

Forerunner

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

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in **2005**

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Unlike most other years, 2005 contains an anomaly in the counting of Pentecost due to Passover falling on a weekly Sabbath. The debate centers around which Sabbath should be used to begin the count—the Passover itself or the Last Day of Unleavened Bread. Will you be keeping Pentecost on the correct day this year?
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Pentecost, Consistency, and Honesty

This year, 2005, is a year in which the church of God is divided regarding the count to Pentecost. Why is there confusion? Is it because some are failing to allow plain and clear scriptures to guide and interpret those that may be vague? Is it because scriptures that should be used to determine some elements of this issue are not even being

considered? Is it because some stubbornly prefer to remain loyal to a wrong tradition or to resist yielding to truth because of pride or fear of “rocking the boat”? Perhaps it is combinations of several of these possibilities.

Whatever the case for others, this author does not believe this issue is vague in the least.

The Starting Point

This article is composed of two major sections: The first establishes the primary importance of the weekly Sabbath that falls within the Days of Unleavened Bread. The day on which the count to Pentecost begins—Wavesheaf Day—is entirely dependent upon when that particular Sabbath occurs. The article’s second part deals with Joshua 5.

On some matters pertaining to Pentecost, the general church is in agreement. Following the basic instructions about Pentecost’s location on the calendar in Leviticus 23:10-16, we find that when Israel came into Canaan, they were to count beginning with the day following a Sabbath. Without further instruction, there could be a whole year’s worth of Sabbaths to choose from! However, within Leviticus 23, the annual Sabbaths are arranged chronologically beginning with Nisan (also called Abib). This, combined with information obtained from other portions of the Bible, has led all concerned to conclude that the Sabbath in question is early in the year, located near the beginning of a spring harvest, and is one of three within the Days of Unleavened Bread. The church of God and the various sects of the Jews are in agreement on this.

The count is to continue fifty days with the fiftieth day being the Day of Pentecost. As a Greek word, the name *Pentecost* does not appear in the Old Testament, only in

the New, and it means “fiftieth.” In the Old Testament, Pentecost is called “the Feast of Weeks” or “the Feast of Firstfruits.”

Carefully note that God points only to a Sabbath—*it* must first be found—in order to begin the count. This fits nicely within God’s directive in Exodus 31:13 that the Sabbath is a sign between Him and His people. Day One of the count does not begin with a Sabbath, but with the day following it. However, without first isolating which Sabbath, one cannot know which “morrow”—which day after. If one does not use the correct Sabbath, it may set Pentecost’s observance as much as seven days off God’s intended target.

The Sabbath in question here can be neither the First nor the Last Day of Unleavened Bread, though both are annual Sabbaths. Why? Because using either of those holy days, both of which fall on fixed dates, effectively eliminates a person’s need to count! This is because, when one begins counting fifty days from a fixed date, one will always end on a fixed date.

If we begin to count with the day following Nisan 15 (the First Day of Unleavened Bread), we will always end on Sivan 6. If we commence our count on the day following Nisan 21 (the Last Day of Unleavened Bread), we will always finish on Sivan 12. If God wanted us to observe Pentecost on a fixed

Passover: Monday

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14 <i>Passover</i>	15	16	17	18	19
20 <i>Wavesheaf</i>	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

Passover: Wednesday

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14 <i>Passover</i>	15	16	17
18 <i>Wavesheaf</i>	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

Passover: Friday

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14 <i>Passover</i>	15
16 <i>Wavesheaf</i>	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29

Passover: Saturday

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14 <i>Passover</i>
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22 <i>Wavesheaf</i>	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

Days of Unleavened Bread

date, He would have told us so, even as He did with all the other festival dates in Leviticus 23.

One man suggested that counting from a fixed date is still counting. Yes, that is true. But if one does that, the count only has to be done once in all of history, and Pentecost's location is found forever. The man's suggestion is similar to interpreting that the command to eat unleavened bread during the Days of Unleavened Bread no longer applies because the Israelites did it when they first came out of Egypt! Even as unleavened bread must be eaten each year, the clear implication from Leviticus 23 is that God wants us to count to Pentecost afresh each year.

God wants us to count to Pentecost year-by-year beginning with the day following a Sabbath whose date changes from year to year. This can only be the weekly Sabbath that falls on or between the two holy days during the Days of Unleavened Bread. The starting point has been located. Even though the count does not actually begin with the Sabbath, the Sabbath's location is of primary importance, not the day after. The day after would never be located without first locating the correct Sabbath.

According to Hebrew Calendar rules, Passover, Nisan 14, can fall only on a Monday, Wednesday, Friday, or weekly Sabbath. During the past century, it has fallen on Monday, Wednesday, or Friday in just over 87% of the years.

Thus, when Passover is on a Monday, the date of the weekly Sabbath will be Nisan 19. Wavesheaf Day, the day the count begins, will be Sunday, Nisan 20 (see the accompanying chart).

When Passover is on Wednesday, the weekly Sabbath will be Nisan 17, and Wavesheaf Day falls on Sunday, Nisan 18.

When Passover is on Friday, the weekly Sabbath occurs on Nisan 15 (the First Day of Unleavened Bread), and Wavesheaf Day is thus Nisan 16.

We easily see that the date of Wavesheaf Day changes depending upon the day Passover occurs. When the date of Wavesheaf Day changes, so also does the date of Pentecost. Since the weekly Sabbath always falls on Saturday, Wavesheaf Day will always be on a Sunday, and counting fifty days beginning with Wavesheaf Day means Pentecost will always occur on a Sunday as well.

Passover on a Weekly Sabbath

Less than 13% of the time in the last century, Passover has fallen on a weekly Sabbath. The conclusion reached by some church of God groups on when to begin the count destroys unity on this issue. A weekly Sabbath Passover causes the next day, a Sunday, to be the First Day of Unleavened Bread and thus a holy day Sabbath. The practice of beginning the count to Pentecost on this day began in 1974 in the Worldwide Church of God and has been continued by several groups following Herbert Armstrong's death.

However, a number of things are wrong with the conclusion to begin counting with this day.

First, we are warned in Deuteronomy 12:32 and Revelation 22:18 neither to add nor to take away anything from God's Word. There is no command or example anywhere in Scripture that the sheaf *must* be waved during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Instead, the implication of Leviticus 23 is that the weekly Sabbath's location *within* the Days of Unleavened Bread is of primary importance, as the instructions in verses 10-11, 15-16 show.

Second, Passover, though it falls on a weekly Sabbath occasionally, never qualifies as a weekly Sabbath *within* the Days of Unleavened Bread. Leviticus 23:5-6 clearly states that "on the fourteenth day of the first month . . . is the LORD'S PASSOVER," and "on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread." That Passover and Unleavened Bread are adjacent to each other is patently true, but they are *separate* festivals with distinctly different teaching. Passover teaches us of the death of our Savior to cover our sins. The Days of Unleavened Bread instruct us to come out of sin, to overcome and grow from the trials of daily life.

Passover is not part of the Days of Unleavened Bread, and therefore the Sabbath it infrequently falls on does not qualify as a weekly Sabbath *within* the Days of Unleavened Bread. To use it so is inconsistent with the counting pattern used in the other 87% of years. Furthermore, Wavesheaf Day is directly attached to Pentecost—the former begins the count, the latter concludes it. In addition, both days involve harvest symbolism. Wavesheaf Day is only indirectly attached to the Days of Unleavened Bread due to the count often beginning *within* them.

Third, no one has ever found a record in all of history of the Jews—whether Sadducees, Pharisees, Falashas, Kairites, or Essenes—observing Wavesheaf Day on anything but a common workday. All these groups began their count following a Sabbath, but none of them ever permitted Wavesheaf Day to be *observed* on any type of Sabbath. This is because they could see that Scripture clearly states

the Wavesheaf Day falls the day *after* a Sabbath, not on one.

John 20:1, 11-18 absolutely proves that Wavesheaf Day follows the day after the *weekly* Sabbath that falls *within* the Days of Unleavened Bread. Jesus, as the first of the firstfruits, is the reality of the symbolism of the Old Covenant Wavesheaf Day ceremonies. He was crucified on a Wednesday Passover and was interred as the sun set that day. He spent exactly three days and three nights buried in the tomb, being resurrected as the sun set ending the weekly Sabbath. Then, on Sunday morning, He rose to heaven for acceptance as the first of God's spiritual harvest.

Seeing their conclusion is weak, those who want to place Wavesheaf Day on the day following a Sabbath Passover have devised a cunning argument for beginning the count with the First Day of Unleavened Bread: Since Jesus, the first of the firstfruits, was "waved" for acceptance before the Father following His resurrection within the Days of Unleavened Bread, they conclude that every Wavesheaf Day thereafter should be conformed to it. But consider this: Does every Passover have to be observed on a Wednesday because Jesus was crucified in a year when Passover fell on a Wednesday? We do not do that, do we? Wavesheaf Day and the beginning of the count to Pentecost are, like all other festivals and their ceremonies, to fall on the dates and days assigned them by God in Leviticus 23 (see verse 2) and in the calendar rules.

There is no consistency to their argument and practice, but those who believe this reasoning are so insistent that at least one group declared Passover to be a Day of Unleavened Bread, despite Leviticus 23:4-6 showing they are two different festivals.

No statement in the Bible says that Wavesheaf Day *must* fall within the Days of Unleavened Bread. Instead, God uses a weekly Sabbath falling within Unleavened Bread as His marker, and the following day begins the count. Thus, the day the count begins—a Sunday—can fall outside the Days of Unleavened Bread in about 13% of years.

Joshua 5 and Assumptions

Through examining seven overlooked assumptions, this article's second part will establish that Joshua 5:10-11 cannot be used to justify changing from the normal counting pattern used when Passover falls on a Monday, Wednesday, or Friday.

