

*Restoring Original Christianity—for Today!*<sup>®</sup>

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Dear Brethren,

The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread will soon be upon us. We all realize that putting *leaven* out of our homes pictures putting *sin* out of our lives through repentance and the shed blood of Jesus Christ. However, we must also remember that the *eating of unleavened bread* for seven days pictures putting *in* the righteousness of Christ in preparation for eternal life. As Jesus said, “I am the bread of life; the one who comes to Me shall never hunger; and the one who believes in Me shall never thirst at any time.... The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up in the last day; for My flesh is truly food, and My blood is truly drink. The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood is dwelling in Me, and I in him. As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father; so also **the one who eats Me shall live by Me**” (John 6:35, 54-57). Even King David understood this: “O taste and see that the LORD is good” (Psa. 34:8).

***Dates for Spring Feasts***

***Passover, April 12—Ceremony, night of April 11***

***Night to be Much Observed to the Lord, night of April 12***

***First Day of Feast of Unleavened Bread, April 13***

**Also, April 13 is the first day of the 50-day count to Pentecost, June 1**

***Seventh Day of Feast of Unleavened Bread, April 19***

Why is the Feast of Unleavened Bread *seven* days? Seven signifies completeness, or perfection. This is why we have the Passover before the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Passover ceremony, as Jesus taught the apostles, is intended to *renew* the New Covenant, which is established on the sacrifice of Christ—His flesh and His blood. This is why the Passover Day is a separate day of unleavened bread (Mark 14:12)—because Jesus Christ is “the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world” (John 1:29, 36).

After partaking of the Passover, we continue to eat unleavened bread for an additional seven days, because we are walking in newness of life. God commands us: “Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread.” Since we learn by obeying God, He shows us that **we are to be made perfect in Christ Jesus**, through His Word and righteousness, by His Spirit. In fact, at the beginning of His ministry Jesus proclaimed during His Sermon on the Mount this message of becoming perfect: “**Therefore you shall be perfect, even as your Father Who is in heaven is perfect**” (Matt. 5:48). That is the goal! That is the vision of the Kingdom of God that we are to keep in the forefront of our

minds. Remember, “**Where *there is no vision, the people perish; but happy is he who keeps the law***” (Prov. 29:18).

In the same sermon, Jesus tells us *how* we are to accomplish this: “But *as for* you, seek first [the Greek means *keep on seeking*] the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matt. 6:33). This is what we are to do daily, as outlined in the model prayer. It begins and ends with the Kingdom of God as the goal: “Therefore, you are to pray after this manner: ‘Our Father Who *is* in heaven, hallowed be Your name; **Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth, as *it is* in heaven;** give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but rescue us from the evil one. **For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.** Amen’ ” (Matt. 6:9-13).

As led by the Holy Spirit of God, we are to keep the laws and commandments of God in their full spiritual intent. By doing so, the love of God is perfected in us, as the apostle John writes: “And by this *standard* we know that we know Him: if we keep His commandments. The one who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. **On the other hand, if anyone is keeping His Word, truly in this one the love of God is being perfected. By this *means* we know that we are in Him.** Anyone who claims to dwell in Him is obligating himself also to walk even as He Himself walked” (I John 2:3-6). This is why John also writes, “By this *standard* we know that we love the children of God: when we love God and keep His commandments. **For this is the love of God: that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome**” (I John 5:2-3).

Though He was God in the flesh, Jesus was *perfected* through suffering. Paul writes: “Who, in the days of His flesh, offered up both prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears to Him Who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because *He feared God*. **Although He was a Son, yet He learned obedience from the things that He suffered; and having been perfected, He became *the Author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him***” (Heb. 5:7-9).

