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GOD'S SEASONAL PLAN

Man's fascination with spiritual ritual is endless. Archaeology, history, sociology and other disciplines deal with the superstitions and myths of societies which have disappeared. Museums around the world are laden with the religious figurines, idols, icons, and jewelry of buried civilizations. From their studies of these religious artifacts, archaeologists glean much information about the people who made and used them. Isn't it strange that man's fascination with the mythological seemingly deliberately overlooked the rich typology seen in God's annual Sabbaths given to ancient Israel?

Egypt, Babylon, Rome; the Mayans, Aztecs, Iroquois, Cheyenne, or the savages of Papua, New Guinea—all have been the subject of intense study of religious idolatry, myth, and superstitions. In a recent issue of National Geographic dedicated to the 500th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of "India," dozens of mythological figures of America's aboriginal inhabitants were featured. How many times have you been told a fraction as much about the God-given picture of God's plan for humanity as revealed through the seasons and God's harvest festivals?

By Garner Ted Armstrong

They believed that the 'Great Coyote' created the heavens and earth," drones the tour guide, informing gaping tourists about the superstitions of ancient savages. Placards in museums explain the use and purpose of various religious artifacts unearthed in Babylon or Egypt, in China or darkest Africa.

Children in elementary school are taught about the religious beliefs of pagan societies from the South Pacific to North America, about their decorative tattooing and its religious significance, or about their practices of human sacrifice.

When was the last time you heard, either in a school classroom, or from the pulpit, about the beautiful picture of God's great plan for mankind as revealed in His harvest festivals He gave to ancient Israel? If your answer is "never," perhaps you should ponder what God said through Jeremiah: "For pass over the isles of Chittim [Cyprus], and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing.

"Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.

"Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Eternal" (Jeremiah 2:10-12).

Historians know much about ancient, bygone civilizations from religious artifacts. As God charged, these nations, who worshipped false, non-existent "gods" NEVER

CHANGED those gods down through centuries and centuries of mythological, superstitious religious practice. Countless tens of thousands of helpless human beings have been slain as a sacrifice to a completely fictitious "god" who "demanded" such of his or her worshipers. Pagans have clung tenaciously to utterly false gods for thousands of years. Has China departed from Buddhism? India from Hinduism? Loyalty seems common among pagan religions.

Yet, God's own people have turned away from the one true God, away from the beautiful, detailed, seasonally-revealed picture of His plan for the human family, embracing purely pagan myths, instead! Do you doubt this? What are some of the pagan myths gleefully accepted by modern, space-age "Christian" societies?

Annual "Holidays": What Do They Picture?

Which is the chief so-called "Christian" holiday? Why, "Christmas," of course. Christmas means, simply, the "Mass of Christ." The Catholic Encyclopedia admits, "Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the church" (Vol. III, p. 724), and explains, "The well-known solar feast, however, of Natalis Invicti, celebrated on 25 December, has a strong claim on the responsibility for our December date" (ibid., p. 727, emphasis mine).

History documents that the Roman Catholic Church did not settle upon the final date for the "Mass of Christ" as Christ's birthday until perhaps five centuries after Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.

Christmas is connected with purely pagan ceremonies: sun worship, ancient Roman festivals, and even more ancient Babylonian mysteries. You will find that holly wreaths, mistletoe, bulbs and orbs, trees, "Old St. Nick," and many other trappings of Christmas are utterly pagan in origin!

The little tree represented Nimrod, or Tammuz—the "sun-god." Bulbs and orbs were fertility symbols, hanging on the tree, which is found as an object of worship throughout Europe and Asia.

Yet, for all its paganism, Christmas is eagerly embraced by countless millions in the professing Christian world as the birthday of Christ; a time to exchange gifts, have family reunions, enjoy roast turkey or goose; a time replete with its own nostalgic music, feelings of good will, and hospitality.

For those wealthy enough to enjoy it, Christmas comes with a marvelous sense of excitement: anticipation of wondrous gifts, family and neighborhood parties around the tree, with egg-nogs and "Tom and Jerrys" helping create the feelings of cheer and camaraderie. Of course, there is always the chance of a stolen kiss beneath the mistletoe at the neighbor's house (all the while remaining blissfully ignorant that mistletoe was viewed by the pagan Druids of Ireland as an aphrodisiac, a fertility symbol) for those who have imbibed enough to be experiencing "Christmas cheer."

