

Pentecost

Firstfruits



The vast majority, your Bible reveals, will be called later--most not until after Christ's return. These thousands of millions cannot come to Christ and become part of God's Church now--even if they try! Jesus said so, plainly, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44). Comparatively speaking, God has been drawing only a few in this age, but for a great purpose.

Why has God called the few He has? For what purpose has God drawn and put into His Church His firstfruits? Has God drawn these few and put them into His Church, as some think, just so they can get salvation and enjoy the fellowship and social life of the local congregations?

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Where We Are Now in God's Plan

God has a Master Plan pictured by seven annual festivals.

The first festival is Passover. It pictures the Messiah--Christ--who volunteered before the foundation of the world to be slain as the Passover Lamb, the Savior of the world (I Pet. 1:19-20; Rev. 13:8). That was accomplished in the spring of A.D. 31.

The second festival, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, pictures overcoming sin. The first humans, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God and sin entered the world. God then sentenced the human family to 6,000 years of spiritual exile, during which the human family is, as a whole, cut off from the possibility of salvation (except for those few He would choose for a special purpose).

We are now near the end of the first 6,000 years, during which humans have experimented with every imaginable form of government, religion, social and economic idea. Soon the fourth step in God's plan will occur--the return of Jesus Christ to restore the government of God on earth. This event is pictured by the fourth Holy Day, the Feast of Trumpets. It is after that event that the vast majority will be called to salvation in a world ruled and guided by God's Family. But before the vast majority can live in such a world and be taught the true way to salvation, rulers and teachers must be trained. That is where we who are the firstfruits of salvation in God's plan enter the picture!

Those now called are part of God's spiritual firstfruits--the first group to be offered salvation. Those now called have been called first--for the special PURPOSE of being prepared for God's Kingdom!

God's firstfruits will become Christ's ruling and teaching assistants, helping teach the true way to salvation to everyone in the tomorrow world. They have been called for the special service of preparing to eventually help bring the knowledge of salvation to the vast majority!

The firstfruits of salvation are pictured by God's third annual festival--the Feast of Firstfruits, which is called Pentecost in the New Testament. Let's look, now, at what traditional Christianity has no knowledge of--what the Bible reveals about the Feast of Firstfruits, God's Church and the third major step in God's Master Plan for the salvation of all mankind.



*No man can
come to me
except the
father
draw him.*

New Testament Church Began on Day of Pentecost

Jesus told His disciples shortly before His trial and crucifixion:

"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 14:18). Christ would continue to teach and support the apostles, but not in person, for He ascended to heaven. So how would He come to them?--by means of the Holy Spirit.

1. Did Jesus promise His disciples they would receive power from heaven? Luke 24:49. Where did He tell them to wait for this power? Same verse and Acts 1:4-5, 8.

2. In what miraculous way did God's Spirit come to Christ's disciples? Acts 2:1-6. What was the name of the day on which this great display occurred? Verse 1.

COMMENT: The day of Pentecost is the third annual festival given to ancient Israel. Its Old Testament name was Feast of Firstfruits, since it came at the end of the first or spring harvest in the Northern Hemisphere (Ex. 23:16; 34:22; Num. 28:26). It was also called the Feast of Weeks, since it came seven weeks after the first Sunday after Passover (Deut. 16:9-10, 16). Since it was also the fiftieth day of the spring harvest season, Greek speaking Jews and Christians called it pentekoste, which means "fiftieth."

Pentecost A.D. 31 marked the beginning of God's Spirit-begotten New Testament Church. Ekklesia, the Greek word for "church," means an assembly of "called-out ones." The whole world is not "called out"--only a tiny minority are predestined to be called for a special purpose. This is pictured by and commemorated by the annual festival of Pentecost.

World Cut Off from Holy Spirit

Why does God call people to salvation? Why is God calling only a few before He calls the vast majority? Once a person is called and put into God's Church, what does he or she DO?

1. God created Adam and Eve and gave them basic instructions in the right way to live. Did God offer Adam and Eve an opportunity to receive His Spirit? Gen. 2:8-9, 16-17.

COMMENT: Adam had mortal life. The tree of life represented eternal life, which can come only from God's Spirit. If Adam had eaten of that tree, he would have received God's Spirit, been begotten as a son of God. Adam, conditionally, would have received the earnest or down payment of eternal life. God's Spirit would have enabled Adam and Eve to overcome temptation, grow in righteous character and become perfect, eventually, ready to be given spirit-composed eternal life, unconditionally. Even Jesus had to grow, learn, overcome and become perfect (Luke 2:40; Heb. 5:8; Rev. 3:21; Heb. 2:10).



2. Adam and Eve, however, did not eat of the tree of life. From which tree did they choose to eat? Gen. 3:1-6.

COMMENT: Though God had warned them of the penalty of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Eve was persuaded by the devil's clever arguments to eat of the fruit that led to self-centeredness and death! Adam also willingly ate the forbidden fruit.

Whether Adam fully realized it or not, he thus lost his opportunity to conquer Satan and replace him as ruler of this world. Instead, Adam obeyed Satan, placing himself under Satan's government.

3. What was Adam and Eve's punishment for disobeying God? Gen. 3:16-19. Were they denied further access to the

tree of life and therefore cut off from God's Spirit? Verses 22-24.

COMMENT: After Adam disobeyed, God cut off all humanity from access to His Spirit and thus cut them off from salvation! Until a son of Adam--the Son of Man--could qualify where Adam failed, could conquer Satan, pay the penalty of human sin and ransom the world from its kidnapper, no one could restore God's government on earth, and no one could be given salvation.