In our obedience to God we are to spiritually *come out of this world*—called “Babylon the Great” (Rev. 18:4). How do we do this? It is much like the Corinthians, who were living in a world like ours—surrounded with paganism, idols everywhere, and a constant display of pornography engraved in stone. To help them come out of their world, Paul wrote: “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and lawlessness *have* in common? And what fellowship *does* light *have* with darkness? And what union *does* Christ *have* with Belial? Or what part *does* a believer *have* with an unbeliever? And what agreement *is there between* a temple of God and idols? For you are a temple of *the* living God, exactly as God said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore, come out from the midst of them and be separate,’ says *the* Lord, ‘and touch not *the* unclean, and I will receive you; and I shall be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters,’ says *the* Lord Almighty. **Now then, beloved, since we have these promises** [all the promises of Jesus in the New Testament], **we should purge ourselves from every defilement of *the* flesh and *the* spirit** [putting out the leaven of sin and carnal behavior], **perfecting holiness** [growing in grace and knowledge daily] **in *the* fear of God**” (II Cor. 6:14-7:1). He adds, “**For we are also praying for this—even your perfection**” (II Cor. 13:9).

This is the whole purpose of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is “for the **perfecting of the saints**, for *the* work of *the* ministry, for *the* edifying of the body of Christ; **until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto *the* measure of *the* stature of the fullness of Christ**” (Eph. 4:12-13).

All the feasts and holy days of God reveal how He is carrying out His plan and purpose. The Feast of Unleavened Bread leads us into the seven-week count (plus one day) to *Pentecost*. This year, Pentecost is on June 1. The completed weeks represent the spiritual harvest of the seven churches of Revelation 2-3. Then comes the resurrection of the saints to eternal life—as pictured by the day of Pentecost, the feast of the harvest of the firstfruits. We will cover more of this in the time

leading up to this glorious feast. The resurrection to eternal life completes our quest for *perfection*. Indeed, salvation is a process!

### The Timing and Meaning of the Feast of Pentecost

With every passing year that we keep God's feasts, He grants us *more* understanding of His plan for mankind. What a tremendous blessing it is to understand that we are destined to be a part of the firstfruits in the first resurrection to eternal life—if we are faithful to the end. Pentecost is that day of hope and promise!

As shown in our booklet *How to Count Pentecost*, it is clear that the first day of the count toward Pentecost is the Wave Sheaf Offering Day—the day that Christ ascended to God the Father to be accepted as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world. This is the day that Jesus was accepted as the *first* of the firstfruits harvest. In Leviticus 23, Jesus' resurrection was symbolized by the *premier sheaf* of the firstfruits waved by the priest before the Lord on the day *after* the Sabbath, the first day of the week during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This day begins the count of 50 days to Pentecost.

The last day, or the 50th day, of the count is the day after the seventh Sabbath. This finishes the harvest of the firstfruits. Pentecost always falls on the first day of the week because it is the *day after* seven complete weeks, or seven Sabbaths (Deut. 16:9-12). And **Monday is never the day after a weekly Sabbath**. Plus, partial weeks are *not* allowed—meaning that **the 50th day can never be on a Monday** or on a fixed day of the month (as the Jews practice). Each week must contain seven days—day one through day seven—for the seven complete weeks. Each week ends on a Sabbath, for a total of 49 days. Then, the day after the seventh Sabbath—the 50th day, a first day of the week—is the day of Pentecost (Greek *pentekosta*). It marks the end of the barley and wheat harvest. Prophetically, Pentecost pictures the harvest of the first resurrection of the saints to eternal life (James 1:18; Rev. 14:14-16).

Jesus explains that the harvest of the firstfruits was comparable to grain sown in the earth. He also showed the various problems faced by those who are called: “Therefore, hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand *it*, the wicked one comes and snatches away that which was sown in his heart. This is the one who was sown by the way. Now the one who was sown upon the rocky places is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; but *because* he has no root in himself, *he* does not endure; for when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, he is quickly offended. And the one who was sown among the thorns is the one who hears the word, but the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. **But the one who was sown on good ground, this is the one who hears the word and understands, who indeed brings forth fruit and produces—one a hundredfold, another sixtyfold and another thirtyfold**” (Matt. 13:18-23).

