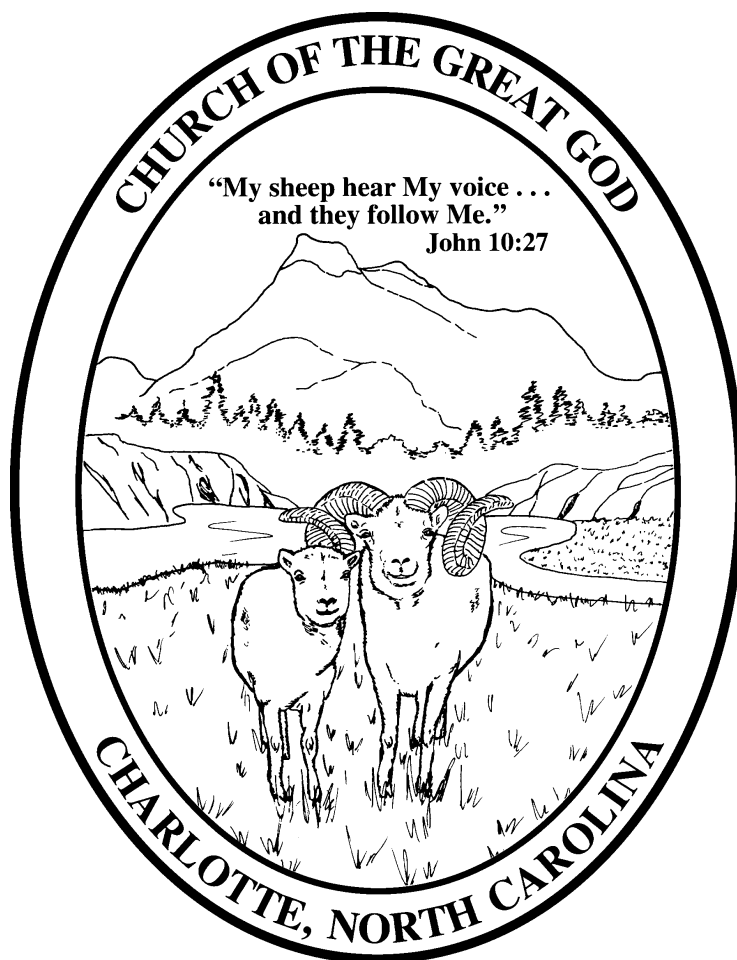




Forerunner
Bible Study Series

The Holy Days of God

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The Holy Days of God

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Introduction

In the past half century, the church of God has had a productive history of using the question-and-answer format in its Bible study materials. Not only does this method spur our curiosity about biblical teachings, but it also **MAKES US** dig into God's Word to find the answers to the great—and the mundane—questions of life. We are pleased to continue this tradition in the *Forerunner Bible Study Series*.

These concise lessons, though primarily basic material, can be helpful to both beginners and veterans of Christianity. Beginners can learn the fundamentals of doctrine, prophecy, and Christian living, while old-timers can quickly refresh their knowledge of these things. They can be a valuable resource.

The Bible studies will be more profitable if

you set aside a convenient block of undisturbed time in which to concentrate on them. Read the questions carefully, looking up—and even writing down—the verses that provide God's answers. You may wish to keep a notebook just for this purpose so your work will be accessible anytime you need to refer to it.

And do not forget the other tools of successful Bible study: prayer and meditation. Ask for God's help to open your mind to understand His teaching, and as He reveals it to you, think deeply about its meaning to you, your family, the nation, and to all mankind. This will help it become a vital part of you in your walk toward God's Kingdom.

We hope these studies of God's Word profit you and enlighten your life!

God's Master Plan

Like any good builder, God has a plan. When a contractor has even a small job—like remodeling a bathroom or adding a bedroom—his company consults an architect or an experienced draftsman to draw up blueprints for the project. He also arranges a schedule for the various subcontractors and inspectors so that no step in the process is left out. With all this careful planning and the cooperation of all the parties involved, the project can be successful.

1. Does God have a plan for His creation? Isaiah 46:9-11.

COMMENT: God says, “My counsel shall stand!” He has a great master plan that He is working out on the earth, and it will come to pass because He is Almighty God.

2. Does God plan and create wisely? Psalm 104:24; Proverbs 3:19; Romans 8:28.

COMMENT: We have a great God who does nothing capriciously. He has determined that His plan, more than any other, will produce the most good when it is completed.

3. What is His main objective? Genesis 1:26-27.

COMMENT: Here in the Bible’s first chapter, God states His goal: He is making man in His own image! By using both “image” and “likeness,” God explains that He has created man to be just like Him! Man does not only look like God, but he also has a spiritual ability to understand God’s nature and learn to conform to it. Through the experiences of life and the process of building godly character, humankind can put on the image of God and be resurrected into His Family (I Corinthians 15:49-53).

4. Has God set time limits to His plan? Matthew 24:3, 14; 28:19-20.

COMMENT: God’s plan has a beginning and an end. He has set certain boundaries and limits during which His creative work of glorifying many sons and daughters will be done. In these particular verses, Jesus speaks of “the end of the age,” that is, this present system of man’s rule over earth will end when Jesus returns to set up His Kingdom.

5. In comparison to our concept, what is time to God? Psalm 90:4; II Peter 3:8.

COMMENT: Isaiah says that God “inhabits eternity” (Isaiah 57:15), so time to God takes on different dimensions. He can function outside of time if He so desires. These verses, however, give us a rough guide that a thousand years equal one day in God’s prophetic revelation to man.

6. Does Christ’s rule, called “God’s rest” in Hebrews, last a thousand years? Hebrews 4:1-10; Revelation 20:4.

COMMENT: Hebrews 4 shows a connection between God’s rest on the Sabbath day during the creation week and the thousand-year reign of Christ, commonly called the “Millennium.” It is logical to conclude that the other six days of Creation typify 6,000 years of man’s government on earth.

We would be making a terrible mistake if we thought that God had waded into His work without a plan! God’s plan, of course, is far grander and more involved than a construction job—and also incredibly more important. Though God is Creator, the physical creation is just the environment for His most important work, creating a Family to share it with for all eternity! We find the blueprint for this wonderful, ongoing creation in the pages of the Bible.

Thus, God has a 7,000-year plan to bring humanity into His Family, and we find ourselves near the end of man’s allotted 6,000 years.

7. What has occurred in God’s plan already?

COMMENT: The following list gives the highlights of completed steps in God’s master plan:

- God made the earth fit for human life (Genesis 1:2-25).
- He made man and instructed him in His way (Genesis 2:1-3, 16-17).
- He called Abraham, with whom He made a covenant and gave promises (Genesis 12:1-3; 17:1-22; 22:15-18).
- He freed Israel from slavery in Egypt and made the Old Covenant with them to preserve His law until the coming of Christ (Exodus 12:31-42; 20-24; Galatians 3:19-25).
- He sent His Son Jesus Christ to live perfectly, die as man’s Savior and be resurrected as High Priest and Firstborn among many brethren (Colossians 1:12-20; I Timothy 2:5-6; Hebrews 4:15; Romans 8:29).
- He sent His Spirit and founded His church to preach the gospel to those He calls (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2).
- He proposed a New Covenant to offer salvation to the Gentiles (Hebrews 8:6-13; Galatians 3:26-29).