Some, realizing their argument for always keeping Wavesheaf Day within the Days of Unleavened Bread is still quite weak, have leapt on another rationalization and conclusion from a series of assumptions read into Joshua 5:10-11. These assumptions have led them to the conclusion that, since Leviticus 23:14 states that the Israelites were not to eat bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain from their new spring harvest until they had brought their sheaf offering to God, and since Joshua 5:11 records that

the Israelites ate of the produce of the land on the day after Passover, it means they must have made a wavesheaf offering.

However, major assumptions in their argument have led them to a wrong conclusion:

First Assumption: Joshua and the Israelites waved the sheaf following a harvest of Canaanite grain. This must be read into the context because this is nowhere stated. In fact, neither the words "wave," "waved," "waves" nor "wavesheaf" or "wave offering" appear in the entire book of Joshua. In addition, the context makes no mention of the burnt or meal offerings that were to accompany the waving of the sheaf (Leviticus 23:12-13). Finally, it does not mention the erection of an altar. This is no minor

element because it would have been the first altar established after entering the Promised Land.

Second Assumption: This was a year Passover fell on a Sabbath. How do they know that? No one knows it! Nobody knows with absolute certainty what year Israel entered into the Promised Land, let alone the exact day this offering was supposedly made! They have no calendar date from which to offer proof. The argument is built on a series of “ifs” centered on the assumption that the Israelites *were required* to wave the sheaf before they could eat of the harvest of the land.

Third Assumption: Israel was required by God—forced by law—to make the wavesheaf offering before they could eat the grain from a Canaanite planting. This assumption is drawn from Leviticus 23:10, 14. Taken alone, these scriptures may lead one to think the wavesheaf had to be done immediately. However, where does God say that it had to be done immediately or that they could not eat of the produce of the land upon entering it? He says nothing of the sort as they approached the land. We will see that the Israelites not only *did not* have to make a wavesheaf offering of Canaanite grain before eating of the land’s produce, but that they *did not* do so, and further, doing so would have been sin to them.

Fourth Assumption: God would accept an Israelite offering derived from crops they had not *planted* on their own land. Exodus 23:14-16 explicitly states that their offerings had to come from grain that the Israelites themselves had sown in the field. Any grains they would have harvested after entering the land would have come from what the Canaanites had sown. This makes all the difference in the world when we consider the spiritual significance of sowing and harvesting. Does God’s Spirit produce the heathen—the unconverted—person’s spiritual harvest?

II Samuel 24:24 shows that David clearly understood another principle involved here. The one making the offering must have done the labor and made the sacrifices necessary to produce the offering and render it acceptable to God. Offerings that cost the offerer nothing are not acceptable.

Where are the labor and sacrifice involved in Israel’s supposed wavesheaf offering? Offering from Canaan’s harvest was not an acceptable offering for Israel to give because it cost them nothing. In short, God wants offered to Him what He has first given to us. When God loves us and we then return love to Him, it is acceptable because He first loved us (I John 4:19) and shed His Spirit abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5). When we offer love to Him, it is His own love, providence, the fruit of His Spirit that we have labored to produce, returning to Him.

Fifth Assumption: God would accept an offering of polluted things. The context in Leviticus 22:19-25 specifically covers animal offerings, but the principle applies to grain offerings as well, as the explanation of the fourth assumption indicates. No animals with blemishes of ex-

PLICIT nature are permitted to be the food of God. In verse 25, God says that nothing from the foreigner’s hand is acceptable “because their corruption is in them.” God states, “They shall not be accepted on your behalf.”

If one thinks this is of small consequence, then perhaps it would be good to review what happened to Nadab and Abihu, Aaron’s sons, when they foolishly used coals from a profane or common fire as they made the offering on the incense altar. God did not think it insignificant when they offered fire He considered unfit for His altar. He struck them dead as a lesson to all those who are less concerned about purity of worship than they should be.

Israel was symbolically under the blood of Jesus Christ and had made the covenant with God. This rendered them a holy people consecrated for God’s use and glorification. Because they were chosen by God and holy, their offerings, as long as they were without blemish and not from the stranger’s hand, were acceptable to Him.

Israel had no acceptable harvest to offer in Joshua 5. In fact, under the circumstance, Israel was required by law *not* to make an offering!

Sixth Assumption: Israel was permitted to make an offering of any kind. This is a big one, reinforcing all the other objections against the common interpretation that Joshua 5:10-11 permits or demands a First Day of Unleavened Bread waving of the sheaf and beginning of the count.

In reality, upon entering the land, offerings involved in the worship of God were *specifically* forbidden by Him until certain things were first accomplished. Through Moses, God instructs in Deuteronomy 12:1, 5-14:

These are the statutes and judgments which you shall be careful to observe in the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth. . . . [Y]ou shall seek the place where the LORD your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His habitation; and *there you shall go*. There you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and flocks. And there you shall eat before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice in all to which you have put your hand, you and your households, in which the LORD your God has blessed you. *You shall not at all do as we are doing here today*—every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes—for as yet *you have not come to the rest and the inheritance* which the LORD your God is giving you. But when you cross over the Jordan and *dwell in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and when He gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety*, then there will be the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide. There you shall bring all that I command you: your

burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, and all your choice offerings which you vow to the LORD. And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your sons and your daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion nor inheritance with you. *Take heed to yourself that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every place that you see*; but in the place which the LORD chooses, in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you. (emphasis added)

This instruction supersedes Leviticus 23 and Numbers 28-29—and especially for the purposes of this article, Leviticus 23:10, 14, where God commands, “When you come into the land. . . .” From those two verses, one could easily assume that the Israelites were to begin keeping those days and all their offerings immediately upon entering. However, Deuteronomy 12, written within the last month before entering the Promised Land, puts a hold on doing these things immediately upon entering the land (Deuteronomy 1:3). Deuteronomy 12 makes clear that they were *not* free to follow the Leviticus 23 instructions until certain matters were accomplished.

Deuteronomy 12 paves the way for Israel, at God’s command, to establish a headquarters, a national, central place for the worship of the Lord God at the site of His choosing. Further, God adds that they were actually to be *dwelling* in the land, to be at *rest*, and to be *dwelling in safety from their enemies*. Also included within these instructions, though not specifically mentioned, is that the Tabernacle, the altar, the laver, and all the interior furniture had to be erected and in place.

Please pay special attention to what Moses says while the Israelites are still in the wilderness: “You shall not at all do as we are doing here today” (verse 8), referring to making offerings any old place that was convenient. In addition, Israel actually had to be living in the land, not marching around it fighting wars. They had to be in a settled circumstance—so settled that they were in safety. Obviously, this eliminates a wavesheaf offering and its accompanying burnt and meal offerings from happening in Joshua 5.

The place God ultimately chose and in which Israel erected the Tabernacle was Shiloh. This was not accomplished until Joshua 18:1: “Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of meeting there. And the land was subdued before them.” This was the first sign that things

were almost ready so they could legitimately offer sacrifices to God. However, some land had yet to be apportioned. The land for seven tribes plus the allocation of cities to the Levites and the cities of refuge had yet to be settled. The final apportioning is recorded in chapters 18-21. Thus, many of the tribes were not yet dwelling and at rest at the beginning of Joshua 18.

The official announcement that all was in place appears in Joshua 21:43-45:

So the LORD gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it. The LORD gave them rest all around, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers. And not a man of all their enemies stood against them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand. Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass.

From the time they crossed the Jordan and entered the land, seven years passed before they were free to offer what Deuteronomy 12 forbade and what some claim occurred in Joshua 5.

Seventh Assumption: Joshua and the Israelites were so irresponsible as to disregard God’s clear instruction given through Moses while they were still wandering. Does the Scripture anywhere speak badly of Joshua? In Joshua 1:6-9, God specifically seeks out Joshua to exhort him to be courageous, not turning to the right or left regarding what he had been instructed as Moses’ right-hand man. That Joshua did just this is verified in Joshua 11:15: “As the LORD had commanded Moses His servant, so Moses commanded Joshua, and so Joshua did. He left nothing undone of all that the LORD had commanded Moses.” At the end of his life, he is as firm as ever (Joshua 23-24).

Joshua 22:25-30 provides a telling example of how deeply the command not to make any sacrifices except where God had placed His name was burned into all of Israel’s heart at that time. When it was found that Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh, which had settled on the east side of Jordan, had erected what appeared to be a sacrificial altar, the remaining tribes almost entered into civil war to stop them! A fuller explanation revealed they had erected, not an altar, but a monument dedicated as evidence of the East Bank tribes’ unity with God and the other tribes of Israel on the west side. They were not about to make offerings anywhere except where God commanded. The Israelites did *not* make the wavesheaf offering when they came into the land.

Old Corn

Joshua 1:11 says, “Pass through the camp and command the people, saying, ‘Prepare provisions [*victuals*, KJV] for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over

this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess.’”

(continued on page 10)

I Am Barabbas

The convicted and condemned murderer, also notorious for sedition and robbery, sits dejectedly in his filthy cell, watched closely by Roman guards. He cannot help but ponder how excruciatingly painful his encounter with crucifixion will be. He has seen many of these hellish nightmares of Roman justice as he walked the roads of Judea and Galilee, conspiring with other rebels willing to resist—and even kill—the hated Roman occupiers. But this time, the Romans had caught their man and justly sentenced him to be executed on the stake.

The Romans were infamous for how they cruelly lined their roadways with crucifixes—their manner of warning would-be enemies of the State to mend their ways. This slow death was designed to torture the condemned for up to three agonizing days! Criminals punished in this way usually died of asphyxiation, no longer able to lift their chests one more time for another searing breath. The pain of crucifixion was so intense that it gave its name to extreme agony: *excruciating*, which derives from Latin words meaning “the pain one experiences while being crucified.”

This convicted murderer dreads the next few days. Sleep is impossible. He fidgets as his mind races, imagining the worst.