On the other hand, for those who cannot afford such things, Christmas is a time of painful contrasts—a poverty-ridden, hungry, sad time of deprivation, cold, homelessness, and despair. It is a time of desperation for America's "street people," the homeless. It is a time when suicide statistics soar; a time of horrifying highway death and injury—a riotous, frenetic, crowded, frenzied outburst of spending, shopping, traveling, drinking, partying, eating; a time when America's retailers either succeed or fail. For many, 50-75

percent of the year's profit margins depend on Christmas spending.

From a child's point of view, what does Christmas teach?

To be sure, the wise men who journeyed to the house where Jesus was during His first year brought expensive gifts. Three types of gifts are mentioned, giving rise to the myth there were only three of them. There could have been a dozen, or any number. They did not come to the manger, but to the house (Matthew 2:11) where the "young child" (not "baby") was. They then gave their gifts to Christ. They did not exchange gifts among themselves. Few people know the truth of the events surrounding Jesus' birth. Few know He was very likely born at the end of September, and nowhere near December 25th, which was a pagan celebration.

How much of your childhood Christmas experience evokes thoughts of the purpose of human life? To be sure, the "spirit of giving" is taught, which is positive. That Christ was truly born, and came into the world as Savior, is positive. Family togetherness is positive. But how much does Christmas, with its pagan symbols of sex, fertility, and Babylonian mysteries; tree worship, and Druidic myths, teach you about your reason for being here, what you are, why you are here, and where you are going?

The Four Seasons

Pagan feasts revolved around the seasons. They were based upon celestial observations, the summer and winter solstices, the vernal equinox. Most pagan holidays were essentially harvest festivals. Pagans prayed to their "invincible sun" (invictus solis) in the depths of winter to begin "his" journey further north once again, putting an end to winter, and bringing the springtime, and new growth.

The springtime festival of Ishtar, the pagan goddess of sex and fecundity of the ancient Babylonians (pronounced "Easter," with a long "ee" sound on the "I" and a silent "h.") was in thanksgiving for the advent of the spring, the end of winter, and new life. It was celebrated with a plethora of mythological ritual: rabbits, for their rapid procreation; eggs, as the source of life and the pagan concept of the beginning of creation; the "bous," or symbol of Tammuz (Nimrod), represented by the Ox, and cakes to Semiramis, Nimrod's mother-wife, and high priestess of the Babylonian mystery religion, as the "queen of Heaven." Such cakes, called "boun," or "bous," featured a cross, as a solar symbol, and were baked in honor of "Ishtar," or "Ashtoreth," and are seen today at "Easter" (Ishtar) time as "hot cross buns."

What did you learn, as a child, about your purpose for being here, the plan of salvation, from "Easter"?

Your parents probably told you it was about the resurrection of Christ. Perhaps you went to a sunrise service, faced the rising sun as a minister chanted or prayed. Then there was the excitement of wonderful new clothes—yellows, greens, and whites, the colors of springtime—white patent-leather shoes for little girls; "Easter" (Ishtar) bonnets, parades, and, of special excitement to little children, "Easter egg" hunts! Cuddly little bunnies and eggs. How cute. How wondrous. How nostalgic.

But not one child in a million was taught that the rabbits and eggs were sex symbols; that sunrise services were conducted in sun worship; that "Easter" means "Ishtar," or "Ashtoreth," the pagan goddess of sex and fertility.

Consider next the frivolous, capricious, demoniacal trappings of "Halloween." What

is Halloween? Even the spelling has been altered, as the passing years and obfuscating tradition contrive to obscure the true, pagan symbolism of this most transparent of all the pagan harvest festivals.

Originally, the word was spelled, "Hallowe'en," which meant "The Eve of All Hallows," or "All Saints Day." Were you taught this as a child? Catholics often celebrate the day of their favorite saint, perhaps the "saint" after which they were named. When the calendar was filled with 365 names, a convenient date was chosen, our November 1st, as a day for "All Saints." Many Central and South American countries feature towns and villages named "Todos los Santos," meaning, "All Saints."