In another parable about a sower of grain and its harvest, Jesus identifies Himself as the sower and the enemy as Satan the devil. The good seed are the children of the Kingdom and the tares are the children of the devil: “And after dismissing the multitude, Jesus went into the house. Then His disciples came to Him, saying, ‘Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.’ And He answered *and* said to them, ‘**The one Who sows the good seed is the Son of man; and the field is the world; and the good seed, these are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked *one*. Now the enemy who sowed them is the devil; and the harvest is *the* end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.** Therefore, as the tares are gathered and consumed in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this age. The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all the offenders and those who are practicing lawlessness; and they shall cast them into the furnace of fire. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. The one who has ears to hear, let him hear**’ ” (verses 36-43).

From these parables we can understand why Pentecost is a *harvest feast* and pictures the first resurrection—the harvest of the saints. The apostle Paul makes this clear: “But Christ has now been raised from *the* dead; He became the firstfruit 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, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: **Christ *the* firstfruit; then, at His coming those who are Christ’s**” (I Cor. 15:20-23). Jesus was the first one to be resurrected from the dead to eternal life—the firstborn from the dead (Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5). No one else has ever been resurrected to eternal life, nor will anyone be resurrected to eternal life until Christ returns. Only Jesus has ascended into heaven (John 3:13)—no one else, not even the virgin Mary.

Just as there are seven weeks of the wheat and barley harvest, the harvest of the Church down through the ages is symbolized by the prophecies of the Seven Churches in Revelation 2-3. While the time frame in actual years may not be symbolized by an exact count of seven prophetic days for each church, the Seven Churches nevertheless represent the Church harvest and correspond to the *seven weeks* (49 days) in the count toward Pentecost.

**God’s Fiftieth Day Harvest:** There is an additional *final* harvest of firstfruits by God, which is represented by the 50th day. This “50th day harvest” is Christ’s special firstfruits harvest of the 144,000 of the children of Israel—12,000 from each tribe—and the Great Innumerable Multitude of Revelation 7. These come to repentance and are saved during the Great Tribulation.

Jesus explained this in the “parable of the laborers”: Those hired in the early morning, who labored all day, represent the apostles and disciples called during Jesus’ ministry. Those workers who were hired at the 11th hour symbolize those who are saved out of the Great Tribulation, only one year before the first resurrection. Yet both groups receive the *same* wage.

In both cases, the wage received represents eternal life. Jesus explains: “The kingdom of heaven shall be compared to a man, a master of a house, who went out **early in the morning** to hire workmen for his vineyard. And after agreeing with the workmen on a silver coin *for the day’s wage*, he sent them into his vineyard. And when he went out about the **third hour**, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, ‘Go also into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.’ And they went. Again, after going out about *the sixth hour* and *the ninth hour*, he did likewise. **And about the eleventh hour, he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all the day?’** They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘Go also into my vineyard, and whatever is right you shall receive.’ And when evening came, the lord of the vineyard said to his steward, ‘**Call the workmen and pay them *their* hire, beginning from the last unto the first.**’ **And when those who were hired about the eleventh hour came, they each received a silver coin. But when the first ones came, they thought that they would receive more; but each of them also received a silver coin.** And after receiving *it*, they complained against the master of the house, saying, ‘These *who came* last have worked one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who have carried the burden and the heat of the day.’ But he answered *and* said to them, ‘Friend, I am not doing you wrong. Did you not agree with me on a silver coin *for the day*? Take *what* is yours and go, for I also desire to give to the last *ones* exactly as I gave to you. And is it not lawful for me to do what I will with that which *is* my own? Is your eye evil because I am good?’ **So the last shall be first, and the first shall be last; for many are called, but few are chosen**” (Matt. 20:1-16).

**Sealing of the 144,000:** God’s “50th day harvest” will be a special event—the sealing with the Holy Spirit and the mass conversion of the 144,000 from the children of Israel and the Great Innumerable Multitude. This will be a tremendous event and will probably occur on Pentecost one year before the first resurrection—from Pentecost to Pentecost. **They are symbolized by the workers hired at the 11th hour.** However, they will not be transformed from flesh to spirit beings until the next Pentecost at the first resurrection. God will directly intervene to save them right after the sixth seal is opened and the fearful and awesome heavenly signs begin: “And when He opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, **there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as the hair of sackcloth, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell to the earth,**

as a fig tree casts its untimely figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then *the* heaven departed, like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the powerful men, and every bondman, and every free *man* hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, ‘Fall on us, and hide us from *the* face of Him Who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; because the great day of His wrath has come, and who has the power to stand?’ ” (Rev. 6:12-17).