His name is Barabbas. We know him as the “lucky” man who received Pilate’s Passover pardon in AD 31, allowing him to skip his just appointment with the crucifix.

As Pilate finishes his interrogation of Jesus, he can find no fault in Him—he has even begun to like Jesus. His wife sends a message, late in the proceedings, warning her husband of a dark dream she has had concerning this innocent Man. Moreover, Pilate has figured out that the Jewish leaders are really just jealous of Jesus’

popularity and are afraid He could cause them to lose their positions of authority. To appease the restless mob—and save himself some trouble with Caesar should the Jews decide to appeal to him—he is willing to shed the blood of a sacrificial lamb, the innocent Jesus, and let Barabbas go free.

The story is told in Mark 15:6-15:

Now at the feast he was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they requested. And there was one named Barabbas, who was chained with his fellow insurrectionists; they had committed murder in the insurrection. Then the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask him to do just as he had always done for them. But Pilate answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?” For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them. And Pilate answered and said to them again, “What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?” So they cried out again, “Crucify Him!” Then Pilate said to them, “Why, what evil has He done?” And they cried out more exceedingly, “Crucify Him!” So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified.

Each of the four gospels gives an account of Barabbas’ part in Jesus’ trial (see Matthew 27:15-26; Luke 23:18-25; John 18:39-40). Matthew 27:16 says Barabbas was a notorious prisoner; John 18:40 calls him a robber. Many find the whole story little more than a curiosity, an interesting

detail of the whole sordid affair. But is that all it?

Me? Like Barabbas?

Barabbas, a condemned murderer, robber, and insurgent. Guilty as charged. The Romans had gotten their man, and he deserved his punishment.

Do we ever identify with Barabbas, the murderer? Perhaps we should.

We have also been found guilty of murder. How? On the day of Pentecost after Jesus’ death, Peter explains that we *all* have killed the Christ (Acts 2:36). We all, by requiring His blood be spilled to cleanse us of our sins, are really the ones who crucified Him. As surely as the Jewish mob agitated for His condemnation, as surely as the Roman lictor tore His flesh with his whip, as surely as the Roman soldiers pounded nails into His hands and feet, as surely as one ripped His side open with a spear, we caused the death of the innocent Son of Man, the very Son of God. Yes, the shed blood of the Innocent drips from *our* hands.

By the standard Peter uses in Acts 2, we should be considered convicted murderers. This also means each of us should also have a date with the executioner—unless somehow, some way, someone can pass over our sins too.

We know that Jesus is the Lamb of God, who came to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29). He *is* our Passover (I Corinthians 5:7). Jesus took on Himself all the sins of all time and paid the penalty for all who will receive Him as Lord and Savior (I Timothy 2:6; Hebrews 2:9; 9:12; I John 2:2; etc.). So now, we can stand before God without condemnation, for “there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ, who . . . walk . . . according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:1). Even this sin—of murdering the Christ—is washed away forever.

After we repent and accept Jesus as our personal Savior, God begets us into His Family by His Spirit (John 3:5-6, 8; I Peter 1:23). God is building a growing Family! The author of Hebrews 2:11-12 says Jesus is not ashamed to call us His brothers. Spiritually, God sees neither male nor female, so of course God is forming sons and daughters (II Corinthians 6:18). Paul writes:

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by which we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. (Romans 8:15-17)

Jesus tells Mary Magdalene, after His resurrection at the garden tomb, something earth-shaking at the time: "I am ascending to My Father *and your Father*, and to My God and your God" (John 20:17). He wants it to be crystal clear to her—and to all of us—that His sacrificial death and resurrection allows us to call God *our* Father. We are His very children!

But we have a problem. We are guilty as charged of murder and other sins. We have incurred the death penalty by law—unless somehow, someone will redeem us by paying the death penalty for us, pardoning our sins and canceling our appointment with the executioner. And just as happened to Barabbas, the One who does these things for us is Jesus Christ, our Savior.

What's In a Name?

So what about Barabbas? Where does he come into this story? It is a moving reminder at Passover time each year that God leaves nothing to chance. Even the man who receives unmerited pardon is in the story for a reason: to remind us what we were and who we are *now*.

Many look at the name "Barabbas" and think it is just a name. Perhaps

they realize that it is an Aramaic word. But what does it mean? *Bar* means "son of" and *abba* means "father," with the connotation of closeness and intimacy similar to our "dad," "daddy," or "papa." Therefore, Barabbas is "the son of the father" or "the son of his dear father." That Passover day in AD 31, there was a guilty "son of the father"—Barabbas—and a totally innocent "Son of the Father"—Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

There is possibly even more. Extant ancient texts say that Barabbas' full name was *Jesus* Barabbas. If that is correct—and it may be—then the crowd picked the wrong Jesus to be freed! Is that not typical of human nature? On our own, we too would choose the wrong savior and doom ourselves to bondage to sin and death rather than freedom from sin and eternal life (John 6:44; Romans 2:4).

As individuals, we are whom Barabbas depicted, "the sons of our dear Father" who did not measure up. Each one of us is *that* child of God. When our Elder Brother Jesus Christ stepped up to be crucified for us, though He should have been the one released, having committed no wrong at all, God also released the rest of His children who would call upon the name of Jesus and accept His sacrifice in our stead. Just as surely as Barabbas walked out of that prison—a free man—Jesus gave Himself so each of us can walk free as well.

That day was an agonizing, terrible day for Jesus, the Son of God. Were these not His own people? Some of these now screaming for His death were ones He had often seen, talked with, perhaps even dined with. These were people He knew, and some He knew well. Someday, when those of the house of Judah see the wounds in His hands, they will indignantly ask the Lamb, "Who did this to you?" (Zechariah 13:6). His prophetic reply is tinged with pain: "My wounds happened in the house of My friends." Jesus even calls Judas His "friend" (Matthew 26:50). Those "friends" include Peter, who denied Him; the Roman soldiers who executed Him; Pilate, who condemned Him; Caiaphas the High Priest, the Phari-

sees and Sadducees, and the Jerusalem mob who schemed and clamored to crucify Him—and His friends include us, those who will form His Bride (John 15:13-15), whose sins made His gruesome, excruciating death necessary.

Jesus is getting married soon. His Bride—the church of God—is bone of His bones, flesh of His flesh, (Genesis 2:23), one body with Him (Ephesians 5:27-32). Jesus gave Himself for her—*for us*. The converted children of God are said to "be in Christ" and to be one with Him. We are His body, and He is the Head of that body of believers.

If Jesus Barabbas was the murderer's name, perhaps Barabbas actually pictures those who are of Christ who are handed undeserved pardon. He may picture those of us who want to take on the name of Jesus but who have fallen short spiritually. We were guilty of sin and earned the death penalty. But the Eternal God saves. The Lord is salvation, which is what "Jesus" means. Thus, just as Barabbas was granted his life and freedom that day, the real Jesus, the real Son of the Father, steps up beside us and lovingly offers to take our place.

A New Life

We are Barabbas. We have truly become "the sons of the Father" because of what Jesus did in our behalf. We have been released from the penalty of eternal death because our Savior and affianced Husband, Jesus the Christ, died in our stead.

All of this came about when the *true* Son of the Father took the place of Barabbas, who represents us all. As the despised Roman guards marched up to him, he was expecting the worse was about to begin. But instead, they broke off his heavy chains, dropping them to the stone floor with a clang that echoed through the corridors of the prison. Slowly, reality began to sink in: They were letting him go! Before long, Barabbas learned that the innocent Jesus of Nazareth, whom some considered a prophet, had given him a new lease on life—a fresh start, a new life. He was free! No crucifixion awaited this

murderous, thieving rebel after all! He undoubtedly could not believe his “luck.”

Because of the gracious act of Jesus, the true Son of His dear Father, the iron shackles have been broken from us, and we walk about as truly free men and women. His sacrifice and resurrection make it possible for God to give us of His Spirit, to beget us into His household, the Family of God. We are begotten to a new life, and made part of the very Family in which Jesus is the Firstborn. The Father invites us to be His Son’s Bride, whom Jesus is preparing for

the Great Marriage Supper, giving of Himself totally for us, so that we can be totally free of sin as He is. When we pronounce our wedding vows to the King of kings, He will present us faultless, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing (Ephesians 5:25-27; Jude 24; II Peter 3:14).

This year, when we eat of the Passover bread, representing His body broken for us, and drink the wine, symbolizing His blood shed for the remission of our sins, let us remember who we are. We can be even more grateful for Jesus and the liberty and life He has given to each of us

(Luke 4:18).

Yes, *we* are Barabbas, sons of our dear Father, children of God. But we are Barabbas *without* the condemnation, for there is no more condemnation when Jesus passed over our sins and paid the ultimate penalty for us. Did Barabbas reform as a result of Jesus’ sacrifice of Himself for him? Nobody knows. But we have a say in our future. As Paul admonishes, because of what the Father and the Son have done undeservedly for us, “we should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

—Staff

PERSONAL ►

Pentecost, Consistency and Honesty

(continued from page 7)

Where did the food they were to prepare and set aside come from? It could not have been manna because manna spoiled within one day (Exodus 16:20). Besides, fresh manna continued to fall each day, except for Sabbaths, until the day following the First Day of Unleavened Bread in that year. God stopped providing manna because the Israelites now had complete access to the produce of the Promised Land, as well as because they were no longer wandering but were camped at a place from which they would launch their conquest of the land.

Considering the time of year (spring), the provision could not have come from fall harvests of fruits and vegetables. The fleeing Canaanites would have either consumed them themselves by this time or taken as much with them as they could. The provision came from a new spring harvest of grains either of winter wheat or barley or both. There was nothing to stop the Israelites from partaking of what was available because no law of God prohibited it; the offering laws applied only to what Israel had planted.

