jesus was preparing to serve God as the Messiah (Luke 2:40-52). During His establishment of the New Testament Church, Jesus prepared disciples and apostles to serve others in this process of preparing for His second coming. The parables of the wedding feast, the ten virgins, and the talents all relate the vital importance of preparation (Mat. 22:1-14; 25:1-30). These examples are reminders of how invaluable the preparation day is.

Consider that any goal achieved, any honor held, any form of real success came from dedication, hard work, and arduous preparation. With this in mind, how much preparation and training would it take to become a faithful king and a priest of the Most High? The answer should be obvious. Therefore, how much effort should we be making right now if we hope to attain that crown? The words of the prophet Amos should greatly motivate us, as he said to Israel:

Prepare to meet your God... (Amos 4:12).

This is a sobering thought. Are we ready to meet our God? Christ will return and He will come with devastating rebuke toward some and with joy and gladness to a chosen few. As Luke quoted Jesus to say:

“Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” Then Peter said to Him, “Lord, do You speak this parable *only* to us, or to all *people*?” And the Lord said, “Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom *his* master will make ruler over his household, to give *them their* portion of food in due season? Blessed *is* that servant whom his master will find so doing when He comes” (Luke 12:40-43).

Just like we cannot delay preparing for the Sabbath, and then claim we have the right to profane it, we cannot put off preparing for God's Kingdom and then expect to be a part of it.

The Sabbath is a continual reminder to the people of God of the preparation necessary before Christ returns when the earth will experience a Millennial Sabbath rest. At that time, 6,000 years of humanity living by its own ways will end, and 1,000 years of God's rule will begin. We must use this present time wisely if we hope to become chosen as citizens of that Kingdom (Eph. 5:15-16).

Passover

God's annual appointed times are not all kept in the same way as the seventh day, but each one is a commanded observance. As God declared:

These *are* the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times (Leviticus 23:4).

The reason God commanded all who worship Him to observe specific days each year is because each one represents a pivotal event in a chain of prophetic occurrences that are directly connected to Christ, to those individuals God would call, and ultimately to all those who will be granted entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. The holy days explain various integral parts of God's plan for humanity, and how that plan will be fulfilled. Some of His appointed times memorialize events that have already occurred, while others portray what God will do in the future. The Apostle Paul made note of this in his letter to Christians in Colossae, stating:

Let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ (Colossians 2:16-17).

The new moon that Paul spoke of is the first day of each month according to the lunisolar calendar God designed for observing His holy days. The festivals and Sabbaths are divinely appointed times within the almanac. Having already discussed the weekly Sabbath, the first annual day that God commands His people to observe is the Lord's Passover. As Moses wrote:

These *are* the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times. On the fourteenth *day* of the first month at twilight *is* the LORD's Passover (Leviticus 23:4-5).

Passover is a reminder of the time when the destroying angel passed over Israelite dwellings while taking the lives of first-born man and beast among the Egyptians. It harkens back to the lamb or goat slain for each household, its blood put on the doorposts for protection, and the flesh that was consumed along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (Exo. 12:3-23).

As amazing as that historic evening was, the prophetic highlight of those events took place centuries later when the ancient ceremony that God commanded Israel to observe was fulfilled. John the Baptist understood this truth and proclaimed what few realized in his day:

Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29).

Christ fulfilled what the Passover lamb represented. By explicitly following God's instructions before the exodus, the animal's blood was used as a means to save multitudes of firstborn believers from death. In like manner, it is Christ's blood that can save us from the wages of sin (Rom. 6:23).

Thus, as our Creator, Christ's life was the only soul able to redeem the sins of the world. All those who believe and repent by changing their behavior to reflect God's ethics can be saved through Him. As Christ said and the Apostle Paul wrote:

But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments (Matthew 19:17).

Jesus Christ... whom God set forth *as* 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 3:22-25).

This correlation between the Passover lamb and Christ was planned from time immemorial. Long before Israel's bondage in Egypt, it was determined that Christ would become the Savior of humanity. As Peter wrote:

You were not 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 **He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world** (1Peter 1:18-20).

The ordinance of Passover was planned long before mankind existed when Christ agreed to become the Messiah before the earth was formed. This explains that God's plan for humanity was not an afterthought. The human race was not a backup plan after Lucifer and many angels sinned (Jude 6). God knew that He would create mankind in His own image and that human beings would need a Savior in order for immortality to be possible.

Therefore, God intended for a Son of Man to be born who would ultimately give His life so that we would understand both the result of those who walk contrary to God's laws, and the outpouring love that He has by becoming a sacrifice for the sins of humanity. As John and the author of Hebrews expressed:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9:15).

Commemorating Christ's sacrifice as the Passover Lamb is a necessity for all who seek the Kingdom of Heaven. Christ's role as both Creator and Savior is not only vital to our existence now, but also to our hope for the future (John 1:3; 2Tim. 1:9). This is why the Passover includes a solemn ceremony that has been kept by faithful people of God for thousands of years.

The Passover Ceremony

Among all of God's commanded observances, Passover is the most somber and the most meaningful. The ceremony itself is not considered a holy convocation, nor is it labeled a holy day. Nonetheless, it is a most sacred rite for the Passover commemorates the suffering and death of Christ which makes God's plan of salvation possible. For this reason, God commanded Israel to perpetually keep the Passover, stating:

And you shall observe this thing as an ordinance for you and your sons **forever** (Exodus 12:24).

While Christ died on the very day of Passover, His death did not do away with the requirement to observe this day. Forever means continually. Every generation of believers are to memorialize what Christ did for ancient Israel and what our Savior has also done for all of mankind. Therefore, God requires that the Christian Passover ceremony be observed by all baptized members of God's true Church.

However, after Christ's death and ascension, the New Testament Passover has been taken to a new level. The difference between what Christians do today, and what God's people did in ancient times, is a result of Christ changing the symbols of the New Covenant Passover. This change occurred during His last Passover meal on the very evening that the animals were slain in ancient times (Mark 14:22-24). That fateful night, the apostles received hands-on instruction, and Paul was later shown what Christians are to do on that night. As he explained to the Church in Corinth:

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" (1Corinthians 11:23-25).

So important is Passover that the accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all describe Christ's instructions for observing the New Testament Passover. It was not replaced by a "Lord's supper" that some observe at various times throughout the year. Weekly "communion" using a small wafer is also insufficient and unbiblical. Paul's words do not mean that we should take the Passover "often" meaning more than once a year. What he meant was that every time we keep the Passover we partake of the appropriate symbols and with the right mindset as a part of our remembrance of Christ's sacrifice.

The observance of Passover is commanded by God to be observed on the evening beginning the 14th of the month of Abib. This month is also called Nisan in the Hebrew calendar. Because the Gregorian calendar used by most nations differs from the one used by God's people for thousands of years, the accurate day of observance must be understood from the Hebrew calendar.

So important is this ceremony that if a baptized member is unable to keep it on the 14th of the first month, they are commanded to keep it on the 14th of the second month with all the same symbols (Num. 9:10-11). Even though Christ instructed His disciples to use unleavened bread and wine in place of a lamb, what these symbols represent remains the same.

The unleavened bread portrays the lamb or goat without blemish that pictured the sinless body of Christ (John 6:32-35). Believers are to eat a small portion of this bread as a sign of our desire to inculcate the loving and obedient nature of Christ inside of us. The wine used during Passover portrays the blood of the lamb that was used to assuage the death of Israel's firstborn (Exo. 12:22-23). It also represents Christ shedding His blood for the sins of many so that those who follow His way will not be forced to suffer the penalty that sin deserves—eternal death. As Paul wrote:

For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).

The bread and wine are focal points of the Passover ceremony. But there was something added that fateful night nearly 2000 years ago. While the disciples argued about whom among the twelve would be greatest in God's Kingdom, Christ took a basin, water, and a towel and washed the disciple's feet. He then told these men:

If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you (John 13:14-15).

This example was only recorded by the Apostle John. He was the last author of the New Testament books who wrote many things not mentioned by the others. It is our belief that this remarkable act was recorded so that Christians would understand the type of service that we should provide to each other.

Many would consider kneeling before another person and washing their feet to be degrading, but nothing could be further from the truth. Christ's example represents the humility of service that we should always be willing to provide. Real humility and service is what true Christian leadership is about. As Christ explained:

For who *is* greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? *Is* it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves (Luke 22:27).

For these reasons, the New Testament Passover ceremony includes washing another Christian's feet. Some might consider washing feet unusual at first, but it is a reminder of what Christ did for us and what we should be willing to do for others. This small act of service opens our eyes—not only to understand the humility and self-sacrificing service of Christ—but to realize the way God's people are to think and live now and for all eternity.

We should always strive to emulate Christ's example of serving the best interest of others no matter what the task.

These required aspects of a Christian Passover ceremony are not to be taken lightly and they cannot be used by just anyone. As an example, God said that no uncircumcised individual was to keep the Passover of old.

However, if an individual who believed agreed to be circumcised, they would enjoy the privileges of a native Israelite. As Moses recorded:

And when a stranger dwells with you *and wants* to keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it (Exodus 12:48).

Circumcision was designed to express the individual's commitment toward living according to God's moral code. This symbolism was expressed in the Old Covenant, and its meaning was also articulated to the New Testament Church:

Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer (Deuteronomy 10:16).

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, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God (Romans 2:28-29)

This is the kind of commitment that God expects each of us to have before partaking of the Passover. Therefore, those who have not accepted Christ as their Savior, been baptized, and had hands laid on them by an elder in God's Church, are not to partake of the symbols. Paul referenced this need for sincerity before taking the Passover when cautioning brethren in Corinth:

Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks *this* cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body (1Corinthians 11:27-29).

Eating and drinking in an unworthy manner during Passover means not discerning How Christ's sacrifice is represented by the bread and wine. However, simply knowing what the symbols represent is not enough. Participants need to commit themselves to living God's way of life before they can truly begin to discern the Lord's body. For this reason, baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit are requirements before partaking of the New Testament Passover. Children and others who believe may attend the ceremony, but they are NOT to partake of the symbols.

In addition, the Passover ceremony is not to be a festive occasion with loud music, excessive drinking, and an abundance of food. This kind of activity is inappropriate and exactly what caused Paul to reaffirm the proper observance of the New Testament Passover. The apostle sent to the gentiles chastised brethren for anticipating a large meal and much wine during the somber event. Some in Corinth were overeating and drinking enough wine to become intoxicated during the ceremony, and Paul rebuked them saying:

Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of *others*; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise *you* (1Corinthians. 11:20-22).

The example is clear. Although the Passover ceremony can be viewed as a joyous occasion because of what Christ made possible for us, it should be a solemn observance as participants reflect on what was required of God's only begotten Son for us to have the opportunity to be saved.

Christ was spitefully mocked, brutally scourged, and unmercifully nailed to a stake to die a slow and painful death. While He could have been killed quickly with very little pain involved, just as the Passover animals were slain, the Savior chose to endure an agonizing and heart wrenching ordeal in order to show us how committed He was to our salvation.