8. What has yet to occur in God’s plan?

COMMENT: Some of the coming events in God’s plan:

- Christ will return as King of kings, defeat man’s Satanic rebellion and set up His Kingdom (Revelation 19).
- The saints will be changed to spirit and reign with Christ a thousand years (I Corinthians 15; Revelation 20:4).
- Satan will be bound throughout the Millennium (Revelation 20:1-3).
- All who ever lived will be resurrected to physical life and have a chance to accept God’s way and live forever. Those who reject salvation will be cast into the Lake of Fire (Isaiah 65:20-25; Ezekiel 37; Revelation 20:11-15).
- God the Father will rule the whole universe from earth, and His Family will live and work with Him throughout eternity (Isaiah 65:17-19; Revelation 21-22).

What an exciting, glorious future God has in store for us!

God's Plan in the Holy Days

We have seen that God has a master plan to recreate himself through human beings. Further, He has limited His plan to a 7,000-year process. If we overlay that blueprint with a more detailed one, we will see more of the process He is using to accomplish His purpose. As individual boards must be placed in a certain order to build a house, God's plan for a spiritual house is revealed: In a deliberate, planned order, each of His holy days highlights a specific step in His work to "build" children in His image.

Leviticus 23, where God lists the festivals and holy days that He gives His people, summarizes His more detailed plan. The weekly Sabbath is the first holy day God commands us to keep, reminding us of His purpose (verses 1-3). The rest of the chapter describes the individual holy days we are to keep "in their seasons" each year. God has us do this so that we never forget His plan for mankind and that we will pass it from generation to generation as our children ask, "Why do we do this?" (Exodus 12:25-27).

1. How do we know the holy days show the whole plan of God and not just remind the Israelites of how God freed them from Egypt? Matthew 26:17-29; I Corinthians 5:2-8; Acts 2:1-17; I Corinthians 15:23-58; Acts 27:9; John 7:37.

COMMENT: Not only did Jesus and His disciples keep the Old Testament holy days—even after Christ returned to His Father—but also new meanings were given to them. Jesus clearly changed the symbols of Passover from a sacrificial lamb to the bread and wine representing His body and blood given for our forgiveness. Paul shows in I Corinthians 5 that unleavened bread represents sin in our lives. These passages begin to reveal the plan of God, beginning with repentance and forgiveness and concluding with the resurrection of the dead as members of His Family.

2. In the process of changing mankind to God, does God proceed in a particular order? I Corinthians 14:40; 15:23; Revelation 20:4-6, 12-15.

COMMENT: God is not haphazard; He is a God of order. Christ deals with four distinct groups of people, to whom He offers salvation and/or resurrects at different times:

1. The living or dead who have accepted God's covenant.
2. The living who have not accepted His covenant.
3. The dead who did not know God.
4. The living or dead who have known and rejected Him.

These four categories cover every person ever born!

3. Who is very first in the plan of salvation? Romans 8:29; I Corinthians 15:23; John 3:13-15.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ opened the way for salvation by coming to this earth to live a perfect life and die for our sins. This is the primary meaning of the Passover. He is the first and only (at this point) to ascend to the Father, but is just the firstborn among many brethren.

4. What group does Christ work with first? Acts 2:1-4, 38-39; Hebrews 12:23; James 1:18.

COMMENT: After accepting Christ's sacrifice, Christians must come out of the world and conquer their sinful natures. This is the meaning of the days of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 12:15-20; I Corinthians 5:7-8). Pentecost, the next holy day, reminds us of God's founding of the church and giving it His Holy Spirit. That church, with

the patriarchs (Hebrews 11:13-16, 39-40; Revelation 6:9-11) and others who qualified before their deaths, God calls His "firstfruits," His early harvest of children.

5. When do the firstfruits receive their reward in His Kingdom? I Corinthians 15:49-57; I Thessalonians 4:16-17; Revelation 10:7; 20:4-6.

COMMENT: The Feast of Trumpets follows Pentecost. When Christ returns at the last trumpet, He will gather His elect, living and dead. Changed to spirit, they will enter God's Kingdom and rule with Christ a thousand years.

6. Who comprises the second group? Matthew 24:21-22; Ezekiel 5; Isaiah 43:5-6; 66:18; Jeremiah 31:10-12, 31-34.

COMMENT: Just before Christ returns, the disasters of the end time will kill most people on earth, and afterwards, He will gather those left of all nations. A thousand years of peace and prosperity will follow, during which those who live into the Millennium, along with any children born during it, will be able to be saved. The Feast of Tabernacles, in the fall or late harvest, represents this time.

7. Who makes up the third group? Revelation 20:5, 7-12; Ezekiel 37-38; Luke 11:31-32.

COMMENT: The only people left who have not had a chance for salvation will be resurrected to physical life at this time. This includes everyone, small and great—babies, adults, the elderly—anyone who died in ignorance of God's way. The Last Great Day of the Feast foreshadows this Great White Throne Judgment (John 7:37). This judgment may last a hundred years (Isaiah 65:20), during which these people can learn and accept God's way of life.

8. At this point, everyone from Adam on will have had an opportunity for salvation. Christ has to deal with only one more group. Who are they? What happens to them? Hebrews 10:26-27; Revelation 20:13-15.

COMMENT: In His Kingdom God does not want people who refuse to live in peace, harmony and love. Those who rejected salvation will be resurrected for a final judgment and burned in an all-consuming fire (II Peter 3:10-12). The wicked will die forever. No feast day pictures this sorrowful event; it will pass and be remembered no more (Psalm 34:16). God gives us His feast days that we might remember His plan and qualify for a *better* resurrection than the wicked (Hebrews 11:35).

Passover

God reveals His plan of salvation for mankind in His commanded holy days. The first step in that plan is shown in the observance of the Passover. The world around us is filled with sin and evil of every kind, and it has been that way since Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. For God to fulfill His plan of reproducing Himself, He had to provide a way to redeem man from his sinful condition and implement a means of forgiveness.

God is holy and will not tolerate sin in any form. Because He will not allow sinful people into His Kingdom, humans must be "justified." By this, God forgives a person's sins, brings him into a right relationship with Himself, and imputes Christ's righteousness to him. Only after being forgiven can people take the additional steps of character development and overcoming to qualify to enter the Kingdom of God. Our annual keeping of the Passover reminds us of this initial step in fulfilling the plan of God.

1. When God called the children of Israel out of Egypt, did He need to show them when the year began? Exodus 12:1-2.

COMMENT: During their long sojourn in Egypt, the Israelites lost track of time. God had to show them when His year began so that they could begin observing His holy days. Israel's calling out of Egypt symbolizes God calling us out of this evil world.