The Messiah, and He alone, could do all this. Of necessity, then, God's plan required that mankind in general be not yet judged. God has therefore not permitted them to have access to His Spirit, nor access to salvation. They will have their opportunity for salvation in a special resurrection to judgment, which will be after God's government has been restored over the entire earth.

God Now Calling Only a Few

The one great purpose now uppermost in God's mind is the restoration of His government on earth. God set apart a period of 7,000 years in which to accomplish His purpose. The first 6,000 years He sentenced mankind to be cut off from salvation.

For His supreme purpose, God has called a few. Hebrews 11 mentions Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and others. Apparently each was called for a special mission preparatory to the salvation of humanity. In order for them to perform their mission, it was necessary that an exception be made and they be empowered by God's Spirit.

The work done by the patriarchs and prophets became the foundation on which the Church was built (Eph. 2:20). And the Church, in turn, is the instrument God is using to eventually bring about His Kingdom and the restoration of His government over the entire earth.

Even ancient Israel, as a whole, was never offered God's Spirit. They were given God's laws, but, as a nation, they were purposely denied access to God's Spirit. God gave proof, through Israel, that without His Spirit, humanity is helpless. The ancient nation of Israel knew about God and could appeal to Him, but without His Spirit in them, the Israelites could not have the love of God in them and they consequently could not be spiritually righteous.

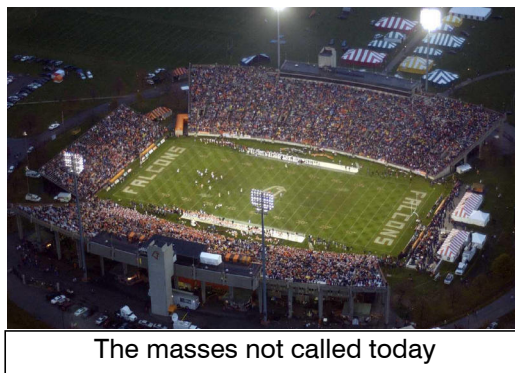
Nevertheless, after the nation of Israel became two people, the separate nations of Israel and Judah were used by God to further His plan. God caused the nation of Judah to preserve the knowledge of His law and His Word even though they did not have a spiritual understanding of it. Into this nation Jesus Christ was born.

When Jesus Christ came to earth nearly 2,000 years ago, it was not to set up His Kingdom (John 18:36). Christ did not, at that time, come to restrain Satan from deceiving the world. Let's understand why.

1. Did Jesus speak in parables to make His meaning clear, or to hide His meaning from the general public? Matt. 13:10-15, 34; Mark 4:11-12. Was this because the time had not yet come for most to be forgiven their sins and be converted? Mark 4:12.

COMMENT: Christ preached the Father's Gospel to the public as a witness. They heard it but did not comprehend it. The only ones Jesus really wanted to understand the truth were a few specially called and chosen students.

2. Can everyone who wants to come to Christ receive God's Spirit and thereby become a member of His Church?



John 6:44, 65.

COMMENT: In this age before Christ begins to rule over the whole earth, each person is specially chosen. Like the prophets before them, these firstfruits are called for a special

mission--a purpose preparatory to the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth and the salvation of the majority!

3. After Christ's resurrection, how many disciples were there? Acts 1:15. Were they given God's Spirit, thus making them the first members of God's Church? Acts 2:1-4; I Cor. 12:13.

COMMENT: Out of the thousands who had heard Christ, about 120 believed Him. Those 120 had been taught by Jesus. The 3,000 who were begotten of God later that day (Acts 2:41) were from various parts of the world (verses 5, 8-11); they had not, as a whole, been taught by Christ. They were now being taught by the apostles, who had been trained and commissioned to teach (Matt. 28:19-20).

The number of Christians continued to grow and may have increased to about 100,000. But then persecution began, just as Jesus had prophesied (John 15:20). Persecution first came from the Jews, then later the Romans and false brethren (Acts 20:29-30; Ill John 9-10). It was some decades later that these false brethren outnumbered the true.

Most congregations were eventually taken over by men who attempted to combine Christ's teachings with traditional customs, compromising the truth by attaching Christian-sounding names to pagan ideas. Satan, the god of this world, was deceiving many with a counterfeit, falsely labeled Christianity.

True Christians remained a small minority--probably never more than about 100,000--fleeing to new areas when persecution became too intense.

Why does God have this small flock? What is its purpose?

The Church is Now Preparing for God's Kingdom

1. Did Paul understand that the people of Israel were spiritually blinded? Rom. 10:16-18, 21. (Although they heard the true Gospel, they did not obey it.) Did God purposely allow their blindness? Rom. 11:8, 25, 32.



2. Nevertheless, did Paul know that the Israelites would have a future opportunity to receive salvation? Rom. 11:26. Did God purposely blind the majority of Israelites so they could obtain mercy later--through the mercy of those who were called first? Verse 31.

COMMENT: Verse 26, which quotes

Isaiah 59:20, explains when most Israelites will have their opportunity for salvation--after a Deliverer (Isaiah says "Redeemer") comes out of Zion to call them to repent of ungodliness. The Redeemer from Zion is Jesus Christ, but Paul was not referring to His First Coming, for Israel was still blinded at the time Paul wrote this.