Christ's sacrifice illustrates His unyielding faithfulness to the Father and to all humanity. It stands as an example of the kind of dedication He has for us and the devotion that God expects from us. The Passover was ordained by God at the Exodus and it continues to be observed by true Christians today. In addition, the Passover ceremony will be kept during Christ's millennial rule upon His return (Eze. 45:21).

Understanding the importance and the enduring observance of Passover, it becomes absurd to consider that this vitally important service is no longer required by Christians or that it can be replaced by a weekly "communion." Passover is a commandment given by Almighty God and must be kept by all who hope to be saved from death. For more information on this subject, please read our booklet—*A Christian Passover Ceremony and Easter or Passover*.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

The first of God's annual feasts begins the day after the Passover ceremony. As God declared to Israel:

And on the fifteenth day of the same month *is* the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; seven days you must eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it... The seventh day *shall also be* a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work *on it* (Leviticus 23:6-8).

Like all of God's holy days, the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread begins in the evening. The eve of the first day is traditionally honored by small gatherings of brethren for fellowship and a meal. This tradition was derived from Moses' description of the time of day that Israel left Egypt.

After keeping the Passover ceremony the evening prior, hundreds of thousands of Israelites took what they needed from the Egyptians and walked from Rameses to Succoth. It was at that time the sun began to set and the first day of the unleavened bread began. This prompted Moses to declare:

*It is a night of solemn observance to the LORD for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. **This is that night of the LORD, a solemn observance** for all the children of Israel throughout their generations* (Exodus 12:42).

Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out of this *place*. No leavened bread shall be eaten. On this day you are going out, in the month Abib (Exodus 13:3-4).

Following the night to be observed, the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread includes a commanded assembly where one of the three annual offerings is to be given. God

requires every head of household to give an offering in the amount that they are able (Deu. 16:16-17). Throughout this period of seven days, every believer is to eat a portion of unleavened bread on each day. This bread may be consumed along with other foods, but nothing that contains leaven is to be eaten during this time (Exo. 12:15). In addition, God requires that all leaven be removed from the believer's homes prior to the first day of the festival. As Moses declared God's command:

Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters (Exodus 13:7).

Some consider these instructions odd and merely Jewish tradition. This is not the case. These days are enduring and were kept by Christ and the New Testament Church. Even the gentile congregations observed these days. For example, the Apostle Paul instructed the Church in Corinth about the observance of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (1Cor. 5:8; 11:20-29). Paul also kept these days with brethren in Philippi (Acts 20:6). Moreover, when Christ returns and sets up His Kingdom on earth, He will require that these meaningful days be observed (Eze. 45:21). Thus, these days are to be kept by true Christians today. Their meaning is applicable to the past, present, and the future.

During this particular feast, leaven symbolizes pride and the sin it causes. Removing leaven for seven days portrays the Christian's effort to remove sin throughout their life. Paul understood this, and he encouraged Christians to continue to practice what God had previously commanded:

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 (1Corinthians 5:7-8).

“Old leaven” is a reference to the undesirable traits of pride, self-righteousness, and a variety of sins. These ungodly characteristics and activities are symbolized by the substances used to leaven food. Just as leaven puffs up a loaf of bread, pride leads people to elevate themselves above others—even above the moral authority of God. Christ previously compared this behavior to the false religious traditions of the Pharisees and Sadducees:

Then Jesus said to them, “Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.” And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “*It is* because we have taken no bread.” But Jesus, being aware of *it*, said to them, “O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—*but* to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Then they understood that He did not tell *them* to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Matthew 16:6-12).

The Pharisees and Sadducees had created extra-biblical rules that they claimed were in accordance with God’s law. They were proud of their self-righteousness to the point where they would break God’s law in order to keep their tradition (Mat. 15:6; Mark 7:13). Their focus became displaying an appearance of holiness, but inside they were shameful (Mat. 23:28). The command to refrain from leaven for seven days reminds us that removing pride and sin is imperative to conversion and real obedience to God.

The apostle Paul said, “A little leaven leavens the whole lump” (Gal. 5:9). By this, he referred to the leavening process in which a very small amount spreads throughout all of the dough. The spiritual application of this process does not necessarily

mean that a single sin will ruin an entire person or group. It means that if sin is allowed to remain, it will spread resulting in more sin. This is a human tendency that will always result in tragic consequences unless it is dealt with.

Therefore, the process of removing leaven involves cleaning out our homes and property. This practice takes place every spring that likely resulted in the age-old expression “spring cleaning.” It represents actively looking for sin and throwing it out as refuse—something we should refuse to tolerate in our lives. This further explains how preparing for and keeping God’s holy days is hands-on training where faithful people are to be actively preparing themselves for Christ’s return and the establishment of His Kingdom on the earth.

This unique week also requires replacing leavened food with that which is unleavened throughout the seven-day feast (Num. 28:17). Unlike leaven that portrays sin during this observance, unleavened bread represents replacing pride with the humble and sinless nature of Christ.

It is no coincidence that Jesus referred to Himself as the bread of life (John 6:48). Unleavened bread is not puffed up as is pride. It represents the humility of Christ and the same type of humility true Christians are to have. The unleavened bread of sincerity and truth is that which pervades God’s nature and His Kingdom in heaven. It will be planted on earth when Christ returns and will eventually spread around the globe (Mat. 13:3). For this reason, He commands us to eat unleavened bread each day of this feast. This command is so important that it is stated nine times in the Scriptures (Exo. 12:15, 18, 20; 13:6; 23:15; 34:18; Lev. 23:6; Deu. 16:3, 8).

Like all of God’s holy days, the Feast of Unleavened Bread reveals a major point in God’s plan for humanity. This feast should personally resonate with all those who hope to attain the resurrection from the dead. They will not consider themselves superior to others, but those who attain the better resurrection will have spiritually de-leavened their lives. As Christ stated:

Blessed are the poor in spirit (*humble*) for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed *are* those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth (Matthew 5:3-5).

The Pilgrimage Feasts

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is one of three times a year when Israelite males were required to travel to the location of the Ark of the Covenant. They were commanded to come before God at this designated location with an offering. This means that the Feast of Unleavened Bread is one of three pilgrimage feasts. The other two are the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles. Notice God's decree:

Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. Every man *shall give* as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you (Deuteronomy 16:16-17).

When this edict was declared, God chose to place His name where the Ark of the Covenant was located within the tabernacle of meeting. This Tabernacle was set up in the midst of the twelve tribes every time they camped for more than 40 years as they wandered in the wilderness. At that time, the males did not need to travel far in order to obey the command. After entering the land of Canaan, the Tabernacle was setup in Shiloh, then Nob, and ultimately the Ark of the Covenant came to reside in the magnificent Temple erected in Jerusalem.

What may be a surprise to most is that there is no scripture indicating that God commanded the Tabernacle or the Temple to stand in any of these cities. Nonetheless, it is evident that God led men who were ordained as leaders of Israel, and high priests, to make such decisions. Therefore, the locations where the Tabernacle and the Temple stood are locations where God chose

to place His name at various times throughout Israel's history. These sites are where all heads of household were required to pilgrimage three times a year. As the command states, "Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD" (Exo. 23:17).

While the Scriptures indicate that everybody was welcome to attend these festivals, everyone was not required to make the journey to the Temple. For most of Israel the journey required days of travel on foot or by pack animal. For obvious reasons, the infirmed, elderly, women, and children were not required to travel such a long distance. Bible commentator Joseph Benson accurately represented the meaning of God's decree when he wrote, "All that were of competent years, and health, and strength, and at their own disposal."

The reason for only requiring specific individuals to attend was a practical one. For most, it was a long distance on foot or by donkey. It would take days of travel time with a need for provisions and some form of currency. Many could not afford to take the whole family even while using their festival tithes (Deu. 14:22-25). Some might be ill or handicapped making the pilgrimage difficult or dangerous. Some women might be pregnant or nursing an infant making travel equally hazardous. In addition, those who owned land or animals would need to make sure that flocks, herds, and crops did not fail while much of the manpower was away. If the whole family left a farm or ranch unattended, animals would die and entire year's harvest could be lost. Therefore, God allowed for family members to stay behind. Those who did not make the pilgrimage would also observe these days, but would do so, locally.

Today, the Ark of the Covenant cannot be located. It was written in the second book of Maccabees that God told Jeremiah to hide the ark and it has yet to be found (2Mac. ch. 1, 2:4-6). There is also no legitimate Temple in the Middle-East, and the Levitical priesthood no longer exists. Therefore, there is currently no specific location where God has placed His name. How then are we to apply God's edict to celebrate His pilgrimage feasts?

Understanding that we are required to worship God in spirit and truth, we are bound to respect the fact that God gave authority to ordained elders in order to make administrative decisions within the boundaries of His law (John 4:23; Mat. 16:18-20). Today it is these men who are responsible for choosing locations to observe weekly and annual worship services. Such decisions are not to be made by individual members unless no contact with an ordained minister is possible (Eph. 4:11-13).

Consequently, true Christians of every New Testament era have continued to observe God's holy days in areas where brethren existed. In 1945, under the leadership of Herbert W. Armstrong, it was decided that Belknap Springs, Oregon would be a suitable location for celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles. This decision was made by elders whose intent was to keep the feast with the same spirit of traveling to a location where many believers could gather—much like was done in ancient times. The Church of God then began to experience phenomenal growth. In the mid-1950s a building was erected in northeast Texas that would serve as another feast site. It was not long after this that various feast sites around the country, and eventually around the world, were chosen by men who were ordained to make such decisions. Their intent was to allow for a family-oriented environment of celebration where brethren all around the world could worship God together in unity.

Understanding that Christ works within those who have God's Spirit, God's name is now placed wherever true Christians congregate anywhere around the world (John 17:23). While some may wish to travel to fun and exotic locations while celebrating God's feasts, there is no requirement for brethren to travel outside of their own city in order to comply with God's command. Meeting in a location chosen by elders is an acceptable method of observing God's pilgrimage feasts.

For example, brethren in Corinth and Philippi did not travel outside their own cities in order to properly observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread (1Cor. 11:20-34; Acts 20:6). The Apostle Paul observed Pentecost locally with brethren in Ephesus

(1Cor. 16:8). Believers all came together within their community for a special day of fellowship. These are examples of administrative decisions that are to be made by God's ministers.

Notwithstanding, some decisions made by elders in recent times are not in compliance with God's law. For example, no individual has the authority to change God's command to present offerings three times a year. This number cannot be interpreted as anything other than three.

In addition, these offerings are given to religious authorities who in turn are to partake and share them with the entire congregation (Deu. 12:17-18). This practice makes the pilgrimage feasts wonderful celebrations for everyone involved. This is the loving worship of God and care for one another that should take place during the pilgrimage feasts. For more on this subject please read our booklet—*Three Times a Year*.

The Wave-Sheaf

Because the Feast of Unleavened Bread is a seven-day festival, a weekly Sabbath will always occur on one of the seven days. This was designed by God so that a unique ceremony would commence on the day following the weekly Sabbath that occurs within the feast. On this unique day, the priest was instructed to wave a sheaf of grain to be accepted by God. As was commanded:

When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it (Leviticus 23:10-11).