2. Is Passover one of God's festivals? Leviticus 23:4-5.

COMMENT: Passover is a feast of *the LORD*, not of the Jews!

3. How was Israel to keep the Passover? Exodus 12:3-11.

COMMENT: God told each Israelite family to choose an unblemished lamb on the 10th day of Abib. On the 14th day at twilight (just after sundown as the 14th began), they killed the lamb, putting its blood on the doorpost and lintel of their homes. Then they roasted and ate the lamb.

4. Why did they put the blood on their doorposts and lintels? Exodus 12:12-13.

COMMENT: The blood was a sign to the death angel to "pass over" their homes when it went through Egypt. Thus, Israel's firstborn were saved, while Egypt's firstborn died.

5. What did killing the lamb and putting its blood around the door represent? Isaiah 53:7; John 1:29; Acts 8:32; Revelation 7:14; I Peter 1:18-19.

COMMENT: These yearly rituals represented the death of Jesus Christ, God in the flesh. The innocent lamb had to be without blemish because it represented the only Man who ever lived a perfect, sinless life. Jesus was the Lamb of God, who gave His life and shed His blood so that we may be saved from eternal death by paying the penalty for our sins. Through faith in His sacrifice, we receive forgiveness of sin and come into a right relationship with God. Because His life was worth more than all human life combined, His sacrifice paid the price for all sin. He redeemed us from the penalty that God's law imposes and freed us to live righteously.

6. Was Jesus crucified on Passover? John 18:39; 19:13-18.

COMMENT: Our Savior was crucified in the early afternoon of Passover day. This further confirms He was the One who was to give His life as a ransom for many. Even to the very day, He completely fulfilled the symbolism of the lamb.

7. Did Jesus observe the Passover during His life on earth? Luke 2:40-42; John 2:13, 23.

COMMENT: Jesus kept the Passover because God had commanded it. In this, He set us a perfect example, showing us that we should observe this festival too.

8. Are New Testament Christians commanded to keep the Passover? I Corinthians 5:7-8.

COMMENT: Paul instructs the Corinthian Christians to observe the Passover as a memorial of Christ's death, our Passover.

9. What did Jesus teach is the first step in observing the New Testament Passover? John 13:1-5, 14-15.

COMMENT: While His disciples ate the Passover meal, Jesus washed the disciples' feet. Considered a lowly responsibility in that culture, footwashing was performed by servants when visitors entered a house. By performing this act of humility, Jesus shows us how we should serve each other. He commands Christians to follow His example.

10. What else did Jesus teach His disciples to do in keeping the Passover? Matthew 26:26-29; Luke 22:19-20.

COMMENT: Jesus told His disciples to partake of unleavened bread and wine during the Passover service. Through this command, He charged His followers to observe it as a memorial of His death for all time. Since Christ's death completely fulfilled the symbolism of killing a lamb, we no longer need to slaughter a lamb in keeping the Passover.

11. Must all converted Christians observe the New Testament Passover every year? John 6:48, 51-54.

COMMENT: Unless we eat His flesh (represented by the unleavened bread) and drink His blood (symbolized by the wine), we have no life in us and will not inherit eternal life! How vital it is for us to keep the Passover every year!

12. Did the New Testament church of God continue to keep the Passover yearly? Acts 12:4.

COMMENT: Some translations grossly mistranslate the Greek word *pascha* as "Easter." It always means "Passover."

13. Did the apostles teach the Gentiles to observe the Passover? I Corinthians 11:23-26.

COMMENT: The apostle Paul carefully taught the Gentile Corinthians to keep the Passover using the symbols of bread and wine that Jesus had instituted. Christians must keep the Passover "till He comes," and the true church of God will still be observing the Passover as He commanded. All those who have accepted His redemption eagerly anticipate His return to share the eternal life He makes possible by His sacrifice!

Footwashing

The Passover marks the beginning of a new cycle of God's festivals and holy days. During the Passover service, before partaking of the symbols of Christ's body and blood, the unleavened bread and the wine, Christians participate in the footwashing ceremony. Though seemingly archaic in our modern world, footwashing provides necessary and important reminders of our duties to each other.

In the Palestine of Christ's day, where the roads were primarily unpaved and the people wore sandals, footwashing was a common service provided to guests. A servant, usually the lowest-ranking member of the household staff, would wash the dust off the guests' feet as they entered the home. This both kept the house clean and refreshed the guests. This simple act contains helpful lessons for our Christian lives.

1. When is footwashing performed? John 13:1-5.

COMMENT: During the evening of Nisan 14, Jesus and His disciples ate the Passover, commonly known as the "Last Supper." After the meal was served, Jesus rolled up His sleeves, as it were, tied a towel around His waist and washed His disciples' feet. Later in the evening, after He predicted that one of the disciples would betray Him (verses 21-26), Jesus introduced the symbols of bread and wine as part of the Passover service (Mark 14:18-24). Following this example, the church places the footwashing ritual first in the annual service.

2. What is its purpose? John 13:12-16.

COMMENT: Because of their incessant bickering about who would be the greatest in the Kingdom (Luke 22:24-27), Jesus gave the disciples an object lesson designed to show them what their real position was under Him. He tells them, "He who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves" (verse 26). He shows them that they must be willing to do whatever task—even the most menial—that is necessary for the good of their brothers. This should have put them in the proper attitude for the Passover's greater purpose, Christ's sacrifice for our forgiveness and redemption.

3. What was Jesus' attitude? Philippians 2:3-7.

COMMENT: The attitude Jesus showed in washing His disciples' feet is the same attitude that enabled Him to give up the power and glory of being like God and become a man. Here we see that our Creator, the Almighty God, is first and foremost a servant. He is willing to serve His own servants! When we come to the point that we are able to do everything in an attitude of service and humility, we are truly following Jesus Christ.

4. What is the significance of having our feet washed? John 13:10.

COMMENT: Christians are "bathed"—made perfectly clean—at baptism (Acts 22:16; I Corinthians 6:11; Revelation 1:5). The footwashing acts as a yearly renewal of our baptism, our commitment to living God's way of life. As Jesus says, we do not need to be fully immersed again to renew our vow—to be recleansed from sin; we need only to have our feet washed to remove the dirt and dust we collect in our walk through life. It was for this reason that Jesus insisted that Peter allow Him to wash his feet (John 13:6-9).

5. Does the ritual itself make us clean, or do we play a part in our recleansing? John 13:10-11, 18.

COMMENT: The footwashing is simply a ritual, a ceremony, a symbolic act that outwardly manifests an inward attitude and conviction. In the example of Judas Iscariot, we see that, though he went through the ritual, he was not really clean. The ritual could not remove the terrible sin that he planned to commit against his Creator. Because he had not repented of his sin, footwashing was meaningless to Judas.