All Israel shall be saved when the Deliverer returns with power and glory to rule. And then, wrote Paul, the Israelites shall receive their opportunity for salvation through the mercy of the first-century Christians and those who would be called into God's Church through the centuries. When Christ returns, all true Christians will be resurrected and/or changed to immortality to help Him rule and teach the way of salvation to both Israelites and Gentiles.

3. Will many nations go to Jerusalem--the headquarters of Christ's government--and ask to be taught His way? Mic. 4:2. Will the earth become full of the knowledge of the Lord?

Isa. 11:9.

4. In addition to being rulers, will the Spiritborn children of God also be priests? Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6. What is the function of a priest? Mal. 2:7; Ezek. 44:23.

COMMENT: Just as ancient Israel's priests were assigned to teach God's laws, Spirit-born members of God's Family will be teachers of God's way of life, helping bring the knowledge of the way to salvation to everyone.

Salvation for all those who have not been called today, will come in the future, through the life and work of Christ and the Spirit born saints. In a sense, then, they, as priests, will be co-saviors with Christ.

Is God unfair to give these positions of leadership to only the few He has specially chosen? Not at all. God has not called anyone for special favors--He has called them for a special purpose--a tremendous job to do. God rewards us according to our works (Matt. 16:27). Those called now have to overcome Satan and his society. That requires effort, self-denial and willpower, a price most humans are not willing to pay.

Before Jesus could qualify to rule, He had to overcome Satan while Satan was ruling. Since the Church will rule with and under Christ, Church members must also qualify by resisting and overcoming Satan while he is still ruling (Rev. 3:21).

That will not be required of the overwhelming majority. God will call them to salvation when the world is ruled by Christ and the saints--when it will undoubtedly be easier to live God's way. It will be easier because of the advance work now being done by God's firstfruits.

In order to qualify for their future jobs, those whom God has called into His Church have been freely given God's Spirit and the opportunity for salvation. The rulers and teachers of God's Kingdom are, by necessity, given opportunity for salvation before their future students can be. The Church is a necessary instrumentality preparatory to bringing salvation to all humanity!

The only reason any person is called to salvation in this age is to qualify to help in ruling and teaching in tomorrow's world --to help call and save those alive then.



God's Spirit Empowers

1. Could Jesus do any spiritual works, including obedience to God, with just His human strength? John 5:30; 8:28. Where did He get the necessary power? John 14:10, last part.

COMMENT: The Father "dwelt" in Jesus through the Holy Spirit!

2. Did Christ promise the same spiritual help to His disciples? John 14:16. What is the "Comforter"? Verse 26. Does Christ, through the Holy Spirit, live in His followers today?

Rom. 8:9-10; Col. 1:27; I John 3:24.

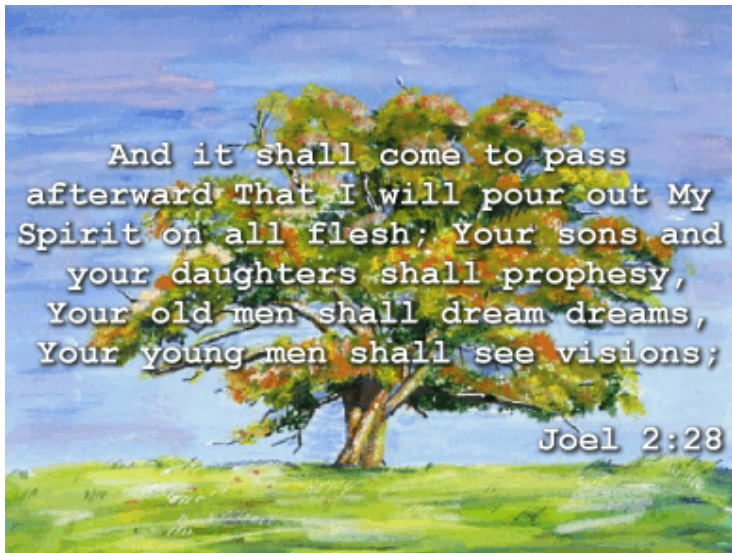
COMMENT: Jesus Christ went to the Father's throne in heaven to send God's Spirit to His disciples (John 16:7). Through God's Spirit, Christ lived in them--not in person, but in spirit. True Christians' hope of glory--our hope of becoming part of God's glorious Family--is in Christ, our Savior, living in us through the Holy Spirit.

3. Is it necessary to obey God to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit? Acts 5:32. Did Jesus obey God, and does He expect Christians to obey Him today? John 15:10. Are Christ's commandments exactly the same as His Father's? John 14:24.

4. Must Christians not only have God's Spirit, but also be yielded to it, letting it transform them so they become more like Christ and the Father?

Rom. 6:13; 8:14; Phil. 2:5; II Cor. 10:5.

COMMENT: God's Holy Spirit gives His Spirit-begotten children supernatural power to help them live the way today that Jesus Christ lived more than 1,900 years ago. Through that Spirit, Christ is enabling them to obey God, overcome sin and endure to the end of this age. God's Spirit is the power by which God's firstfruits are now being prepared for their jobs in God's Kingdom.



5. Did Christ say His servants would do even greater works than He had done while on earth? John 14:12. What work would the Church do in preparation for the end of this age and the return of Christ? Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10.

Thus far in this lesson we have referred to the Feast of Firstfruits only briefly--yet what we have studied relates directly to the meaning of this festival! Understanding God's plan of salvation and especially the Church's role in God's Master Plan is essential to understanding the meaning of God's third annual Holy Day. Why? Because the day of

Why Called Feast of Firstfruits?

