

Day 49—Sabbath Before Pentecost

(The Harvest of God)

Fred R. Coulter—June 11, 2016

Greetings, brethren! Welcome to the Sabbath before Pentecost, day 49 in the count of 50 days to Pentecost!

As I mentioned in the May letter, all of the Holy Days are connected one with the other beginning with the Passover. There is a direct connection with counting Pentecost during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. That has to do with Jesus Christ, His crucifixion death, resurrection and ascension to heaven.

Here is the direct connection between the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His acceptance of the Father and going forward to the next most important day, which is Pentecost. Day 49 brings us right up to that point. We'll fill in the gap today from Unleavened Bread up through Day 49.

Leviticus 23:9: "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, "When you have come into the land which I give to you, and shall reap the harvest of it..."'" (vs 9-10). This was the harvest that the Canaanites had planted, but they reaped the harvest of it. God gave the children of Israel the land so it was *their* harvest.

One minister likes to say that you can't count that because the grain was in the hands of 'unclean' Gentiles. Well, God doesn't say that. He says *its harvest*.

"...then you shall bring *the premier* sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest" (v 10). This "...*premier* sheaf..." represents Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead. This is why the count for Pentecost always begins on the first day of the week *during* Unleavened Bread.

In case the Passover is on the Sabbath, remember the Passover Day itself is a day of unleavened bread, separate from the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days. So then, that would mean that the Holy Day would be on the first day of the week, which then the Wave Sheaf Offering would be waved and the count would begin at that point.

Verse 11: "And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD to be accepted **for you**..." This is interesting because the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is *for us!* He did it, and this is what this pictures.

"...On the next day after the Sabbath the

priest shall wave it" (v 11). Another very interesting thing is that the Hebrew here for Sabbath is 'ha Shabbat,' which is *the Sabbath*, the seventh day of the week.

So, if this is *the day after* 'ha Shabbat' then it is waved on the first day of the week. It has to be during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, not outside of it, afterward or before.

Notice the offerings that were to be brought, v 12: "And you shall offer that day when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb without blemish of the first year for a burnt offering to the LORD." This is a type of Christ, the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world, and it is a *burnt offering*, meaning wholly dedicated to God.

Was Christ wholly dedicated to God? *Yes, indeed!* He said, 'Of Myself I can do nothing! But the Father in Me, He does the works!'

Verse 13: "And its grain offering... [there's only one grain offering, too] ...*shall be* two tenth parts of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering made by fire to the LORD for a sweet savor.... [wholly burned] ...And the drink offering of it *shall be* of wine, the fourth *part* of a hin." The priest was to drink that, but that was part of indicating the shed blood of Christ.

What did we learn during Passover time? *Jesus said that He was the Bread of Life; we are to eat His flesh and drink His blood!* This is why He is the *first* of the firstfruits. This is why Jesus is also called *the Firstborn from the dead*. We'll see more about that as we go along tomorrow on Pentecost.

Verse 14: "And you shall eat neither bread, nor parched grain, nor green ears until the same day, until you have brought an offering to your God. *It shall be* a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings."

Interesting, isn't it? If they ate anything not dedicated to God, or before the harvest was dedicated to God, does this represent something like *false prophets? Could be!* We'll see as we go along, because we'll talk about the seven churches and we will see some of the problems that they had.

Verse 15: "And you shall count to you beginning with the next day after the Sabbath, beginning with the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; **seven Sabbaths shall be complete.**"

As I explained the May letter, each week was to be a full seven days.

Verse 16: “Even unto **the day after the seventh Sabbath** you shall number fifty days....” In years past they used to keep Pentecost on a Monday instead of on a Sunday. Tell me, on which calendar does Monday come after Saturday? A little thought for those who still believe it.

“...And you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD” (v 16). Now, we’ll pick it up here in v 17 tomorrow (Pentecost). What do these loaves represent? *We will see!* After the *premiere sheaf* was waved, they could start the grain harvest of barley and wheat, and it would last for seven weeks.

Jesus pictures the preaching of the Gospel and bringing people into the Kingdom of God comparable to a harvest. Let’s see what Jesus teaches concerning this, and how it’s a perfect example of in the world. Jesus talked to the disciples in parables, and He talked to the multitudes in parables, because ‘in seeing they couldn’t see, in hearing they couldn’t hear, and neither could they understand.’

There’s one key thing that you will hear through the Bible, that the key to understanding is *obeying God!* If you don’t obey Him, you won’t understand. The disciples came to Jesus after He had given the parable of the sowing of the seed, because they didn’t understand it.

Mark 4:10: “Now, when He was alone, those who were around Him with the twelve asked Him *about* the parable. And He said to them, ‘To you *it* has been given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God...’” (vs 10-11). Isn’t that something?

I want you to stop and think about how precious and how good this is, that *God gives us the knowledge of His secret, His secret plan!* This knowledge could not come until Jesus had come. That’s why there’s the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

“...but to those who are without, all things are done in parables; so that *in* seeing they may see, and not perceive; and *in* hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest they should be converted, and *their* sins should be forgiven them” (vs 11-12).

This is quite a statement, because this runs absolutely contrary to what Protestantism teaches, that everybody has to be saved *now*. If that’s the case, then why didn’t Jesus open this knowledge to the world? *Because in the plan of God He’s going to take care of this as we find out with the Last Great*

Day after the Feast of Tabernacles! They will be resurrected to a second physical life for a first opportunity for salvation.

We’re getting a little ahead of ourselves. But this is why. You come to Rev. 3 and the Church of the Laodiceans and they’re lukewarm. Jesus said, ‘I wish that you were either hot or cold.’ So then, because you’re neither hot or cold, ‘I’m going to spew you out of My mouth.’