The command to set aside food was made because God knew He would stop sending the manna on Nisan 16. The stockpiled food would keep Israel fed until a much

larger harvest could be made after the Passover events were completed, the holy day observed, and Israel was more settled in the land, preparing for the conquest of Jericho.

Israel crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land on Nisan 10 and immediately moved to set up camp that day in Gilgal. The mass circumcisions mentioned must have taken place on Nisan 11. As Nisan 13 ended and Nisan 14 began, they kept the Passover as commanded by God. The daylight portion of Passover day was spent preparing for the holy day on Nisan 15. They kept the Night to be Much Observed as the holy day began, eating unleavened cakes and parched corn from the already harvested Canaanite crops. During the daylight portion of the holy day, they ate of the same provisions that supplied their meal the previous evening because no manna fell on that Sabbath day. No manna fell the next day, Nisan 16, either.

The notation regarding “old corn” (“produce” in modern versions) is simply given to show where Israel’s sustenance came from, since the manna stopped appearing. It is not given to prove that a wavesheaf offering was made because none was required—none could be made in the first place.

Conclusion

Joshua 5:10-11 cannot be used to support using the First Day of Unleavened Bread to begin the count to Pentecost because:

1. No authority is given in Scripture to change the method of counting to Pentecost when Passover falls on the weekly Sabbath.
2. Counting to Pentecost always begins the day after the weekly Sabbath within the Days of Unleavened Bread. It is the weekly Sabbath, God’s sign, not

Wavesheaf Day that must fall within the Days of Unleavened Bread.

3. Exodus 23 explicitly requires the grain offering to be planted by the offerer, thus they had none to offer immediately after entering the land.
4. Leviticus 22 forbids making an offering of heathen substance, thus they had no acceptable grain offering.

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*“ . . . and the graves were opened;
and many bodies of the saints
who had fallen asleep were raised . . . ”*

Matthew 27:52

Resurrection AD 31

Jerusalem: AD 1944

MMy dad and my Uncle Albert were enjoying some leave after serving with the British Army in North Africa. As they were wandering around the so-called “Holy City,” sightseeing, a powerful bomb exploded in one of the city’s cemeteries. Some coffins were unearthed by the blast, and a few of them were broken open. My Uncle Albert liked to spice up the story by telling us that they found scratch marks on the insides of some of the coffin lids!

Jerusalem: 3:00 PM, Abib 14, AD 31

WWe read of a somewhat similar scenario in Matthew 27:46, 50-53:

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?” . . . Jesus, when He had cried out again with a loud voice, yielded up His spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised;

and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

This was an amazing and, no doubt, frightening event, and one that raises many questions, some of which we do not have the answers to at this time:

- When did the earthquake take place: at Christ’s death or shortly before His resurrection? Or were there two earthquakes (see Matthew 28:2)?
- Did these saints awake from the dead when Jesus died and stay in the tombs until after He rose? Or did they awake at His resurrection and come out immediately?
- Who were these “many” saints? How many of them were there?
- When did they live their *original* lives?
- Why did this event happen? What was its purpose?
- Were they made immortal sons of God at this time?

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Immigration and th

The recent news out of Europe shows the issue of Muslim immigration quickly approaching a flashpoint. Europe has long been known for its loose immigration policy. Its endorsement of and wholehearted agreement with pluralism and multiculturalism has resulted in a massive influx of immigrants, both legal and illegal, and a significant percentage of those immigrants are from predominantly Muslim countries. European governments have been pleased with this for the most part, because of the cheap labor and because the native population of Europe has such a low birthrate that the only reason the population is increasing at all is because of immigration—in some areas, the birth rate of immigrants is *three times* the rate of the native population.

These factors have set the stage for a cultural conflict that could lead to radical changes within the fabric of Europe. This not only has prophetic implications, but it also serves as an excellent object lesson for those seeking to enter the Kingdom of God.

Even though ethnic and religious tension has been building for some in Europe, it finally reached a bursting point the same week that President Bush was re-elected. A Dutch filmmaker and critic of Islam named Theo van Gogh, a descendant of the painter Vincent van Gogh, was shot while riding his bicycle in Amsterdam. The bullets did not kill him, so his attacker pulled out a long knife and slit his throat. The murderer then pinned a lengthy letter, written in Dutch and Arabic, to van Gogh's chest with the bloody knife. He then sunk in a second knife, apparently in accordance with a common practice in North Africa. The killer, the son of a Moroccan immigrant, had converted to radical Islam shortly after September 11, 2001.

Theo van Gogh was singled out because he made a short film, *Submission*, which unveiled the abuse of women in Muslim countries. This is not meant to paint him as a hero, because he also regarded Christianity and Judaism to be simply "barbaric superstition." But this event struck a chord for the Dutch especially because, as commentator Daniel Johnson, writing in *The London Daily Telegraph*, put it, "the murder of an artist for the sake of his art shocks secular Europe [much] as martyrdom shocked Christendom. Theo van Gogh is a secular martyr."

Jumping on the Bandwagon

The Netherlands has long been known as one of the most tolerant places on earth. But with the prospect of

a renewed Muslim caliphate ("the era of Islam's ascendancy from the death of Mohammed until the 13th century") at hand, even the most tolerant people on earth cannot abide militant Islam. The Dutch government has declared war on radical Islam, the prime minister promising a relentless crackdown on extremist cells. The immigration minister has unveiled plans for a law allowing the deportation of Islamic radicals—even if they are Dutch citizens! Meanwhile, some of the "more civilized" Dutch citizens have taken to burning mosques, acts which have resulted in reprisal burnings and vandalism of Christian churches. One of the most liberal societies in the world has discovered something it will not accept.

The Netherlands is not alone in its fight. Other European nations are also considering their positions as a result of decades of unchecked immigration and poor societal integration. Senior German politicians are saying that Muslims will have to integrate themselves better if they wish to remain in the country. Leaders of various conservative parties have been calling on citizens to emphasize patriotism and Christian values. Some are calling for a renewed German "leading culture," which would include common language, values, and laws. The Bavarian Interior Minister, Günther Beckstein, has gone so far as to declare that "multiculturalism, as propagated by the red-green [German government] for years, has proven to be illusionary." Those are strange words for a European politician!

German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder has warned of a "conflict of cultures," saying Muslims "must clearly and without misunderstanding demonstrate that they accept our legal order and democratic rules." He also stated, "A democracy can neither tolerate *lawless areas*, nor *parallel societies*" (emphasis ours throughout), and that he will not allow a foreign culture to develop inside the country.

Similar sentiments are being expressed in Denmark. The Danish prime minister said he was determined to root out Islamic extremism: "Let's call the kettle black and admit that there are some young Muslims of immigrant origin who have not understood the principles of democracy, tolerance, and freedom of expression on which Danish society is based."

The major media of Europe are also jumping on the bandwagon. The German news magazine *Der Spiegel* opined, "The veil of multiculturalism has been lifted, revealing *parallel societies where the law of the*

the Kingdom of God

state does not apply.” The *Berliner Zeitung*, similar to our *Washington Post*, headlined their story on the current circumstances: “Fear is spreading.” And in Holland, the *Telegraaf*, much like our *New York Times*, wrote: “. . . magazines and papers which include incitements should be *suppressed*, unsuitable mosques should be *shut down*, and imams who encourage illegal acts should be *thrown out of the country*.”

Implications

Europe’s multiculturalism appears to be catching up with it! This has a number of prophetic implications. For one, this provides a cultural application of the King of the South—which we have interpreted to be Arabic—pushing at the King of the North—generally the remnant of the Roman Empire (see “Clash of Cultures,” *Forerunner*, November 2002). The “pushing” is not military in nature right now, but it is a push through immigration, by promoting a culture and a religion that does not easily mix with most of Europe.

A second implication is that, sooner or later, Europe will have to decide exactly what it means to be European. Europe is being pushed and stretched by the Muslim onslaught, and many analysts say it is only a matter of time before something breaks loose—probably resulting in more bloodshed. Europe has long operated by the idea that one culture is just as good as the next, that borders do not need to be strictly enforced, and that there is “strength in diversity.” What they are experiencing, though, is that not all cultures are equal, and that the Islamic culture does not mix well with traditional European culture.

This presents a problem: How does one define “traditional European culture”? Until the relatively recent adaptation of secular humanism and pluralism, Europe was traditionally Christian. If things continue to heat up, the native population of Europe may reach back to a form of “Christianity” to give definition to what is acceptable and what is not.

Most Europeans do not want the dominant culture of Europe to be Islamic, yet because of immigration and because Muslims are having more children than native Europeans, this seems to be a distinct possibility. It also appears that Europeans are waking up to the fact that a culture dominated by secular humanism is also not ideal, in that the Muslim immigration and integration problem has developed precisely *because* of the secular humanist idea that all cultures are equal

and can get along. The only option left is a return to a nominally Christian culture, if Europeans want something familiar to them.

These factors set the stage for a King of the North to rise and provide native Europeans with a solution to the “pushing” coming from the nations of the south. Given that the pushing has a large Muslim component, a natural solution is a “Christian” revival—led by someone who “has two horns like a lamb” but speaks “like a dragon” (Revelation 13:11). This individual rises after the first Beast (verse 1), convincing the world, with the help of spectacular signs and wonders, to give their allegiance to him (verses 12-17).

Incidentally, the current Pope would probably not be party to such an arrangement. John Paul II is a strong promoter of an open-borders policy. He has repeatedly equated immigration restrictions with *abortion*, arguing that to refuse to admit a prospective immigrant into a country is as sinful as to kill an unborn child (David Simcox, “The Pope’s Visit: Is Mass Immigration a Moral Imperative?” *The Social Contract*, Winter 1995-96, p. 107).