Though it is not considered a holy convocation, this ceremony is intimately connected to Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The sheaf was waved by the priest and accepted by God as a firstfruit offering, and its symbolism is enormously important. The sheaf represented Christ who became an offering once for all (Heb. 10:10). He was the first human

being to be raised from the dead and changed into a glorious spirit being. As the Apostle Paul wrote:

He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence (Colossians 1:18).

There are many similarities between the wave-sheaf, Christ's death, His resurrection, and ascension. For example, the sheaf was the first grain to be harvested from the land. Nobody was to consume any new grain until this offering was made (Lev. 23:14). To wave the sheaf means that the priest lifted it into the air and moved it side to side for God's acceptance. This act portrayed Christ who was the first to be raised up and taken from the earth. After being raised from the dead at the end of the weekly Sabbath, the next morning, Christ was accepted as an offering for the sins of humanity and ascended to heaven. This occurred on the same day that the sheaf was waved. For more on this subject, please read—*The Resurrection of Christ Was Not on Sunday*.

The word "sheaf" can also mean *omer*. An *omer* is a measurement of grain equivalent to two quarts or 1.8 liters. Israel was previously told to gather this amount of manna for each person per day for nourishment (Exo. 16:16). The manna was vitally important food that literally came from heaven in order to sustain the congregation in the wilderness. It is no coincidence that Christ later said that He was the reality of what the manna portrayed:

Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" (John 6:32-33).

Christ's offering for all of mankind makes it possible for those who choose to live by God's way to attain eternal life. This

is similar to the manna which made it possible for the nation of Israel to live while wandering in the wilderness.

The procedure for harvesting the wave-sheaf is not dictated in the Scriptures. According to Alfred Edersheim's study of *The Temple its Ministry and Services as they were at the Time of Jesus Christ*, a spot where the sheaf was to be reaped was marked by the priesthood and tied in a bundle beforehand (p. 170). Later, at the close of the weekly Sabbath, just as the sun had set on the horizon, the sheaf was cut from the ground. That is the very moment the promised three days and nights were over and Christ was miraculously resurrected to spirit. When the women came to the sepulcher before dawn on Sunday, He was not in the tomb (Mat. 28:1-6). Notice what Jesus told Mary Magdalene just after sunrise on Sunday when she approached Him:

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 (KJV, John 20:17).

Christ had already risen from the dead, but had not yet ascended to heaven early that morning. One might wonder what He was waiting for, and the answer is directly related to the wave-sheaf. The Savior had not yet ascended because He was fulfilling an important step in God's plan pictured by the wave-sheaf ceremony. He told Mary not to attempt physical contact because the wave-sheaf had not yet been offered. Just as the sheaf was held up and waved by the priest later that morning, Christ also ascended to the Father at that same time!

Shortly after the initial encounter, Christ was seen again by these same women. During this next visitation the two women held Him by the feet and worshipped (Mat. 28:9-10). The only conclusion is that Christ had ascended after Mary's first encounter and returned. Over the next 40 days He frequently visited these men and women to offer further instruction and encouragement (Acts 1:3).

Christ is the reality of what the wave-sheaf portrayed. He is vitally connected to God's plan for humanity and is represented in various ways throughout all of God's holy days. In this case, no other new grain was to be eaten until the firstfruit sheaf was waved (Lev. 23:14). This represents the fact that no other human beings could be raised until after Christ's resurrection from the dead. He was the first, and this is evidence that others will follow:

But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man *came* death, by Man 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, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming (1Corinthians 15:20-23).

The Feast of Weeks

The Scriptures use several descriptive titles for the next annual holy day. It is known as the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Harvest, the Day of Firstfruits, and Pentecost. This feast is intimately connected to the wave-sheaf offering and its several titles have great meaning which we will discuss shortly. It is the second “pilgrimage” feast of the year and is celebrated with a gathering of brethren, a Church service, a required offering, and a festive meal (Deu. 16:16-17).

Counting to the day of this festival is the reason for the titles Feast of Weeks and Pentecost. The Feast of Weeks refers to counting seven weeks after the sheaf is offered and observing Pentecost the next day. Pentecost is a Greek expression meaning “fiftieth” indicating that the holy day’s observance falls on the 50th day from the wave-sheaf offering (*Strong’s*, G4005). The count begins on the day the priest offered the sheaf. In other words, Sunday is day one. By understanding that the wave-sheaf represented the Messiah, we can identify the transcendent meaning of this Feast of Harvest.

There are only two commanded enumerations in the Bible that dictate counting seven sets of seven and then the 50th is observed. The first is the count to the Feast of Weeks and the second is the count to the Jubilee. Understanding the intent of the Jubilee can help us to comprehend the meaning of Pentecost.

The Jubilee

God instructed Israel to observe a land rest and a year of release every seven years (Lev. 25:1-7; Deu 15:1-11). Every 50 years, they were to observe the Jubilee (Lev. 25:8-22). These instructions are given just a few pages after the holy days indicating that they were declared by God at the same time. Just as there are prophetic types found in all of God’s holy days, there is symbolism in the observance of the Jubilee.

The fiftieth year was designed to be an important component of Israel’s economic system. It was a time when bondservants were released and all debts were forgiven. Property and possessions that may have been pledged during times of

financial difficulty were returned to their original owners. In addition, the land was to experience an extended period of rest from cultivation. The Jubilee was designed for the purpose of restoring relationships between people and their land.

The Jubilee represents what will occur when Christ returns. Faithful people from all ages will be set free from the grave when they rise and are changed (1Ths. 4:16-17; 1Cor. 15:51). God will restore health and vitality to the land. Ecosystems will be healed, and the entire planet will be given rest from mankind's overuse and abuse (Acts 3:19-21). There will be widespread repentance and forgiveness when God's perfect law guides humanity on a course of peace, truth, and prosperity (Hab. 2:14). Even the lost tribes of Israel will have their inheritance restored to them (Jer. 23:3-8; Eze. 48:1-29).

The similarity between the Jubilee and Christ's return helps us understand its connection to Pentecost. Both observances contain the same multiples of the number 7 plus 1. Pentecost occurs the 8th day after counting 7 sets of 7 days. The Jubilee occurs on the 8th year after counting 7 sets of 7 years. Both celebrations reflect a time of refreshing that will come from the presence of Christ (Acts 3:19). Both observances require obedience to God in order to be fulfilled. The Jubilee was a fresh start for people and the land. Pentecost will also be a fresh start for God's chosen people and the earth.

The Jubilee was to be declared on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 25:9). That holy day portrays Satan being bound for 1,000 years. It is fitting therefore that bond-servants were released during a time that portrays the world being set free from the prince of the power of the air who has captivated the thoughts, and tried to control the lives, of billions for thousands of years. The similarities between the Jubilee and the fulfillment of Pentecost are uncanny.

The Old and New Covenants

When God delivered Israel from Egypt, He told them that the month of *Abib* would be the **first month** of the year to them (Exo. 12:2; 13:4). This means that the calendar they would use

from that point forward would include the observance of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread during the first month. Israel proceeded to leave Egypt the day after observing Passover on the 14th. The historical record further indicates that they were in the Wilderness of Sin and had setup camp before Mount Sinai in the third month:

In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came *to* the Wilderness of Sinai. For they had departed from Rephidim, had come *to* the Wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness. So Israel camped there before the mountain (Exodus 19:1-2).

It is believed that each month of this calendar was 30 days long. Therefore, Israel would have been camping before Mount Sinai 1½ months, or approximately 45 days, after they left Egypt. Moses then went up the mount two separate times in which He personally talked to God. After receiving divine instructions, Moses returned to the camp and told the people that God required them to wash and be sanctified prior to God descending upon the mountain to speak to everyone in three days (Exo. 19:10-15).

After three days, a thick cloud came upon the mountain. There was a blast of a great trumpet that sounded long and became louder and louder. Enormous thundering and lightning caused the mountain to quake and smoke. Then God came down on the mountain and spoke to the people delivering terms of His covenant with Israel (Exo. 19:16-25; 20-24:3). The period of time between Passover and God declaring His covenant from the mount indicates that this event likely occurred on the Feast of Weeks.

For example, consider that Israel left Succoth on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The count to Pentecost would have begun after the weekly Sabbath. Exodus 16:1 indicates that the nation of Israel was in the Wilderness of Sin on the 15th day of the second month. Three weeks later was the day of Pentecost.

Though it is unstated, when we consider the symbolism of the Feast of Weeks, it is conceivable that God declared the Ten Commandments on this holy day. The commandments were the conditions of His covenant with people who were later called the congregation in the wilderness (Acts 7:38). Israel accepted God's terms and the Ten Commandments were soon written in tablets of stone by the finger of God (Exo. 31:18).

With this in mind, God made another covenant with His people on the day of Pentecost centuries later that is called a "better covenant"—of which Christ is the Mediator (Heb. 8:6). New Testament Church members were given the Holy Spirit at that time (Acts 2). This time the law was not written in tablets of stone. The Holy Spirit allows for God to write His law on "tablets of flesh." As the Apostle Paul recognized:

You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly *you are* an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, *that is*, of the heart (2Corinthians 3:2-3).

When a believer is baptized and receives the Holy Spirit, they have made a covenant with God. It is at that time that a Christian is committed to living by God's law.

When God made His covenant with the nation of Israel, He descended upon the mountain in fire (Exo. 19:18). On the first Pentecost of the New Testament Church, the Holy Spirit came upon select individuals and it appeared as divided tongues as of fire (Acts 2:3). Both of these events are important aspects of the Feast of Weeks. Both are also vital facets for those who hope to be included in the better resurrection. They must live by God's law both internally and externally.

The Two Wave-Loaves

An important clue to the meaning of Pentecost is found in a unique offering that God commanded to be given on this day. The Eternal declared that, during this spring harvest season, a

second offering of firstfruits was to be waved in a similar fashion to the previous single wave-sheaf that we understand represented Christ. This time, the offering would consist of two loaves of bread. As God's instructions to the Levites stated:

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 dwellings 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 23:16-17).

Just as the wave-sheaf was a firstfruit offering, the two loaves are also called "firstfruits." The relationship between these two offerings is further understood by the fact that no new grain was to be eaten until the first sheaf was offered (Lev. 23:14).

The wave-sheaf portrayed Christ's resurrection and His ascension to heaven. It portrays the fact that it is not possible for anyone else to be resurrected and ascend to heaven until after Christ was reaped from the earth. The fact that He was the first to be resurrected offers true Christians great hope. It assures us that others will follow.

Because no other human being has ever been born again, Christ is called "the firstborn among many brethren" and "the firstborn from the dead" (John 3:13; Col. 1:15-18; Rom. 8:29). Those who qualify for the first resurrection are the many brethren James spoke of who are considered "a kind of firstfruits," who "shall be like Him" (Jam. 1:18; 1John 3:2). These are a few of the verses revealing that the two wave-loaves represent the first harvest of the saints. This is why the holy day is also called the Feast of Harvest (Exo. 23:16). The likely reason that there were two loaves represents those chosen from both the Old and New Covenants.

Another clue to the meaning of Pentecost is found in the prescribed ingredients of the loaves. Leaven is frequently used to symbolize sin (Mark 8:15; 1Cor. 5:8). Therefore, the wave-sheaf contained no leaven because it represented Christ who committed no sin (Lev. 2:11; 1Pet. 2:22). On the other hand, the two wave

loaves were the only holy day offering containing leaven. In fact, leaven was a required ingredient. When we consider that leaven represents sin during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Pentecost offering is intimately connected to the spring feast days, the leaven portrays the fact that, as humans, Christians will have a history of sin when raised from the dead.