However, Halloween is not an invention of the Catholic Church, but an adaptation of an ancient, pagan festival. "Though now known as little else but the eve of the Christian festival, Hallowe'en and its formerly attendant ceremonies long antedate Christianity" (Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th Edition, Vol. XII, p. 857). History proves most of the superstitions connected with Halloween, including "apple ducking," and the like, are purely Druidic, from the pagan priests of pre-Christian Ireland.

The pagan Greeks and Romans celebrated a fall harvest festival in honor of their goddess "Pomona," which featured apples and nuts. Since the Druids believed "Saman," or Samhain, or Shaman, the "lord of the dead" (Satan), consigned the departed souls of people to the bodies of animals as punishment for wickedness, it was natural for them, in their darkened, pagan superstitions, to imagine it necessary to attempt to placate Saman with offerings, and to attempt to frighten away wicked spirits with "Jack o' lanterns."

Halloween features symbols of witchcraft, demonism, and death. What does it teach little children? The common practice of "trick or treating" is nothing more than children playing the part of Saman and his demons, approaching homes, demanding an "offering" of candies and the like in return for refraining from vandalizing the house!

Today, people festoon their houses and yards with "ghost decoys," in blissful ignorance. Are they attempting to attract "ghosts," or demons? Naturally, were you to make such a suggestion, a neighbor who has festooned his yard with Jack o' lanterns, witches, black cats and plastic ghosts would look at you in utter amazement, and wonder if you had gone crazy.

It would not seem "crazy" to the neighbor to decorate his home and yard with symbols of Satan, demons, and death.

Do modern space-age Americans, Canadians, Britons and many other nations actually "believe" they are frightening away evil spirits by pieces of white plastic hung in trees, or orange leaf bags with hideous faces, "Jack o' lanterns," placed on their lawns. Of course not. They are "innocently" mimicking pagans, entering into the "spirit of Halloween."

Perhaps you have not realized Halloween is the most important annual festival to Satanists. You will be astounded at the rank paganism associated with this fall harvest festival!

These three—Christmas, Easter, and Halloween—are probably the most important among "Christian" holidays. Then there is "Valentine's Day," also rooted in paganism, with connections to Nimrod; and other days, like "New Year's" day, in the middle of a dead winter; "Groundhog Day," and many, many more. Among them all, only "Thanksgiving" stands out as a celebration one may safely assume God endorses.

For Americans to gather around a bounteous table, giving thanks to God in

commemoration of the early Pilgrim's practice of doing so is surely a wonderful thing to do, and has no pagan connotations.

But why, in all your church-going and religious experience, have you never been told about the rich, CHRIST-centered, NEW Testament meanings of God's annual Sabbaths given to Israel and Judah? Let's investigate the first one, the Passover.

The Passover and the Exodus—Pictures of Christ

When God called His nation out of slavery under Moses, it was for the express purpose of "sacrificing the 'Passover'" (Exodus 3:18; 5:1-3; Exodus 12).

Egypt is a type of sin. As ancient Israel was living as captive slaves in Egypt, so each one of us has lived as a slave to our appetites; to this world, with its false, vanity-ridden, materialistic values; held captive by the sway of Satan, who is the present world ruler (II Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2; Revelation 12:9).

Pharaoh is a type of Satan. Moses appears in two distinct shadowy roles: (1) as a type of God the Father, calling His people out of sin, breaking the grip of Satan, and granting repentance. Also, Moses typified the Father in giving the law of God from Mount Sinai. (2) As a type of Jesus Christ: as the shepherd of God's people, leading them from Egypt; as the advocate for the people before Pharaoh (Satan); and as a "redeemer," conveying them out of slavery, toward freedom.

Moses and Aaron are also seen as shadowy types of the future "two witnesses" of Revelation 11. Continually, Moses and Aaron went before Pharaoh (type of Satan), performing miracles (see Revelation 11:4-6). Pharaoh's two magicians, Jannes and Jambres (types of the "beast and the false prophet" of prophecy [Revelation 19:19-20]), empowered by Satan and his demons, counterfeited the miracles until the plague of the lice, when they were forced to admit, "This is the finger of God."

The perfect, helpless little sacrificial lamb is a type of Jesus Christ (Isaiah 53:7). The shed blood of the lamb on the lintels and door posts of the Israelites' houses is a symbol of Christ's shed blood atoning for our sins, causing the penalty of death (Romans 6:23) to pass over those who call upon Christ for forgiveness.