Then, when the heavens are rolled back as a scroll, the sign of the Son of man appears in heaven. This spectacular event takes place after two years of tribulation against the 12 tribes of Israel. When it first appears, it will probably be like a great burst of light illuminating the heavens and the earth—an astonishing sign! It will become like another sun. Because of the rotation of the earth it will appear to shine, as does the sun, from the east to the west: “**For as the light of day, which comes forth from *the* east and shines as far as *the* west, so also shall the coming of the Son of man be**” (Matt. 24:27).

The prophet Malachi verifies that Jesus’ return will be as the sun coming to the earth: “ ‘For behold, the day is coming, burning like a consuming oven; and all the proud, and every doer of wickedness, shall be stubble. And the day that comes shall burn them up,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘and will leave them neither root nor branch. **But unto you who fear My name, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise**, and healing will be in His wings. And you shall go out and grow up like calves of the stall. And you shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I *am* preparing,’ says the LORD of hosts” (Mal. 4:1-3).

The whole world will think the earth is being *invaded* from outer space—which will be true, because Christ will be coming as a conquering king. Jesus described these coming days: “But immediately after the tribulation [against Israel] of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. **And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming upon the clouds of heaven with power and great glory**” (Matt. 24:29-30).

However, right after the sign of the Son of man first appears in the heavens, an astonishing thing happens. Jesus Christ directly intervenes and sends a mighty angel to save the 144,000 and the Great Innumerable Multitude—sealing them in their foreheads with God’s Holy Spirit. To help this mighty angel, God sends four other angels to hold back the four winds until the sealing is complete. John wrote: “And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that the wind might not blow on the earth, or on the sea, or on any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from *the* rising of *the* sun, having *the* seal of *the* living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to damage the earth and the sea, saying, ‘Do not damage the earth, or the sea, or the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.’ And I heard the number of those who were sealed: one hundred forty-four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of *the* children of Israel....

“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no one was able to number, out of every nation and tribe, and people, and language, was standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and *holding* palms in their hands; and they were calling out with a loud voice to Him Who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, saying, ‘The salvation of our God *has come*.’... And one of the elders answered *and* said to me, ‘These who are clothed with white robes, who are they, and where did they come from?’ Then I said to him, ‘Sir, you know.’ And he said to me, ‘**They are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and have made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb**’ ” (Rev. 7:1-14).

They will then be changed from flesh to spirit on the next Pentecost—the first resurrection.

After they are sealed on Pentecost, the seven trumpet plagues begin to be poured out. The first trumpet plague begins on the Feast of Trumpets the year before Christ and the resurrected

saints return to the earth on the following Feast of Trumpets. The first four trumpet plagues are poured out rather quickly. When fifth trumpet plague is poured out, it lasts five months. Then the sixth trumpet plague is unleashed (Rev. 8-9). Sometime after the sixth trumpet sounds, the Two Witnesses will finish their work and be killed (Rev. 11); their bodies will lie in a street of Jerusalem for three and a half days, immediately prior to the next Pentecost. Then the seventh trumpet sounds—the “last trump”—for the first resurrection.

Since they are the *last* ones martyred for Christ, the Two Witnesses will be the *first* ones to be resurrected—literally “the first will be last and the last will be first.” Notice Revelation 11: “And when they [the Two Witnesses] have completed their testimony, the beast who ascends out of the abyss will make war against them, and will overcome them, and will kill them. And their bodies *will lie* in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. Then those of the peoples and tribes and languages and nations shall see their bodies three and a half days, for they will not allow their bodies to be put into tombs. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, and will make merry, and will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets had tormented those who dwell on the earth. Then *I saw the* spirit of life from God enter into them after the three and a half days, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were watching them. And they heard a great voice from heaven, say, ‘Come up here!’ And they ascended into heaven in a cloud; and their enemies saw them *rise*. And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell, and seven thousand men were killed in the earthquake. And the rest were filled with fear, and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming immediately” (Rev. 11:7-14).