Pentecost pictures the firstfruits of salvation, and the job they are now doing, empowered by God's Spirit!

God established His annual festivals and Holy Days in conjunction with the two annual agricultural harvests in the land of Palestine. The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread come at the beginning of the spring grain harvest; the Feast of Firstfruits or Pentecost comes at its end. The fall festivals are associated with the large fruit harvest of summer and early autumn.

But it is the spiritual harvest God is most concerned with! The spiritual harvests are patterned like the physical harvests--first a small harvest, then a large one.

The spring festivals illustrate to God's Church yearly that those He calls into His Church in this age are the "firstfruits"--the first group to be given God's Spirit and offered salvation--the relatively small beginning of His spiritual harvest.

1. What were God's instructions regarding the Feast of Firstfruits? Lev. 23:15-17, 20. Was this festival an annual Sabbath on which the people were to assemble? Verse 21.

2. How long is the Feast of Firstfruits--Pentecost--to be kept annually by God's people? Lev. 23:14, 21. Did Christ's disciples know they should keep the day of Pentecost? Acts 2:1; 20:16; I Cor. 16:8.

COMMENT: Jesus did not abolish Pentecost or any other annual Holy Day. Quite to the contrary, Christ told His disciples to be in Jerusalem so on that Holy Day they would receive God's Spirit. If the disciples had not been observing God's Holy Days, they would not have been there to receive God's Spirit! And long after Christ's death, Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, kept the festival of Pentecost with Gentile converts.

The Encyclopedia Britannica has this to say about the New Testament Church's observance of Pentecost: "The Jewish feast was primarily a thanksgiving for the Firstfruits of the

wheat harvest, but the rabbis associated it with remembrance of the Law given by God for the Hebrews to Moses on Mt. Sinai. The church's transformation of the Jewish feast to a Christian festival was thus related to the belief that the gift of the Holy Spirit to the followers of Jesus was the Firstfruits of a new dispensation that fulfilled and succeeded the old dispensation..." (article "Pentecost," 15th edition).

3. What special offering did the Old Testament priests make on the day of Pentecost? Lev. 23:17. Does the leaven in these loaves typify sin? I Cor. 5:7.

COMMENT: Since the Feast of Firstfruits was a harvest festival, representing an end result, baked loaves, rather than unbaked flour, were waved to be accepted by God. The leaven in the loaves represented the fact that God's spiritual firstfruits had sin in their lives. (Of course, they had to repent of sin and be cleansed by Christ to be acceptable to God.) There were two loaves--one to represent the patriarchs, judges, prophets and kings of the Old Testament period whom God called and the other to represent the true Christians of the New Testament Church.

Pentecost, or Firstfruits, pictures God's first spiritual harvest--mortal human beings translated into spirit-beings! God's Church shall be that firstborn harvest (Heb. 12:23)--born into God's Family at Christ's return.

4. Are Spirit-begotten Christians the Firstfruits of God's Master Plan of salvation? Jas. 1:18. Do Christians today have the Firstfruits of God's Spirit? Rom. 8:23. Are specific Christians also called Firstfruits in the Bible? Rom. 16:5; I Cor. 16:15; Rev. 14:4.

COMMENT: The 144,000 of Revelation 14:1-5 are not the only Firstfruits (the Greek text has "firstfruits," not "the firstfruits"). All who will be in God's first spiritual harvest, the first resurrection, are firstfruits. This will include Old Testament prophets and all true Christians.

5. What defines whether one is a member of God's Church and part of the spiritual firstfruits? Rom. 8:9, 11, 16; I Cor. 12:12-14. Did the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets have God's Spirit? I Pet. 1:10-11. But when was the first time

God gave His Spirit to a large group? Acts 2:1-4. Did the day of Pentecost thus mark the beginning of the New Testament Church? Verses 1, 41, 47.

COMMENT: On the day of Pentecost, A.D. 31, God sent His Spirit to begin His Church--to beget and strengthen the Firstfruits He was beginning to call into His Church, symbolically represented by one of the "wave loaves." The

Christ-First of the Firstfruits

New Testament festival of Pentecost is now a memorial commemorating the founding of the New Testament Church of God through the receiving of the Holy Spirit.

God's Church observes the Feast of Firstfruits as an annual reminder of this step in God's Master Plan: God's people today are merely the firstfruits--the small first group to be offered salvation through Christ.

The Feast of Firstfruits pictures God's firstfruits--all who will be born into God's Family at the first resurrection--the first group of humans to be harvested by God and given glorious, powerful immortal life.

But one human has already been born of God--more than 1,950 years before the first resurrection. He is the first of the firstfruits, and was pictured in Old Testament rituals by a symbolic ceremony during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, 50 days before the Feast of Firstfruits. The meaning of this ceremony is important, even though it is no longer performed since the Old Testament priesthood is no longer needed.

1. Was the first part of the spring grain harvest to be waved before God to be accepted by Him? Lev. 23:10-11.

COMMENT: Since most modern translations use the word "sheaf," the traditional name for this wave offering has been "wavesheaf." However, the priests did not wave a sheaf.

The word "sheaf" is translated from the Hebrew word omer, which means a measurement of about two quarts or two liters. The Jews traditionally cut a sheaf, beat out the grain, then ground the first of the firstfruits into flour and offered an omer of that flour. (See the Jewish Encyclopedia, article "Omer.")