Paul writes, "Examine *yourselves* as to whether you are in the faith. Prove *yourselves*" (II Corinthians 13:5). Isaiah urges, "Wash *yourselves*, make *yourselves* clean; put away the evil of your doings" (Isaiah 1:16). In his psalm of repentance, on the other hand, David beseeches God, "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin" (Psalm 51:2). Thus, we see that this rededication to God at Passover is a shared effort between us and God. We renew our faith in Christ's sacrifice, redevote ourselves to the New Covenant, repent of our spiritual failings and seek forgiveness, and He forgives us and cleanses us of our sins.

6. Is there another lesson in the footwashing ceremony? Matthew 6:14-15; 18:21-35.

COMMENT: Our washing at baptism represents forgiveness of sin, and the footwashing symbolizes renewing this forgiven state. Our participation in this ritual shows our willingness to forgive others just as God has forgiven us.

7. Is the footwashing a commanded ceremony for Christians? John 13:12-15.

COMMENT: Indeed it is! We should inculcate this object lesson into our lives and practice it at every opportunity! As Christ served us, so should we serve others. The apostle John writes in I John 2:6, "He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked."

8. Is there a blessing given for footwashing? John 13:17.

COMMENT: The word translated *happy* in the King James and New King James Bibles can easily be rendered "blessed," "favored" or "satisfied." There is a reward for following God's marvelous way of life! Not only will we be given eternal life and rulership in His Kingdom, but God will also bestow His blessing and favor upon us until we are completely satisfied!

Unleavened Bread

Passover pictures the first major step in God's plan of salvation, *justification* through the forgiveness of sin by faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The Days of Unleavened Bread explain and memorialize the second major step in salvation, *sanctification*. When God sanctifies us, He separates us for holy use. After cleansing us at Passover, He sets us apart and considers us to be holy. The problem is, though, our human nature remains intact and resists holiness.

When the Israelites passed through the Red Sea, a type of baptism, they were symbolically washed and sanctified as a

holy people to God. However, they began to murmur and rebel almost immediately. Why? Because they still had aslave mentality; they were not yet accustomed to providing for themselves. They were frightened and intimidated, and they voiced their desire to return to their bondage in Egypt.

We also find it *very* easy to return to old, sinful habits and erroneous ways of thinking. God commands us to keep the Days of Unleavened Bread yearly to remind us to continue to put off the bondage to Satan's world and our carnal natures so that we can truly escape slavery with a high hand!

1. After such a solemn observance as Passover, how does the Night To Be Much Observed fit in with the Days of Unleavened Bread? Exodus 12:42; 14:8; Numbers 33:3.

COMMENT: Israel, a nation of slaves, began to glimpse the possibility of freedom through Moses. Their anticipation roller-coasted from high expectation to dread after each plague. How their emotions must have soared when they walked away from the brickyards with *their* firstborn alive, laughing and playing! The Night To Be Much Observed memorializes our own freedom from spiritual bondage. We left spiritual Egypt, the world, behind, and in great hope and zeal, began our trek toward God's Kingdom.

2. Why did God tell the Israelites to eat unleavened bread and put leaven out of their homes? Exodus 12:19-20, 39.

COMMENT: The Exodus involved a great deal of urgency and haste. With Egypt virtually destroyed, the Egyptians urged the Israelites to leave lest further devastation occur. However, God knew Egypt would not long tolerate its loss of slaves or delay in seeking vengeance. They did not even have time to let their bread rise! Biblically, leaven represents sin. Once converted, we must *diligently* endeavor to stop sinning and live God's pure way of life (I Corinthians 5:8). Like Israel, we must flee from sin, lest it destroy us (Matthew 12:43-45).

3. How does leavening demonstrate the effect of sin in our lives? I Corinthians 5:6; James 2:10-11.

COMMENT: Just as a little leaven in bread quickly spreads completely through the dough, one "little" sin affects our whole being. As James points out, if we break one commandment, we are guilty of breaking the whole law. One sin begets another unless the chain is broken through repentance.

4. How does sin puff us up? I Corinthians 5:2, 6-8.

COMMENT: The Corinthians had serious problems with sexual sins, but instead of feeling terrible, some were "glorying" in it. They did not comprehend the slavery imposed by profligate lifestyles: broken marriages, ruined health, and alienation from God and man. They did not realize true liberty is in *keeping the law*.

5. Does leaven represent false doctrine as well? Matthew 16:6-12; I Corinthians 5:8.

COMMENT: Jesus points out the error of the Pharisees'

doctrines, and Paul advises the Corinthians to partake of the bread of sincerity and *truth*. False doctrine causes us to think more highly of ourselves than we ought. True doctrine promotes sincerity, humility, and obedience to God, the overall lesson of this festival.

6. Why do we now keep these days? What is their spiritual significance? Exodus 13:8-9; I Corinthians 5:1-13.

COMMENT: These days are a memorial to God's law and to His powerful deliverance from Egypt and bondage. Paul explains this to the Corinthians and the *urgency* attached to cease sinning. We should not even keep company with a brother involved in flagrant sin! By ridding our homes of leaven, we realize that overcoming sin is hard work!

7. Why are there *seven* days of Unleavened Bread but only one day of Passover, Pentecost, Trumpets and Atonement? Exodus 12:19; Hebrews 12:1; I Corinthians 9:27; 10:12-13; Romans 7:14-25.

COMMENT: God knows that we tend to change slowly. He gives us seven days each year to concentrate on our duty to rid our lives of sin. Those acts that are God's responsibility—the sacrifice of one for all sin, the sending of His Spirit, the resurrection of the dead, or the binding of Satan—He can accomplish in one day. The part that involves *mankind's* participation—overcoming sin—requires more time and attention. The Days of Unleavened Bread represent a period of judgment when man is required to overcome. To us, overcoming a deep-seated sin can seem to take an eternity!

8. This world's Christianity has perverted Passover into Easter and completely dismissed the Days of Unleavened Bread. What have they lost by avoiding these days? Revelation 3:12; 22:14-15; Hebrews 6:4-6; 12:14-17.

COMMENT: Mainstream Christianity has lost a vital step in salvation: **SANCTIFICATION!** God sets us aside for a *lifetime* of overcoming sin so that we might enter His Kingdom. By their "once saved, always saved" doctrine, worldly Christians deny the whole process of putting sin out of their lives. This directly contradicts Hebrews 6 and 12! God has chosen to reveal this festival to us so that we will overcome, pursue holiness, and secure eternal life in His Kingdom.

Pentecost

As we study the meaning of God's holy days, a logical pattern surfaces that unlocks truths that remain a mystery to the vast majority of the world's people. The day of Pentecost symbolizes a major key to spiritual understanding because upon this day God sent His Holy Spirit to His church, providing Christ's disciples with the power, love and understanding to carry out the work of the church. This begetting by the Holy Spirit, the key to understanding the spiritual principles of God's Word, opens our understanding of the plan that God is working out among humanity.