In the current Catholic hierarchy, permissive immigration is a higher virtue than national identity and patriotism. However, if the flashpoint that causes the first Beast, the King of the North, to attack the King of the South is a cultural pushing through Muslim immigration, advancing an agenda of open borders will not be popular. If this scenario is correct, we should look for a religious leader—a “Lamb Dragon”—who is not an avid fan of Third World immigration.

Heavenly Citizenship

Prophetic speculation aside, the immigration nightmare in Europe provides an excellent teaching vehicle for explaining the coming Kingdom of God—in some ways, only by contrast.

God’s Word tells us that we have already been conveyed, or transferred, into His Kingdom: “[God] has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Colossians 1:13). We understand that we are not in His Kingdom in its fullness because it is not yet established on earth and because flesh and blood cannot *inherit* the Kingdom (I Corinthians 15:50). We are heirs to it but not yet inheritors. Yet, Colossians 1:13 shows that those who have been redeemed by Christ’s blood are already part of His Kingdom.

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SEARCHING

Part Eleven: M

*"And of Joseph [Moses] said,
'Blessed of the Lord is his land.'
(Deuteronomy 33:13)*

For centuries, the two tribes of Joseph dwelt together, the folk of Manasseh living with those of Ephraim in the British Isles. In the early 1600s of this era, God took action to separate Manasseh from Ephraim. It was people of Manasseh who moved from England to "the coastlands" (Isaiah 41:1) of Jamestown in AD 1607. Fleeing religious persecution, others followed, founding Plymouth thirteen years later. More and more came to "the coastlands" of the New World. The colonies they founded, eventually thirteen in all, grew into independence from England by the end of the 1700s. These early Manassite settlers and their descendants became the "great" (Genesis 48:19) peoples of the early United States of America. Over a period of time, the United States grew to become the single "nation" God promised in Genesis 35:11 that would descend from Jacob.

Through Moses, God prophesied that Joseph would "push the peoples to the end of the earth" (Deuteronomy 33:17). Last month, we saw how Ephraim (Britain) pushed. In her own way, so did America. Rallying to the cry of "manifest destiny," the Americans did what Israelites have been doing for centuries: They moved west. Her peoples pushed the French back,¹ the Spaniards out,² and the Russians³ and the Dutch⁴ away. They pushed the Ephraimites, who did not want to lose control of this rich land, back to their island confines and north into Canada; and they pushed the native Indians onto reservations.

They pushed west, past the Appalachians, across the Mississippi River, over the Rockies, beyond the Pacific, all the way to the Hawaiian Islands and Alaska, then the Philippine Islands, then the Japanese Islands. Like her brother Ephraim, America developed a thalassocracy, her vast naval power enforcing her economic interests as far as the Arabian Desert. America now has a greater military presence in Arabia than Solomon ever did!

Manasseh's Birthright

To the early American settlers, the land seemed a never-ending, multicolored tapestry. A green land, with ridge after ridge of hills blanketed by thick primeval forests⁵ wherein dwelt fur-bearing animals of every ilk—otter, mink, sable, and beaver. A black land, much of it covered with a rich humus suitable for farming and cattle-grazing. A blue land, filled everywhere with lakes and rivers and streams teeming with all manner of fish.⁶ A golden land, capable of supporting miles and miles of wheat, barley, oats, and other grains.⁷ A glimmering land, abounding with gold, silver, copper, iron, coal, and oil. What a big, magnificent land it was!

Using the various resources that God provided them, the folk of Manasseh put mind and muscle to work and built the American phenomenon, a rich, powerful nation, greater in scope—if not in wealth—than even Solomon's Kingdom. And that by almost any measure.

For example, consider steel manufacturing, which became the measure of American industrial strength by the late 1800s. Just before the turn of the last century, one American company, Carnegie Steel, by "itself produced more steel than Britain, France, and Germany combined."⁸

F O R I S R A E L

Manasseh Found

Alternatively, consider a modern European's assessment of Manasseh's wealth. The late French politician Jean Jacques Servan-Scheiber puts the stature of the United States in clear perspective:

American industry produces twice the goods and services of all European industry combined—including both Britain and the Common Market—and two and a half times more than the Soviet Union, which has a greater population than the United States. It produces a third of the total production of all countries in the world. The Americans have achieved this with only 7 percent of the surface of the globe and 6 percent of its population. . . .

All by themselves, the Americans consume a third of the total world production of energy, and have one third of all the world's highways. Half the passenger miles flown every year are by American airlines. Two trucks of every five on the road are American-made and American-based. Americans own three out of every five automobiles in the world.

Advanced technology and management skills have raised per capita production in the United States to a level 40 percent above that of Sweden (next highest), 60 percent above Germany, 70 percent above France and 80 percent above Britain. . . . The combined profits of the ten biggest firms in France, Britain and Germany (30 in all) are \$2 billion. The profits of General Motors alone are \$2.25 billion. To equal the profits of General Motors, you would have to add the ten leading Japanese firms to the Euro-

pean total. These firms employ 3.5 million people, while General Motors employs 730,000—or about a fifth.⁹

Servan-Scheiber uses 1965 figures, a bit dated now. American power is now measured less in steel manufacturing and more in her predominant role in the Information Age. That is part of the marvel of Manasseh; the birthright blessings are multifaceted. The vast *diversity* of America's wealth resonates with the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 33:13-16. Joseph was blessed

with the precious things of heaven, with the dew, and the deep lying beneath, with the precious fruits of the sun, with the precious produce of the months, with the best things of the ancient mountains, with the precious things of the everlasting hills, with the precious things of the earth and its fullness. . . .

The present-day magnitude of America's power frequently invites comparison with the Roman Empire. One writer, however, puts that comparison in its proper perspective.

That comparison actually understates the current level of U.S. advantage. For the Roman world coexisted with the great civilizations of China and India, which were hardly touched by it, and the rival empire of Parthia (roughly the contemporary area centered on Iran and Iraq), which was never subdued. The U.S. sphere of cultural influence has no predecessor in its global reach.¹⁰

The Ephraim-Manasseh Nexus

For purposes of inheritance, Jacob (Israel) *adopted* Joseph's sons, claiming them as his own. Genesis 48:5 records how he tells Joseph, "Your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh . . . are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine." In verse 16, Jacob asserts, "Let my name be named upon them. . . ." Jacob, in effect, subdivided the tribe of Joseph into two parts: In verse 22, he tells Joseph, "I have given to you one portion above your brothers. . . ." Joseph received two portions, his own and another "above" his brothers.

Joshua 14:4 states the consequence of this arrangement: "The children of Joseph were two tribes: Manasseh and Ephraim." When it came time to divide Canaan among the tribes, Joshua understood that the tribe of Joseph was to receive a double inheritance: one for Manasseh, another for Ephraim.

For all that, as often as not, we say the names Ephraim and Manasseh in one breath. The Scriptures regularly treat Ephraim and Manasseh—whether as two brothers or as two tribes—as if they were connected at the hip, that is, in a two-in-one arrangement. So it is today: England and America are *separate* nations that enjoy a lot in common. They share a common language, similar traditions, laws, and culture, as well as political and economic institutions. For decades, Britain has been "America's truest and most important ally" (Conrad Black, "Britain's Atlantic Option," *The National Interest*, Spring 1999, p. 15.) The two nations act in concert more often than not. Together, they collaborate as the leaders of Western civilization.

Consider for a minute the global economic impact of Ephraim and Manasseh together. Much of this planet's transportation and education systems, food-processing techniques, medical technology, and drugs—legitimate and illegitimate—have been *pushed* on the world by American and British business interests. London and New York remain key financial centers to this day.

America and Britain have developed our modern instruments of war, which they sell to whomever they will. America and Britain *push* their own form of government and economics (various interpretations of democracy and capitalism) on as many nations as will have them, even forcing them on some peoples. Finally, the world receives most of its information (e.g., news and documentaries) and entertainment (e.g., rock music, movies, and television) from American and British sources. The primary telecommunication companies—the BBC, NBC, CNN, CBS, ABC, and FOX—are all owned and operated by Ephraimite and Manassite interests.

In short, the modern-day tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim generally recognize common national interests. The two have traditionally acted separately, yet in concert, to *push* their culture and their lifestyle on "the peoples to the ends of the earth."

While this world's scholars fail to recognize the British and American peoples to be descendants of Israel's adopted sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, they do recognize the deeply-rooted nexus between the British and American nations. One writer, decrying the artificial nature of the European Union as an agglomeration of nations that really have little (or nothing) in common, suggests that the most successful course of action for America and Britain is to forge ever-deepening relationships. "If we seek something better" than the "obsolete and premature" European Union, he asserts,

it seems sensible to turn to a grouping [of nations] that would be natural rather than artificial, going with the cultural grain rather than cutting across it. It hardly needs saying that what comes to mind is some form of unity between countries of the same legal and political—and linguistic and cultural—traditions; which is to say an Association of the

Why Joseph?

Why did God choose to bestow the birthright blessing to Joseph? Deuteronomy 33:16 provides the key to the answer. Moses writes, "Let the blessing come on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers."

God honored Joseph because he "was separate from his brothers." He was separate in that *he alone remained faithful to his God*. Conspicuous by their absence are the names of Joseph's brothers from the Faith Chapter. Hebrews 11 does not mention Reuben, Judah, Dan, Gad, or any other of Jacob's sons. Verse 22 emphasizes Joseph's faithfulness: "By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones."¹¹

Allaying his brothers' fears of retribution and revenge,

Joseph explained his understanding that God had placed him in power in Egypt "to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance" (Genesis 45:7). To his dying day, he never broke faith with his brothers: As recorded in Genesis 50:20-21, he reassures them of their well-being after their father's death:

But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.

Nor did he ever break faith with his God. Dying, he reminded his brothers that God would bring their posterity out of Egypt, restoring them "to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob" (Genesis 50:24).