As the Two Witnesses are rising up into heaven, the seventh trumpet (the *last trumpet*) sounds and **the first resurrection begins to take place, which occurs on Pentecost one year after the 144,000 and Great Innumerable Multitude are sealed: “Then the seventh angel sounded his trumpet** [the “last trumpet”]; and *there* were great voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become our Lord’s and His Christ’s, and He shall reign into the ages of eternity.’ And the twenty-four elders, who sit before God on their thrones, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, ‘We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, Who is, and Who was, and Who *is* to come, that You have taken *to Yourself* Your great power, and have reigned. For the nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time for the dead to be judged, and to give the *promised* reward to Your servants the prophets, and to *all* those who fear Your name, the small and the great; and to destroy those who destroy the earth.’ And the temple of God in heaven was opened, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple; and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake and great hail” (verses 15-19).

Revelation 14 also depicts the first resurrection, the harvest of the firstfruits: “And I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and *one* like *the* Son of man sitting on the cloud, having a golden crown on His head; and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him Who was sitting on the cloud, ‘**Thrust in your sickle and reap, because the time has come for You to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe** [the first resurrection, the harvest of the firstfruits].’ **And He Who was sitting on the cloud thrust forth His sickle upon the earth, and the earth was reaped**” (Rev. 14:14-16).

Paul wrote that the first resurrection will occur **at the “last trumpet”—which is seventh trumpet**. Remember, it was on the Day of Pentecost when God came down on Mount Sinai and spoke the Ten Commandments to the children of Israel. On that day the trumpet—singular—sounded loud and long (Ex. 20:18). From that time forward, the trumpet was always blown on the Feast of Pentecost at the Tabernacle, and later at the Temple. The seventh trumpet of Revelation 11 is the last trumpet blown and this undoubtedly occurs on Pentecost. This is when the first resurrection takes place—not on the Feast of Trumpets. Indeed, the resurrection does *not* occur at the end of a memorial of the blowing of many trumpets all day long on the Feast of Trumpets. Rather, **it is a single trumpet, the seventh trumpet, or the last trump** that the angel sounds, not many angels sounding many trumpets. Notice: “Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all fall

asleep, but **we shall all be changed, in an instant, in *the* twinkling of an eye, at THE LAST TRUMPET; for *the* trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.** For this corruptible must put on incorruptibility, and this mortal must put on immortality. Now when this corruptible shall have put on incorruptibility, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory’ ” (I Cor. 15:51-54).

When the seventh trumpet sounds, the first resurrection of the saints will take place and Jesus will send the angels to gather His elect who have been raised from the dead. **“And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet; and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to *the* other”** (Matt. 24:31).

Why are those in the first resurrection taken up into the air by the angels? Where will they be taken? When Paul wrote to the Thessalonians about the first resurrection, he partially answered those questions. “But I do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, that you be not grieved, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, in exactly the same way also, those who have fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. **For this we say to you by *the* word of *the* Lord, that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede those who have fallen asleep; because the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with *a* shout of command, with *the* voice of an archangel and with *the* trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them IN *THE* CLOUDS FOR *THE* MEETING WITH THE LORD IN THE AIR; and so shall we always be with *the* Lord.** Therefore, encourage one another with these words” (I Thess. 4:13-18).

Where will this meeting in the air take place? Why is it necessary? What will happen at that “Great Meeting”? After about a year of shining in space and appearing as a second sun, the “great light”—the sign of the Son of man in the heavens signaling His return—will suddenly streak towards the earth. This is when all the people of the earth will see Jesus Christ coming on the clouds of heaven in great power and glory! At that time, instead of smashing into the earth as would a huge asteroid, the “great light” will settle into the clouds and suddenly become a great Sea of Glass in the clouds over Jerusalem.