God established His holy days around the two major harvests of the year, a small one in the spring and a larger one in the fall. These harvest seasons typify two spiritual harvests. Pentecost, occurring in late spring, symbolizes the first spiritual harvest and reveals that this is *not* the only day of salvation. Those whom God calls now are merely a "pilot group" that He has specifically selected to be His "firstfruits." This day is also the anniversary of God's church—the beginning of the portion of God's master plan in which He calls people out of this evil world to create in them His holy, perfect, spiritual character.

1. During what three periods of the year did God command Israel to appear before Him? Exodus 23:14-16.

COMMENT: The "three times" are general periods during which God's holy days fall. Passover and Unleavened Bread occur in early spring, the "Feast of Harvest" in late spring, and the "Feast of Ingathering" in the fall.

2. How did the spring harvest begin? Leviticus 23:10-11, 14.

COMMENT: Before the Israelites could reap the spring crop, God commanded them to bring a sheaf of grain to the priest, who waved it before God for acceptance. This "wavesheaf offering" occurred on "the day after the Sabbath" that falls during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

3. How do we determine when to observe Pentecost, also called "the Feast of Weeks"? Leviticus 23:15-16, 21.

COMMENT: God instructs us to count fifty days from the day that the wavesheaf was offered. This explains why this day is commonly called Pentecost, which means "fiftieth." The Sabbath in verse 15, is not an annual holy day, but the weekly Sabbath that falls during Unleavened Bread. We know this because Pentecost must be counted every year. If this Sabbath were an annual Sabbath, Pentecost would always fall on a fixed date. It always falls on the same day of the week—the first day, Sunday—because one begins to count on a Sunday.

4. What special offering did God command to be offered on Pentecost in the Old Testament? Leviticus 23:17.

COMMENT: God commanded that two loaves of bread be offered as firstfruits to God. These two loaves represent the Old and New Testament churches.

5. Are the members of God's church regarded as firstfruits? James 1:18; Revelation 14:4.

COMMENT: Pentecost, the Feast of Firstfruits, represents the first part of God's spiritual harvest. God is now calling a small number of people, the firstfruits, into His church. These people, who live in the world but are not part of it (John 17:15-16), are training to be the leaders in the World Tomorrow when God will work to save all mankind.

6. Is the end time a spiritual harvest? Matthew 13:24-30, 37-43.

COMMENT: "End of the age" (verse 39) refers to the time of Christ's second coming and the resurrection of the dead when God will reap the firstfruits of His harvest!

7. What did the wavesheaf offering symbolize? I Corinthians 15:20-23.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ, the first of the firstfruits, willingly gave His life so others may receive forgiveness of sin. He was a holy, sinless sacrifice, and three days later, He was the first person resurrected to eternal life! In this, He fulfilled the symbolism of the wavesheaf offering.

8. Did Jesus have to be accepted just as the wavesheaf offering was? John 20:17.

COMMENT: Jesus was crucified on the day of the Passover in AD 31, which fell that year on a Wednesday. God resurrected Him at the end of the weekly Sabbath (Saturday). He appeared to Mary Magdalene the next morning, the day after the weekly Sabbath during Unleavened Bread, when the priests presented the wavesheaf offering. He did not permit her to touch Him because He had not yet ascended to the Father. Just as the High Priest had to wave the sheaf of grain before the spring harvest began, so our Savior had to ascend to the Father that day to be accepted before Him. Once this happened, He allowed His disciples to touch Him (see Matthew 28:9; John 20:20-28).

9. Did Christ's disciples observe Pentecost? Acts 2:1.

COMMENT: This was the Day of Pentecost exactly fifty days after Christ ascended to heaven to be accepted by the Father.

10. What happened then to fulfill Jesus' promise to His disciples? Acts 2:2-4; John 14:16, 26.

11. Was the Holy Spirit to be *IN* the disciples as contrasted to dwelling *WITH* them? John 14:17.

COMMENT: During Jesus' life on earth, the Holy Spirit was *with* the disciples. After the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost, the Spirit was *in* them as it had been in Christ. At this time, the disciples were begotten by the Holy Spirit, marking the beginning of the church of God.

12. Did the early church continue to keep Pentecost after the Holy Spirit came? Acts 20:16; I Corinthians 16:8.

COMMENT: About 25 years after Christ's ascension into heaven, Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, hurried to be in Jerusalem in time for Pentecost! Just as the early church kept Pentecost every year, so the true church of God continues to keep it today as a continual reminder of our part in God's great master plan of salvation!

Trumpets

Normally, church members approach Passover and Unleavened Bread very somberly. The enormity of what our Father and His Son risked for us is sobering, especially as we examine ourselves in comparison to the perfection of Jesus Christ! At Pentecost, the mood lightens as we contemplate the coming of God's Holy Spirit as a comforter and guide during our journey toward the Kingdom of God. It is a thrill to realize that God has chosen us to be part of the first harvest of His creation!

This exuberant mood stays with us as we approach the Feast of Trumpets. We tend to focus on the return of Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords and on our resurrection to glory as this festival depicts. What a joyous day that will be! Though Trumpets does ultimately focus on these events, we should consider other sobering—even terrifying—meanings as we near the Feast of Trumpets, for it also depicts a terrible time of judgment upon the people of this world!

1. Why do we call this holy day “the Feast of Trumpets”? Leviticus 23:23-25.

COMMENT: We are to keep this holy day each year to remember something about the “blowing of trumpets.”

2. What do trumpets symbolize in Scripture? Isaiah 58:1; Jeremiah 4:5; 6:1; Ezekiel 33:3; Joel 2:1, 15; Amos 3:6.

COMMENT: Trumpets symbolize a warning cry of impending danger! These verses impart a dire warning to those living in the end time: The day of the Lord is at hand, a day of darkness, gloominess, and clouds over man's society! The prophets strongly admonish ministers to raise their voices to warn of sudden, terrifying destruction!

3. Are these warnings just for the world, or are they for God's people too? Same verses.

COMMENT: Though originally intended for Israel, these warnings apply specifically to the called-out children of God, since *we* are the ones living in the end time with the understanding of God's plan! In fact, we have the most to lose by ignoring these stern prophecies of death and destruction. They are admonishments to prepare ourselves **SPIRITUALLY** for the tumult ahead. Notice that these verses stress repentance, fasting, and prayer, and who but God's elect truly understand them?

4. How do these warnings apply to the Feast of Trumpets? Revelation 8-9; 11:15-19.

COMMENT: The seventh seal, which includes the seven trumpets, announces the Day of the Lord and the return of Jesus Christ. I Corinthians 15:52 says that the resurrection will occur “at the last trumpet,” and in I Thessalonians 4:16, Paul writes that Christ “will descend from heaven with a shout, . . . with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.” These proofs lead unmistakably to the conclusion that the Feast of Trumpets represents this step in the plan of God.

5. Why must God pour out His wrath on humanity? I Corinthians 13:9-13; I John 4:16.

COMMENT: We do not know all the reasons why such destruction and death must occur, but we do know that God will do it in love. It may be that He sends these plagues in just retribution for their sin, or He may be saving their character from permanent rebellion against Him. He desires all to repent and attain His Kingdom (II Peter 3:9), so He will do whatever is necessary to bring that to pass!