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United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand . . . For within the West, it is above all the English-speaking community that has over the centuries pioneered and then maintained the middle way between anarchy and despotism. (Robert Conquest, "Toward an English-Speaking Union," *The National Interest*, Fall 1999, p. 64.)

Simon Jenkins, writing in the op-ed section of the *Times* of London, November 19, 2003, recognizes this connection between America and Britain, at the same time stressing the differences between England and continental Europe. His comment is worth extended quotation:

The French economist, Michel Albert, was right when he drew the great capitalist divide not down the Atlantic but down the English Channel, between the "neo-Americans" and the "Rhine model." Though his divide was between the collectivist corporatism of Continental Europe and the individualism of Anglo-America, it was also cultural. Mr. Blair's ambition to be "the bridge between Europe and America" is absurd. He is an "American," leading a country which may not be a 51st state but which has always been part of a centuries-old confederacy. . . .

Britons still comprise the largest category of legal immigrants into America each year. There are 35,000 Americans living in London and 35,000 Britons living in New York. These two most dynamic world cities are Siamese twins. Their economies depend on the same industries of finance and leisure, rising and falling in unison and largely independent of their hinterlands. They are both global people-magnets. New York's greed is London's greed; London's art is New York's art.

I cannot turn on a radio station and not hear an

American voice. Britain and America enjoy a shared cadre of novelists, playwrights, architects and musicians. . . . Today's most dynamic art form, cinema, depends on a single transatlantic talent pool, as does most popular entertainment. . . . Continental Europe, rich though it is, might be on another planet.

James Bennett has coined the word *Anglosphere* to denote what he sees as a "civilizational network" of English-speaking nations, led primarily by the United States and Britain. He reports that a survey by the pro-EU organ, the *Economist*, "showed that more Britons felt represented by the American flag than by the EU one, and far more of them identified with the United States than Europe as Britain's most likely source of help ("Networking Nation-States: The Coming Info-National Order," *The National Interest*, Winter 2003/04, p. 17.)

Bennett believes that this network of English-speaking nations is far from declining, but is, contrariwise, "emerging." If this be true, the phenomenon should have readily visible implications for students of prophecy. For, unrecognized by Bennett, the Anglosphere is made up of the *Joseph* nations: Britain, America, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (with a few others). Historically, Joseph was betrayed by his jealous brothers; it was a family feud. It may be that the non-Joseph (and non-English speaking) *Israelite* nations of Europe, such as France (principally) and Belgium, will—repeating history—sell the English-speaking Israelite nations into slavery out of sheer jealousy. Many non-English speaking Israelite nations in continental Europe feel far closer to the EU than to their brothers Ephraim and Manasseh. Some, such as France and the Netherlands, are just plain hostile to America.

Watch for an increasingly acrimonious division between Israelite nations along the fault-line of *language*: English-speaking Israelite nations *contra* non-English-speaking ones. A divided Israel will not long stand!

Endnotes

¹ The French, once strong contenders for control of the continent, are now largely isolated to limited areas of Canada. There they still raise the jingoistic cry of separatism. The American President Thomas Jefferson bought out the French interests further south, in mid-continent, through the Louisiana Purchase of AD 1803.

² America pushed the Spanish out, not just from Texas, but even further westward—"to the ends of the earth"—from Manila!

³ The Russians held certain trading posts along the Pacific "coastland" as far south as central California (Fort Ross). These settlements were largely in support of Russia's fur-trading activities.

⁴ The Dutch colonized Manhattan in AD 1624, buying it from the natives there two years later and naming it New Amsterdam. The town administered a larger Dutch area called New Netherland. In 1664, Charles II of England issued a land grant to his brother, the Duke of York (later King James II). The grant included New Netherland. A fleet of English warships seized New Amsterdam that year; the settlement was renamed New York. The town was retaken by the Dutch in 1673, but a year later they ceded it back to the obviously ascendant England.

⁵ By one estimate, less than 5% of that original forest remains

standing, yet America is more heavily forested now than then.

⁶ One group of explorers took a route somewhat to the north of the one blazed by Lewis and Clark. These explorers actually crossed the continent by *canoe*, having to carry their conveyance only about 25 miles during the entire trip. Indeed, America was well-watered.

⁷ California gained the appellation "the Golden State" because of its wheat fields overspreading the San Joaquin and Sacramento Valleys, not because of its fabulous gold resources. It was California's wheat that fed the Union armies fighting the Civil War, and its cotton that clothed them!

⁸ Madrick, Jeffrey, *The End of Affluence: The Causes and Consequences of America's Economic Dilemma*, Random House, NY, p. 48.

⁹ *The American Challenge*, Scribner, 1968.

¹⁰ Bell, Coral, "American Ascendancy and the Pretence of Concert," *The National Interest*, Fall 1999, p. 55.

¹¹ See Genesis 50:22-26 for the story.

¹² See Genesis 34 for a fine example of cunning deception, ruthless murder, and rapacious greed on the part of Simeon and Levi in the affair of their sister Dinah with Hamor, a Hivite prince living in Canaan at that time.

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Likewise, Paul also says that we already have citizenship in the Kingdom of God:

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. (Philippians 3:20-21)

Our citizenship is where the Kingdom is at this time—in heaven. At Christ’s return, the firstfruits will be either resurrected or changed (see I Corinthians 15:51-53), and will rule with Christ in the Kingdom He has established on earth (Revelation 5:10). At that point, we will be in the Kingdom in its entirety.

The analogy of immigration—though not perfect—can help us understand certain elements of the Kingdom of God. We have already been given an application for citizenship in that Kingdom, something we could not request for ourselves (John 6:44), but the government of the Kingdom decides who will be its citizens and tightly controls the immigration process. Ultimately, all mankind will be given the opportunity to emigrate from Satan’s domain into the Kingdom of God, but at the start only 144,000 people will successfully complete the application process (Revelation 14:1-5). Unlike Europe, God has not thrown open the door, allowing anyone and everyone to enter at once. Unlike Europe, in God’s Kingdom harmony and order will exist precisely because all of the immigration applicants have left behind the culture and ways of their previous nation, having taken on God’s ways.

The Place of Law and Deeds

A hotly contested point within Christianity is what part God’s law plays in the life of one who has been justified by Christ’s sacrifice. The immigration analogy helps here as well. The function of law within a nation is not to grant citizenship, but to guide the behavior of the citizens and define what is acceptable conduct to ensure peace and order. If an American were to travel to Canada and abide by every one of its laws, doing so would not make him a Canadian citizen, for that is not the purpose of Canadian law. Canada’s government must still grant the right of citizenship. Nevertheless, abiding by Canadian law would help to ensure that he would get along with Canada’s citizens and that he would not merit punishment under its system of justice.

Likewise, keeping the laws of the Kingdom of God will not guarantee full entrance, as that is not the purpose of God’s law. God’s law provides a guide for conduct and a definition of acceptable behavior toward the goal of living eternally. It is the way that the citizens of His Kingdom should conduct themselves so that same quality of life is possible for everyone.

With human governments, a person does not immi-

grate based on his good deeds. Immigration officials do not care if he does community service, is kind to his neighbors, or donates to charities. The decision—or not—to grant admission into the nation is entirely the prerogative of the government officials.

Similarly, “immigration” into God’s Kingdom is not granted based on works. We cannot buy our way in or convince God that He should let us into His Kingdom because of what good people we are. The decision of who receives an application and who is granted citizenship is entirely His.

Certain actions and behaviors, however, will result in a person being refused entry into a country or being expelled if he has already immigrated. In the Netherlands, politicians are proposing that any person with ties to radical Islam be deported, *even if he is already a citizen*. Lacking ties to radical Islam will not guarantee that an immigrant can enter the country, but having those ties will ensure his swift expulsion.

There is a parallel with God’s Kingdom in this too:

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you . . . that those who practice such things *will not inherit the kingdom of God*. (Galatians 5:19-21)

I Corinthians 6:9-10 includes homosexuals (catamites), sodomites, thieves, coveters, and extortionists in the list of those who will be barred from entering the Kingdom of God. Revelation 21:8 mentions that the cowardly, the unbelieving, and the abominable will not live eternally. Revelation 22:15 adds “whoever loves and practices a lie.” Yet, even though these verses list specific sins, they just scratch the surface of defining acceptance or rejection with regard to the Kingdom of God.

No Parallel Cultures

Notice that this list of disqualifiers does not correspond with any one list given in the Old Testament. Some of the Ten Commandments occur here, but not others. Of the four dealing directly with our relationship with God, only the first is given. Does this mean the second, third, and fourth commandments are irrelevant? Certainly not!

Consider also that drunkenness is listed in two different places in the New Testament as behavior that will keep us from the Kingdom (Galatians 5:21; I Corinthians 6:10). Yet, even though there are numerous references to the abuse of alcohol within the Old Testament, within the Old *Covenant* itself it barely gets a mention. On the other hand, the Sabbath and holy days get tremendous coverage within the Old *Covenant*, yet these “sin lists” in the New Testament do not say that breaking the Sabbath will keep us from

the Kingdom. Why are some sins listed and not others?

Again, what is happening in Europe provides an example. German politicians especially are warning about “parallel societies,” “parallel cultures,” and “lawless areas.” They recognize that if two diametrically opposed cultures exist within a state, the only possible outcome will be strife and violence. Yet, they are having difficulty defining exactly what German (or European) culture is and what it is not because of the risk of offending cultures they have insisted are equal. Their definition is hazy, and confusion has resulted.

By contrast, God has already defined His culture for us. He did not see fit to make a checklist of all the things we must avoid to enter His Kingdom, though He has listed a few specifics in verses like these. A broader view shows that He desires citizens in the Kingdom who are already conformed to *His* culture, *His* way of doing things. He is seeking heirs in *His image*—not merely immigrants who have agreed not to, say, dabble in witchcraft, cheat on their wives, or

kill anyone. His culture is defined throughout the Bible, which is why Jesus says, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every word* that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4, see Deuteronomy 8:3).