The death angel symbolizes God's judgments against unrepentant sinners who will not obey God (Ezekiel 9:2-11; Revelation 14:17-20). The "firstborn" are to be sanctified to God. Instead, the Egyptian firstborn, and everyone else, was lost in the most repugnant idolatrous paganism. God reaped a bitter harvest of the firstborn of Egypt as a terrible penalty for sin, but spared Israel as the "firstfruits" unto God from the earth, His own chosen people, protected under the symbol of the blood of Christ.

Once God had broken the hold of Pharaoh over the Israelites, they were hastily thrust out of Goshen. In like fashion, when one repents, receives baptism and God's Holy Spirit, former friends—sometimes even beloved family members—have no further use for a person whose new understanding makes them uncomfortable. Instead, they attempt to dissuade such a repentant sinner from accepting God's truth, talk them out of it, make them feel "out of step" with the rest of society.

When Israel was hemmed in by the wilderness, facing the Red Sea on one hand, Pharaoh's army pursuing to the rear, and steep mountains on both sides, it typifies the newly-repentant sinner contemplating baptism, as a symbol of the burial of the old man; the washing away of sin in the waters; the resurrection of the "new man," or the "new

creature in Christ," to live a new and different life, free from sin.

Satan and his minions do not give up easily. As Pharaoh's armies pursued Israel, so do former friends, habits, appetites, moods and attitudes attempt to overtake the repenting sinner.

Moses had to say, "Stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Eternal!" at the Red Sea.

By a stupendous miracle, Israel walked through the Red Sea bed dry shod! When Pharaoh and his army assayed to follow, they were drowned. Paul wrote, "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers passed through the sea; and were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat [manna]; and did all drink the same spiritual drink [water, brought forth from the rock miraculously. Christ is the rock; the water is a symbol of God's Holy Spirit]: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (I Corinthians 10:1-4).

When Israel passed through the Red Sea, a Christ-centered, New Testament type, or picture, of God's plan of redemption and salvation took place. Notice how Paul mentioned their miraculous sustenance on manna, which God sent down from heaven.

The Israelites were commanded to eat the Passover with "unleavened bread," called the "bread of haste," bread which was flat, plain—not light and fluffy, puffed up. Immediately following the Passover were the Days of Unleavened Bread.

God commanded them, "In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's Passover.

"And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the Eternal: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread" (Leviticus 23:5,6).

Leaven, as an agent which spreads throughout moist dough, and which causes bread or cakes to rise when baked, lending a light, airy texture, was pointed out as a type of sin. Jesus said, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees" (Matthew 16:5-12).

Unleavened bread, on the other hand, pictured sinlessness; humility, an absence of vanity, pride, and sin. Christ said, "I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

"This [pointing to Himself] is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:48-51).

Do not all Christian-professing churches believe in Christ as Savior? Then why do they never teach the rich meaning of God's annual holy days—the plan of redemption and salvation centering around Christ and His sacrifice as pictured in each of God's annual Sabbaths?

Can anything be more New Testament oriented than the meaning of the Days of Unleavened Bread?

Yet, nominal Christendom remains totally ignorant of these days. Years ago, when God's people gathered on church grounds near several small towns in East Texas, local restauranteers were amazed and incredulous when they learned why.

"The days of WHAT?" they asked. When representatives of the church explained,

informing the restaurants that none of these thousands of people would be eating regular bread for a week, but eating "hard tack" or "matzos" instead, the people of the local towns, mostly Baptist, Methodist, Church of Christ, or Pentecostal, shook their heads in dumbfounded amazement.

Quickly, they lay in stocks of unleavened bread.

That autumn, the same church group was to return to the church grounds to observe the Feast of Tabernacles. In careful preparation, all the local restaurants and grocery stores once again ordered large stocks of unleavened bread. They were shocked when not one single person asked for it, but wanted regular bread, instead!

This true story serves to illustrate the point.

There is an incontrovertible anti-Judeo BIAS among professing Christianity! From the earliest moments in the first century, when many Gentiles—Greeks, Romans, and others—were being converted, when the church wrestled with the problem of circumcision (Acts 15), a gradually increasing anti-Jewish bias began to emerge.