6. Does God's church have a responsibility in preparing for Christ's return? II Peter 3:10-18; Revelation 19:7-9.

COMMENT: It is one thing to celebrate a joyous meeting with Christ—it is quite another to ensure that we are a fitting bride for Him! The church must do its part in cooperating with God to prepare us as holy, righteous, godly saints who are worthy to marry His Son.

7. Revelation 10:7 says that when the seventh angel “is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished.” What is this mystery? I Corinthians 15:50-58.

COMMENT: The great mystery is that we can and will become immortal and incorruptible spirit beings at Christ's return! This is the part of the Feast of Trumpets that we rejoice in—for good reason—for vision of what **WE WILL BE** is a great motivator! I John 3:2 says we will be just like the returning Christ, who is very God, “the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29; see Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:18)!

8. Is God's plan finished when Christ returns? I Corinthians 15:23-28; Revelation 20.

COMMENT: The resurrection at Christ's second coming is only the beginning of God's reign on the earth! In the proper time and order, all who have lived will be given an opportunity to repent and enter God's glorious Kingdom as sons of God. These events are more fully contemplated in the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day.

9. Will Jesus return on the Feast of Trumpets?

COMMENT: The church of God has supposed this to be true for many years—and the biblical material seems to support His second coming **ON** that day some time soon. However, no verse specifically, unequivocally states this. The Feast of Trumpets *pictures* His return, but we cannot blindly assume that He will in fact come on that day. The odds are no worse than 1 in 365, however!

Because we **know** that He *will* return soon, we can be prepared for it! If we learn to love each other fervently—which is the basis of His judgment of us (Matthew 25:31-46)—we will qualify to help perfect others. We will be prepared to help others as they recover from the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. We will be trained to teach and guide others as they strive to enter God's Kingdom.

For us, **BEING READY** is far more important than **WHEN** Christ returns. Thus, we need to be busy repenting, overcoming, praying, and fasting as Christ's return approaches!

Atonement

So far, we have seen the plan of God broaden from our personal redemption and removal of sin in Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread to the founding of the church and giving of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Trumpets pictures the return of Christ, the changing of the saints into immortal spirit beings, and God's judgment on all mankind. But one more hurdle must be overcome before salvation can be made available to everyone. God must remove the archenemy, Satan the Devil, to produce unity between Him and humanity.

The Day of Atonement depicts the accomplishment of this step in God's purpose. Though this prodigious feat deserves our joyous praise and thanksgiving to God, Atonement is the most solemn of the seven festivals. On this day, Christians fast—afflict their souls—to show that only when man sees himself in proper comparison to God will he have the right attitude to be truly at one with Him. When Satan is bound and men live humbly before God, then God's Word and Spirit will work wonders among the people of the world!

1. Is the Day of Atonement a commanded feast of God? Leviticus 23:26-32.

COMMENT: God emphasizes this day's solemnity by threatening death to those who fail to afflict their souls or who do any work on this day. Nothing is more important than being at one with Him!

2. What is atonement? Romans 5:6-11; Hebrews 9:24-26; I John 1:1-2.

COMMENT: A dictionary definition of "atonement" describes it as "reparation for an offense or injury: satisfaction." Theologically, it is payment for sin, particularly the death of the Creator God, Jesus Christ, for mankind's sins. Because Christ's death satisfies the justice of God, we are reconciled to God and able to be "at one" with Him.

3. What is it to "afflict your souls"? Isaiah 58:3.

COMMENT: Fasting puts us in a proper attitude to submit to God. When we deprive ourselves of the necessities of life, we see how dependent we are upon God's providence. This is why in a true, spiritual fast we neither eat nor drink anything for the whole 24 hours of the day (Deuteronomy 9:18; Esther 4:16). God desires such a humble spirit in us so that we can walk in harmony with Him (Micah 6:8; Isaiah 66:2).

4. What are we trying to accomplish when we fast? Isaiah 58:3-12.

COMMENT: The members of Isaiah's audience were fasting for all the wrong reasons! They fasted to get things from God and to appear righteous. God says, though, that we should fast to free others from their sins, to intercede with God for their healing, to help provide for their needs, and to understand His will. Fasting is a tool of godly love we are to use for the good of others, and any benefits *we* derive from it are wonderful blessings! On the Day of Atonement, we fast to implore God to bring to pass the greatest blessing of all upon ourselves and the world: unity, oneness, with Him!

5. Did the early church keep this Fast? Acts 27:9.

COMMENT: Luke, writing over 30 years after Christ's death, makes it clear that the early church observed this holy day.

6. What unusual ritual did the Aaronic high priest perform on the Day of Atonement? Leviticus 16.

COMMENT: This lengthy, involved ritual depicts all of the steps that must be accomplished before mankind can truly be at one with God. In short, the following must occur:

- A high priest must be pure and sinless to mediate between God and man (verse 4). Christ, having lived a sinless life, is our eternal High Priest.
- The high priest must enter God's presence with blood to open the way between God and man (verses 3, 14-16). Christ, by His own sacrifice, gains us entrance before God's throne, having rent the veil (Matthew 27:51).
- The sins of men must be covered by the offering of an innocent victim (Leviticus 16:9, 15). Christ's blood covers our sins, and God grants us forgiveness.
- The cause of man's sins must be removed (verses 10, 20-22). After Christ returns, Satan—the being who first sinned and has been broadcasting his sinful, rebellious nature to all mankind—will be imprisoned so that he cannot deceive men.

7. How long will Satan be bound? Revelation 20:1-3.

COMMENT: Mankind will have a thousand years of freedom from the Devil's attitudes of pride, rebellion, vanity, and strife! What a peaceful, blessed time this will be!

8. What will result from Satan's removal? Acts 3:19-21.

COMMENT: Once the Deceiver is neutralized, refreshing and restitution can begin! Christ and the saints will immediately work to restore the earth to its beauty and productivity (Isaiah 35). God's perfect government and laws will be reinstated, bringing peace and prosperity to all who submit to them (Isaiah 2:1-4). In a spirit of harmony, everyone will pitch in to rebuild the waste places and ruins caused by man's and Satan's sins (Isaiah 58:12; 61:4; Amos 9:14). This is the wonderful World Tomorrow that all of God's people have looked toward since the Garden of Eden! All that is good—very good (Genesis 1:31)—will be restored!

The Feast of Tabernacles

The holy days show us God's plan unfolding. The process of salvation, revealed in the spring festivals, culminates in the Feast of Trumpets, picturing Christ returning to earth in power to crush Satan's end-time attempt to subjugate the world. Saints from all ages will be resurrected, or if alive, *changed* to immortality. For the first time in history, man will be totally *at one* with his Creator! Satan will then be bound for a thousand years, and his evil, destructive influence will be totally cut off.

