

JESUS CHRIST kept the Feast of Pentecost. So did the apostles, disciples and the New Testament Church.

Why, then, do so few "Christians" keep this important feast? When and where did professing Christians stop following the footsteps of Jesus and the apostles?

Today, most professing Christians know very little about Pentecost. Yet many have heard of "Whitsunday" (or "Whitsuntide"), which is not even so much as mentioned in the Bible.

What exactly is *Whitsunday*? In the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1973 edition, article "Whitsunday"), we read: "*Whitsunday (Pentecost)*, one of the three major festivals of the Christian Church, celebrated on the Sunday that marks the 50th day after Easter, to commemorate the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples at the Jewish *Pentecost* following Jesus' passion, resurrection and ascension (Acts 2) . . ."

Whitsunday has usurped the place of Pentecost and obscured its true meaning. But Christ and His followers did not observe Whitsunday. This day is a mere invention of men — which, sad to say, has been instrumental in turning away the minds of believers from the all-important, God-ordained festival of Pentecost.

Notice how "Whitsunday" obscured and supplanted the original Feast of Pentecost which Christ and the New Testament Church kept: "*Whitsuntide* is the week beginning with Whitsunday or Pentecost (the seventh Sunday after Easter) . . . The name (Anglo-Saxon *hwita sunnandaeg*, white Sunday) derives from the white garments worn by those baptized on the vigil" ("*Whitsuntide*," *Collier's Encyclopedia*, 1972 edition).

But Whitsunday is not synonymous with Pentecost. Rather, Whitsunday is a *counterfeit* of the Day of Pentecost which God originally gave to His Church in the wilderness, and later to His New Testament Church (Acts 7:38).

It is certain that the early New Testament Church kept the Feast of Pentecost, for it was on that very day that God first chose to send the great outpouring of His Holy Spirit (see Acts 2). Had the disciples not been keeping Pentecost, they would not have been there to receive the "firstfruits" of the Holy Spirit which was given on that feast day.

"Peter preached his first sermon, converting and baptizing three thousand in the faith of Christ on this occasion. For this reason it [Pentecost] has been re-

what you need to know about the new testament pentecost

garded from earliest times as the birthday of the Christian church" ("*Pentecost*," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1973 edition).

But why has this important feast, the very "birthday" of the New Testament Church of God, been obscured? Why do many Christians not keep this feast today?

Meaning of God's Sabbaths

Isn't it time we went directly to the Word of God to see what it says about the important Feast of Pentecost? Should it be observed by Christians? What is the real *meaning* of this day? And what does it actually picture in the plan of God?

The truth is that much of the world's blindness, ignorance, superstition and misunderstanding is the direct result of its rejection of God's annual festivals and His Sabbaths — including Pentecost!

God gave His Sabbaths to be a "sign" between Him and His people: "Verily my *sabbaths* ye shall keep: for it is a *sign* between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you" (Ex. 31:13).

Most Christians utterly fail to understand that it was both the weekly and the annual Sabbaths which

God's commanded Feast of Pentecost has somehow become buried in modern Christianity. Why did Christ and the apostles observe this important feast, called the "day of firstfruits"? What does it picture in the plan of God? Should Christians observe this feast today? If so, on what day should Pentecost be observed?

by Garner Ted Armstrong and Raymond F. McNair

were to be a "sign" between God and His people.

Remember, in Old Testament times the *Gentiles* were totally cut off from God. The Eternal had chosen *Israel* to be His people — to understand His purpose which He is working out here below on planet Earth: "Now therefore, if ye [Israel] will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a *kingdom of priests*, and an holy nation" (Ex. 19:5, 6).

Had the nation of Israel obeyed God, they would have been used by Him to bring the knowledge of the true Creator to the far-flung ends of the earth (Deut. 6:6-8) — till the whole world would have been filled with the glorious understanding of the great Creator-Ruler God.

Furthermore, God gave Israel His "sabbaths" to be that identifying "sign" between Him and His people. God's Sabbaths (both *weekly* and *annual*) would have identified the true God and would have kept His people in the knowledge of God's ways.