So, those who don’t understand are in the area of cold. He’ll take care of them later. I might put it this way: While they’re in the grave, they’re in ‘cold storage.’

Verse 13: “And He said to them, ‘Don’t you understand this parable? Then how will you know all the *other* parables? The Sower sows the Word.... [the Sower is Christ] ...Now the ones by the way, where the Word was sown, these are the ones who hear, but Satan comes at once and takes away the Word that was sown in their hearts” (vs 13-15).

When they find out they’ve got to do this, they say, ‘I can’t do that.’ *It’s gone!*

Verse 16: “And the ones which were in like manner sown upon the rocky places, these are *the ones* who when they hear the Word, immediately receive it with joy; but *because* they have no root in themselves, they do not endure; when tribulation or persecution arises because of the Word, they are quickly offended” (vs 17-17).

‘I didn’t sign up for this!’ Stop and think about it. Didn’t Jesus sign up for death? Beginning with the creation of man and woman? *He sure enough did!* So, you don’t go down the road and say, ‘I didn’t sign up for this.’

Verse 18: “And those which were sown among the thorns, these are the ones who hear the Word, **but the cares of this life, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things that come into their lives choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful**” (vs 18-19). They’re:

- more worried about the things in the world
- more about trying to make money
- more about worried about trying to get ahead

rather than develop the *spiritual character* that they need!

Verse 20—let this be us: “Now, those which were sown upon the good ground, these are *the ones* who hear the Word and receive *it*, and bring forth fruit, one thirtyfold, and one sixtyfold, and one a hundredfold.” We will see about the fruit that we are

to bring forth. We will see the things that God wants us to do.

As a matter of fact, all the epistles—beginning with the general epistles and Paul’s epistles—tell us how we bring forth *spiritual fruit*.

Verse 21: “And He said to them, ‘Is a lamp *lit* to be put under a bushel basket or under a bed? *Is it* not rather *lit* to be put on a **lampstand**?’” We will see *lampstand* in Rev. 1; there are seven of them, and those picture the Churches.

Verse 23: “If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.” Notice what Jesus says next, because this is important for us to understand:

Verse 24: “And He said to them, ‘**Take heed to what you hear...**’” How many people get confused because when they come to the Word of God they have a preconceived notion in their mind? When they read it, or they hear it, they hear something entirely different that was never meant to be. Be careful how you hear!

“...for with whatever measure you use, it shall be measured back to you; and to those who hear, *it* shall be added” (v 24). So, the more you hear, obey, learn and do that’s how you grow. The reason it’s likened unto a harvest is because it’s just like a seed. That’s what it starts out as when we receive the Holy Spirit of God; *just like a seed!*

Verse 25: “For whoever has, to him shall *more* be given...” Why? *Because he’s shown him or herself responsible with the Word of God:*

- to use it properly
- to define it properly
- to believe it with all your heart
- to love God with all your heart

“...but the one who does not have, even that which he has shall be taken from him” (v 25).

Have you seen that happen to people? *Once they start off eating the wrong food*—the thorns and thistles and things like that—what happens to them? *That’s what we learned in the Feast of Unleavened Bread:* ‘a little leaven leavens the whole lump.’ So, the knowledge is taken away from them.

Verse 26: “Then He said, ‘The Kingdom of God is likened to this: *It is* as if a man should cast seed upon the earth.” Listen to this carefully, because this is still true today!

Verse 27: “And should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, **but he does not know how.**” Isn’t that an interesting statement?

It’s true today; we don’t know how when

you put a seed in the ground and you add water to it, it grows. Why does it grow? What does it grow into? *It’s always after its kind!*

It’s also true that some of the smallest seeds grow the biggest things! Some of the biggest seeds, like an avocado seed—that’s a big seed! Whenever I see an avocado with a seed in it and then I see a seed like the special package that I got of sequoia seeds and I also have some mustard seed, I ask: Why did God make that seed for the avocado so big? *Well, God knows what He’s doing!* Human beings look at it and think: If the seed weren’t so big there would be more fruit.

Jesus is talking about grain. So, the Church is likened to a harvest of a grain field. That’s why we have the Wave Sheaf Offering, Who was Christ. Then we have seven weeks of harvest, which we will see are the seven churches. Then we have the fiftieth day, which is tomorrow—Pentecost—and that has special meaning.

Verse 28: “For the earth brings forth fruit of itself, first a blade, then a head, then full grain in the head.” How does that happen? *God put it genetically into the seed to do it!* But also, it has to be taken care of.

Verse 29: “And when the grain is mature, immediately he puts in the sickle, for the harvest has come.” Now, here is something very interesting, too. You take grain, harvest it, how long can you keep it. Well, they found grain from Egypt nearly 4,000 years old. They took a grain of it, planted it and guess what? *It grew!* Think about that!

Isn’t that likened to those who come to the harvest and the harvest is there dying in the faith. Where are they put? *Into the grave, just like the grain of seed that is stored!* But what it is, the spirit returns to God and we will see about that with the Church of the Firstborn later.

Then God uses that for the resurrection! Same situation. It’s how you look at how the grain grows, you don’t know. How is God going to do that? *You don’t know! I don’t know! God does!* We will see that there is a fulfillment of this in Rev. 14, putting the sickle in because the harvest is ripe.

Verse 30: “And He said, ‘To what *then* shall we liken the Kingdom of God? Or with what parable shall we compare it? *It is* like a *tiny* mustard seed, which, when it has been sown upon the earth, is less than all the seeds that *are* upon the earth; but after it has been sown, it grows up and becomes greater than all the herbs, and produces great branches, so that the birds of heaven are able to roost under the shadow of it’” (vs 30-32); showing the growing of

the Kingdom of God, etc.