The Feast of Tabernacles depicts the ensuing Millennium when the whole earth will rest. In Hebrews 4, the writer discusses the Sabbath as a day of rest. He uses Israel entering the Promised Land as a type of our entering into rest when Christ returns. If the week typifies the length of God's plan, we are now living on "Friday," the sixth day, as almost 6,000 years—a thousand years as a day—have elapsed since Adam's creation. Christians should be busy preparing for Christ's return and His coming Sabbath rest.

1. Why is this feast called "Tabernacles"? Leviticus 23:33-43; Deuteronomy 14:23-27; 16:13-15.

COMMENT: This feast, also called the "Feast of Ingathering" (Exodus 23:16), falls after the summer harvest. Anciently, the Israelites kept this festival by erecting temporary dwellings made of branches to commemorate Israel's wilderness wanderings. The two symbols of harvest and temporariness prefigure aspects of the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ.

2. What will life be like in the World Tomorrow? Isaiah 11:5-16, 29:18; 35:1-10.

COMMENT: Man is proud of his powerful computers, satellites, modern scientific labs, and medical discoveries. In spite of this, he fights with nature and other men. Crime, drug abuse, sexual perversions, and all sorts of other evils escalate. The deaf and blind go unhealed. Man pollutes his air, water, and soil because he does not know how to manage a civilization. With all his technological advances, man cannot get along with his neighbor.

The earth being "full of the knowledge of the LORD" means far more than "everyone will go to the right church"! God's knowledge is vast; He knows how to make a civilization work—even a high-tech one! In the Millennium, man will be at peace. Nations, neighbors, and even spouses will not fight. Cancer, diabetes, heart disease, blindness, and deafness will be eradicated. Eyeglasses and braces will be found only in museums. The deserts will produce bountiful harvests. Animals will peacefully co-exist with humanity. All this will be the result of an unprecedented explosion of knowledge *in how to do things right!*

3. What will be the Millennial job of those glorified at Christ's return? Revelation 5:10; 20:4, 6; Isaiah 30:20-21.

COMMENT: As King of kings, Christ will appoint His faithful followers as kings and priests over the earth. They will have abilities as God has today. If a person considers an action that would hurt himself or someone else, the glorified children of God will teach them to choose a better course. At that time, people "shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain" (Isaiah 11:9).

4. Over whom will the saints rule? Isaiah 11:11-16; 66:14-21; Zechariah 14:9-19.

COMMENT: After Jesus Christ returns, the survivors of all nations will be gathered, and He will appoint the resur-

rected saints to rule over them. If they rebel against His rule, He will cut off all rain until they submit and keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

5. How will their keeping of the Feast of Tabernacles show submission to God? Zechariah 14:16-19.

COMMENT: During the Millennium, people will be required to go to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles to worship—the King, Jesus Christ. The Feast will be their primary reminder of where they are in God's plan and when they must secure their salvation. If they fail to keep it, they will reveal their refusal to accept Christ as sovereign and to cooperate with Him in His purpose.

6. What occurs at the end of the Millennium? Revelation 20:7-10.

COMMENT: God will release Satan for a short time when the thousand years end. The people, familiar with Christ and His kings and priests, will have lived in unprecedented peace, happiness, and prosperity. They will have learned and lived God's way from birth. Surely, Satan could have no influence on them!

Almost instantly, however, he will raise an army of people "as the sand of the sea" out of "the four corners of the earth"! His arguments will persuade them that they should and can destroy Christ and His throne in Jerusalem. God, however, will annihilate them all in a blinding flash of fire from heaven and cast the Devil into the Lake of Fire, never to be freed again!

7. What can we learn from this? I Peter 5:8-11; Revelation 12:7-12.

COMMENT: This rebellion at the end of the Millennium is often overlooked in the joy of considering Christ's wonderful rule. Satan's influence is *so* powerful he can influence millions of people to follow him seemingly overnight. Having drawn away a third of the angels from God (Revelation 12:4; Isaiah 14:12-14) and overcome Adam and Eve, he has wielded almost total control over man.

His present power will be *greatly magnified* very shortly when he is cast down to earth to begin the Great Tribulation. He would deceive the very elect if it were possible (Matthew 24:24). It is no wonder Peter instructs us to be sober, to be vigilant, to resist Satan in faith that Christ might establish us in the end!

The Last Great Day

God's annual holy days reveal the purpose He is busy working out. We have seen that *Passover*, the first festival, memorializes Jesus' sacrifice for man. The *Days of Unleavened Bread* instruct Christ's disciples in holy conduct. *Pentecost* pictures God's Holy Spirit given to His church. The *Feast of Trumpets* warns mankind of impending war and the return of Jesus Christ. *Atonement* depicts Satan being restrained and man finally becoming one with God. The *Feast of Tabernacles* pictures Christ's thousand-year reign of unprecedented peace and prosperity.

The final festival is the *Last Great Day*. It looks forward to a time after the Millennium when an awesomely wonderful period of salvation will take place. During this time the majority of mankind—rich and poor, young and old, men and women—will be resurrected and have an opportunity to inherit eternal life. Billions will qualify to enter the God Family! On the other hand, those who will not repent, who will not submit to God and His way, will be cast into the Lake of Fire and die the second—eternal—death. What a fair and merciful God we have!

1. Why is this festival called “the eighth day” and “the last day, that great day of the feast”? Leviticus 23:34-36, 39; Numbers 29:35; John 7:37.

COMMENT: This seventh holy day is observed immediately following the Feast of Tabernacles. Biblically, seven symbolizes perfection. It is also the eighth day of the Feast, and the Hebrew word for “eight” is related to another meaning “fatness,” implying abundance, fertility—even resurrection and regeneration. According to Jewish tradition, on the Last Great Day, they finished reading what they started when Tabernacles began. Though intimately connected to the Feast of Tabernacles, it holds a distinct meaning of its own. It is part of it, yet separate.

The offerings required on this day in the Old Testament were the largest of all, typifying Israel's thankfulness to God for all He provided. Today, God's people keep this day with praise and thankfulness—spiritual sacrifices (Hebrews 13:15)—for His abundant spiritual gifts.

2. What does the Last Great Day foreshadow? Isaiah 65:20-25; Revelation 20:11-15.

COMMENT: This holy day represents the Great White Throne Judgment period. The prevalent conditions of the Millennium—God's government, peace, prosperity, etc.—will continue into this time, just as the Last Great Day follows the Feast of Tabernacles. From Isaiah 65:20, some speculate that this judgment will last a hundred years, the life span of a healthy individual.

3. What resurrections will occur during this period? Revelation 20:4-6, 11-15.

COMMENT: The first part of verse 5 inserts a parenthetical statement that refers to a *second* resurrection, described in verses 11-15. After the Millennium, God will raise up to **PHYSICAL LIFE** all those who have never had an opportunity for salvation. Christ will judge all those who lived throughout human history yet have not been called. Ezekiel 37:1-14 prophesies of God resurrecting all Israel. At the same time (see Matthew 12:41-42), He will raise all the Gentiles and extend to them the same offer He does to Israel (Romans 2:7-11; I Timothy 2:4). If they satisfy God's judgment, He will at some point grant them eternal life and

give them spiritual bodies (I Corinthians 15:44-49).