The wave-sheaf was offered prior to the wave loaves representing the fact that Christ's unleavened sacrifice for our sins had to be accepted before anyone can follow Him to the Kingdom of Heaven (Heb. 9:14; 1John 3:2). The leavened loaves reflect that no human being will attain the Kingdom sinless. However, this does not give anyone an excuse to continue to sin. As the Apostle John pointed out, those who receive the Holy Spirit cannot continue practicing sin (1John 3:9).

Further, Christ's sacrifice will NOT cover the sins of those who sin willfully after receiving the knowledge of truth (Heb. 10:26). Those considered faithful must spiritually mature as they work to overcome sin (Jam. 1:4). That is what Christ referred to when He said "you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Mat. 5:48). It is term meaning to be mature in faith.

Leviticus 23:19-20 states that these loaves, along with the meat offerings, were "holy to the LORD for the priest." It is likely that the reason two loaves were required represented those who would be chosen from both the Old Covenant and New Testament. After having been offered, the loaves were given to the priest for his personal use. The high priest was symbolic of Christ who is called "a great High Priest" (Heb. 4:14). This indicates that the first resurrection of saints will be presented to God and given to Christ as His bride (Rev. 19:7-9). John described these individuals as being "redeemed from *among* men, *being* firstfruits to God and to the Lamb" (Revelation 14:4).

The Day of Firstfruits

The transcendent meaning of Pentecost helps us to understand another term used to describe this holy day. Numbers 28:26 calls it "the day of the firstfruits." This is a fitting

description when we consider that those chosen will be considered the first harvest of souls among men.

Consider how the Holy Spirit was given to certain individuals on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit allows for spiritual conception portrayed by the Apostle Peter as a seed being planted within those who are called (1Pet. 1:22-23). The Apostle John also spoke of this spirit stating that, "His seed remains in him" (1John 3:9). This spiritual seed facilitates the conversion process as believers grow in grace and knowledge much like a child that develops within the womb (2Pet. 3:18). Such growth involves keeping God's law both in the letter and its intent (Mat. 5:21-48). This means having God's law written, not in tablets of stone, but within the fleshy tablets of the heart (Deu. 26:16; Pro. 7:1-3; 2Cor. 3:3). For these reasons, the Apostle Paul was inspired to write that true Christians, "have the firstfruits of the Spirit," and they are "eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23).

As shocking as this may sound to some who claim to be Christian, the Bible declares that absolutely no one will receive eternal life without observing God's laws and holy days as well as having God's Spirit in them (Eph. 1:13; 2Cor. 1:22). This is why God chose to give disciples the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). It is also why Christ told Nicodemus that being born again means to be born of the spirit (John 3:3-8). It is not a mere feeling or a simple catch phrase. For more on this subject, please read our booklet answering the question—*What it Really Means to be Born Again*.

The resurrection of God's elect is what the annual observance of Pentecost represents. The Apostle Paul was inspired to prophesy that this monumental event will take place at the end of the age at the sound of the last trumpet (1Cor. 15:51-53; Rev. 11:15-18). This awesome plan will be fulfilled with the inclusion of God's next annual holy day—the Feast of Trumpets.

A Memorial of Blowing of Trumpets

The next annual holy day after Pentecost is commonly known as the Feast of Trumpets. Like all of the other feasts, this day is observed by a Sabbath rest and a holy convocation. However, it is not one of the three times a year when an offering is required. Notice God's declaration:

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. You shall do no customary work *on it* (Leviticus 23:24-25).

God had previously instructed Israel to construct silver trumpets to be blown by the priests on a variety of occasions (Num. 10:10). Though these trumpets were blown on every holy day, the unique sound of these trumpets was to be a focal point of this particular feast. But their purpose in this celebration has confused many. As the famous Bible scholar John Gill wrote:

What this blowing of trumpets was a memorial of is not easy to say; some think it was in memory of the wars the people of Israel had with their enemies the Amalekites and Canaanites, and the victories they obtained over them, and particularly in remembrance of the walls of Jericho falling down at the sound of rams' horns... it is more commonly received with the Jews that it was on the account of the binding of Isaac on this day... and by others, that the world was created, and this blowing of trumpets might be in memory of that (*John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, Lev. 23:24).

Most speculations regarding the meaning of this holy day tend to focus on events of the past. However, the Feast of Trumpets does not memorialize history. Rather, it portrays an act of enormous impact that will occur in the near future. It portrays the beginning of a series of supernatural plagues that will ravage the entire planet.

This sequence of events is explained in detail beginning in the eighth chapter of Revelation in which the Apostle John saw seven angels stand before God. Each angel was given a trumpet to be blown in succession. Devastating plagues will wreak havoc on our planet with every reverberating blast. The earth and all living things will suffer the consequences of humanity's rebellion against the moral law of God that has resulted in thousands of years of war, suffering, disease, and widespread abuse of the earth. All people will finally realize that God is real, that His laws are everlasting, and yet mankind has continued to violate His commandments.

His coming wrath has been prophesied to occur from ancient times. The Scriptures call it "the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God" (Isaiah 61:2). It will be a full year of the most horrifying experiences in human history including seven dreadful trumpet plagues followed by seven even more terrifying bowl plagues. Consider a brief summary of this future year of devastation.

The First Trumpet

The first trumpet plague will cause hail and fire to rain down on the earth (Rev. 8:7). This fire is similar to the brimstone that came upon Sodom and Gomorrah only far worse. The resulting flames will burn a third of all trees and consume all the green grass on the entire planet. The smoke resulting from global catastrophic fires would cause a pandemic of respiratory illness while leaving grasslands barren.

The Second Trumpet

The second trumpet will bring a curse upon the oceans and seas of the world that will kill one-third of all aquatic creatures. The stench of rotting carcasses will fill the coastlands. It will also cause a third of all sea-going vessels to be destroyed (Rev. 8:8-9). All fleets on the earth will be crippled. The bustling harbors and seaports of today will be clogged with wreckage of both commercial and military vessels.

The Third Trumpet

The third trumpet will unleash a fiery falling star that will strike a third of all fresh water. This star is named Wormwood which means “*bitterness*” portraying “*calamity*” (*Strong's*, G894). The bitterness will be a poison which many people will drink resulting in an untold number of fatalities (Rev. 8:10-11),

The Fourth Trumpet

The next plague will result in shocking signs throughout our solar system that will affect weather patterns on the earth (Rev. 8:12). This plague was described previously by Christ when speaking to the disciples about the end of the age. The Savior said:

And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken (Luke 21:25-26).

Christ described supernatural events that will dramatically affect the sun, moon, stars, and the earth. The book of Revelation expresses further details indicating that a third of the sun, moon, and stars will not shine for a third of the day and night. For how many days, weeks, or months this will occur is not stated. Though some may initially think that such a plague is somewhat benign, there will be a great disruption to the world's weather and food production. The disturbance to the human psyche is yet to be known, but it will likely cause worldwide panic.

The Fifth Trumpet and Three Woes

The last three trumpet plagues are called the three woes (Rev. 8:13). The term “*woe*” is an expression of profound grief and when these three plagues are unleashed. They will cause enormous sadness due to the pain, suffering, and loss of life. The woes will begin with the fifth trumpet that will unleash swarms

of venomous insects that will be permitted to torment people for five months. The description of them indicates that these are locusts, but they are not any type of locust the world has ever seen. In fact, when we read the prophecy, it becomes clear that they are no less than demonic beings that God allows to inflict great pain and suffering on all people. Notwithstanding, they are not allowed to kill anyone nor do harm to any surviving vegetation (Rev. 9:1-11).

Evidence that they are demonic is found in the fact that they are released from what John called “the bottomless pit.” This is a spiritual place of restraint that both Peter and Jude described as chains of darkness (2Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). When released, these creatures continue to be restrained. While wicked angels would desire to murder every human being, the Almighty only allows them to hurt people without killing them.

It is also written that these beings have a king over them. Their ruler is known as, “the angel of the bottomless pit whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon” (Rev. 9:11). These two terms mean “destroying angel, and destroyer” and refer to Satan who is the leading figure among the wicked angels—elsewhere called a destroyer (*Strong's*, G3; G623; Exo. 12:23).

The Sixth Trumpet

The sixth trumpet will release four angels that are bound at the Euphrates River. These are likely wicked angels that have been bound for untold millennia (Jude 6). They will be allowed to kill with fire, smoke, and brimstone. However, like the prior release of demons, they too will be restrained from doing more harm than they might desire. One-third of the people left on the earth will perish at that time (Rev. 9:13-19).

Shocking as all of this may sound, it is what God has declared will happen. What is surprising to read is that, despite the punishing devastation that these six trumpet plagues will bring, most of those who survive will still remain hostile and defiant toward God. God knows the depths of rebellious and

stubborn human nature. Notice how many will refuse to repent of the sins that brought about such tragedy:

But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts (Revelation 9:20-21).

A Series of Thirds

Some have wondered why there are so many devastating thirds during the trumpet plagues:

- One third of the trees are burned up
- One third of the sea becomes like blood
- One third of sea creatures die
- One third of ships are destroyed
- One third of all fresh water becomes poisonous
- One third of the sun, moon, and stars are darkened
- One third of mankind is killed

A possible reason for these disastrous thirds comes from Revelation 12:4 where Christ portrayed Satan drawing a third of the angels away from God. These are wicked angels who joined the devil in his rebellion against their Creator long ago (Isa. 14:13-14; Eze. 28:16). When we consider the countless travesties that have resulted from Satan's persuasion and deception of mankind, it may be that God will use devastating thirds to demonstrate the demonic path of destruction.

The Seventh Trumpet

Man's continued defiance will cause Christ to direct an angel to sound a seventh trumpet plague. This final trumpet will begin a process of seven even more dreadful bowl plagues (Rev. 11:15; 16:1-21). Before this, however, the moment that all of

God's faithful people have waited for will finally occur—the resurrection of the saints! As Christ and the Apostles Paul and John stated:

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 24:30-31).

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 (1Corinthians 15:51-52).

But in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets (Revelation 10:7).

God's mystery is the resurrection of a select group of faithful servants who will become divine spirit beings. This miraculous event will sweeten the extremely bitter experience of the great tribulation and the year of God's wrath that many who are called will witness and experience (Mat. 24:9).

The tragedy caused by the trumpet plagues will be enormous, but absolutely necessary to turn the hearts of a rebellious planet. The living will finally understand that there is only one true God who is the author of all creation, the Lawgiver, and the greatest power in both the physical and spiritual universes. It will finally be realized that His holy law cannot be broken without dire consequences.

The Memorial of the Blowing of Trumpets pictures these events and it is a holy day to be kept by all who truly believe God. It is inextricably tied to the destiny of those who

will be chosen to assist the Savior in ruling His glorious Kingdom at His return—and beyond. Although the observance of this particular holy day reminds us of coming tragedy, it also reflects the time when God's chosen few will keep their transcendent appointment with Christ as they ascend to meet Him in the air. As Paul prophesied:

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord (1Thessalonians 4:16-17).