Some modern translations of the Bible have given the passage describing this wave offering the erroneous subhead "the Feast of Firstfruits." Subheads are not part of the original text; they are not inspired. The wave offering was not a "feast"; it was merely a ceremony that involved primarily the priests. The difference is clear when we look at the original Hebrew words.

As we learned earlier in this lesson, the Feast of Firstfruits is another name for the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost. In the verses that refer to the Feast of Firstfruits (Ex. 23:16; 34:22; Lev. 23:17, 20; Num. 28:26), "firstfruits" is translated from the word bikkuwr. It refers to the results of the entire spring harvest.

However, the firstfruits referred to in Leviticus 23:10-11 are reshiyth, perhaps better translated "first of the firstfruits." This was the very first of the spring harvest, during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

2. On what day was the first of the firstfruits wave offering made? Lev. 23:11.

COMMENT: The Pharisees interpreted "the morrow after the Sabbath" as the day after the first annual Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Sadducees, who were mostly priests, said the wave offering should be made on the day after a weekly Sabbath--always on a Sunday. The correct day becomes clear when we examine the context.

3. Must the date for the Feast of Weeks be counted beginning on the day the first of the firstfruits was offered? Lev. 23:14-16; Deut. 16:9-10.

COMMENT: According to the reasoning of Rabbinic Judaism, Pentecost is on the 6th day of the third month.

4. The offering of the first of the firstfruits marked the beginning of the first harvest of each year. Now let's notice the way in which Jesus Christ, the first of God's spiritual harvest, became the spiritual fulfillment of that offering. Who was the first to be resurrected from the dead into God's

Family? Acts 26:23. Was He therefore the first of the firstfruits of God's spiritual harvest? I Cor. 15:20, 23; Col. 1:13-15, 18.

COMMENT: All who will be born into God's Family at the first resurrection will be firstfruits, the results of God's first spiritual harvest. They are pictured by the Feast of Firstfruits. Christ, who became a born Son of God at His resurrection more than 1,900 years ago (Rom. 1:4), was the first of the firstfruits, pictured by the

first of the firstfruits ceremony--50 days before Pentecost.

5. After Christ was resurrected from the dead, did He have to ascend to His Father in heaven? John 20:17. On that same day, after returning to earth, could His disciples then touch Him? Read Matthew 28:1-10, especially verse 9, and John 20:19, 27. What day of the week was it? John 20:19, first part.

COMMENT: Early on the Sunday morning during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Christ would not let anyone touch Him because He had not yet ascended to His Father. But later that same day, Christ did allow His disciples to touch Him. This clearly shows that Christ ascended to heaven and was accepted by His Father as the spiritual "first of the firstfruits" on the same day the Levitical priests were commanded to offer the first of the firstfruits to be accepted by God!



First Century Garden Tomb

Jesus Christ became the firstfruit from the dead.

Christ therefore fulfilled the symbolism of the first of the firstfruits on the morrow after the weekly Sabbath--not an annual Sabbath. If it had been the first annual Sabbath that was intended by the words "the Sabbath" in Leviticus 23:11, then the sheaf or omer would have been waved on Friday in A.D. 31. But on Friday the Messiah was dead, buried in a sealed tomb. So the explanation in Rabbinic Judaism of Leviticus 23:11 is incorrect.

Christ's resurrection or harvest was necessary before any of the remaining spiritual harvests could be reaped (see Lev. 23:14 for this truth in symbol).

Now notice also how Pentecost is counted.

6. How are the authorities in the Church to count the days toward Pentecost? Lev. 23:15-16.

COMMENT: The Hebrew wording in Leviticus 23:15-16 means "beginning with" the starting point. The English word "from" is therefore misleading.

The New American Bible (1970) makes the correct method of counting very clear: "Beginning with the day after the Sabbath, the day on which you bring the wave-offering sheaf, you shall count seven full weeks, and then on the day after the seventh week, the fiftieth day...", you shall keep the Feast of Firstfruits (Lev. 23:15-16).

The day of the wave offering, the Sunday during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, was day one. Day seven would be the next weekly Sabbath. Day 49 would be the seventh Sabbath, and the 50th day would be a Sunday, "the day after the seventh week" or "Sabbath" as the original Hebrew and the Authorized Version have it. The correct dates for Pentecost for the next few years are published at the end of this publication.

New Covenant-Completion of First Harvest

The Sinaitic covenant, commonly called the "Old Covenant" by Christians, was a marriage agreement between Israel and the Logos, the Spokesman of the God Family. The basis of

that covenant was the Ten Commandments, which Israel agreed to obey, as a wife obeys her husband. According to Jewish tradition, the Ten Commandments were given on the day of Pentecost. But the Holy Spirit was not then given to the nation. The coming of the Holy Spirit did not occur until another Pentecost (Acts 2) for the New Testament Church. The Sinaitic covenant ceased to be in effect when the Logos, Christ, was killed. We now look forward to a new covenant.

1. Has the Lord promised to make a new marriage covenant with His people? Jer. 31:31-34.

COMMENT: The weakness of the Sinaitic covenant was not its laws, but in the people (Heb. 8:8). They were not able to keep the law because they did not have the Holy Spirit.

2. Under the terms of the proposed New Covenant, what will the Lord do? Ezek. 11:19-20; 36:26-27; II Cor. 3:3.

COMMENT: The New Covenant will not be made with mortals who cannot keep their promises--it will be established only with immortal spirit beings who have proved, by their lives, their willingness to obey their future Husband, the "LORD" of the Hebrew Bible who became, through human birth, the Jesus of the Greek New Testament.