After all have had their opportunity, God will perform yet a *third* resurrection. Those who will not repent of their rebellion against the Almighty will be raised to physical life and cast into the Lake of Fire, which provides a merciful, permanent death (see Matthew 25:41).

4. Does God judge everyone by the same standard? I Peter 4:17-18; Romans 14:10-12; I Corinthians 3:8, 13; II Corinthians 5:10.

COMMENT: God judges true Christians today by how well they live by His Word, and He will judge those who rise in the second resurrection exactly the same way. They will be given enough time to live a life of overcoming and obedience, just as God's firstfruits are doing in this age.

5. Why is this a *great* day? John 7:37.

COMMENT: As the God of the Old Testament (John 1:1-3, 14), Jesus personally instituted the Last Great Day to symbolize the Great White Throne Judgment. As Judge of mankind, Christ is great in all His attributes; He is the perfect Judge of all (John 5:22, 24-30). We can also see the greatness of this period in the huge number of people who will be mercifully, lovingly judged and granted eternal life.

6. Why did Christ speak of the Holy Spirit during His proclamation on the Last Great Day? John 7:37-39.

COMMENT: His words reveal that a day—the White Throne Judgment—will come when all humanity would have free access to the “living water” of God's Holy Spirit (John 4:13-14; Matthew 5:6; Revelation 22:17).

7. What occurs after this period? Revelation 21:1-4.

COMMENT: Following this time, God will create “a new heaven and a new earth”—a clean, pure world fit for God the Father Himself. For all eternity, “there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” All who have accepted God's way will have been glorified as members of His Family, and will live forever. Like God, they will create, beautify, and spread God's rule over the entire universe! With this wonderful potential ahead of us, we can eagerly echo the apostle John's words in Revelation 22:20: “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”

Pagan Holidays

The Babylonian system depicted in Revelation 17 rules over the kings and kingdoms of the earth. It “shall intend to change times and law” (Daniel 7:25), and we see this particularly well in this world’s holidays. The contrast between God’s way and the world’s is very obvious: God begins the year in the early spring as plant life begins to bud and grow; the world, in the middle of a dead winter (northern hemisphere) or hot summer (southern hemisphere). God’s months start with a new moon; the world’s,

haphazardly. God begins the day at sunset; the world, at midnight. God sanctified the last day of the week for rest; the world, the first day, sixth day, or whatever day without regard for God’s command.

This present system has attempted to change God’s Sabbath and holy days, syncretizing them into corrupt worship, and establishing its own counterfeit holidays. We will see that God has not sanctioned this world’s pagan holidays and that it is wrong to share in its celebrations.

1. God created us in His image (Genesis 1:26). Does that mean we think like Him? Isaiah 55:8-9; Numbers 22:32; Proverbs 14:12.

COMMENT: God’s intent is creative, constructive, and leads to eternal life. In contrast, man’s perspective is degenerative, destructive, and leads to death. Physically and materially, man can design marvelous temporal things, but mentally and spiritually, his ways are far from God’s. Man’s holidays, philosophies, and laws are opposite God’s.

2. Should a Christian get involved in the ways of this world? Psalm 73:3-17; Jeremiah 10:2-5, 8-11; II Corinthians 6:14-17; I John 2:15-17.

COMMENT: Paul warns us to beware of those who would try to cheat us of eternal life by their human reasoning (Colossians 2:8). Why should a true Christian have fellowship with the world? Some believe they can convert those in the world if they socialize with them, but it is God alone who calls future sons to glory (John 6:44; Hebrews 2:10).

3. Are we enslaved to whomever we follow or obey? Romans 6:16-22; I Corinthians 7:22-23; Galatians 4:1-11.

COMMENT: When we lack spiritual understanding and do as the world does, we are slaves of the world. When converted, we cease to be slaves of the world and become begotten sons of God. We are slaves of the world until Jesus Christ frees us by calling and redeeming us. Thereafter, we cease being slaves of the world and become servants of Christ.

4. Does God care how we worship Him? Exodus 20:2-6; Deuteronomy 5:7-10; Matthew 15:8-9; I Corinthians 10:14; Titus 1:12-16. Does it matter whether or not we share in the celebration of this world’s religious holidays? Deuteronomy 13:13-18; 27:15; Isaiah 1:13-14; 29:13; Luke 16:15; I Peter 4:3-4.

COMMENT: Though the Bible—the Word of God—makes no direct references to New Year’s Eve, Lent, Easter, Halloween, or Christmas, the origins of these pagan holidays are mentioned as being abominations to God.

5. Does it matter that most of this world’s holidays are based on fables, myths, and lies? Mark 7:6-9, 13; II Thessalonians 2:9-12; Titus 1:14; Revelation 22:14-15.

COMMENT: A true Christian does not lie and does not associate with lies, but seeks after truth in all aspects of life. If we live with a little lie now, then it is much easier to live with a worse lie later. God is emphatic on this point: A liar will not enter His Kingdom (Revelation 21:7-8).

6. What should we do about this world’s celebrations? Proverbs 4:14-17; II Corinthians 6:17; Revelation 18:1-4.

COMMENT: We condone and lend support to activities we attend. If everyone obeyed God by refusing to keep pagan holidays, one of Satan’s ploys to obscure God’s plan for mankind would be thwarted. The Bible is very clear that we should avoid, flee, or turn away from the ways of this world and not allow them to enter the church of God (II Timothy 3:1-5).

7. What standard should we use to determine which religious days to keep? II Timothy 3:15-16.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ is our example (John 16:33; Hebrews 13:8; I Peter 2:21-22). He commands His own disciples to observe God’s holy days (Luke 22:8; John 7:8; 14:15). The apostle Paul kept them and taught their observance (Acts 20:16; 24:14; I Corinthians 11:17-28; Colossians 2:16-17). As the holy days show God’s plan, they depict the spiritual regeneration of man, whereas, man’s holidays picture no such plan. The holy days, then, are a vital tool in bringing about God’s true purpose for mankind, reproducing Himself in us!

The Holy Days of God

With the founding of the church in AD 31, did Christ institute a whole new set of Christian holidays like Christmas and Easter? Did He “do away” with the holy days found in the Old Testament?

An inspection of the New Testament shows very quickly that Christ, the apostles and the early church kept the “Old Testament” holy days! And the Bible provides no instruction concerning the so-called Christian holidays.

Our Savior had good reasons for continuing the observance of the holy days. They provide the outline of God’s master plan and teach us vital knowledge about the process of salvation.

We need to keep them with understanding each year to rehearse these marvelous truths.

This Bible Study will review each holy day, giving proofs of its validity and helpful insights into its observance. God’s magnificent purpose will take on greater meaning as we study God’s wisdom in the holy days!

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