Just as the *weekly* Sabbath was designed to keep man in remembrance of God as Creator (see Ex. 20:8, 11), so the annual Sabbaths were designed to unfold before mankind the great master plan which the Creator devised for the purpose of working out His will here on earth.

The Feast of Firstfruits

All of God's Sabbaths (weekly and annual) are given in the 23rd chapter of Leviticus. The third annual Sabbath listed is the Feast of Firstfruits (Feast of Weeks or Pentecost). It was the *first* harvest feast (see Lev. 23:9-22).

The second annual harvest feast was called the "feast of tabernacles" (Lev. 23:33-44), or the "feast of ingathering" (Ex. 23:16).

These two harvest festivals, the *Feast of Firstfruits* and the *Feast of Ingathering*, were both based on the annual harvests in Palestine.

The Feast of Firstfruits occurred at the end of a 50-day harvest period which commenced on the wave-sheaf Sunday during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

This *fiftieth day* ended the grain harvest in Palestine. It came at the close of the spring harvest of the "firstfruits." But the Feast of Ingathering occurred later — at the end of the great late summer and early *autumn harvest*.

What do these two feasts picture in the plan of God? We shall see the answer to this later, but let us first notice how we are commanded to *count* Pentecost.

The Eternal commanded Moses: "When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the *harvest* thereof, then ye shall bring a *sheaf of the firstfruits* of your harvest unto the priest: and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath [Hebrew, *mi-mohorat ha shabbat*] the priest shall wave it" (Lev. 23:10, 11).

The high priest waved this firstfruits of grain (probably barley) on the morrow after the weekly Sabbath. This wave sheaf was always waved on what we call a *Sunday* during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Notice what happened next: "And ye shall *count* unto you from the morrow after the sabbath [*mi-mohorat ha shabbat*], from the day that ye brought the *sheaf* of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: even unto the morrow after the *seventh sabbath* [*mi-mohorat ha shabbat*] shall ye number fifty days . . ." (verses 15, 16).

The New American Bible translates this more accurately: "Beginning *with* the day after the sabbath, the day *on* which you bring the wave-offering sheaf, you shall count seven full weeks, and then *on* the day after the seventh week, the fiftieth day, you shall present the new cereal offering to the Lord" (verses 15, 16).

Then the priest was to take "two wave loaves." "They shall be baked

with *leaven*; they are the *firstfruits* unto the Lord" (verses 17).

What did the high priest do with them? He waved the various offerings, including "the bread of the firstfruits," as a wave offering. "And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day [Pentecost], that it may be an holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein: it shall be a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations" (verses 20, 21).

This commanded holy convocation was held on what in New Testament times was called the Day of Pentecost. And remember that this fifty-day harvest of firstfruits began on the day of the waving of the *wave-sheaf firstfruits* and ended with the waving of the *two* (leavened) *loaves of firstfruits*. Can you now see why Pentecost was called the "day of the firstfruits"? "Also in the day of the firstfruits . . . after your [seven] weeks be out, ye shall have an holy convocation . . ." (Num. 28:26).

The second annual harvest festival was called the "feast of ingathering." "And [thou shalt keep] the feast of harvest, the *firstfruits* of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the *feast of ingathering*, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field" (Ex. 23:16).

These were the two great annual harvests in Palestine. The first annual harvest began with the offering up of the wave sheaf (the first of the firstfruits) during Unleavened Bread, and ended with the offering up of the *two loaves* made from the *firstfruits* grain — on the "day of the firstfruits" (Pentecost).

The second annual harvest festival, called the "feast of ingathering," occurred in the late summer or early autumn — near the end of the harvest year — at the time of the great *gathering in* of the summer fruits.

Both of these annual harvests contain great symbolic meaning. Christ spoke of Himself as being a

“sower,” and the people who were ready to receive that word and act upon it were likened to a “harvest.” In Matthew 9:37, 38, we read: “Then saith he unto his disciples, The *harvest* truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the *Lord of the harvest*, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.”