Although the New Covenant has been proposed, and



Christians today overcome sin and live by the laws of that covenant through the power of the Holy Spirit, it will not be finalized until the first resurrection. Only then will God's children be given the fullness of God's Spirit to enable them to perfectly resist all sin.

3. Are Spirit-begotten Christians now engaged or betrothed to Christ? Rom. 7:4; II Cor. 11:2. When will the marriage--the ratification of the New Covenant--take place? Rev. 19:6-9.

COMMENT: God's Church will be the Bride of Christ. Christ, the Messenger of the Covenant (Mal. 3:1), will come to His spiritual Temple, and make the New Covenant--a marriage agreement. God's law will be written in their hearts so completely that they can be perfect, righteous and able to assist Christ in ruling, teaching and administering God's law perfectly.

The Spirit-born Church will become Christ's New Covenant wife, and that divine marriage will produce children. Christ and His Spirit-born Bride will be a ruling and teaching team. Through them God will open salvation to all, ultimately producing thousands of millions of additional Spirit-born children of God. More on that in future lessons.

Notice in Revelation 19:7 that the Church will have "made herself ready." Each member of God's Church must grow in righteous character and be prepared--ready--to help Christ rule and teach. Jesus' parable of the wise and foolish virgins (Matt. 25:1-13) shows that some who think they are prepared for the New Covenant marriage will be shut out.

When the Church is ready both in numbers and in character, and the world has been sufficiently warned, Christ will return. Our next lesson reveals the exciting details of the events leading up to Christ's re turn!



TEST

This multiple choice test is designed to help you review the preceding lesson. It's an enjoyable way of putting to use some of the vital knowledge and understanding you have gained through this lesson.

Select one of the four choices given under each question or incomplete statement. The other three are incorrect--unless stated or indicated otherwise.

Take sufficient time to understand each question or statement, as well as the choices. Try to do as many as you can without referring to the lesson. If you have difficulty deciding on the correct answer, then review the part of the lesson in question.

1. Before the vast majority can live in a world of peace, truth and opportunity for salvation,
 - A. Jesus Christ must return and set up the Kingdom of God.
 - B. Satan must be prevented from deceiving humanity.
 - C. spiritual-minded rulers and teachers must be prepared to assist Christ.
 - D. All of the above.

2. Before Jesus Christ ascended to heaven, He promised His disciples He would
 - A. give them the Holy Spirit.
 - B. call everyone who would hear them preach.
 - C. rapture all true believers to heaven.
 - D. All of the above.

3. God's New Testament Church began when
 - A. Christ fed the multitude of 5,000.
 - B. God's Spirit was given to about 120 disciples on Pentecost, A.D. 31.
 - C. Christ gave the Sermon on the Mount and concluded with an altar call.
 - D. John the Baptist came baptizing and announcing that the Kingdom of God was at hand.

4. The Feast of Firstfruits

- A. comes at the end of the Palestinian spring grain harvest.
- B. pictures the firstfruits of salvation.
- C. is a yearly reminder that God is calling only a few out of this world.
- D. All of the above.

5. If Adam had eaten from the tree of life, he would have been

- A. guaranteed salvation instantly.
- B. given an immortal soul.
- C. given God's Holy Spirit, and an opportunity for salvation.
- D. All of the above.

6. After Adam and Eve sinned, God

- A. cut them off from access to His Spirit.
- B. told them their penalty would be eternal torment in hell.
- C. began to try to correct the damage and redeem them.
- D. cursed Satan and then bound him.

7. Since no one could be given eternal salvation before Christ paid the penalty of sin,

- A. God immediately instituted animal sacrifices and rituals to pay the penalty of sins.
- B. God sent the Messiah to earth right after Adam sinned to minimize the damage.
- C. God's plan required that the vast majority be not yet judged and not yet allowed to understand His truth.
- D. all non-Christians are condemned to eternal suffering.

8. Since the vast majority do not now have an opportunity for salvation, God will

- A. resurrect them after the Millennium to physical life and give them an opportunity.
- B. judge them by the morals of their societies.
- C. judge them according to their consciences.
- D. give them eternal life no matter what they may have done.

9. The purpose uppermost in God's mind is

- A. getting as many as possible saved as soon as possible.
- B. finding a way to reverse Satan's apparent success.
- C. helping missionaries reach the millions who are not yet saved.
- D. restoring His government to the earth.

10. To prepare for the restoration of His government on earth, God is now

- A. calling a few to prepare for His Kingdom, which will be the government that restores His laws worldwide.
- B. working in the churches of this world.
- C. emphasizing faith and grace, instead of obedience, as the way to salvation.
- D. struggling with Satan for the souls of mankind.

11. When Jesus preached to the multitudes, He spoke in parables

- A. so everyone would understand.
- B. but explained their meaning only to His disciples.
- C. and called everyone to be His disciples.
- D. so they would repent and be forgiven.

12. The spiritual Temple that Christ will return to at His Second Coming

- A. is God's Church, His firstfruits.
- B. will be built by the Jews.
- C. is the Moslem Dome of the Rock, the building now on the Temple Mount.
- D. will be an interdenominational building soon to be built on the Mount of Olives.