This rejection of all things Jewish took quantum leaps over the passing centuries. Though Christ Himself was Jewish, and though the apostles and the vast majority of the early church were Jewish, the Gentile leaders of the apostate church of the second and third centuries threw out the baby with the bath water: rejected God's Sabbath day; rejected God's annual Sabbaths; changed the date for the observance of the Passover, and called it "Ishtar" (Easter), instead; embraced the purely pagan festivals of Roman idolatry, such as Christmas, and effectively stamped out all knowledge of God's holy days.

Finally, during the days of Constantine, who had "converted" from sun worship to apostate "Christianity," the then visible church (God's true church had been forced "underground" by horrible persecutions) issued a decree that Christians were not to be found "Judaizing" by observing the Passover on the 14th of Abib, but were ordered to observe Easter, instead!

Is there anything "Jewish" about the CHRIST-centered meaning of the Days of Unleavened Bread? No, nothing. Yet, you have not heard sermons preached in the Sunday-observing churches explaining the rich types and shadows of God's holy days as they pertain to repentance, baptism, the receiving of God's Spirit, the Second Coming of Christ to set up His Kingdom, the binding of Satan, and the final great resurrection.

Today, the Christian-professing world is lost in a sea of ignorance about God's plan! Embracing the pagan doctrines of the "immortality of the soul," and "going to heaven when you die," they fail to understand the plan of God as revealed in the progression of the seasons—fail to understand the truth about God's mercy upon the darkened races of Gentile nations who have never heard the Gospel.

More Bible Types Revealed

The next holy day following the Days of Unleavened Bread is the "Feast of Sabbaths," or the "Feast of Firstfruits," which became named "Pentecost," meaning "fiftieth," by the Greek speaking world.

Why "fiftieth"?

Because the high priest was to cut the very first sheaf of grain on the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread. This meaningful ceremony pictured the

first of the firstfruits; the very first sheaf of the springtime barley harvest.

It pictures the RISEN CHRIST, now "cut off" from the world, ascending to the Father in heaven. The ceremony became known as the "wave sheaf" offering, since the priest would select a sheaf of the grain, harvest it, and then wave it toward heaven in thanksgiving to God.

God said, "And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, 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 shall ye number fifty days..."

(Leviticus 23:15,16).

Christ ascended to His Father on a Sunday, after being resurrected late Sabbath afternoon. The wave sheaf pictures CHRIST, as the FIRST of the "firstfruits" of God's righteous harvest of the earth.

The number seven pictures perfection. Seven times seven symbolizes complete perfection. Built around the land sabbaths and the year of release was the Jubilee. This shadowy type of the Kingdom of God is found in the seven sabbaths (49 days) which were to be reckoned until the fiftieth day (Jubilee), which was the Feast of "Sabbaths," or "Firstfruits."

The firstfruits pictures God's righteous harvest from among mankind from the time of Christ until the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:1-5; 11-15).

Is anything more richly rewarding to a farmer than seeing the fruits of his labor coming from his land, the early grain harvest of abundant food—giving thanks to God for rain in due season, for the new wealth coming forth from the soil?

God's springtime holy days picture repentance, acceptance of Christ's shed blood, allowing Christ to dwell within us through His Spirit (by eating unleavened bread for seven days), and shows us that we are part of an early harvest, a "firstfruits" unto God (James 1:18). It also shows us that God is not trying to save the whole world now, that there is to come a later, fall harvest unto God.

This is a vitally important point, for the vast majority of professing Christians simply do not understand the schedule of events in God's plan. If they knew the beauty of His plan as revealed seasonally through His annual Sabbaths, they would never suppose most of the world is lost forever, never believe that God could be so cruel as to punish, in a blazing hell fire, little oriental infants who have never so much as heard the name of Christ.

Ample biblical proof exists to demonstrate that Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, not only kept God's annual Sabbaths, but taught Gentile converts to do so.

He wrote to the Corinthians, "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"

"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened [a clear contradiction of terms, unless he plainly means they were observing the Days of Unleavened Bread, for he had just told them they were "leavened," meaning they were guilty of sins which needed to be purged, or expunged. When he said "as ye are unleavened," it can only mean that they received this missive during the Festival of Unleavened Bread, that they were keeping it!]. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us:

"THEREFORE LET US KEEP THE FEAST, not with old leaven, neither with the

leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (I Corinthians 5:6-8).