In the book of Hebrews, Paul shows that when we pray we come to a *heavenly* Mount Zion: “But you have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of *the* living God, heavenly Jerusalem; and to an innumerable company of angels, to the **joyous festival gathering**; and to *the* church of *the* firstborn, *whose names have been* registered in *the* Book of Life in heaven, and to God, *the* Judge of all; and to *the* spirits of just *men and women* who have been perfected; and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant; and to sprinkling of *the* blood of *ratification*, proclaiming superior things than *that of* Abel” (Heb. 12:22-24).

There will be a “**joyous festival gathering**” of the resurrected saints, who will be carried by the angels into the air to meet Christ. That “joyous festival gathering” could only be pictured by Pentecost, the completed harvest of the firstfruits, the first resurrection. On the other hand, the Feast of Trumpets is not a feast of joy, but a feast of war. But, where will the resurrected saints meet Christ? Do the angels take the resurrected saints up in the air, meet Christ, and immediately return to the earth? If the first resurrection were on the Feast of Trumpets, that is exactly what would have to happen. However, as we will see, that is not the case.

Paul wrote that we will meet Christ in the air. But how? And where? As we will see, the **angels will carry us up to the Sea of Glass—where Christ will be.** The apostle John recorded this vision in Revelation 15: “Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and awesome: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is filled up. **And I saw a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who had gotten the victory over the beast, and over its image, and over its mark, and over the number of its name, standing on the sea of glass, having *the* lyres of God.** And they were singing the song of Moses, *the* servant of God [symbolizing those in the first resurrection from Old Testament times], and the song of the Lamb [symbolizing those in the

first resurrection from New Testament times], saying, ‘Great and awesome *are* Your works, Lord God Almighty; righteous and true *are* Your ways, King of the saints. Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For *You only are* holy; and all the nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been revealed’ ” (Rev. 15:1-4).

At this point the first resurrection is finished and all the saints will be with Christ on the Sea of Glass, which is in the clouds over Jerusalem. We will then be the “Great Congregation of God.” While we are on the Sea of Glass, many things will happen before we return with Christ to the earth, on the following Feast of Trumpets, to fight against the armies of the world and to begin to reign with Him for a thousand years:

- We will meet Christ in person, and all the resurrected brethren;
- He will proclaim us to the Father and we will see Him;
- We will all receive our rewards and new names;
- The marriage of the Lamb and the wedding supper will take place;
- The seven last plagues will be poured out;
- We will receive our assignments;
- We will be organized into Christ’s army;
- Then we will return with Jesus to the earth on the following Feast of Trumpets.

Those on earth will think that Jesus is the enemy and will begin to marshal their armies to fight against Him; that will culminate with the seven last plagues—the vengeance of God and the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16).

There are additional passages that complete the story. However, there is not enough room in this letter to include all the references. As the Scriptures show, this is what we have to look forward to and why the Day of Pentecost is such a tremendous feast! It is the “joyous festival gathering” of all the saints, who are resurrected at the first resurrection!

***Keeping Our Minds on the Spiritual:*** As we look at the world today, we can see more than ever that we need to keep our minds on the *spiritual*. We should be aware of what is taking place in this world, yet keep our focus on the spiritual things of God and the hope of the resurrection—rather than on physical things. Paul shows us how to do this: “Therefore ... let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily entraps *us*; *and* let us run the race set before us with endurance, having *our minds* fixed on Jesus, the Beginner and Finisher of our faith; Who for the joy that lay ahead of Him endured *the* cross, *although* He despised *the* shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Now meditate deeply on Him Who has endured such great hostility of sinners against Himself, so that you do not become weary and discouraged. You have not yet resisted to the point of *losing* blood in your struggle against sin” (Heb. 12:1-4).

Not only does Paul admonish us to lay aside every weight and sin, but we are also to follow *his* example. As he did, we need to consider that, compared to eternal life, all the physical things in this world are nothing but a heap of dung. Physical things may seem pleasant or good, but they perish with the using. Moreover, Jesus promised that if we seek the Kingdom of God first, He will provide for us (Matt. 6:25-34).