Again, the disciples didn't know what Jesus was talking about. I was channel surfing and I came to a religious channel and the one who was preaching said, 'I have to view everything in the Bible through the finished work of Christ.' Why did he way that? *Because he thinks that everything was done when Jesus died, and He said, 'It's finished!'* But that's not true! Let's see what Jesus said.

We won't turn to the Scriptures, but in His final prayer in John 17 Jesus said, 'I finished the work that you gave Me to do.' What was that? *That was the preaching of the Gospel!* That was calling and training the apostles and the disciples. Then when He was on the cross, just before He died He said, 'It is finished.' That means that the sacrifice that He was to give was finished and completed.

Now then, He was raised from the dead to also continue the spiritual work, just like Jesus said, 'I work and My Father works!' So, the work is not finished until you get clear to what Rev. 21 says, when Jesus proclaims after everything is over 'it is done!' whenever there's a finish, there's also a new beginning.

The disciples did not know about the plan of God as we understand it now. As a matter of fact, brethren, with the whole Bible and everything that we have, we are able to understand more about the plan of God than people have been able to understand down through history and time, even into the modern age because we have so many false prophets.

Jesus was talking to the woman by the well and the disciples came back and were going to have Him eat something, but He didn't eat and here's what He said:

John 4:34: "Jesus said to them, 'My meat is to do the will of Him Who sent Me...'" What is the will of God? *To love God! To obey Him!*

The work that Jesus had was to live a perfect life to become the sacrifice for the sins of the world, "...and to finish His work" (v 34). It's not finished until Rev. 21, but here is the start. Just like you take a grain of seed and put it in the ground and it grows.

Verse 35: "**Do not say** that there are yet four months, and *then* the harvest comes...." This was right around Pentecost time when this occurred in the chronology. "...*then* the harvest comes...." *Don't say that!*

There's the grain harvest first, and there's the latter harvest of everything else after that. That would be four months after Pentecost. Jesus wanted

them to understand about the grain harvest.

"...I say to you, look around. Lift up your eyes and see the fields... [the fields of grain] ...for they are already white to harvest. And the one who reaps receives a reward, and gathers fruit unto eternal life..." (vs 35-36). He's talking about the ministry that they would start.

"...so that the one who is sowing and the one who is reaping may both rejoice together" (v 36). That is at the resurrection!

- look at all the work that all the prophets have done look at all the work that Jesus and the apostles have done
- look at all the work that the Churches of God down through history have done
- look at the work that is being accomplished today
- look at what God is doing

The harvest for the firstfruits is not yet over!

Verse 37: "For in this the saying is true, that one sows and another reaps. I sent you to reap that in which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor" (vs 37-38).

Same way with us, everything that we have is the labor of someone else. Look at what William Tyndale did in translating the Bible from the original Hebrew and Greek into English. We're all dependant upon that. Every English Bible is at least 90% William Tyndale. We are working off of what he had. And even William Tyndale was so humble that he said, 'I know that there are other things that need to be understood concerning the translation, and that others after me will take care of it.'

What a wonderful thing for him to say. Look what God has blessed us with. So, that's quite a thing. The first harvest is a grain harvest.

Let's see another couple of parables. What tree did Jesus curse when He and the disciples were going to the temple? *A fig tree!* He cursed it in the spring, but that was before the fruit could be born. That fig tree represented Judaism, which didn't bring forth any fruit. The only fruit that was ever brought forth was through the Word of God, not through Judaism.

{Note book: *Judaism: Revelation of Moses or a Religion of Men?* by Philip Neal; that will open your eyes to understand so much in the New Testament.}

Jesus is likening it to a fig tree planted in a vineyard, Luke 13:6: "And He spoke this parable: 'A certain *man* had planted a fig tree in his vineyard;

and he came seeking fruit on it, but he did not find *any*. Then he said to the vinedresser, “Look *here!* For three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and have not found *any*. Cut it down. Why should it *continue* to waste *space in the ground?*”” (vs 6-7).

All right, here’s another answer: We must always be producing fruit! The way to always produce fruit is *never rest on what you have done!* What you have done is well and good. God knows! He understands! He’ll bless you! Rather look at what you have to do today and tomorrow and keep working forward. Never, *never, never* stand still, but never, *never, never* just sit there and not produce fruit.

Read the parable of the pounds and the parable of the talents. God expects us to work, continue to work and produce, and produce the spiritual fruits that He wants. That’s why we have life the way that we live, so that we can grow, change and overcome.

Verse 8: “But he answered *and* said to him, “Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig about it and put *in manure.*”” Put something in there to get it to grow, get it to produce. *Likewise with us!* What is derived out of the manure? *All of the nutrients necessary from the soil and the manure.* Of course, that’s all we are, just a pile of manure when you come to understand it. Isn’t that true?

Verse 9: “And *see* if in fact it will bear fruit; but if not, after that you shall cut it down.” This shows what we need to do. There may be times when we’re not producing. What do we need to do? *We need to get the Truth and the nutrients from the Word of God, with the Spirit of God so we can produce the fruit.*

Now, when we’ve done that, we are not to be like the man who said that he’s going to... Here’s another parable.

Luke 12:16: “Then He spoke a parable to them, saying, ‘The ground of a certain rich man brought forth abundantly.’” If there are a lot of things going on, a lot of fruit developing, and things are really working well...