The trumpet plagues will be a severe form of punishment on wicked people of the earth, but the last trumpet will signal the resurrection of the saints. As a result, many have made the mistake of thinking that the Feast of Trumpets celebrates the first resurrection of the dead; when those who are chosen will be changed to spirit (1Cor. 15:51). However, that is not the case. As stated previously, the activities and symbolism of God's holy days reveal that the first resurrection will take place on Pentecost—not the Feast of Trumpets.

This may seem out of sync to some because the majority of events represented by the Feast of Trumpets will take place before the fulfillment of Pentecost. And yet each year Pentecost is celebrated before Trumpets. These occurrences do not need to be a stumbling block. God's timetable indicates that ALL of the events taking place within the year of God's wrath are in sync with what the annual holy days consecutively represent.

Consider the following scenario. The silver trumpets were commanded to be blown on every High Holy Day of God's feasts. If God chooses to sound a trumpet plague on each of the annual High Days, the last trumpet would be blown on Pentecost:

- 1st Trumpet - A Memorial of Blowing of Trumpets
- 2nd Trumpet- The Day of Atonement
- 3rd Trumpet - The first day of the Feast of Tabernacles
- 4th Trumpet - The Eighth Day
- 5th Trumpet - The first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread
- 6th Trumpet - The last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread
- 7th Trumpet - The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost)

Even though this series fits with the true meaning of Pentecost, it is not known if God will choose to sound a trumpet plague on each of the annual High Holy Days. It is certain, however, that the year of God's wrath will only be complete after both the trumpet and bowl plagues are released.

How long is the Great Tribulation?

It is important to understand that the first chapters of the Bible indicate that a year, according to God's timetable, consists of 360 days. For example, the period of time between the beginning of the flood and the ark coming to rest in the mountains of Ararat was exactly 150 days. The biblical account indicates that this period began the 17th of the second month and ended on the 17th of the seventh month (Genesis 7:11-24; 8:4). That means a 12-month year was exactly 360 days.

This is important to recognize when considering prophetic timeframes mentioned in the Bible. A study of prophecy also reveals that a time, times, and half a time is equal to 3½ years—the equivalent of 42 months or 1260 days (Rev. 11:2; 12:6).

With this in mind, it is commonly believed that the beginning of the great tribulation until Christ's ultimate return to the Mount of Olives is 3½ years. We have learned that the year of God's wrath is one full year of that time. This would mean that the trumpet plagues would have to start 2½ years after the beginning of the great tribulation. However, such a scenario is out of sync with the description of other prophetic events to occur at the end-time.

The year of God's wrath begins when the first trumpet sounds. The chosen saints will also be resurrected at the sound of

the last trumpet, but the year of God's wrath will not be over at that point. There will still be seven bowl plagues that will need to be poured out by seven angels. Christ also revealed:

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).

The chosen saints will be resurrected after "the tribulation," but before the destructive bowl plagues that will continue to wreak havoc on the earth. As we are about to see, the tribulation that Christ spoke of is not the end of horrific events that fall into the category of the great tribulation affecting the whole world. Instead, Christ spoke in the context of tribulation that will affect the individuals God has called who are individuals that He is uniquely concerned about.

Because other prophecies indicate that end-time events will include a 3½ year period, many have assumed that the great tribulation that affects the whole world will last for only 3½ years. However, when we closely examine these prophetic references, none of them actually say that the great tribulation will last for just 3½ years. Notice the following verses that speak of this timetable and consider their context within all of the end-time events:

He (the beast) shall speak *pompous* words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then *the saints* shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time (Daniel 7:25).

This verse does not say that the time from the beginning of the tribulation until Christ's triumphant return will be 3½ years. It specifically speaks of persecution upon Christians who are lukewarm as described in Christ's letter to Laodicea (Rev. 3:16-18). Evidently, the length of their maltreatment will be 3½ years. For more on this subject, please read our booklet—*A Place of Safety*.

Another prophecy also speaks of 3½ years, but again does not indicate that this is the entire length of the end-time tribulation. As Daniel wrote:

And *one* said to the man clothed in linen, who *was* above the waters of the river, "How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders *be*?" Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who *was* above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that *it shall be* for a time, times, and half *a time*; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these *things* shall be finished (Daniel 12:6-7).

This passage of Scripture discusses the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecies leading up to God raising a select group of people to become Kings and Priests to reign with Christ on the earth (Rev. 19:7; 1:6). The conclusion is that, after 3½ years, "many shall be purified, made white, and refined" (Dan. 12:10). Before that, however, certain faithful and dedicated individuals will be taken to a place of safety as indicated in the following verse:

But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time... (Revelation 12:14).

The subject of this verse is a woman who portrays those in God's Church who are found worthy to be taken and protected

during great tribulation (Luke 21:36). They will be taken to a place of safety, protected, and nourished for 3½ years. Nevertheless, Christ did not indicate that cataclysmic events affecting the whole world will end after a time, times, and half a time—3½ years.

When considering this definitive period of time, remember that a primary focus in the Scriptures has always been God's people. Therefore, what the prophetic timeframe indicates is that certain events affecting those people God is particularly concerned with during the last days will culminate after 3½ years. These are measures that will dramatically affect God's Church—both the faithful and the lukewarm.

Regarding the tribulation that affects the whole world, Christ said, "For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be," but He never said exactly how long this worldwide tribulation would last (Mat. 24:21). Nonetheless, He did give us three indicative clues: times, time, and half a time, the year of God's wrath, and a predetermined annual holy day calendar.

Understanding that the trumpet plagues will likely begin on the Memorial of Trumpets, and the seventh trumpet will be blown on the day of Pentecost, the Scriptures reveal that there will be another series of plagues called "bowl plagues" that will be poured out after the last trumpet and before the next annual holy day to be satisfied.

The bowl plagues will not all be poured out at the same time. They will occur over several months and will culminate with the completion of the year of God's wrath. Shortly afterward, the next annual holy day to be fulfilled will result in taking another profound step in God's plan.

The Day of Atonement

All of the events discussed so far are important steps in God's plan for humanity. What may be the most significant to some is binding the devil and his demons for 1,000 years. This momentous future event is portrayed through the observance of the next annual holy day—the Day of Atonement:

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, 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. For any person who is not afflicted *in soul* on that same day shall be cut off from his people. And any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. You shall do no manner of work; *it shall be* a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It *shall be* to you a sabbath of *solemn* rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth *day* of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath (Leviticus 23:27-32).

These instructions state that believers must afflict their souls on this holy day that is also observed much like a weekly Sabbath in which absolutely no work is to be done. The form of affliction that God requires is fasting. On this day, baptized members of God's Church are to go without food and drink for 24 hours from sunset to sunset. In addition, there is to be a holy convocation. No offerings are required to be given by brethren on this day. It is our opinion that an attempt to take offerings by brethren on the Day of Atonement would be considered a sin.

Notice that God declared, "Any person who does any work on that same day, that person I will destroy from among his people. You shall do no manner of work!" The offerings in ancient times consisted of produce, animals, and currency. To take up offerings on the Day of Atonement would require a great

deal of work by many people. This was forbidden. Only the priestly duties were allowed on this holy day. For more on this subject, please read our booklet—*Three Times a Year*.

Two Goats

In order to understand why this particular holy day foreshadows God's plan to bind Satan and his demons for 1,000 years, we must consider a unique ritual that was required of Israel and performed by the Levitical priesthood. God decreed that Aaron and his posterity were to annually observe the Day of Atonement with the following ceremony:

And he (the high priest) shall take from the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats as a sin offering... He shall take the two goats and present them before the LORD *at* the door of the tabernacle of meeting. Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the LORD and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat on which the LORD's lot fell, and offer it *as* a sin offering. But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make atonement upon it, *and* to let it go as the scapegoat into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:5-10).

The two goats represent a prophetic truth. The goat on which God's lot fell was sacrificed as a sin offering for the people. This goat represented Christ who was slain as a sacrifice for the sins of humanity (Heb. 9:11-15). God chose Christ to be our Savior. In a similar fashion, He chose which goat would represent His sin offering through the process of drawing lots. If it were up to men to decide who their savior would be, they would likely choose the wrong one. This is evident from the fact that the vast majority of humanity has been fooled by a false gospel about Christ preached by most sects of Christianity. From the time of Adam and Eve unto today, Satan and his ministers have portrayed themselves as messengers of light deceiving everyone to various

degrees (2Cor. 11:14-15; Rev. 12:9). Therefore, God is the one to choose our Savior and King (Acts 1:24).

Christ came as a man with no physical attraction (Isa. 53:2). He spoke the words of God, and the Jews widely rejected Him (John 19:15). Even in His hometown few believed (Mat. 13:57-58). He was a light in a darkened world, and the minds of most men and women did not comprehend who He was (John 1:5). If it were up to men to choose who their Messiah would be, we would pick the individual who was most appealing from a physical and carnal perspective. This is why, through the drawing of lots, God chose the goat that would become a sacrifice for the sins of the people as well as the one to be the scapegoat.

While the sacrificed goat represented Christ, the scapegoat portrayed the devil. It was this second goat that was separated from the people Israel. As God instructed:

And when he (the high priest) has made an end of atoning for the Holy *Place*, the tabernacle of meeting, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat. 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 (Leviticus 16:20-22).

The live goat is the scapegoat—the one to be presented alive before the LORD (v. 10). The word “scapegoat” is translated from the Hebrew *azazel* meaning “goat of departure” (*Strong's*, H5799). This goat had the sins of the people symbolically placed on its head thus representing the sins of the world which are intimately connected to Satan's deceptive mind from the beginning of humanity's existence.

A man prepared for this task led the scapegoat outside the vicinity of Israel and released it in an area uninhabited by people. This part of the ceremony portrays the angel prepared

by God to bind Satan and take him to the bottomless pit—a place uninhabited by human beings. As prophesied by the Apostle John:

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 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 (Revelation 20:1-3).

Humanity has never known a time when Satan has NOT influenced mankind's thoughts and behaviors. The devil has ruled this world as a type of god by persuading people to make decisions that have altered the course of history. The way of the devil has vastly become the way of mankind. This is why Christ said, "Wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it" (Mat. 7:13). Notwithstanding, the dragon's deception will have an end. That end will begin on the Day of Atonement which represents the future imprisonment of the adversary who currently stalks the earth like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1Pet. 5:8).

The ceremony performed by the priests does NOT represent two sides of Christ found in the two goats. In addition, the ritual does NOT represent Satan's final end. Some have created a scenario in which the Savior is pictured by both the goat for the LORD as well as the scapegoat. A few others believe that Satan will never be destroyed, but will be imprisoned for eternity. This is not true. The goat for the LORD represents Christ's sacrifice, and the scapegoat portrays binding the devil and separating him from people for a thousand years. In addition, Satan's ultimate end is not represented by this ceremony.

In the spiritual prison called the Bottomless Pit, the devil will be unable to affect anyone or anything for a millennium. As will be explained on the following pages, after 1,000 years, Satan

will be released for a relatively short span of time. Ultimately, he will be destroyed in the final lake of fire. For more information on this subject, please read our booklet—*Satan's Fate*.