When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he wanted to inspire them to always strive for the true righteousness of Jesus Christ and the power of the resurrection: “But then truly, I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; **for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count *them* as dung that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him**, not having my own righteousness, which *is derived* from law, but that *righteousness which is by the faith of Christ—the righteousness of God that is based on faith, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection*, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; **if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead.**



“Not as though I have already received *this*, or have already been perfected; but I am striving, so that I may also lay hold on that for which I also was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. **Brethren, I do not count myself as having attained; but *this one thing I do*—forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to the things that are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:8-14).**

This is the attitude and dedication Christ wants us to have, so that regardless of the things taking place in this world, or what our personal circumstances are, we will be overcoming and pressing toward the goal—the first resurrection and eternal life. Paul shows that if we have this frame of mind we are being *perfected* in love, grace, and knowledge: “So then, let as many as *be* perfect be of this mind. And if in anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal *even* this to you. Nevertheless, *in regard* to that which we have attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be imitators together of me, and bear in mind those who walk in this way, as you have us *for* an example” (verses 15-17). What a tremendous blessing it is to know that if we are in any way “otherwise minded,” God will reveal this to us so that we may repent and overcome. **Remember, God the Father and Jesus Christ love us and are for us. Therefore, no one, nor any thing, can prevail against us—not even the accusations of Satan the devil.**

However, just as it was in Paul’s day, so it is today. There were those who forsook the spiritual and turned back to the physical—counting them more important than eternal life. They became weary and allowed themselves to give up on God and eternal life. Some had even turned against Christ by following false teachers; others marched right back into the world to serve self and Satan: “For many walk *contrary*; I have often told you of them, and also I tell *you with* weeping, *they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end *is* destruction, whose god *is* their belly, and whose glory *is in* their shame; *for* they mind earthly things” (verses 18-19.)

When we consider all the trials and difficulties that Paul endured, we know that he is an excellent example for us to follow. He always looked to Jesus Christ. He always kept the goal of the resurrection in the forefront of his mind. Here is his exhortation to us: “But for us, the commonwealth *of God* exists in *the* heavens, from where also we are waiting for *the* Savior, *the* Lord Jesus Christ; **Who will transform our vile bodies, that they may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the inner working of His own power *whereby* He is able to subdue all things to Himself” (verses 20-21).**

Not only are we to follow the example of the apostle Paul, but, more importantly, we are to be followers of God: “**Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, even as Christ also loved us, and gave Himself for us *as an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor***” (Eph. 5:1-2). This is how we can avoid being partakers of the sins of the world—Babylon the Great (Rev. 18:4).

If we continue in God’s way of life, we will be walking in love and obedience—having the faith of Jesus and keeping the commandments of God (Rev. 14:12). We are then *imitating God*. We will be building godly character and growing to perfection (Matt. 5:48). Moreover, when we are doing the things that please God, we are living righteously—and we automatically avoid sinning. Nevertheless, Paul warns: “But *as for* fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, do not permit it even to be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking nor jesting, which are not becoming; but instead thanksgiving. For this you know, that no fornicator, or unclean person, or covetous *person*, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” (Eph. 5:3-5).

When we are actively living God’s way, day by day, we are spiritually armed and on guard so that we will not be led astray. Today, we are confronted with so many preachers and teachers who have a multitude of false doctrines and false prophecies. And they can sound very convincing. But the end result is not righteousness or the love of God. Rather, the end result is confusion, deception, and self-righteousness. Paul continued his warning, which applies to us today: “Do not let anyone deceive you with vain words; for because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not be joint-partakers with them. For you were once

darkness; but now *you are* light in *the* Lord. Walk as children of light (because the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth), **proving what is well-pleasing to the Lord; and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness**” (verses 6-11).

Let us diligently apply ourselves and live by these scriptures, keeping the hope of the resurrection and eternal life in the forefront of our minds.

Brethren, we all realize that we are facing very difficult times. But regardless of our circumstances, God the Father and Jesus Christ love us and are with us; and the holy angels are watching over us. Once again, thank you for your love and prayers. We pray for you every day—that God’s love, grace, healing, and blessings will be upon you and yours in every way. We thank you for your continued support with your tithes and offerings, which help us to reach out to brethren and, increasingly, to new people who are searching for the true God.

With love in Christ Jesus,

*Fred R. Coulter*

FRC

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