Who is the “Lord of the harvest”? None other than Jesus Christ.

The Master Plan of Salvation

Few realize that God has a great master plan of salvation. And still fewer realize just what that plan is.

The majority of Christians assume that God is *now* trying to save the whole world. Nothing could be further from the truth!

God is not *now* desperately trying to save all mankind. He is not engaged in a fierce contest with a sinister devil, who is constantly striving to deceive and destroy humanity.

If a great contest is on between God and Satan, then who do you think is winning that struggle?

God is now leaving man to his own devices, under the sway of the devil — so that man might learn that Satan’s way of deceit, sin and greed will only produce a bumper crop of woe, misery and death.

One reason so many think God is now trying to save the world is that they have lost sight of God’s annual feasts; they don’t *understand* what these festivals picture in God’s master plan of salvation. It is only by keeping God’s commanded festivals, which were intimately connected with the two annual harvests in Palestine, that we can understand this plan of God.

Also, before we can understand that plan we need to get a few facts straight.

Salvation Not Offered to All in Old Testament

First, God did *not* offer salvation either to *Israel* or to the *Gentiles* during the Old Testament period. True, God prophesied that the time would come when salvation would

did Christ and the Apostles keep pentecost?

IT MAY come as a surprise to many to learn that it was Jesus Christ’s “custom” to observe the Day of Pentecost.

Notice this surprising truth in Luke 4:16: Jesus “came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, *as his custom was*, he went into the synagogue *on the sabbath day*, and stood up for to read.” The Greek words translated “sabbath day” read literally “day of weeks.” This is a different expression than is used when an ordinary Sabbath is meant.

What is the “day of weeks”? Deuteronomy 16:9 and 10 gives us the answer. It is the “feast of weeks,” otherwise known as the “day of firstfruits” (Num. 28:26) and Pentecost day (the *fiftieth* day — see Lev. 23:16).

After everything that was abolished on the cross had been done away, the true New Testament Church of God was assembled in a holy convocation on the first Pentecost after Christ’s death and resurrection. We read in Acts 2: “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place” (verse 1).

Pentecost pictures the first part of God’s spiritual harvest — the calling out of the Church — the called-out ones — which for the New Testament dispensation began on this Pentecost in A.D. 31. On that day the Holy Spirit came to dwell within flesh, as prophesied

earlier by Joel (Joel 2:28, 29).

Years later we find the New Testament Church continuing to observe this day. In Acts 20:16 we read: “For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.”

And in I Corinthians 16:8: “But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost.” Paul was following the example of Jesus Christ Himself.

But this is not all. Two more Bible references show that Christ’s *custom* was also Paul’s custom. We read in Acts 13:14 that Paul and his companions “went into the synagogue *on the sabbath day*, and sat down.” And in Acts 16:13, “And *on the sabbath* we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made: and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.” In both these cases the original Greek expression is the same as in Luke 4:16, which is discussed above. Both refer to the Day of Pentecost, an *annual* Sabbath.

It was the unvarying practice of the New Testament Church to keep the Day of Pentecost.

For proof that the New Testament Church kept the other holy days of God, write for our free booklet *Pagan Holidays — or God’s Holy Days — Which?* □

the true pentecost day

WHAT is the true day for Pentecost? Even in the days of Christ and the apostles there was disagreement among the Jews as to which was the correct day. The *Pharisees* believed Pentecost should be reckoned from the first annual Sabbath, to the 6th of Sivan. The *Essenes* believed Pentecost should be kept on the 15th of Sivan. But both of these dates were incorrect.

The *Sadducees* "counted" Pentecost correctly — counting *inclusively* from the wave-sheaf Sunday during the Passover season.

The Bible reveals that all of God's

commanded annual holy days, with the exception of Pentecost, are on fixed days of the sacred calendar.* These annual holy days (except Pentecost) were divinely set to fall on *fixed days of the month*. And just as God has preserved the "oracles of God" (Word of God) through the Jews (Rom. 3:2), He has also preserved the sacred or Hebrew calendar through them.