Verse 17: “And he was reasoning within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to lay up my fruit?’ And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my granaries and build greater *ones*, and there will I lay up all my produce and my good things. Then I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many good things laid up for many years; take your rest, eat, drink, *and be merry*””” (vs 17-19). *NO!* We are not to do that!

Notice that whenever you think everything is going well, and you take it for granted and don’t thank God and don’t continue to produce, trouble will come! In this case for this man, v 20... It’s not going to take your life immediately, but sooner or later it will.

Verse 20: “But God said to him, ‘Fool, this night your soul shall be required of you; and to whom will you leave what you have prepared for yourself?’ So *shall it be* to the one who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (vs 20-21).

This is why we need to be rich toward God in spiritual fruit, growing in grace, knowledge and understanding. So, there’s a warning. Let’s look at another one; here it is likened to a building rather an ground and fruit. We’re the ones who are building.

This is quite a thing! This also tells us a very good aspect of how Paul looked at his ministry and thought of himself, etc. It’s not based upon a man, though there needs to be teachers and those who are helping, serving, doing and producing, that is true. However, we’re never to get all lifted up in how important we are. Paul says, who wrote 40% of the New Testament himself:

1-Corinthians 3:4: “When someone says, ‘I am of Paul,’ and another one *says*, ‘I am of Apollos,’ are you not carnal? Who then is Paul? And who is Apollos? *They are* but ministers through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to each one” (vs 4-5).

How do we view teaching? The way that we should view teaching is the way Christ views teaching. ***We are to grow and become as the Teacher, and the Teacher is Christ!*** That’s what’s important. “...*They are* but ministers through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to each one.”

- Who did the calling? *God did!*
- Who did the preaching? *Paul and Apollos!*
- Who gave the belief and understanding so they would repent? *God did!*

As Paul explains in 1-Cor. 4, all teachers, elders and ministers are stewards to bring forth fruit to God. Paul says that he’s a wise architect. Christ is the foundation, and no one can build on anything other than Christ.

Verse 6: “I planted *and* Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.” What makes people grow in grace and knowledge? *God’s Spirit!*

Verse 7: “Therefore, neither is he who plants anything, nor he who waters; for *it is* God Who gives the increase. Now, he who plants and he who

waters are one, but each shall receive his own reward according to his own labor” (vs 7-8).

- what the brethren do
- what we do with what God gives us
- what we do in teaching the brethren
- what they do with what they learn

it's all combined with God's Spirit

- we have our own labor
- we have our own work

God judges according to our works!

Verse 10: “As a wise architect, according to the grace of God that was given to me, I have laid *the* foundation, and another is building upon *it*. But let each one take heed how he builds upon *it*.” Very important! **How is your spiritual life?**

Verse 11: “For no one is able to lay any other foundation besides that which has been laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now, if anyone builds upon this foundation...” (vs 11-12). This is your personal relationship with God the Father and with Jesus Christ:

- How are you building on that foundation?
- Is it with love, joy, peace, zeal and understanding?
- What is it?

Or like we covered, sort of laid back and ho hum!

Paul likens it this time, instead of to plants, to precious things, “...gold, silver, precious stones...” (v 12). Those always remain true! In fact, when they're put to the fire of trials, they improve and get better.

Or “...wood, hay *or* stubble” (v 12). Those who build with wood, hay or stubble the fire is going to come, as Paul says, that you may be revealed, you may be saved.

Here's the key, v 16: “**Don't you understand that you are God's temple, and that the Spirit of God is dwelling in you?**” That's how we do what God wants us to do. This is what makes the Church *the Church*. Not the building, but the people and the spiritual quality of the brethren. That's what makes the Church.

Let's see another parable that Jesus gave in John 15. Here He likens it to a vine. Notice what He says and that God is involved directly in every one of our lives. What did He say concerning the Holy Spirit? *The Father and the Son, through the power of the Holy Spirit, are dwelling within us!*

You think about planting a seed and growing, and how that grows, that is a spiritual lesson that is most profound!

John 15:1: “I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman. He takes away every branch in Me *that* does not bear fruit; but He cleanses each one that bears fruit, in order that it may bear more fruit” (vs 1-2). That's the reason for every trial and difficulty that comes along, so that we can grow and get rid of the things that hold us back. We can put down the things that want to exalt us and so forth.

Verse 3: “You are already clean through the word that I have spoken to you.... [referring to the Passover] ...Dwell in Me, and I in you....” (vs 3-4). That's how it has to be! And the Father, as well.

“...As a branch cannot bear fruit of itself...” (v 4). It may stay green for a day or two, or maybe a week or two, but it can't bear fruit.

“...but only if it remains in the vine, neither *can you bear fruit* unless you are dwelling in Me” (v 4)—also dwelling in His love. That's the important thing.

We will see when we come to the seven churches (Rev. 2 & 3) that those who stray from the things that we have brought out here have difficulties and problems. But through the grace, mercy and Truth of God, they can repent and overcome and still be saved.

(go to the next track)

Before we get to Rev. 2 & 3 let's see about bringing forth fruit as Paul writes to the Philippians. Here is some good encouragement for us. Too many times we read the epistles and we forget the introduction, which is the most important.

Philippians 1:1: “Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, together with *the* overseers and deacons: Grace and peace *be* to you from God our Father and *the* Lord Jesus Christ” (vs 1-2). That's what we need, brethren—the grace of God and the peace of Christ—regardless of the circumstances around us. Always trusting in God and looking to Him for everything.