Our High Priest

The Day of Atonement is one of the last phases of God's plan before Christ returns. It pictures the imprisonment of Satan and his demons, but the high priest's role also pictures Christ as our High Priest being the Mediator who makes atonement for all. The central role of this priest was designed to represent Christ who faithfully committed Himself to a life of faithful service to the Father (John 5:17). For this reason, the high priest was required to perform an elaborate rite on the Day of Atonement consisting of washings and offerings in order to be considered a fitting mediator between God and the people (Lev. 16:1-6, 11-19, 23-34).

Christ came to the earth and experienced all the pulls of the flesh that we feel, and yet He lived a sinless life in order to become our faithful High Priest. He is therefore the Mediator of the new covenant. (Heb. 2:17; 4:15; 12:24). Christ's contribution is absolutely vital to every person who has ever lived. Still, every Christian has reasonable service and duties to fulfill in order to be worthy of receiving the gift of eternal life (Luke 17:10; Rom. 12:1). We simply must become mature in the faith, and strive to be holy as He is holy if we hope to be saved (Mat. 5:48; 1Pet. 1:15).

The Purpose of Fasting

The Day of Atonement is a holy day in which believers fast for 24 hours. Fasting is a physical form of cleansing. Ordinarily, the body will use stored elements in order to give its organs the energy they need to continue functioning normally. Occasional fasting cleanses the body of toxins that become embedded in adipose or fat tissue. Many of these impurities are purged when the body goes without food or drink for an extended period of time. But the annual sacrament goes beyond physical benefits. It pictures something spiritual.

Fasting represents our effort to remove impure behaviors that often become embedded in our lives. As the author of Hebrews wrote, Christ's blood was shed in order to, "cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb. 9:14). So it is that the conscious effort of refusing to eat and drink for a period of time portrays the believers desire to turn away from a life of impurity and obey the commandments of God. By going without food and water on the Day of Atonement, we rehearse our commitment to put God above all else. As Christ said to the devil regarding fasting, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God will man live" (Mat. 4:4).

Fasting is another way of rehearsing our commitment to put to death the person we were before beginning a lifelong conversion process. It portrays a statement made by Paul when he said "I die daily" which refers to the continual putting away of the old man and the ongoing development of a new person in Christ (1Cor. 15:31). Fasting pictures refusing what human nature desires and living by the faith of Christ as a new creation—an individual who has been cleansed of sins previously committed and is no longer walking according to the flesh, but according to the spirit (Rom. 3:25; 8:4; 2Cor. 5:17; 1John. 2:6). Paul related this on many occasions and in various ways such as the following statement:

And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:24-25).

This simple yet profound act of fasting represents several aspects of conversion and God's plan including His relationship with us! It represents ridding ourselves of the spiritual impurities that separate us from God. When our cells might be crying out for food, fasting portrays our commitment to obey God instead of the flesh. It also depicts a future at-one-ment (unity) with our Creator.

Therefore, the Day of Atonement reminds us that Satan will be bound. It rehearses how much we need Christ's sacrifice to make all of this possible. It represents our future unity with the Creator, and how much the world needs the wicked angels to be put away. Only by the elimination of the devil will the suffering of the world end so that all people can rejoice and prosper under the rule of Christ and His saints.

The Feast of Tabernacles

The final set of annual holy days is called the Feast of Tabernacles. This festival consists of a seven-day observance initiated by a holy convocation. The week is then followed by an eighth day holy convocation. As God declared to all people:

The fifteenth day of this seventh month *shall be* the Feast of Tabernacles *for* seven days to the LORD. On the first day *there shall be* a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work *on it...* On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. *It is* a sacred assembly, *and* you shall do no customary work *on it.* (Leviticus 23:34-36).

This festival is the third and last pilgrimage feast of the year. Much like the other two, the Feast of Tabernacles is observed by saving a festival tithe and using those funds for desired travel to a location where brethren gather to celebrate. The Church of God in our age has chosen this particular feast to be observed in various locations around the world referred to as “feast sites.” However, it must be understood that traveling outside of a believer’s local community, in this age, when there is no temple in the Middle East, is not required. For more on this subject refer to *Pilgrimage Feasts* on pages 43-46 of this book.

During this festival, celebrants are encouraged to participate in activities, meals, and fellowship with brethren (Deu. 14:22-26). The observance includes a holy convocation on the first day and there is a required offering to be given during this time of year (Deu. 16:16).

With the understanding that stages of God’s plan are portrayed in every holy day, this last set of holy days represents a culmination of prophetic events. It portrays 1,000 years of Christ’s rule on earth. It represents worldwide peace, longer life spans, and prosperity as the knowledge of God’s way of life spreads around the globe (Isa. 11:9). It pictures what God will offer billions who never truly knew Him such as the reward of

those who will choose His way of life, and ultimately the fate of those who do not—including the end of Satan and his demons.

Consider how Christ's return to the earth as King of kings will cause Jerusalem to become the headquarters of God's government on the earth. A temple will be established that will be like none the world has ever seen (Ezekiel 40-47). The prophets Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel wrote dozens of verses describing a massive second exodus in which the scattered tribes of Israel will be gathered from all around the world. Christ will parcel out areas of land in the Middle East for the returning descendants of Jacob. Zechariah also prophesied that God will begin to call people from other nations to come to Jerusalem and learn of His ways while observing the Feast of Tabernacles:

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 (Zechariah 14:16-17).

God's way of life will become clear to all people. The world will not be influenced by Satan's selfish way of get, but will instead practice the giving way of God:

No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, "Know the LORD," for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more (Jeremiah 31:34).

The earth will be restored to the vigor it had during the time of Eden in what the Bible calls "the times of refreshing," and "the times of restoration of all things" (Acts 3:19-21). There will be miraculous healing in flora, fauna, and humanity itself:

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; in the habitation of jackals, where each lay, *there shall be* grass with reeds and rushes (Isaiah 35:5-7).

The world will not learn the ways of war anymore (Isa. 2:4). Communities will become agrarian based. There will not be cramped apartment buildings and congested cities with skyscrapers drenched in smog. People will be given ample space and time to build meaningful relationships and to develop righteous character in what will be a truly nurturing environment. As Micah stated:

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. But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make *them* afraid; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken (Micah 4:3-4).

There will finally be widespread peace and prosperity on the earth. However, these changes will not happen overnight. People will need to learn the way of God and choose to apply His laws, ethics, and standards.

This will begin by learning God's way of a good work ethic, and there will be much work to do. The surviving races will play an active role in rebuilding their own communities. Those who choose to participate and submit to God's government will prosper tremendously while those who initially continue to reject God will need further persuasion. One of the persuasive methods will be the threat of drought (Zec. 14:17).

Defining a Tabernacle

The world, and most people in it, will continue to exist in a physical state throughout the Millennium. For this reason, the last of the annual feasts is called the Feast of Tabernacles. A tabernacle is a temporary structure such as a tent, hut, cabin, apartment, or a suburban home. No matter how well they are built, these are all temporary dwellings. Even the human body is a type of tabernacle wherein our spirit dwells. The simple fact is that nothing on this planet was designed to last forever. The entire physical creation is temporary and given enough time it would all cease to exist. As God told Adam:

For dust you *are*, and to dust you shall return
(Genesis 3:19).

The spirit of each person returns to God upon death indicating that our bodies are a type of tabernacle in which our existence is fleeting (Ecc. 12:7). The world itself is also a tabernacle that cannot exist forever. Science itself declares that, given enough time, our sun would burn out and the earth would fade into a lifeless, frozen, darkness. And yet this planet is currently our home. We all live in a world, in a house, in a body, and yet our time in these tabernacles is relatively short. The only hope of moving beyond this existence is to attain the Kingdom of Heaven.

That is why Christ began His ministry by telling the crowds that followed Him to, “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand” (Mat. 4:17). This is our purpose in life—to learn what will endure beyond the test of time, and the only thing that will allow us to live forever is the character gained through faithful obedience to God. This truth is exactly what King Solomon eventually realized and also what Christ expressed:

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all
(Ecclesiastes 12:13).

But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments (Matthew 19:17).

Blessed *are* those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life... (Revelation 22:14).

The Kingdom of Heaven will last forever! And the only way to attain that Kingdom is to practice the enduring principles of those spirit beings that currently live in it. That is what those who are called at this time are to strive to do. Those who qualify will be raised up at the sound of the last trump on Pentecost. They will return to the earth with Christ and bring with them God's government resulting in 1,000 years of peace, prosperity, and creative projects the likes of which this world has never experienced (Rev. 20:6). And yet, during the Millennium, the earth will continue to primarily be populated by mortal beings living in a temporary environment.

This relates how the Feast of Tabernacles pictures a culmination of mankind's existence. It will be the most enjoyable and prosperous time in human history and yet it will still not be a permanent world. The final holy days of the year were designed to remind us of this truth. As enjoyable as the Millennium will be, it too will come to an end. Notice how God desired for us to understand this while relating instructions for the seven days of this particular Feast. The Almighty declared that Israel was to dwell in booths during this time:

And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. You shall keep it as a feast to the LORD for 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 for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths (Leviticus 23:40-42).

A booth is also known as a *sukkah*. It is a structure made of wood and covered with palm branches or large leaves. It is comparable to a hut or tent that was to be erected and used during the Feast of Tabernacles. These huts are symbolic of our temporary, mortal, existence in this physical world. The lesson is that all things in this life will come to an end. Much like a hut that will not stand against the winds of time, everything in this world was designed so that it would not last. On the other hand, the Kingdom of Heaven will endure (Luke 1:33). Incorruptibility and immortality for some is a part of God's plan. As Paul wrote:

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1Corinthians 15:53-54).

This is the hope of the saints, but it will become the hope of all people during the Millennium. It will lead to the final stage in God's plan for humanity. For this reason, God instituted an eighth day to be an inseparable part of the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Eighth Day

The last holy day of the year is simply called the Eighth Day. God commanded that on this day all believers were to participate in a holy convocation that would commence after observing the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days:

Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the LORD *for* seven days; on the first day *there shall be* a sabbath-rest, and on the eighth day a sabbath-rest (Leviticus 23:39).

Notice that the Eighth Day is considered a separate observance from the Feast of Tabernacles, and yet it is inextricably linked to the seven days of the previous festival. God said, “You shall keep the feast of the LORD *for* seven days,” and then, without any word of explanation, celebrants are told that on the eighth day there shall be a Sabbath rest. What is the significance of this Eighth Day that makes it a separate Sabbath and yet connected to the prior festival?

The answer can begin to be understood by examining the number eight. The Hebrew word for eight is *shemonah*. The symbolic meaning of this number is described by *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* as being, “through the idea of *plumpness*; as if a *surplus* above the “perfect” seven (H8083). The Biblical scholar and theologian E.W. Bullinger understood the significant meaning of this number. In his volume describing the meaning of various numbers in the Bible, Bullinger wrote:

As seven was so called because the seventh day was the day of completion and rest, so eight, as the eighth day, was over and above this perfect completion, and was indeed the first of a new series, as well as being the eighth (*Number in Scripture*, p. 196).