Pentecost (also called the "feast of firstfruits") is the only holy day which has to be counted, figured or calculated each year.

But how was it to be counted?

Notice God's instructions in Leviticus 23:15, 16: "And ye shall count unto you *from the morrow* [Hebrew, *mi-mohorat*] after the sabbath [Hebrew, *ha-shabbat*], from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: Even *unto the morrow* [Hebrew, *mi-mohorat*] after the seventh sabbath shall ye number *fifty days . . .*" (Lev. 23:15, 16).

This Hebrew prepositional phrase *mi-mohorat* is used only twenty-eight times in the Old Testament. In the eleventh verse of this twenty-third chapter of Leviticus, it is translated as "on the morrow." And it is rendered "on the morrow" in twenty-five other places. Only in verse 15 is it rendered "from the morrow" and in verse 16 "unto the morrow."

We are plainly commanded to

"count" the fifty days to Pentecost "from the morrow after the sabbath." But which "sabbath" is meant?

All agree that it is a "sabbath" during the Passover season. But there are usually *three Sabbaths* during this period. Example: when the *first* day of Unleavened Bread (an annual Sabbath) falls on a Thursday (as in A.D. 31, see calendar below), the *last* day (also an annual Sabbath) is Wednesday. But the weekly Sabbath comes between these two annual Sabbaths. Thus, there are normally three Sabbaths during the seven-day period of Unleavened Bread.

God commanded that Pentecost be counted from the day following a particular "sabbath" — but *which Sabbath?*

It is clear that God meant for us to count Pentecost beginning with the wave-sheaf Sunday during Unleavened Bread. This wave-sheaf Sunday must always follow the *weekly Sabbath*.

But how can we know that a weekly Sabbath is meant rather than one of the *annual Sabbaths*? If God had intended us to count the fifty days to Pentecost beginning with one of the *annual Sabbaths* — then there is really no way to know (from the Bible) which of the annual Sabbaths was intended.

Both biblical and secular history show that during the days of Christ and the apostles Pentecost was offi-

*1) *Passover* — 14th of Nisan or Abib (1st month). 2) *Unleavened Bread* (seven days) — 15 Nisan through 21st. 3) *Pentecost* — Always occurs in the 3rd month (Sivan), but on different days of the month. It is the only annual holy day that is not set on a fixed day of a particular month in the sacred calendar. 4) *Feast of Trumpets* — 1st of Tishri (7th month). 5) *Day of Atonement* — (Fast Day) — 10th day of Tishri. 6) *Feast of Tabernacles* (seven days) — 15th through 21st of Tishri. 7) Eighth Day (Last Great Day) — 22nd Tishri.

Sacred Calendar of A.D. 31

Historically, different Jewish sects have begun their count to Pentecost on different days. All, however, counted from the morrow after a Sabbath, and all counted inclusively. The Sadducees counted from the morrow after the weekly Sabbath (Nisan 17) during the days of Unleavened Bread (15th-21st) as does the Worldwide Church of God. The Pharisees, in contrast, would have counted from the morrow after an annual Sabbath (Nisan 15), the first of the days of Unleavened Bread. The last day of Unleavened Bread (Nisan 21) was also an annual Sabbath.

NISAN						
Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

cially observed (up until about A.D. 65) according to the Sadducees' way of reckoning this day. During that time of the early New Testament Church, the Sadducees and the priests took the *weekly Sabbath* of the Passover season as the bench mark from which to reckon the fifty days to Pentecost. It was not until a very few years before the fall of Jerusalem that the *Pharisees* finally got control of the Temple and changed over to reckoning Pentecost from the morrow after the first *annual Sabbath* during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

It is clear that Christ and His apostles did *not* observe Pentecost annually on a set or *fixed* day of the third month, the 6th of Sivan. But following the priestly way of reckoning, they kept Pentecost the *fiftieth* day of the spring harvest, reckoning the first day as the day on which the wave sheaf was offered.

How, then, are we to count Pentecost?