Verse 3: “I thank my God on every remembrance of you, always making supplication with joy in my every prayer for you all” (vs 3-4). Brethren, that's what we need to do:

- pray for each other
- pray for those who have needs
- pray for those who are new
- pray for those who have been in the Church a long time, that they may complete what they need to do in their spiritual growth

Verse 5: “For your fellowship in the Gospel from *the* first day until now... [this is the confidence that we need to have]: ...being confident of this very thing, that He Who began a good work in you... [Who is God the Father] ...will complete *it* until *the* day of Jesus Christ.... [His return and the resurrection] ...It is indeed right for me to think this of you all because you have me in *your* hearts, both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the Gospel, *and* you are all fellow partakers of my grace. For God is my witness, how I long after you all with *the* deep affections of Jesus Christ. And this I pray... [this is the fruit we need to bring forth] ...that your love may abound yet more and more in all knowledge and understanding in order that you may approve the things that are excellent, so that you may be pure and without offense unto *the* day of Christ” (vs 5-10).

Attain to the end! The one who is faithful to the end, that’s the goal! How?

Verse 11: “Being filled with *the* fruits of righteousness... [loving God and obeying God] ...which *are* by Jesus Christ, unto *the* praise and glory of God.”

Let’s look at the fruits of righteousness called here *the fruit of the Spirit!* The result of the Spirit of God working in our lives, in our heart and in our mind.

Galatians 5:22: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love...” Loving God with all our heart, mind, soul and being, and loving each other as Christ has loved us.

“...joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control; **against such things there is no law**” (vs 22-23). How do we develop these things?

- with the Word of God!
- with the Spirit of God
- with living
- with growing
- with overcoming

Just like any contract, read every word, because there may be a word that changes everything. I wonder how Protestantism has done that.

Colossians 1:1: “Paul, an apostle by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, to the saints...” (vs 1-2). We are saints; a saint is not some statue over St. Peter’s Basilica. Those are idols! A saint is someone who has the Spirit of God and is alive and well. *That’s us!*

“...and faithful brethren in Christ *who are* in Colossi: Grace and peace *be* to you from God our

Father and *the* Lord Jesus Christ” (v 2). Directly from God! That’s how it comes, through His Spirit to us. That’s an amazing thing when you come to understand it.

Verse 3: “We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying for you continually.” Brethren, as I write in my letters, I pray for you everyday, and special prayers for those who need special prayers.

I know that you’re praying for me and all of those who are working with us. I might just say this: There are three workers here who are really very devoted and dedicated and hard, hard workers. That’s the three women who work in the office: Kimberly, Bonnie and Terry. Everything that you receive comes through their hands. I just want you to know how hard they work. And all the rest of us, too.

Verse 4: “Since hearing of your faith in Christ Jesus, and the love that *you have* toward all the saints; because of the hope that *is* laid up for you in heaven...” (vs 4-5). Our hope and reward is in heaven with the return of Christ. That’s what we’re looking for!

Verse 6: “...and is bringing forth fruit...” the fruit that we just read: love, hope, joy, faith, meekness, longsuffering, etc.

“...just as *it is* among you, from the day that you heard and knew the grace of God in Truth; even as you also learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ for you; Who has also informed us of your love in *the Spirit*” (vs 6-8).

That’s what we need to have, brethren. Let’s end all the Church wars. Why should the brethren of Christ be fighting against each other? We don’t all have to join the same organization, but we do need to love each other. After all, we’re all going for the same thing—aren’t we? *Yes, indeed!* However, we will see why there are troubles in the Churches.

Verse 9: “For this cause we also, from the day that we heard *of it*, do not cease to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” Those are the fruits that God wants us to have. All of them! Put it altogether and that’s a full life! That’s a full slate of character qualities that come from God.

Verse 10: “That you may walk worthily of the Lord, unto all pleasing, **being fruitful in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God**... [What will happen with that?] ...being strengthened with all power according to the might

of His glory, unto all endurance and long-suffering with joy” (vs 10-11).

The thing that is so important with Paul is that he is always pointing toward the goal, and that’s what Pentecost pictures for us, as we will see tomorrow, *the first resurrection!*

Verse 12: “Giving thanks to the Father, Who has made us qualified for the share of the inheritance of the saints in the Light; **Who has personally rescued us from the power of darkness...**” (vs 12-13).

Let’s see something very important in Rev. 1 and how this is really quite a book; a single book that is the seventh division in the Bible. The reason that it is, is because it ties everything together. You cannot understand the book of Revelation unless you have a firm foundation of knowledge and understanding of the rest of the Bible.

Revelation 1:3: “Blessed *is* the one who reads, and those who hear the words of this prophecy and who keep the things *that are* written therein; for the time *is* at hand.” Guess what? If you do a study here, you will see everything:

- faith
- hope
- love
- resurrection
- commandment-keeping
- law-keeping
- trusting in God
- seeing how the world is
- the evil of Satan the devil
- the evil of men
- how it comes down to utter destruction

Men and women, because of the way of carnal minds and Satan in the world, are the most destructive things in the world. Think about that! ***All of the great good can be turned into great evil!*** And that’s what Satan has done!

We get a blessing for reading and hearing. By the way, we have it all read on a CD for you, and you can play it and listen to it. I know some people who listen to it over and over again. It turned out to be very, very inspiring, indeed! “...who keep the things *that are* written therein; **for the time is at hand.**” Technically, it’s always at hand, because we don’t know how long we’re going to live.

Verse 4: “John to the seven churches that *are* in Asia: Grace and peace *be* to you from Him Who is, and Who was, and Who *is* to come; and from the seven spirits that are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn

from the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him Who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to God and His Father; to Him *be* the glory and the sovereignty into the ages of eternity. Amen” (vs 4-6).

That says an awful lot! What an introduction, directly from God the Father and Jesus Christ to us.

Verse 7: “Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and **every eye shall see Him...**” We’ll see that tomorrow when He comes back.