13. Who will help Christ rule and teach after God's Kingdom is established on earth?

- A. Millions of angels.
- B. The politicians, educators and theologians of today's world.
- C. The members of God's Church, who are now being trained for their future responsibilities by the leadership of the Holy Spirit.
- D. The Bible does not reveal this matter.

14. Why are the firstfruits called and given their opportunity for salvation before the vast majority are called?

- A. Because it is easier to be saved now.
- B. So they can be prepared as kings and priests, co-rulers and co-saviors with Christ.
- C. As special favors to those God chooses.
- D. Because they have more natural abilities than those who are not called in this age.

15. Which one of the following statements is FALSE?

- A. Christians can overcome sin and righteous character only through power of God's Spirit.
- B. The work of the Church is done by the power and inspiration of God's Spirit.
- C. Christians must not only have God's Spirit, but they must also be yielded to it.
- D. God's Spirit forces His children to do the works He wants.

16. The annual Feast of Firstfruits, the day of Pentecost, pictures

- A. God's Church being called and trained for their future jobs as rulers and teachers.
- B. all those who will be born into God's Family at Christ's Second Coming.
- C. the first group to be called to salvation, and the job they are now doing, empowered by God's Spirit.
- D. All of the above.

17. In ancient Israel, the Levitical priests made a special wave offering on the day of Pentecost--two leavened loaves that represented

- A. man's dual nature.
- B. the firstfruits called during the Old and New Testament periods.
- C. that humans can be sinful yet accepted by God.
- D. the two ways humans can be saved.

18. The Feast of Firstfruits is

- A. the day God gave the Ten Commandments, according to Jewish tradition.
- B. an annual reminder to God's Church that they are the first to be offered salvation.
- C. a memorial of the beginning of the New Testament Church, which first received the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, A.D. 31.
- D. All of the above.

19. The Levitical priests were commanded to ceremonially wave once each year the first of the firstfruits of the grain harvest. This wave offering

- A. was to be presented annually on the day after the first annual Sabbath.
- B. was called the Feast of Firstfruits.
- C. represented our Savior's appearance in heaven to be accepted by the Father on the very day the ceremony occurred.
- D. was presented before God annually on the day that both Sadducees and Pharisees agreed upon.

20. Greek-speaking Jews and Christians came to call the Feast of Firstfruits Pentecost, which means "fiftieth," because

- A. the firstfruits harvest was about one-fiftieth or two percent of the total harvest.
- B. it was the fiftieth day after the cutting of the omer or first of the firstfruits.
- C. they gave one-fiftieth of their harvest to the priests.
- D. it was the fiftieth day of the year.

21. Jesus Christ fulfilled the symbolism of the omer or first of the firstfruits wave offering by

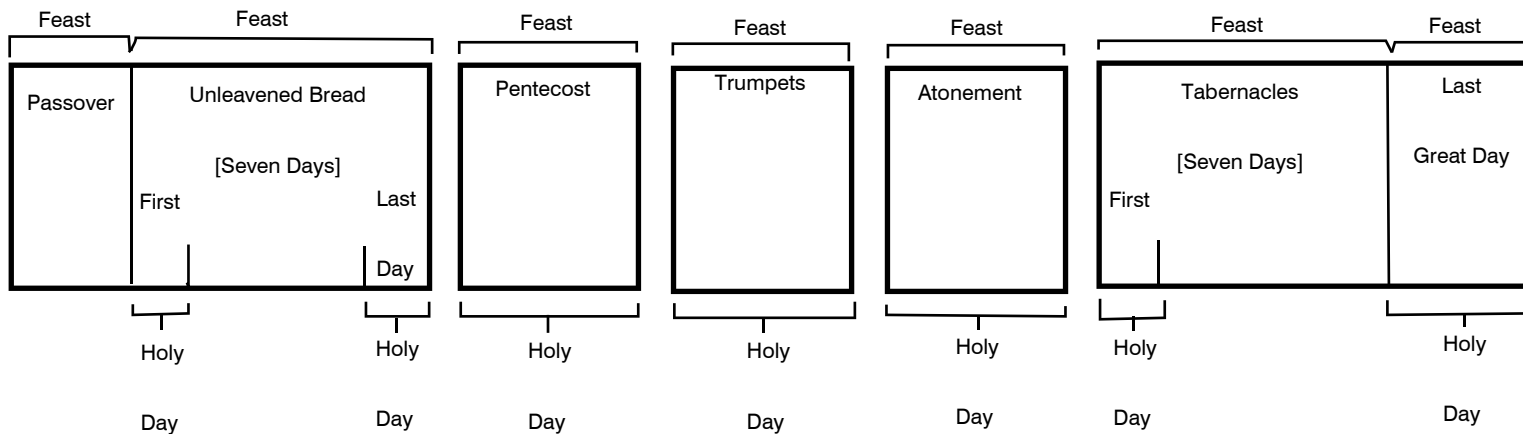
- A. becoming the firstborn Son of God, the firstborn of many brethren.
- B. being resurrected on Sunday morning.
- C. being the first and only begotten Son of God.
- D. His birth in Bethlehem.