Can anything be plainer?

Paul instructed these Gentile Christians in the large Gentile city of Corinth to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread!

Not only did the Feast of Sabbaths picture the risen Christ, and the firstfruits unto God, it also foreshadowed the momentous events on the Day of Pentecost, explained in Acts, the second chapter.

How appropriate that the Feast of "Firstfruits" unto God should fall on the very day God sent His Holy Spirit to this earth, as Christ promised! (John 16:7).

Though many Protestants celebrate "Whitsunday," they do so 50 days after Easter (Ishtar), not 50 days from the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Many myths and traditions sprang up surrounding "Whitsunday." The Church of England formerly celebrated three days surrounding it, and in May, 1871, the British government declared "Whitmonday" a legal bank holiday.

Those who keep God's annual holy days know that Pentecost is the birthday of the church, the Christian festival in commemoration of the great events on that original Pentecost when the Holy Spirit, with a loud, roaring sound like a rushing wind, filled all the room where the apostles and others were assembled, when the apostles appeared to have flaming crowns of fire atop their heads.

Nearly 30 years following Christ's resurrection, Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, wrote to the Gentile church in Corinth, "But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost" (I Corinthians 16:8).

Trumpets and Atonement

When was the last time you heard a sermon expounding all these rich, detailed types and shadows of Christ, of salvation, as revealed through God's annual holy days? If you are among the majority, you will probably answer, "Never!"

Yet, all the annual Sabbaths given to Israel convey to our minds part of the detailed tapestry that is God's great plan of redemption and salvation.

Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread, and Pentecost all come in the springtime. Just before the fall comes the Feast of Trumpets. God said, "In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a Sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation" (Leviticus 23:24).

The trumpet was Israel's means of communication. Study Numbers 10:1-10 for further details. To assemble the people, trumpets were blown. They were blown as "officers' call," just as in the military, to cause this or that tribe to march, or to herald the arrival of special occasions. They were blown as an announcement—to say, in effect, "ATTENTION, everyone!" They were blown as an alarm if an enemy was approaching, and blown on solemn holy days.

In a sense, the trumpet was ancient Israel's "radio and television," for it was a means of instant, mass communication.

God's prophetic messages clearly show that God announces each great intervention of God by the sound of a trumpet (Revelation 8:6). Christ said, "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and

they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

"And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to another" (Matthew 24:30,31).

Though this final trumpet blast occurs suddenly, God shows that the process of calling out God's elect from this earth over many decades is also typified by the blowing of a trumpet!

"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sin," wrote Isaiah (Isaiah 58:1). Christ said, "And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14), and told His disciples, "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops" (Matthew 10:27).

The primary focus of the Feast of Trumpets is the return of Jesus Christ to this earth. God says, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep [die the first death], but we shall all be changed,

"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump [the last of all the trumpets listed in Revelation, the same trumpet call to which Christ referred]: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (I Corinthians 15:50-52).

Today, God sends out His announcement of Christ's coming Kingdom through His church, through the preaching of the Gospel, through proclaiming the sins of our peoples, through witnessing, warning, forth-telling, inviting people to repent!

But the time is coming when God will no longer speak through human voices, but will cause mighty angels to blow on ear-splitting trumpets! Then, the whole world will hear! The final trumpet blast heralds Christ's Second Coming as KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS to rule this earth with a rod of iron (Revelation 2:26; 3:21; 19:11-16).

The emphasis on the Feast of Trumpets is mostly prophetic! It focuses mainly on Christ's coming and the resurrection, but also foreshadows the announcement God is sending to mankind through His church, through the preaching of the Gospel of Christ as a witness and a warning!

Then comes the only commanded fast day of the year, the solemn Day of Atonement.

God said, "Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation [a commanded assembly] unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls [lives]..." (Leviticus 23:27).

In a solemn ceremony on this day of fasting, when God commanded Israel not to eat or drink from sundown of the previous day until sundown on Atonement, the high priest enacts a fascinating, meaning-laden ritual. Study Leviticus the 16th chapter to understand all the types.