We are commanded to begin counting the "seven weeks" or "seven sabbaths" *from* (figuring inclusively), or beginning with, the wave-sheaf Sunday which must always fall during the Days of Unleavened Bread. The wave-sheaf Sunday was the first day of the fifty-day count. Counting forty-nine days (seven full weeks) will bring you through seven Sabbaths. The very next Sunday is therefore the fiftieth day. This fiftieth day is to be observed as the Feast of Firstfruits (or Pentecost).

The Sadducees and most Christian scholars throughout history have concluded, erroneously, that the wave-sheaf Sunday could sometimes fall *outside* the Days of Unleavened Bread. But this is incorrect. This year, the wave-sheaf Sunday fell on the first day of Unleavened Bread — just as it did in the year of Israel's entry into the Prom-

ised Land (see Joshua 5:10, 11).

We are told in the King James Version that the Israelites ate the "old corn" (the Hebrew is, more correctly, "produce") of the land of Canaan on the 15th of Nisan. This was expressly forbidden unless and until they had offered to God the wave sheaf of their firstfruits (see Lev. 23:10-14). Since the wave sheaf was always offered on a Sunday during Unleavened Bread, the Passover during that year had to have fallen on the weekly Sabbath. The fifty days to Pentecost were reckoned beginning with the Sunday after Passover day, the 14th of Nisan.

In the twentieth century there are only *eleven* instances in which the last day of Unleavened Bread coincides with the weekly Sabbath — thereby producing a double Sabbath.

Many English translations of the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus (for counting Pentecost) are ambiguous or misleading. By using "from," which in English can be used either inclusively or exclusively, some confusion has resulted.

There is, however, one modern English translation which renders Leviticus 23:15, 16 in plain, understandable English: "BEGINNING WITH the day after the sabbath, the day *on* which you bring the wave-offering sheaf, you shall count seven full weeks, and then *on* the day after the seventh week, the *fiftieth* day, you shall present the new cereal offering to the Lord" (*The New American Bible*, 1970 edition).

If we begin counting the fifty days to Pentecost, "beginning *with* the day after the sabbath" (Sunday), then we will always wind up keeping Pentecost on the right day — on a Sunday — just as did Christ, His disciples and the Sadducean priests.

This year Pentecost will be on Sunday, May 26th. □

be offered. But you will search the entire Old Testament in vain to find one promise of eternal life given either to Israel or to the Gentiles. God's promises to Israel were primarily material, physical — rain in due season, plenty of corn and wine, physical health, material wealth — and, in addition, peace and happiness.

It is true, however, that God did grant salvation to a very few during the Old Testament dispensation — to such men as Abel, Enoch, Noah, the patriarchs, Moses and the prophets. But salvation was not offered to the masses. It was, however, prophesied to come later.

Who first brought immortality to light? "... Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought *life* and *immortality* to light through the gospel" (II Tim. 1:10).

Second, Jesus Christ did not try to save the vast multitudes while upon this earth — shocking as that may sound. He cast out demons, healed the sick, preached the gospel and went about "doing good." Christ plainly said that He spoke many of the parables in order to *hide* the true meaning from the multitudes — whom He was *not* calling at that time (Matt. 13:10-15).

Furthermore, Christ showed that He did not come to send "peace" on the earth at His first coming (Matt. 10:34). The Prince of Peace *will* bring peace to all mankind at His second coming in the not-too-distant future.

The eleventh chapter of Romans clearly shows that God is not now trying to save "all Israel." "God hath given them [Israel] the spirit of slumber... unto this day" (Rom. 11:8).

The Apostle Paul said "that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel *shall be* [future] saved..." (verses 25, 26).

During Jesus Christ's three-and-one-half-year ministry on this earth countless thousands heard Him speak, but very few really believed His message.

At the time of Christ's ascension

into heaven, there were only "about one hundred and twenty" disciples (Acts 1:15).

Why were there so few faithful believers at that time — after Christ's entire ministry of three-and-a-half years?

The answer is revealed only in the annual feasts — and in the Feast of Pentecost in particular.