Verse 8: “‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the Beginning and the Ending,*’ says the Lord, ‘Who is, and Who was, and Who *is* to come—the Almighty.’” That’s Who we are dealing with. God is granting us eternal life. He has His Churches, and the seven Churches are important. The seven Churches tell us what God is doing.

He says, v 11: “saying, ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, and what you see, write in a book...’” God wants it written down; that’s why we have the Bible written down.

If you have it in your computer, or on your smart device—by the way, all you have to do is go to ‘apps’ and download the whole Bible right into your smart device or smart phone, and you’ll have it with you wherever you go, the whole Bible in its original order!

Think about the way that the Word of God has been published and in the world today, and available in so many different ways, you go back and think about what Jesus Christ said: ***‘And this Gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the world to all nations as a witness and then the end shall come!’***

I’m here to tell you, brethren, it is going to be a great and fantastic witness, not only in the things that are going to transpire, but in the Word of God that He has sent to us and to the world.

- ***to us*** so that we can grow in grace and knowledge, and be in the first resurrection
- ***to the world*** so that they can understand that there is a God Who is sending Jesus Christ back to rule this world

“...‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, and what you see, write in a book, and send *it* to the churches that *are* in Asia: to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.’ And I [John] turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw **seven golden**

lampstands” (vs 11-12)—in a circle; and Christ in His power and glory standing in the middle of it.

Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, and no man! Someone needs to tell that to the pope. Well, I’m sure that Christ will tell that to him.

John was so taken aback at seeing Christ and His power that he “...fell at His feet as dead...” (v 17). Just think! We’re going to have glory very similar to what Jesus Christ has. This is why He starts out the book of Revelation the way that He does, so that we can have our mind on what we are called to do: where we’re going and how we need to get there. That’s why the message starts out first with the churches.

Verse 13: “And in *the* midst of the seven lampstands *One* like *the* Son of man, clothed in a *garment* reaching to the feet, and girded about the chest with a golden breastplate. And His head and hair *were* like white wool, white as snow; and His eyes *were* like a flame of fire... [righteous, piercing and powerful] ...and His feet *were* like fine brass, as if *they* glowed in a furnace; and His voice *was* like *the* sound of many waters. And in His right hand He had seven stars, and a sharp two-edged sword went out of His mouth, and His countenance *was* as the sun shining in its *full* power” (vs 13-16).

That’s something! Think about our calling! Think about the fact that Paul wrote that ‘we will see Him as He is’; we will have a body of glory like He has. We’ll find out more about that tomorrow on Pentecost.

Verse 17: “And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as if dead; but He laid His right hand upon me, saying to me, ‘Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last, even the One Who is living; for I was dead, and behold, I am alive into the ages of eternity. Amen...’” (vs 17-18). He was the Firstborn from the dead.

Sidebar: If the authorities and people could have found the body of Christ, don’t you think how powerful that would have been to prove that He was a fraud? However, since they couldn’t find the body of Christ,

- that proves that He was the Son of God
- that proves every word that He said was true
- that proves that He alone has life to give to His brethren

“...And I have the keys of *the* grave and of death. Write the things that you saw, and the things that are, and the things that shall take place hereafter” (v 18-19). He wanted it written down!

Verse 20: “The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, *is this: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches; and the seven lampstands that you saw are the seven churches.*”

That is the light of the lampstand to preach the Truth to the world and to Church and the brethren. In the Bible we have prophecies of all the major nations of the world. What is the most important thing out of everything from the time of Christ until now? *His Church! The saints who will become the sons and daughters of God!*

That’s the most important thing! This is why Rev. 2 & 3, because God first deals with His Church, and in this case *churches*—seven aspects of the one church—because that’s the most important thing that needs to be taken care of first. The seven churches in prophecy and timing apply this way:

1. to the literal seven churches that were in Asia
2. prophetically down through time until the return of Christ
3. prophetically at the end of the age, the seven churches as God views them

One mistake that men make is that if they have an incorporated church they claim that ‘this is *the* Church.’ **NO!** God has many churches, and He views it as one from His throne in heaven and Christ at His right hand.

There are seven major aspects of the Church. How God views it from heaven is entirely different in how we view it down here on earth and look around and see the organization. So, we also have another aspect of the seven churches: it talks about the seven aspects of:

- attitudes
- problems
- difficulties
- interaction with each other
- fighting against Satan
- fighting against false prophets
- being faithful to God
- being lukewarm

Let’s examine it! Let’s examine the seven churches! One other aspect of the seven churches is important:

- ***We are the harvest, the grain harvest!***
- ***We are the firstfruits!***

How many weeks to the harvest was there? or *spiritually* is there? *Seven weeks!* Very interesting, isn’t it? All of this leads to *the resurrection!* What we are looking at here is another

definition, the spiritual definition of the seven aspects of the harvest of God of His Churches.

What it does is tells us the things we need to do and the things we should not do, and how He is there:

- to help us
- to encourage us
- to lead us to repentance

so that we can overcome. He says one thing important, *'I know your works!'* He judges us according to our works, which are the fruit that we produce that we've covered.

Ephesus:

Revelation 2:1: "To the angel of **the Ephesian Church**, write: 'These things says He Who holds the seven stars in His right hand, Who walks in *the* midst of the seven golden lampstands. **"I know your works..."**" He says this to every one of them.

"...and your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot bear those who are evil; and *that* you did test those who proclaim *themselves* to be apostles, but are not, and did find them liars" (v 2).

Deut. 13 says that if there is a false prophet that God allowed that false prophet to *test us if we will remain faithful to the Word of God!* The children of Israel were to take that false prophet or prophetess out and execute them, because they had the administration of death in addition to the spiritual aspect of the laws and commandments of God.