The number eight, going above and beyond completion, and representing a new series, refers to a new beginning. This

symbolism is found throughout the Scriptures. Noah and his family were eight individuals who became a new beginning for the human race after the flood. Male children of believers were to be circumcised on the eighth day after birth portraying a new beginning as a child of God's people (Lev. 12:3). This rite portrays a circumcision of the heart which is the beginning of a new way of life for all who believe in Christ (Deu. 10:16; Rom. 2:28-29). As a new beginning for Aaron and his progeny as temple priests, Aaron was consecrated after seven days and accepted as high priest on the eighth day (Lev. 8-9). Fulfilling the wave-sheaf offering, Christ rose from the dead at the end of the seventh day of the week, but ascended to the Father on the eighth day of the week (Sunday). This was a new beginning for Him as mankind's merciful and faithful High Priest (Lev. 23:11; Heb. 2:17).

These are just a few of the biblical examples of the number eight being used to represent a new beginning. When we consider the prophetic verses revealing the timing of God's plan for humanity, we begin to understand what the Eighth Day represents. As Bullinger again wrote, the number eight in Scripture is, "specially associated with resurrection and regeneration, and the beginning of a new era or order" (p. 200).

After 1,000 Years

Because the Eighth Day is intimately connected to the feast of Tabernacles, some conclude that it is a part of the 1,000-year period after Christ's return. This is not the case. Though the Millennium will be a fresh start for many people, the fact that there are seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles again represents God's plan being completed within a period of 7,000 years. This is similar to the weekly Sabbath as explained in the beginning of this book where a day symbolically reflects a thousand years (Psa. 90:4; 2Pet. 3:8).

After Christ's return, the chosen saints will rule with Him for 1,000 years. Then, another resurrection will take place at the end of this time period. As the Apostle John foresaw:

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years (*the Millennium*). **But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.** This (those who will live and reign with Christ) *is* the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-5).

This part of the prophecy mentions a time when “the rest of the dead” will live again. However, the second resurrection will not be to a spiritual existence as was the first. This part of God’s plan will bring back to life all people who lived and died since the time of Adam and Eve. They will be raised to a physical existence for a specific purpose—to offer them a chance to be saved from the second death (Rev. 21:8).

When all these people are raised up, the earth’s population will swell dramatically. The knowledge of God will have previously filled the earth (Hab. 2:14). This means that the people who live during the Millennium will know that the rest of the dead will be raised after 1,000 years. Vast preparations will have long been underway in anticipation of this staggering event. Communities far and wide will be ready for the arrival of their ancient ancestors. They will have built homes, planted crops, made clothes, in anticipation of the multiple billions of people who will be brought back from the grave.

This resurrection will include all those of every race and nation who had not committed unpardonable sins and those who had not yet been offered salvation. Teeming masses from every age of human history will be given the opportunity to work and grow in the grace and knowledge of God. It is at this time that something else of great significance will occur. Satan will be released from his prison to tempt the nations once again. Let’s review what John saw regarding the devil’s imprisonment:

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 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** (Revelation 20:1-3).

Why will God release Satan after 1,000 years? The answer is found in the reason he was locked up in the first place. God imprisoned the devil so that he would “deceive the nations no more.” Therefore, his freedom is only allowed so that he can attempt to deceive the nations once again. But why would God allow for people to be tempted in this way?

The reason is because everyone who ever hopes to be saved must be tested in the same way that the saints were tested before qualifying to attain a spiritual existence. God must know who sincerely desires to live His way or not. Once these resurrected individuals are certain of God's existence and understand His ethics, which of them will work to resist Satan's influence in order to live the way of God? Who will join the devil and rebel? Will some be half-hearted in their efforts and their commitment? Those who are not fully committed to God's way of life will NOT be allowed to continue to exist. Those are not the kind of people that God will allow to live in His perfect Kingdom forever.

Mankind has currently only experienced a world without God as its King. During the Millennium, and after the second resurrection, all humanity will have had the opportunity to see a world as God desires it to be. Similar to those called in our age, God will again allow the devil to tempt people so that He can be certain who will be faithful in every situation for eternity. All who hope to be saved from everlasting death must qualify for God's priceless gift by overcoming human nature as well as the devil. Those who pass this test will become incorruptible in a

final resurrection. Those who fail will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15; 21:8).

Satan's Last Stand

The seventh 1,000-year period of God's 7,000-year plan will technically end when the rest of the dead are raised and Satan is released from the bottomless pit. But this will not be the end of world—not yet. The Scriptures indicate that that Kingdom of God on earth will continue for a number of years after the rest of the dead are raised. One Scripture that relates to the millennium, as well as to those in the second resurrection, reveals that humanity will live longer and healthier lives during that time. As the Prophet Isaiah wrote:

No more shall an infant from there *live but a few days*, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; for the child shall die one hundred years old, but the sinner *being* one hundred years old shall be accursed. They shall build houses and inhabit *them*; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit (Isaiah 65:20-21).

No more will children die at a young age as some do today. Even the elderly will be raised to live a full life. All who live during the Millennium will fulfill their years as God allows them time to learn of His way, build character, and bear fruits worthy of real repentance. It is after the Millennium, during this extended period of time of the second resurrection, that Satan will be released. He will go out to generate anger, hostility, greed, and make war. As John foresaw:

Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number *is* as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down

from God out of heaven and devoured them (Revelation 20:7-9).

Before this final insurrection, the devil will have been locked in the bottomless pit for more than 360,000 days. Once freed, he will again broadcast resentment, greed, and hostility through the airwaves as a prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2). He will incite and encourage rebellion against the peaceful people of God. The devil will succeed in deluding many. Even after learning the ethics of the true God and experiencing a world at peace and filled with prosperity, thousands will turn against Christ's government. The ungodly of that time are referred to as Gog and Magog. These were once names of ancient ungodly rulers in the east, but spiritually these titles are representative of all who have rejected the way of peace and cooperation under God's law.

The nations will not have learned the way of war for more than ten centuries. As a result, the rebellious armies will not be armed with machine guns, tanks, or missiles. Instead, Gog and Magog will take up arms that we would consider primitive. Notice what Ezekiel revealed about this final insurgency:

Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog... Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I *am* against you, O Gog... You will ascend, coming like a storm, covering the land like a cloud, you and all your troops and many peoples with you." Thus says the Lord GOD: "On that day it shall come to pass *that* thoughts will arise in your mind, and you will make an evil plan: You will say, "I will go up against a land of unwalled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates" (Ezekiel 38:2-11).

The Middle-East has been a land of strife, contention, and war for thousands of years. And yet this prophecy speaks of the time when the land of Israel will not have experienced war for over 1,000 years. The villages, towns, and cities will have no

fortified walls because there will be no treacherous threat of invasion. However, Satan will influence many to rise up and turn against the peaceful people of God. While refusing to acknowledge the sovereignty of God, the insurrection will be an utter failure:

Then I will knock the bow out of your left hand, and cause the arrows to fall out of your right hand. You shall fall upon the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples who *are* with you; I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and *to* the beasts of the field to be devoured. You shall fall on the open field; for I have spoken," says the Lord GOD. "And I will send fire on Magog and on those who live in security in the coastlands. Then they shall know that I *am* the LORD" (Ezekiel 39:3-6).

The exact amount of time that Satan will be allowed to deceive people is not known. The Scriptures say that it will be a small space of time in comparison to the previous 1,000 years. Exactly how long it will take to amass this enormous rebellion is also not known. Nevertheless, when we consider the fact that God will bring back to life aborted babies and the elderly, and He will allow them a sufficient amount of time to live, learn, and experience His way, we speculate that it may be around 100 years from the time of Satan's release until the final rebellion (Isa. 65:20-21).

A final clue to the timing of this uprising is found in the weapons used by Gog and Magog. They will primarily be constructed of wood that can be used as fuel for fire. God foretold that, after the invasion is crushed:

Then those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go out and set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and bucklers, the bows and arrows, the javelins and spears; and they will make fires with them for seven years. They will not take wood from the field nor cut down *any* from the forests, because they will make

fires with the weapons; and they will plunder those who plundered them, and pillage those who pillaged them (Ezekiel 39:9-10).

The weapons built primarily out of wood will be so numerous that the peaceful people who had been attacked will be able to use them as firewood for seven years afterward.

This prophecy indicates that it will take place after Satan is loosed at the end of the Millennium. But is this what the Eighth Day celebration portrays? Does it represent the second resurrection to flesh, setting the devil free, and the failed insurrection of Gog and Magog? No! The Eighth Day portrays much more than that—an entirely new beginning that will be glorious and it will take place soon after all rebellion is stamped out. It portrays a super abundant new era in the future history of God's plan for His creation.

A Final Resurrection for Judgment

So far, the prophetic puzzle of future events reveals that the rest of the dead who never knew Christ will have been raised to a mortal existence, and given a number of years to live and learn the way of God. Satan will be released and allowed to influence mankind once again. A large number will turn and rebel against God and His faithful people. This final act will seal the fate of many. As we are about to see, there will then be a formal judgment made upon both the good and the incorrigible. Before that final judgment is pronounced, a third resurrection will take place that will be similar to the first. This third resurrection will be to spirit and it will include all people whether they were good or evil. As Paul stated in the book of Acts:

There will be a resurrection of *the* dead, both of *the* just and *the* unjust (Acts 24:15).

This is a third and final resurrection. It is the time Christ spoke of when He explained:

All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...” Then He will also say to those on the left hand, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:32-41).

God will pronounce a formal judgment regarding the works of every individual. He will open the Book of Life containing the names of those who desire God's way, while the names of those who rejected His way will have been blotted out:

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 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. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15).

This final judgment is again what Christ spoke of when encouraging His Church to overcome the temptation to sin:

He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and **I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life**; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels (Revelation 3:5).

Those people found written in the Book of Life will be judged worthy to become spirit born citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. Those who chose to reject God will be erased from existence in a massive lake of fire. This conflagration is the dreaded second death and it is of such magnitude that it will include the extinction of Satan and his wicked angels. For more on this subject, please read our booklet—*Satan's Fate*.

The third resurrection is not for the purpose of destroying the incorrigible alone. It is at this same time that many will be judged worthy of salvation. The purpose of raising everyone as spirit was noted in a prophecy by Daniel who wrote “Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2).

Everlasting contempt does not mean that the wicked will burn forever in some kind of raging “hellfire.” God is a God of mercy and love—not of torture. The expression refers to the finality of judgment rendered. There will not be another opportunity for these people to be saved. The judgment will be final—a second death from which there will be no return.

Christ also related that, at that time, death and *hades* will be destroyed (Rev. 20:14). This means everyone who has chosen to whole-heartedly live God's way will never face death or the grave again. The profound implication of that statement begins to reveal an amazing truth. All that is physical, including the entire universe, will be destroyed in preparation for an entirely new creation! This is what the Eighth Day represents—the ultimate new beginning that will include an entirely new heavens and earth!

The New Universe

As wonderful as the Millennium will be, it will still be a temporary existence. This fact is related by God's command for Israel to keep the Feast of Tabernacles by dwelling in booths for seven days (Lev. 23:39-43). The Feast of Tabernacles represents the Millennium and booths are temporary structures much like a stall or tent. These instructions were given to literal

pilgrims coming out of Egypt and heading toward the Promised Land, and yet the land of Canaan would still not be a permanent residence for God's people. This territory was symbolic of the world to come.