God had ordained that the very first real "harvest of human souls" would occur *after* He sent the Holy Spirit to dwell within the believers. And remember that while Jesus walked on this earth as a mortal human being "the Holy Ghost [Spirit] was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39).

God had decreed, according to His great master plan of salvation, that the first real harvest of humans would begin on the Day of Pentecost, exactly fifty days after Jesus' ascension to heaven after His resurrection.

In ancient Israel, the Israelites could not "touch" or use any grain until the wave-sheaf firstfruits were offered up to God (Lev. 23:9-14). In fulfillment of this Old Testament type, no human could "touch" Christ until after His ascension and acceptance by the Father as the "firstfruits" of all humanity.

Christ told Mary: "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father" (John 20:17). This important event occurred on the wave-sheaf Sunday during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Before a single human could be saved (or reaped), Christ, as the first human wave sheaf, had to ascend to heaven in order to be accepted as the "firstfruits" of humanity by the Father.

Notice that Christ's disciples kept the Feast of Pentecost: "And when the day of Pentecost [the Feast of Firstfruits] was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues [languages], as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1, 4).

Christ had previously commanded the disciples: ". . . But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). They were to "wait for the promise of the Father," which was that Jesus would send the Spirit of God ("the Comforter") to guide them into all truth (John 16:7, 13).

We Are the Firstfruits

What does the Feast of Firstfruits (Pentecost) picture in the plan of God? It portrays this present New Testament Church age in which God is only calling out the "firstfruits" — a comparatively few in number. The vast majority of humans are still "blinded" — still deceived by Satan into following his way of deceit, hypocrisy, sin and death.

And so it was that on the Day of Pentecost (A.D. 31) the "firstfruits of the Spirit" came to dwell within the believers, transforming their lives from within so they could become the divinely begotten sons of God.

The period of time from Pentecost in A.D. 31 until the second coming of Jesus will constitute the "harvest of the firstfruits" unto God.

This is clearly taught throughout the entire New Testament. The Apostle Paul revealed that Christians have received "the *firstfruits* of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:23).

When Christ returns to this earth, the living and revived dead are to be caught up to meet Jesus in the air (I Thess. 4:13-18; I Cor. 15:51-54). When will this occur? At the *seventh* or "last trump" (I Cor. 15:52).

This same momentous event is described in Revelation 11:15-18. When the "seventh angel" sounds, God will give "reward [eternal life] unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great . . ." (verse 18).

These saints, given immortality at the second coming of Jesus Christ, are the very first to receive glorification as sons of God. They will com-

prise the "firstfruits" — the very first to be glorified with eternal life in God's everlasting Kingdom.

Among those who will comprise the firstfruits are the 144,000 mentioned in the book of Revelation: "These were redeemed from among men, being the *firstfruits* unto God and to the Lamb" (Rev. 14:4).

But who was to be the "first" of the "firstfruits" of all humans — the first to be raised from the dead to receive immortality?

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the *firstfruits*; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (I Cor. 15:22, 23).

Christ is called the "firstfruits" because He was the very first human to be "reaped" — to be changed from mortal to immortal, from human to divine.

We have seen that the 144,000 are also referred to as "the firstfruits unto God." During this Church age Christians receive freely of the "firstfruits of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:23).

Notice James' confirmation of this important truth: "Of his [the Father's] own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of *firstfruits* of his creatures" (James 1:18).

All converted believers during this New Testament Church age comprise the "firstfruits unto God."

Jesus Christ is called "the *firstfruits* of them that slept" (I Cor. 15:20). He is also called "the *firstborn* from the dead" (Col. 1:18), "the *firstborn* of every creature" (verse 15), and "the *firstborn among MANY BRETHREN*" (Rom. 8:29). This shows that others are to be born later. God's Church is called the "church of the firstborn" (Heb. 12:23).

If today's churches observed Pentecost (just as did Christ and the apostles), they would understand God's plan of salvation. They would realize that God is not *now* trying to save the world. He is merely calling out the "firstfruits" so they can be

used by Him to rule this earth during the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ.