We don't have that, so Paul gives us the instructions; let's see what he says. Today we cannot execute false prophets. Today we have to get away from them. That's why the Church is scattered:

- because of false doctrines
- because of false teachings
- because of false prophets
- because of men who exalt themselves over the brethren

1-Timothy 6:3—Paul writes: "If anyone teaches any different doctrine, and does not adhere to sound words, *even those* of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine *that is* according to Godliness... [which comes from loving God and obeying Him] ... he is proud and knows nothing. Rather, he has a morbid attraction to questions and disputes over words, from which come envy, arguments, blasphemy, wicked suspicions, vain reasonings of men who have been corrupted in *their* minds and **are destitute of the Truth...**" (vs 3-5).

We have lived through the time when those men stuck into the Church just exactly as Paul prophesied; that there would come 'ravening wolves' into the Church, 'devouring the flock.' We've experienced that.

"...—*men* who believe that gain is Godliness. From such withdraw *yourself*" (v 5). That's what we are to do! Get away from the false teachers! Don't get around them.

That's one of the reasons we have Church at Home, because there is so much false doctrine out there being taught, it is incredible! ***The Truth today in this world***—though it's available nearly everywhere because of all of the high technology that we have—***is very hard to find.***

Revelation 2:3: "And *that* you have borne *much* and have endured, and for My name's sake have labored and have not grown weary; nevertheless, ***I have this against you...***" (vs 3-4). Christ is always looking to His Church, and He sees what needs to be changed and overcome.

- Why is this so important?
- Why is in the first Church?

"...that you have **left your first love**" (v 4).

- What is the first love?
- What is the first and greatest commandment?
- *Loving God with all your heart, mind, soul and being!*

They left that to do things that appear good and charitable and are not contrary to the Word of God, but are not loving God directly in a personal relationship.

Verse 5: "Therefore, remember from where you have fallen, and repent, and do the first works; for if *you do* not, I will come to you quickly; and I will remove your lampstand out of its place unless you repent."

- How important is Truth, righteousness and keeping the commandments of God?
- How important is guarding the Truth?
- How important is guarding the doctrine?

We have to do that!

I talked to a man, via e-mail, who is over in Britain. He just accepts the four Gospels and he does away with the Epistles of Paul. Amazing thing!

Verse 6: "But this you have: that you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate." There are two things about the Nicolaitans:

1. **hierarchy**: ruling over the brethren, oppressing them
2. **libertinism**: if you are righteous, even though you're living in sin, it will not affect your salvation

That's why God hates it!

Now notice this all the way through, and He says this to every church, v 7: "**The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches. To the one who overcomes I will give the right to eat of the tree of life that is in the midst of the paradise of God.**"

Smyrna:

Let's note here that there are only two churches that did not need correction: the Smyrneans who gave their lives, faithful unto death; being chased and imprisoned by Satan the devil and receiving persecution for ten years, which then shows that this escalates down into time. But, if you're faithful in those conditions, it says that ***you are rich, even though you are poor!***

What's going to happen when all of these great marvelous wonderful conveniences that we have today are brought down to nothing? What will we do then? *Think about that!*

Verse 11: "**The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death.**"

The next two churches are by far the two churches that get into the deepest trouble of all:

Verse 12: "And to the angel of **the Church in Pergamos**, write: 'These things says He Who has the sharp two-edged sword.... [God's Word, His Truth that cuts away at sin] ...I know your works and where you dwell, where the throne of Satan is....' (vs 12-13). That's pretty much like today. Satan is everywhere!

Let's put it this way: You're living Rome! Hard not to be affected by that! Notice that because of that, they had some difficult problems:

"...but you are holding fast My name, and did not deny My faith, even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells" (v 13).

When Christ died, the Church began to have problems. What did they do? *They began* "...to eat things sacrificed to idols..." (v 14). This was not just animal sacrifices, this was what today is known in the Catholic Church as the *sacrifice of the Mass*.

You could write volumes on that. How blasphemous that is, and how far from God that is.

"...and to commit fornication.... [*spiritual fornication* by idolatry] ...Moreover, you also have *those* who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, **which thing I hate**. Repent!...." (vs 14-16). Notice that things are so bad with these kinds of churches, that God says to:

Verse 16: "Repent! For if *you* do not *repent*, **I will come to you quickly, and will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**" Then it talks about the one who overcomes.

So, there needs to be some repentance! Brethren, you are responsible. If you are in a church where you have a hierarchy, where you have men that exalt themselves over you—as Paul says, 'beat you in the face'—and mistreat you... There are some Churches of God that are so harsh, terrible and unloving that some people have even committed suicide!

- What do you think God's judgment against them will be?
- What do you think God's judgment will be against the people who stay there?
 - ✓ don't withdraw themselves as Paul instructed
 - ✓ be abused and ruled over

Think about that!

Thyatira:

Instead of getting better, the next church even got worse. It's interesting that the Seventh-Day Adventists connect themselves to the Church at Thyatira. They're so infiltrated with Jesuitism that they have many splits and schisms, as well. Even some of the splits keep the holidays.

But within the Seventh-Day Adventists today, outside of the Sabbath, it's just exactly like any Protestant Church with a whole lot of Catholicism in it, because they let false teachers in.

Verse 18: "And to the angel of **the Church in Thyatira**... [v 19]: ...I know your works, and love, and service, and faith, and your endurance, and your works; and the last *are* more than the first. But I have a few things against you, because you allow the woman Jezebel..." (vs 18-20)—the daughter of the high priest of Baal who married Ahab the king of Israel. Where is sun-worship and Baalism today? *In the Roman Catholic Church!*

Read this and this is what God thinks about it. If you think these words are harsh, try the two-

edged sword that God brought against Pergamos.