Israel's bondage in Egypt portrays a life in bondage to the effects sin. Freedom from Egypt represents coming out of that sin. Entering into the Promised Land pictures the promised Kingdom of God on the earth. Therefore, the heroes of faith throughout history continued to consider themselves strangers and pilgrims in this world. Moreover, their example continues to be a goal for God's faithful people:

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced *them* and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth (Hebrews 11:13).

The earth, our solar system, and this present universe are only temporary. In fact, we exist in a literal series of tabernacles. We live in a mortal body that dwells in a material home on a corporeal planet residing in a solar system of matter that spirals in a temporary physical universe. We only exist as pilgrims in this world. Every person and every dwelling place on the earth, no matter how big or small, is a figurative booth. This truth led Paul to write:

For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life (KJV, 2Corinthians 5:4).

Neither this earth nor our present human body is a permanent residence. All things physical will ultimately have their end. But the body of the resurrected saints, the new heavens, new earth, and the New Jerusalem will exist forever! The new universe will be a place in which all who are found written in the book of life will be able to call home forever.

Another Day of the Lord

Many believe the expression “the day of the Lord” is only considered the time of God’s wrath. But there are other verses that use the same expression that simply point to a time when God dramatically intervenes in the affairs of mankind. The apostle Peter understood this and spoke of a time that Christians should look forward to—a divine renewal that is both eternal and entirely righteous:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells (2Peter 3:10-13).

The Kingdom of God will come to this earth, but that Kingdom exists right now in heaven. That is why Christ frequently called it the Kingdom of Heaven. The Millennial reign of Christ and the resurrected saints on earth will be an extension of that realm, but even that world will come to an end. However, God’s angel said that, “of His kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:33).

The final High Holy Day of each year is the Eighth Day. It represents something greater and far beyond our present existence. When it is fulfilled, the Eighth Day will begin a new series and a new age for God, the angels, and all who will be saved. As John’s vision continued to reveal:

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there

was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Revelation 21:1-8).

Few realize that the reality of the Eighth Day was prophesied long before John's vision. Centuries earlier, a psalm was written in which the composer was inspired by God to write:

Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens *are* the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; yes, they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will change them, and they will be changed. But You *are* the same, and Your years will have no end. The children of Your servants will continue, and their descendants will be established before You (Psalm 102:25-28).

This is the glorious, super magnificent, new beginning that surpasses that which is complete. It is beyond God's 7,000-year plan, and is therefore an eighth time period without limit—with no end. For this reason, God has not revealed all that will

occur when life as we know it will no longer exist. What we do know is that He who sits on the throne will say, “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev. 21:5). As Isaiah also prophesied:

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind (Isaiah 65:17).

The Millennial reign of Christ and the saints will be grand beyond the expression of words. However, it will be surpassed by the realization of the Eighth Day—a New Heavens, a New Earth, and the New Jerusalem descending from heaven like a bride adorned for her husband. Only then will God the Father make His tabernacle among individuals who are converted and transformed into a spiritual existence where they will forever be known as the literal children of God. As Herbert Armstrong fittingly wrote:

With God’s great master plan of seven thousand years finally completed—the mystery of the ages finally revealed, and with the re-creating of the vast universe and eternity lying ahead, we come finally to: **THE BEGINNING** (*Mystery of the Ages*, p. 363).

We Must Observe God's Holy Days

To members of God's true Church, there is no question whether or not we should observe God's holy days. The simple answer is a resounding yes! But most people who merely claim to be Christian have little understanding of the true faith delivered to the saints (Jude 3). As a result, billions assume that they are not required to keep the seventh day Sabbath or any of God's annual holy days. These times are frequently discounted as simply Jewish traditions that are no longer relevant. Notwithstanding, even the Jews of today no longer observe these days the way God intended. Once it is understood that the early Church observed these days, and it is known how they are to be kept, and that God's plan for all humanity is indelibly written within them, this knowledge should cause every believer to agree that God's holy days must be kept!

The arguments against keeping God's Sabbaths are based upon inference, lies, and are the result of a lack of understanding the Bible. There is not a single verse in the entire Bible indicating that they are no longer applicable for New Testament Christians. When we realize that these observances are designed to be a spiritual road map to God's Kingdom, how could it be true that God did away with any one of them? It would be the equivalent to believing that the God who said, "I do not change" did away with the opportunity for salvation (Mal. 3:6).

Consider that the chapter outlining all of God's feasts states four separate times that they shall be kept "forever" (Lev. 23). Include the truth that all the faithful servants of God observed His weekly and annual Sabbaths. Reflect on the fact that God who never changes, and Christ who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, severely punished His people when they forsook these days (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8; Eze. 20:13; Neh. 13:18). Omitting their observance and importance should be unthinkable, so where did this negligence begin?

A Sign between God and His People

The vast majority of people who claim to believe in Jesus Christ do not realize that God established a sign between Him

and His people long ago. This sign is described multiple times in the Bible. What may be even more surprising is that God's sign is worn in the hand and forehead which is an expression meaning what people think about and what they apply their strength to do. Notice one of the verses describing God's sign:

And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. **You shall bind them as a sign** on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes (Deuteronomy 6:6-8).

These verses indicate that keeping God's commandments, including the Sabbath and holy days, is the way to reflect God's sign to Him and to others. Interestingly, the word "sign" is translated from the Hebrew *oth* which is defined as a "mark" (*Strong's*, H226). Those who truly obey God carry His mark as a sign that they recognize Him as the primary authority in their lives. The Scriptures repeatedly use the terms *sign*, *oth*, and *mark* to delineate the proper behavior of faithful people. Notice some of the examples regarding God's holy days:

The Seventh Day Sabbath

Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: "Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a **sign** between Me and you throughout your generations, that *you* may know that I *am* the LORD who sanctifies you" (Exodus 31:13)

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day *there shall be* a feast to the LORD... It shall be as a **sign** to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the LORD's law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the LORD has brought you out of Egypt (Exodus 13:6-9).

God's Statutes, Judgments, and Commandments

Therefore you shall love the LORD your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always... Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a **sign** on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes (Deuteronomy 11:1, 18).

God's Weekly and Annual Sabbaths

Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a **sign** between them and Me, that they might know that I *am* the LORD who sanctifies them... I *am* the LORD your God: Walk in My statutes, keep My judgments, and do them; hallow My Sabbaths, and they will be a **sign** between Me and you, that you may know that I *am* the LORD your God (Ezekiel 20:12-20).

The Mark of the Beast

God has a mark that His people wear in their hand and forehead. It is a sign carried by those who worship Him in truth. The counterfeit of God's mark is that of the end-time beast. That beast described in the books of Daniel and Revelation is symbolic of an unholy empire that is inspired by a false religious system known as "mystery Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth" (Rev. 17:5). What few realize is that the apostate system of the beast is alive and well today. Billions already subscribe to its ways without even realizing that they are in direct conflict with the Word of God. In this way, they are already accepting the mark of this beast, but exactly what is that mark?

The mark of the beast is not a tattoo, barcode, or a tiny computer chip. It is also not 666 which is a number enabling people to recognize the leader of the final beast (Rev. 13:18). The mark of the beast is altogether different. It is a system of beliefs and standards that are contrary to those of God and yet they have the appearance of being spiritual.

Consider that God's mark is worn in the forehead and hand and they are directly related to His commandments and holy

days. The mark of the beast is also worn in the hand and forehead (Rev. 13:16). Therefore, the mark of the beast is also related to holidays and days of worship, but they are not God's days.

The end-time beast will be a powerful empire led by a charismatic individual that is aligned with an apostate church. This empire actually began long ago in ancient Babylonia, and has morphed as it developed through distinct stages over thousands of years. The last stage of this empire will preach a false Christ and force acceptance of days that are contrary God's appointed times. Shockingly, these blasphemous days already exist and they are observed by billions all around the world. Surprising as it may be, the observances of Christmas, Easter, Lent, and weekly Sunday worship services are an intimate part of the mark of the beast. For more information on this subject please read our booklet—*Understanding the Mark of the Beast*.

Christ will destroy that wicked system and restore widespread observance of God's holy days when He returns. Before that, however, He tells sincere believers to come out of false religious systems and immoral practices that disregard God's commandments and His holy days. As John saw and heard:

And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues" (Revelation 18:1-4).

Throughout the history of modern Christianity, doctrines and holy days were changed without God's approval. First, the Sabbath was outlawed and replaced with Sunday in 325 A.D. Soon afterward, Christmas, Easter, and Lent were adopted. These are manmade appointed times that not biblical! All of them came from pagan days of worship that were adopted by an apostate organization claiming to be holy. As was later stated by a Catholic priest:

Sunday is our mark of authority. The church is above the Bible, and this transference of Sabbath observance is proof of that fact (*The Catholic Record*, Sept. 1, 1923).

Everyone Will Keep the Holy Days

God's appointed times were observed from the creation of Adam to the time of Jesus Christ. The apostles and the New Testament Church honored these days, and they continue to be observed by God's true Church today. In addition, these divine holy days will be kept by everyone in the future. As God declared:

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 14:16-19).

Christ has promised to return to this earth in order to set up a Kingdom in which all nations will be required to celebrate the holy days. The previous verses specifically speak of the Feast of Tabernacles, but other millennial prophecies include the observance of God's Sabbath, the Passover, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Eze. 45:21-25; 46:1-4). Notice God's decree through the prophet Ezekiel regarding God's people after Christ returns:

They shall keep My laws and My statutes in all My appointed meetings, and they shall hallow My Sabbaths (Eze. 44:24).

Come out of Her My People

We are very close to Christ's return as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Right now, there is a window of opportunity to

reject the mark of the beast and prepare for the world to come. It is God's desire that we trust in His wisdom and not that of mankind. We must turn from the ways of this world and seek the way of God while there is still time. As the prophet Isaiah wrote:

Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. "For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor *are* your ways My ways," says the LORD." For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:6-9).

We may think that there is nothing wrong with observing Christmas, Easter, or Sunday. We might think that participating in religious holidays designed by men does not matter when it comes to salvation. Perhaps we feel that good intentions are enough and God will only consider what is in the heart. But we need to take a closer look at these observances to understand their true origin and the meaning of their symbols. We must follow the guidance of God's written Word and realize that what we do externally reflects our reverence for God internally. We must recognize that God's ways are superior to ours.

Therefore, we should desire to observe His appointed times. The true holy days are not only superior to anything created by men; they symbolize His profound plan for all humanity. You can now consider it to be an indisputable fact that God's holy days are required observances for anyone who will ever have the hope of being saved.

The Eternal Church of God offers a variety of books, booklets, audio, and video messages to help people better understand the Bible. Some of the printed literature available includes:

Understanding the Mark of the Beast

Keys to Understanding Revelation

The Calendar Controversy

The Truth about Heaven

The Truth about Tithing

The Truth about Easter

A Place of Safety

The 144,000

The Sabbath Test

Evidence for Eras

Three Times a Year

The Trinity – fact or fiction?

The Truth about Matthew 18

The Truth about New Year's Day

The Shocking Truth about Valentine's Day

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