The Only Day of Salvation

Some believe, erroneously, that this is the only day when salvation will be offered. "Probation" will soon be over, and all who have not accepted Christ, according to this teaching, will be forever lost. What colossal error!

"Behold, now is *the* day of salvation" (II Cor. 6:2). This verse is quoted from Isaiah 49:8, where it is rendered as "*a* day of salvation."

Now is certainly not *the only* day of salvation! Now is *a* day of salvation for the "firstfruits" — those who are called now to be the very first to receive salvation and to be changed from mortal to immortal at the second coming of Jesus.

If those who profess to follow Christ really followed His example — if they kept the Feast of Firstfruits (Pentecost) — they would realize that now is the time when only the "firstfruits" are being called out of the world. God now gives the "firstfruits" of His Holy Spirit only to those who are to be the *first* actually to be born into His family — born of the Spirit, with Godlike powers and prerogatives.

The second great harvest feast, the Feast of Ingathering (or Feast of Tabernacles), which occurs in the late summer and early autumn, pictures the time *during the millennium* (1000-year reign of Christ on earth) and a short period afterward. It is *then* that the whole world will receive their opportunity to learn of God — to repent of their sins and grow in grace and knowledge. And after a sufficient period of time, they, like the "firstfruits" of this New Testament Church age, will finally be clothed with immortality and eternal glory.

That is God's true plan of redemption, as taught from Genesis to Revelation! And how contrary to the popular teaching! But it is the plan, nevertheless, pictured in God's annual holy days. And had the

churches continued to keep these holy days, they would never have lost sight of this plan, and come under the deception of false religionists!

Follow Christ's Example

Unfortunately, many have looked on the Feast of Pentecost as "Jewish," and have therefore assumed they should not observe this important festival.

But Pentecost is not "Jewish." It is *God's* festival. God calls these commanded festivals "*feasts of the Lord*"; and He also says, "even these are *my feasts*" (Lev. 23:2).

Christ and the New Testament disciples and apostles understood that Pentecost was one of God's commanded feasts; and they kept it. Had they not kept it, they would have missed out — would not have received the "firstfruits" of the Holy Spirit on the "day of the firstfruits" — just fifty days after Christ's ascension to His Father after His resurrection.

Think about that for a moment. We are commanded to follow Christ's "example" (John 13:15) — to "follow his steps" (I Pet. 2:21).

Is it not time for all true Christians to get back to "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints"? (Jude 3.)

It is high time that Christians really began *following Christ*. He and His disciples kept *Pentecost* — and so should we.

Those who keep *Pentecost* understand that God is not *now* trying to save the world. The Feast of Firstfruits reveals that God is now calling out only a few (the "firstfruits") in order that they can partake of the "*better resurrection*" (Heb. 11:35) and live and reign with Christ during the soon-coming millennium.

For a complete exposition of the other holy days of God, be sure to request our free booklet *Pagan Holidays — or God's Holy Days — Which?* It explains in detail the meaning and importance of God's holy days in His master plan of salvation. □

How your Good News subscription has been paid

Jesus said, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached [and published — Mark 13:10] in all the world for a witness unto all nations" (Matt. 24:14) at this time, just before the end of this age. A price must be paid for this magazine, the Correspondence Course, booklets and other literature.

But how? Christ forbids us to sell it to those who receive it: "Freely ye have received, freely give," said Jesus to His disciples whom He was sending to proclaim His gospel. "It is more blessed to give," He said, "than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

God's way is the way of love — and that is the way of giving. God expects every child of His to give freewill offerings and to tithe, as His means of paying the costs of carrying the gospel to others.

We, therefore, simply trust the Living Christ to stir the minds and hearts of His followers to give generously, thus paying the cost of putting this precious gospel truth in the hands of others.

The faithful, tithe-paying members of the Worldwide Church of God and our ever-growing family of co-workers gladly give of their incomes that we may give this precious gospel to an ever-widening number of readers.

The living, dynamic Christ Himself enables us to send you this *Good News* magazine without charging a price. God's way is right — the way of giving to others.