God will not allow a parallel culture to develop or exist in His Kingdom. He will not allow “lawless areas.” The “strength through diversity” movement is destined to fail because a kingdom “divided against itself will not stand” (Matthew 12:25). As heirs of God’s eternal Kingdom, our duty is to examine our lives and determine whether our culture—that is, our way of thinking, living, and behaving, which defines us and underlies our achievements—is compatible with what God has revealed in His Word (II Corinthians 13:5), or whether our culture has the potential to create a “parallel society” in the Kingdom of God. If what we would bring with us into the Kingdom does not fit God’s culture, He will not grant us entrance and risk the disaster that Europe currently faces.

—David C. Grabbe

P E R S O N A L ➤

Pentecost, Consistency and Honesty

(continued from page 13)

5. Deuteronomy 12 forbids offerings until the Tabernacle, altar, laver, and all the Tabernacle’s furniture were in place.

6. Deuteronomy 12 requires the Israelites to be settled in their inheritances and no longer involved in warfare before any sacrifices could be lawfully made.

The Test Commandment

When the ministry received the doctrinal research papers regarding the Pentecost change in 1974, the subject of this article was left unresolved. Dr. Charles Dorothy, who authored those papers, made this comment in regard to this unresolved issue. “This may be a supreme test for the entire Church of God at the end time.” A decision was hastily made and announced by letter a few weeks later. However, the letter had no new information from what appeared in the research papers. A wrong decision was made without adequate biblical information and without adequate understanding of some ceremonial laws. At its base, it is an issue of the Sabbath and its proper use.

The Sabbath has been called the test commandment with good reason (Exodus 16:4). God Himself states in Exodus 31:13 that it is a sign between Him and us. A sign gives direction and guidance. On the one hand, it designates the relationship between the Eternal God and His people. But in the case of the subject of this article, God uses it to point the way to the observance of Pentecost, another Sabbath, on the correct day. It is the position of the weekly Sabbath within the Days of Unleavened Bread that is the consistent sign pointing to when Wavesheaf Day should be observed and the count to Pentecost begun.

Scripture gives no authority to change the method of counting to Pentecost when Passover falls on a Monday, Wednesday, or Friday to a different one when it occurs on

a weekly Sabbath. Counting to Pentecost should always begin with the day after the weekly Sabbath within the Days of Unleavened Bread. It is the weekly Sabbath, not Wavesheaf Day, that must fall within the Days of Unleavened Bread.

The other way puts Wavesheaf Day and its ceremonies on a Sabbath. No one has ever found a record of anybody ever doing such a thing until the Worldwide Church of God began using that method in 1974. Wavesheaf Day was always a common workday. It represents the beginning of a harvest, and harvesting is hard work. The Sabbath is a day of rest.

Finally, it is not an unholy act to begin to count to Pentecost outside the Days of Unleavened Bread. This occurs simply because one is following God’s instruction and the patterns of the Hebrew Calendar. The same rules that establish that Passover can fall only on four different days also stipulate that Wavesheaf Day occurs outside the Days of Unleavened Bread on occasion. Let us honor God’s Sabbath by using the right one to establish Wavesheaf Day and thus Pentecost, another Sabbath, every year.

In Christian love,



“. . . and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised . . .”

(continued from page 11)

This article will answer the last two of these questions.

Two Main Types

The Bible reveals that, although the scriptures describe three great resurrections in addition to Jesus’ resurrection, there are really only *two main types* of resurrection. Although only a few have witnessed it so far, the type we are most familiar with is the resurrection to immortal, spiritual life. This is the type of resurrection Jesus Christ experienced, and the one Christians look forward to experiencing. We commonly call it the “First Resurrection.”

However, the Bible also has much to say about another type of resurrection—that to mortal, physical, temporary life, the same as the life humans enjoy or endure now. The Bible actually describes this physical resurrection in more detail than the process of resurrection to immortal, spiritual life. For example:

So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them. Then He said to me, “Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.”’” So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army. Then He said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel.” (Ezekiel 37:7-11)

This exciting scripture is just one

scene from the event that we talk a lot about on the Last Great Day of the Feast. We call it the “Second Resurrection,” and it describes the time when all of those billions, small and great, who never had an opportunity for salvation will be physically reconstructed (as only God knows how) to live again—to live a physical life, yes—but one with a difference: the opportunity for, and the great probability of, salvation and eternal, spiritual life.

Numerous Physical Resurrections

Physical resurrection is not exclusively restricted to the time of the future Second Resurrection. In fact, there are an astounding number of biblical cases of miraculous resurrections to physical life. For example:

- God used Elijah to resurrect the son of the widow of Zarephath:

Now it happened after these things that the son of the woman who owned the house became sick. And his sickness was so serious that there was no breath left in him. So she said to Elijah, “What have I to do with you, O man of God? Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to kill my son?” . . . And he stretched himself out on the child three times, and cried out to the LORD and said, “O LORD my God, I pray, let this child’s soul come back to him.” Then the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived. (I Kings 17:17-18, 21-22)

- Similarly, God used Elisha to raise a Shunammite boy:

When Elisha came into the house, there was the child, lying dead on his bed. He went in therefore, shut the door behind

the two of them, and prayed to the LORD. And he went up and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands; and he stretched himself out on the child, and the flesh of the child became warm. He returned and walked back and forth in the house, and again went up and stretched himself out on him; then the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. (II Kings 4:32-35)

- Jesus Himself raised Jairus’ daughter:

While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue’s house who said, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?” As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, “Do not be afraid; only believe.” . . . Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, . . . He said to them, “Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping.” And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all out, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying. Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, “Talitha, cumi,” which is translated, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.” Immediately the girl arose and walked. . . . (Mark 5:35-36, 38-42)

- Jesus also raised the son of the widow of Nain:

And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. . . . When the

Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, “Do not weep.” Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, “Young man, I say to you, arise.” So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother. (Luke 7:12-15)

- There is, of course, the well-known account of the raising of Lazarus:

Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me.” Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth!” And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. (John 11:41-44)

- God worked through the apostle Paul to resurrect a lad named Eutychus:

And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing him said, “Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him.” . . . And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted. (Acts 20:9-10, 12)

- The apostle Peter raised a church member by the name of Tabitha:

At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. . . . When [Peter] had come, they brought him to the upper room . . . and [he] knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, “Tabitha, arise.” And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive. (Acts 9:36-37, 39-41)

- Jesus commanded His disciples to raise the dead when He sent them out:

These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: . . . “And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, *raise the dead*, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.” (Matthew 10:5-8)

- When John the Baptist sought confirmation that Jesus was the Messiah, the raising of the dead was part of Jesus’ response:

Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; *the dead are raised up* and the poor have the gospel preached to them.” (Matthew 11:4-5)

So, even though the saints’ resurrection in AD 31 is the only recorded instance of a *multiple* physical resurrection, it certainly was not unique.

Many others had taken place before it, and a few more took place after it.

A Physical Resurrection

Matthew 27:52 specifically states that the *bodies* of these saints were resurrected: “And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised.” Notice that Matthew does not describe them as having any outstanding or remarkable appearance, as the spirit bodies of Jesus and various others are highlighted as having:

- Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever. (Daniel 12:3)

- Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. (Matthew 13:43)

- [Jesus] was transfigured before them. His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. (Mark 9:2-3; see also Matthew 17:1-2)

- . . . and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, . . . and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. (Revelation 1:13-16)

Moreover, when these resurrected saints of AD 31 went into Jerusalem, they did not restrict their appearance to a comparative few as Jesus did after His spiritual resurrection. Rather, “they appeared to many.”

“. . . and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised . . .”

Like Lazarus, and all the others who had been brought up in physical resurrections, these saints lived for a while longer—no one knows for how long—served the purpose for which they were raised, and then died once again. There is no record of them living eternally after this resurrection.

Only One Raised to Eternal Life

The members of God’s church are His “firstfruits” (see James 1:18; Revelation 14:4), but Jesus Christ is the *first* of those firstfruits—His resurrection and initial ascension to His Father being represented by the Wavesheaf Offering (see Leviticus 23:9-14).

As is pictured by the Feast of Trumpets, the resurrection of the saints—all of them—comes later, at Christ’s return. Notice that a five-and-a-half month period separates the Wavesheaf Offering from the Feast of Trumpets. This period represents the time (we believe about two thousand years) between Jesus’ resurrection and the resurrection of the saints. The Bible makes no exceptions. This sequence is mentioned in I Thessalonians 4:14-17, but is more effectively explained in I Corinthians 15:20-23, 50-53:

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. . . . Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 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. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

Like all of their brothers and sisters from throughout the ages, these saints written of in Matthew 27 need to be resurrected and changed to spirit in order to be part of the Kingdom of God. As we have just read, there is a set time for this spiritual resurrection: “at His coming.” No exceptions!

To What Purpose?

Finally, we should not leave this subject without looking into the reason for this special, multiple, physical

resurrection of saints. Even though its purpose may not be formally stated in Scripture, it was *not* just some strange, inexplicable, supernatural happening.

By comparing this account with accounts of other physical resurrections in the Old and New Testaments, we can see that this was a powerful sign and witness to those living in the areas of Jerusalem and Judea of AD 31 that:

- Jesus is the Son of God (Matthew 27:54), despite the Jews’ rejection of Him.
- Vital events were taking place at that juncture.
- A vast change was being made in the nature and irreversibility of death.

We do not yet know the answers to all of the questions we might come up with about this event. However, we do know that those saints are once again dead—peacefully sleeping, unconsciously waiting for the sounding of the seventh trumpet when Jesus Christ returns.

Dateline: Jerusalem AD 20??

Whatever the actual date may be, let us look forward to meeting those saints there and then!