22. The New Covenant

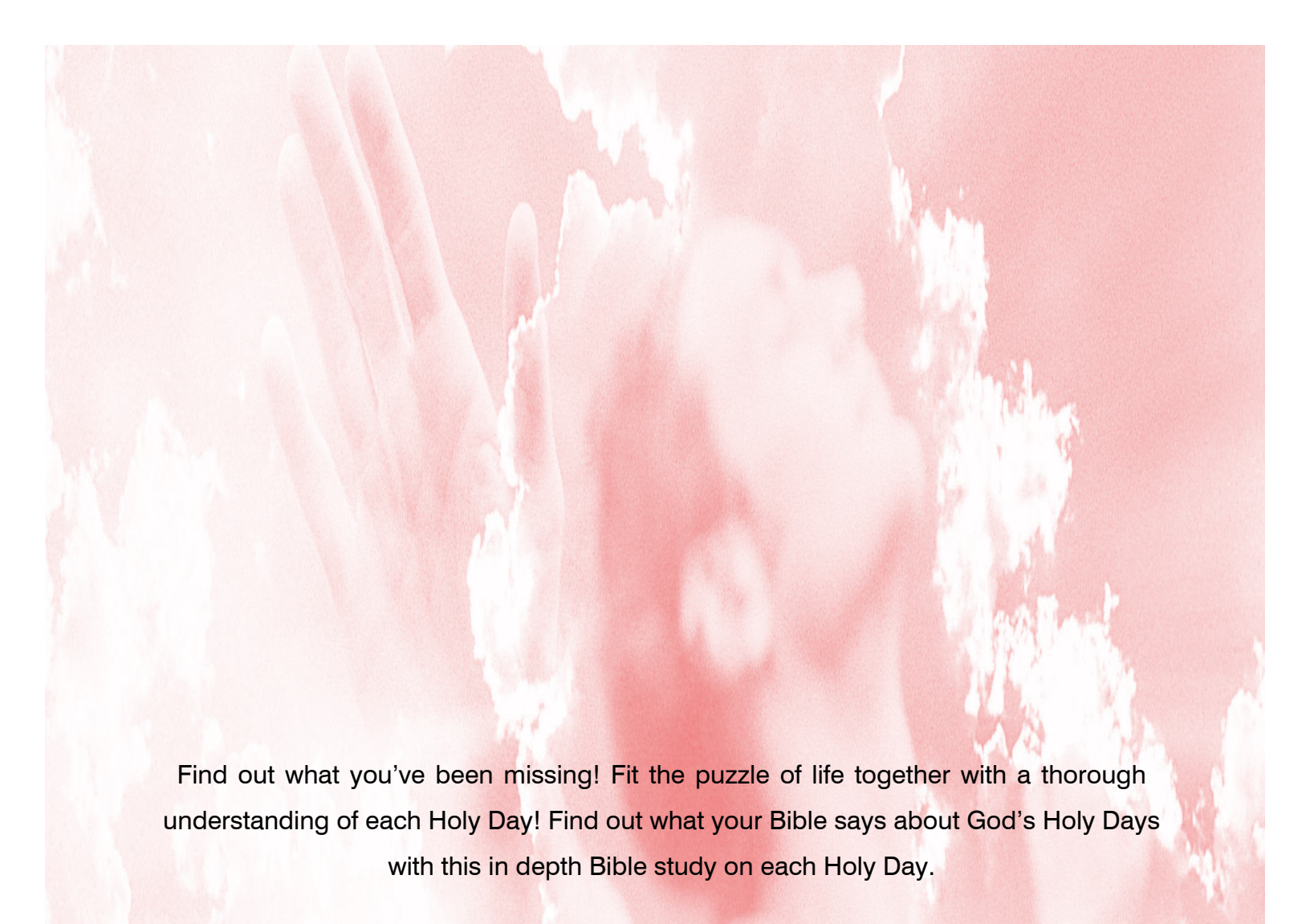
- A. includes spiritual laws that Christians today should keep as their part in that covenant.
- B. is a marriage agreement between Christ and His Church.
- C. will be finalized at the first resurrection.
- D. All of the above.

God's Holy Day Calendar

Year	Passover*	Days of Unleavened Bread	Pentecost	Feast of Trumpets	Day of Atonement	Feast of Tabernacles	Last Great Day
2006	April 12 Wednesday	April 13-19 Thur - Wed	June 4 Sunday	Sept. 23 Saturday	October 2 Monday	Oct. 7-13 Sat - Fri	Oct. 14 Saturday
2007	April 2 Monday	April 3-9 Tue - Mon	May 27 Sunday	Sept. 13 Thursday	Sept. 22 Saturday	Sept. 27-Oct. 3 Thur-Wed	Oct. 4 Thursday
2008	April 19 Saturday	April 20-26 Sun - Sat	June 8 Sunday	Sept. 30 Tuesday	Oct. 9 Thursday	Oct. 14-20 Tue - Mon	Oct 21 Tuesday
2009	April 8 Wednesday	April 9-15 Thur - Wed	May 31 Sunday	Sept. 19 Saturday	Sept. 28 Monday	Oct. 3-9 Sat - Fri	Oct. 10 Saturday
2010	March 29 Monday	March 30-April 5 Tue - Mon	May 23 Sunday	Sept. 9 Thursday	Sept. 18 Saturday	Sept. 23-29 Thur - Wed	Sept. 30 Thursday



God's Annual Festivals [Lev. 23]



Find out what you've been missing! Fit the puzzle of life together with a thorough understanding of each Holy Day! Find out what your Bible says about God's Holy Days with this in depth Bible study on each Holy Day.

ANSWERS TO TEST

1-D, 2-A, 3-B, 4-D

5-C, 6-A, 7-C, 8-A, 9-D

10-A, 11-C, 12-A, 13-C

14-B, 15-D, 16-D, 17-B

18-D, 19-C, 20-B, 21-A, 22-D

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