“...who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants into committing fornication and eating things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her fornication, but she did not repent” (vs 20-21). That time of repentance came during the Council of Trent. They didn’t repent!

Did you know that with the Council of Trent, which lasted for decades and decades, there was a part within the Roman Catholic Church that wanted to go with only Scripture. That’s what the Protestant said ‘sola Scriptura’: Scripture, and Scripture alone!

But when it came to Sunday, *no, no, no*, they didn’t repent! To this day one of the most difficult things with the Church of England is that with the king or queen is the head the church, just a different pope.

Didn’t repent! Since the Protestants didn’t go back and keep the Sabbath, that’s why we have in Appendix N: Rome’s Challenge to the Protestants. Read it!

Sidebar: All the commentary and appendices in *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* are to help you understand the Bible even more. I hope you read and study those. That will give you a lot of information that will help you grow and overcome, and will help you when you come back and study the Scriptures and be able to help you understand even more.

Verse 22: “Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation...” That happened! What was Europe like during that time? *Terrible!*

“...unless they repent of their works. And I will kill her children with death...” (vs 22-23). Is that the second death, because if you kill someone they’re dead. But if you kill them “...with death...” how can you kill someone without death? So, this has got to be the *second death in the Lake of Fire!*

“...and all the churches shall know that I am He...” (v 23). Listen carefully, because we’re not dealing with men, we’re not dealing with women, we’re not dealing with churches and organizations; ***we’re dealing with God the Father and Jesus Christ!*** Notice what He is doing constantly. All the churches should know, all the churches—this is a message to *all the churches*:

“...Who searches *the* reins and hearts...” (v 23). God knows the innermost part of your thought work and your process of what you think and

believe. The reason that He knows it is because *no man can know!* That’s why He’s called *the heart-knowing God!*

“...and I will give to each of you according to your works” (v 23). The works that we are to keep.

Verse 26: “**And to the one who overcomes and keeps My works unto the end, I will give authority over the nations.**”

Sardis:

Historically speaking, the Church at that time was just completely exhausted.

DVD: *Israel of the Alps* (produced by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church). {can be found on YouTube} Get it and watch it and you can learn a lot from it. That’s actually in the modern time when the SDA began. That will be a real lesson for you. You can understand why the Church of God went for such a long time with just the Sabbath and Passover and never went into the Holy Days. Some of them did down through time; there were those who kept the Holy Days and so forth. They were there even in the 19th century in the 1800s. There were those who kept the Holy Days.

This one is very important because it says, Revelation 3:2: “Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, which are about to die. For I have not found your works complete before God.”

What you have is the minimum. The Church of Sardis is the minimum. We shouldn’t settle for the minimum, we need to go to the maximum. The maximum is the next one: Church in Philadelphia

Verse 3: “Therefore, remember what you have received and heard, and hold on *to this*, and repent. Now then, if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you shall by no means know what hour I will come upon you. You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with Me in white because they are worthy. The one who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments...” (vs 3-5).

Philadelphia:

Everyone wants to profess to be a Philadelphian. Listen, if you’re faithful to God and if you love God and keep His commandments, you very likely are a Philadelphian! But let me tell you this:

Do you think that with the attitude of the Philadelphians—because they *faithfully keep the Word of God, faithfully love God and Christ loves*

us—that they are so lifted up in vanity that they would profess that they are the ‘Church of Brotherly Love’ and beat up on all the members? *No way!*

Verse 10: “Because you have kept the Word of My patience, **I also will keep you from the time of temptation...**” I sent out a sermon on that recently: *Temptation to Try the Whole World* (Rev. series #26). When you read that you can see that the Philadelphia Church, the Church of Thyatira and the Laodicean Church are the most active in the end-time.

Laodicea:

Then we won’t go into the Laodiceans because they’re ‘lukewarm.’ If you’re lukewarm you’d better either get cold or hot as Jesus said, you better come to Christ, because He’s there knocking.

Verse 20: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” He says to be zealous and repent.

Verse 21: “To the one who overcomes will I give *authority* to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne.”

So, ends the messages to the seven churches. The seven weeks of harvest leading to Pentecost are equivalent to the seven eras of the Church and how God views the churches through the perspective of the seven churches.

Rev. 4 is a foretaste of the resurrection. We will pick that up tomorrow.

Scriptural References:

- 1) Leviticus 23:9-16
- 2) Mark 4:10-21, 23-32
- 3) John 4:34-38
- 4) Luke 13:6-9
- 5) Luke 12:16-21
- 6) 1 Corinthians 3:4-8, 10-12, 16
- 7) John 15:1-4
- 8) Philippians 1:1-11
- 9) Galatians 5:22-23
- 10) Colossians 1:1-13
- 11) Revelation 1:3-8, 11-12, 17, 13-20
- 12) Revelation 2:1-2
- 13) 1 Timothy 6:3-5
- 14) Revelation 2:3-7, 11-16, 19-23, 26
- 15) Revelation 3:1-5, 10, 20-21

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Revelation 14; 21

- 1 Corinthians 4
- Deuteronomy 13
- Revelation 4

Also referenced:

- Book: *Judaism: Revelation of Moses or a Religion of Men?* by Philip Neal
- DVD: *Israel of the Alps* (produced by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church) {can be found on YouTube}
- Sermon: *Temptation to Try the Whole World* (Rev. series #26)
- Appendix N: Rome’s Challenge to the Protestants (*The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version*)

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