—John Plunkett

(continued from page 16)

The two sons of Joseph received the birthright blessings because their father was separate, ethically and morally, from his perfidious, scheming brothers. His brothers exhibited few scruples concerning killing Joseph, forswearing murder only when they saw the opportunity to profit from selling him into slavery. Compounding their despicable and abject turpitude, they darkened their father’s days by sustaining the ruse of Joseph’s death for more than a decade.¹²

What a paradox! Ephraim and Manasseh have used the wealth and influence God gave them because of Joseph’s

faithfulness to *push* on Gentile nations a way of life totally contrary to God’s way. Rather than separating from the ways of this world, as their father Joseph did, modern-day Ephraim and Manasseh push globalism, another term for the Babylonian system of “get,” on the whole world. Sifted among the nations, Joseph subverts those around him rather than serving as an example of godliness to the Gentiles.

Next month, we will conclude this series by addressing the question, “Why do modern-day Israelites not know who they are?”

—Charles Whitaker

Franco-German Divergence

For the last fifty years, the Franco-German partnership has been the bedrock of European power. According to Strategic Forecasting (Stratfor), however, German and French interests may begin to diverge (“Geopolitical Diary,” February 24, 2005).

Since WWII, the United States and Germany have been allies largely because 1) the United States occupied Germany (and still has a strong military presence there), and 2) the perception of a greater threat to the east: Russia. But times are changing. Not only does Berlin view Russia as essentially non-hostile, but German politicians—Gerhard Schröder, most notably—see a Russian partnership as necessary to Germany’s political and economic future. Russia already supplies the majority of Germany’s energy needs, and Germany has proved to be a stable trading partner whose government is not overly concerned with Russia’s internal affairs (i.e., human rights, rule of law, democracy, freedom of the press).

Yet, no one else in Europe is as enamored with Russia—including France. France is geographically boxed in by Spain to the south, Britain to the north, and Germany and Italy to the east. Any number of coalitions can hold her in check. Her neighbors have an interest in keeping her so, and Paris has responded by trying to build associations—political, economic, and military—with other major international players. But France has little need for Russia. As Stratfor puts it, “It is too far away to be militarily useful, too poor to be a good market, and French policy has for decades sought as much independence in energy matters as possible”—France having invested more in civilian nuclear power than any other European nation.

Because of France’s situation, its geopolitical strategy revolves around reducing the powers of other players (thus raising its relative status) while simultaneously maintaining its options for advancement. Stratfor observes, “This is what drove France to support American independence in the 18th century, to first guarantee and then abandon Czechoslovakia in the run-up to WWII, to join the Israelis in an attack on Egypt, to flirt with the Soviets, the Iraqis, the Chinese and anyone else who might not be fond of the Americans.” This is part of the reason France opposed the invasion of Iraq—she had her own political and economic interests in the region, specifically in Iraq—and why she has been a main proponent of the European Union (EU): It keeps most of Europe bound together, with France as a dominant player.

But Germany, the other major force on the Continent, lacks these options. It stands at the heart of a region that it cannot command financially or politically, let alone militarily, and as such, needs alliances to ensure its relevance. A Russo-German partnership looks increasingly attractive. As Stratfor notes, “Schröder’s rise to power meant an end to a Germany that walked around saying ‘sorry’ and nodding to

everything that Paris said. Germany has its own foreign policy now, and its interests are diverging from those of France.”

Even as France’s and Germany’s interests diverge, recent events in the Russian sphere of influence may set the stage for Russia to be further interested in partnering with Germany. Lately, the relatively Kremlin-friendly leaders of Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine have been replaced with leaders who are pro-Western. In particular, the so-called “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine—where pro-Europe (and pro-NATO) Viktor Yushchenko ousted pro-Moscow Viktor Yanukovich—could have devastating consequences for Russia. Yushchenko has already indicated his interest in bringing Ukraine into the NATO fold. This is significant because Ukraine hosts Russia’s only warm, deepwater naval base, as well as the preponderance of Russia’s major infrastructure connections—especially energy—to the outside world. Moreover, if Ukraine eventually joins NATO or the EU (another possibility), it puts a potential Russian enemy less than 300 miles from Moscow—an easy drive for an armored division. In short, Ukraine’s turn to the West makes Russia essentially indefensible by conventional warfare standards.

Russia is somewhere between being hedged in and being backed into a corner. War is not about to break out, but, Stratfor warns, in geopolitics *capabilities* matter far more than *intentions*, for intentions can change rapidly. Russia recognizes that the West stands in a threatening position, and she needs alliances to keep matters in check. Partnering with Berlin is a good option for Russia, too.

Of course, the full effects of a Franco-German divergence are uncertain, but it is no coincidence that the CIA has predicted the potential collapse of the EU within 15 years, based in part on what France decides:

One view has been that since the EU is a primarily French creation—an attempt to preserve French power in Europe and to enhance France economically—its fate will depend on France. In crises, the French either [will write] a new constitution or violently [dismantle] the state [the EU]. This suggests that Europe may end in an explosive collapse. (National Intelligence Council Europe Workshop, April 28-29, 2004).

This much is certain: The EU is far from united. The member states are bound up in red tape from Brussels, their economies are stagnating from the federalist bureaucracy, and they have no single voice for foreign affairs. For any sort of strength to arise in Europe—political, economic, or military—the old institutions will have to fall. A Franco-German divergence could be the beginning of such a reorganization. ■

NEWS AND TRENDS
Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man is coming. (Matthew 25:13)

BIBLE STUDY: *THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD*

Part Two

In Part One of this two-part study of the Parable of the Good Shepherd, we briefly analyzed the good, great, ruling, and ownership characteristics of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd. The theme of the parable is that Jesus is the sovereign Shepherd, benefactor, and ruler of His sheep. He not only has the inherent traits of supremacy and superiority, but He also possesses a knowledgeable and intimate relationship with His sheep.

This month, we will look deeper into the personal relationship that exists between the Good Shepherd and His sheep. Jesus Himself says, “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13). In physical life and death, Jesus loved His sheep; and now in His glory, He continues to love His sheep, which is shown in His kind and providential leadership of His church.



1. Why is it important for a good shepherd to *know* his sheep? John 10:14, 27.

COMMENT: Jesus says, “I know My sheep, and am known by My own.” Both the Shepherd and the sheep are aware of this, and it enables the Shepherd to lead His sheep in the best possible way, helping them to learn what He teaches and to do what He commands. Being known by and knowing the Shepherd implies that, not only do they know His voice, but they have an intimate understanding of the way He thinks and are inclined to reflect His way of doing things. Their imitation of the Shepherd becomes automatic because the sheep anticipate his will. They become one with the Shepherd, as the Shepherd is one with the Father (John 10:15, 30). Just as full knowledge exists between the Father and the Son, the Shepherd has a complete knowledge of each of His sheep.

2. Why is it essential for a good shepherd to *lead* his sheep? John 10:3.

COMMENT: Unlike other animals, sheep rarely find their own way safely. Since sheep go astray, their guidance and safety lies in the Shepherd’s leadership (Psalm 23:1-2). A thief, a robber, or a stranger may call the sheep by name and try to imitate their Shepherd’s voice, but through long usage and intimacy, they can discern a strange voice and become alarmed. We know the Shepherd’s voice because the Holy Spirit gives us discernment; the result is that we turn and flee from any unfamiliar, misleading voice.

Often the unfamiliar voice is a religious-sounding one. Just as the Pharisees’ voices confused and misled Jews, so do many religious leaders’ voices today. Since the truth is not in them (I John 1:8; 2:4), they lead foolish sheep away from the truth. It is vital for us to seek to live according to the Good Shepherd’s will, known from His voice. His positive guidance leads us “in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake” (Psalm 23:3).

3. Why is it necessary for the Good Shepherd to be willing to *give His life for* His sheep? John 10:15, 17-18.

COMMENT: Jesus says several times, “I lay down My life for the sheep,” or “I lay it down.” It is significant that of His own will, He gave Himself up to die. The Romans did not take it from Him—He gave it voluntarily for His sheep

(verse 11). He made it clear that Pilate was not condemning Him, but that He was accepting death (John 19:10-11). Jesus lived His life as an act of obedience to God, His Father. Moreover, when He died He became the propitiation (expiatory or atoning sacrifice) for the whole world, not just for our sins (I John 2:2). God’s graciousness is justified by the sacrifice of the Shepherd.

In the Old Testament, the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies was symbolic of God’s throne, where He sat in judgment (Hebrews 9:5). When the Good Shepherd gave His life in bloody sacrifice for sinners once for all (verses 12, 24-28), the Mercy Seat became a “throne of grace” (Hebrews 4:16). It was God’s will that Jesus’ sacrifice apply to all sinners for all time, but Jesus’ phrase “My sheep” in this parable refers only to His followers—the saints, the members of His flock—highlighting His special, intimate relationship with them.

4. How does the Good Shepherd *give life to* His sheep? John 10:28-29.

COMMENT: God the Father, who raised Jesus from the dead, dwells in each member of His church through His Holy Spirit, and by it He will also give eternal life to them (Romans 8:11). Therefore, the life given to the sheep is the same Spirit that dwells in the Father, in the Shepherd, and in the sheep. Because the Shepherd gave His life for the sheep, sacrificing all, He is able to give abundant, eternal life to them by removing the obstacle of death, the penalty for sin, by the resurrection from the dead.

No one can steal His sheep from Him because they are, in effect, in the palm of His hand (I Peter 5:6; Revelation 1:17). Nothing could be safer or more secure. The Shepherd and His Father are one, and Their grip is tightly on Their church so that even “the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18).

Thus, with a large number of sheep, the true Shepherd may shelter them in many pens, but they are still all His sheep and all one flock. The flock does not create this unity, but because the nature of the sheep is in harmony with their Shepherd, and because their relationship to Him is intimate, they recognize and obey His voice: “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me” (John 10:27).