Two goats were to be presented. One was "for the Eternal," and the other an "Azazel," erroneously called a "scapegoat." The "Azazel" goat was to have all the sins of Israel symbolically placed upon its head, and then was to be led in the hands of a "fit man" who would not allow the goat to turn back into the distant wilderness, where it would be released.

One goat was sacrificed, symbolizing an atonement for sin, a shadow of Christ's

impending sacrifice. The other was to be allowed to wander in the wilderness, bearing, figuratively, the sins of Israel upon it (Leviticus 16:21).

Only once in the year was Aaron, and the high priests to follow him through the centuries, to enter into the "Holy of Holies" in the tabernacle (later, the temple). The ninth chapter of Hebrews explains the deep meaning of this ritual. Paul wrote, in part, "But into the second [the Holy of Holies] went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:

"The Holy Spirit this signifying, that the way into the holiest [type of heaven, and God's presence] of all was not yet made manifest, while as yet the first tabernacle was yet standing...But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

"Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us..." (Hebrews 9:7-12).

The sacrifice on the Day of Atonement was extremely elaborate. The priest had to carefully wash and dress, had to sacrifice an animal for his own sins, had to sprinkle blood upon the book and the people (Hebrews 9:19).

In this elaborate ritual, accomplished on a day of fasting, one sees the terrible consequences of sin. God has decreed that the penalty for sin is death (Romans 6:23). Yet, He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, as the "Lamb of God" to die for the sins of you and me, for all mankind—to atone for sin so that those who call upon Christ are symbolically covered by His shed blood, their sins forgiven.

To be sure, the ancient ceremony of Atonement was a bloody one. Now, see the whole picture: The high priest was a type of Christ, entering "through the veil" that separated the outer holy place from the "Holy of Holies," a type of heaven itself. The veil in the temple split when the miraculous earthquake struck at the moment of Christ's death, signifying that Christ's death had made it possible for mankind to have direct access to God the Father through Christ!

The "Azazel" goat is not a type of Christ, but a type of Satan! Notice: "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit [the abyss: see Jude 13] and a great chain in his hand.

"And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years" (Revelation 20:1,2). This angel was pictured by the "fit man" selected to take the goat over whose head the sins of Israel were confessed into a trackless wilderness, and there release it, alive.

Thus, God shows we have all had a partner in sin! This goat is not a "scapegoat," for God places guilt where guilt squarely belongs! The Hebrew word "Azazel" comes from a word meaning "fierce, mighty, rough, or strong," such as "rough goat." It means, literally, "the rough goat that is sent out."

Thus, the detailed ceremony of the Day of Atonement shows the necessity for Christ's sacrifice to atone for sins; shows how His death opened the way into God's presence in heaven itself; shows how Satan will finally be bound, unable to deceive the nations any more.

Paul wrote, "Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.

"And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

"It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

"For Christ is not entered into the holy place made with hands, which are the figures [types, pictures] of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

"Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year [on the Day of Atonement!] with blood of others...but now once in the end of the world [age] hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Hebrews 9:21-28).

Do you see how these rich New Testament truths were pictured so ceremoniously, so richly, and in such detail, by the accompanying rituals of the annual holy days?

WHY, then, do the churches utterly ignore these annual Sabbaths? Why have you not heard the Christ-centered, New Testament meaning of God's annual holy days?

Now for one of the richest of all—the fabulous fall harvest festival, the Feast of Tabernacles, followed by the "Last Great Day."

The Feast of Ingathering

At the time of the great fall harvest season, God set His "Feast of Tabernacles." The word "tabernacle" merely means "booth," or "kiosk," a temporary domicile. God said, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

"Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord.

"On the first day shall be an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein...Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath.

"And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days.

"And ye shall keep it a feast unto the Lord seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month.

"Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths:

"That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

"And Moses declared unto the children of Israel the feasts of the Lord" (Leviticus 23:33-35, 39-44).

Notice that the Feast of Tabernacles, or little "booths," was coincident with the time of the gathering in of the fruit of the land—a festival which emphasized the harvest.

Notice also that God said the purpose for their dwelling in these little tabernacles or temporary domiciles for seven days was so that they would remember that God "made the children of Israel to dwell in booths...."

All you really learn from this scripture, standing by itself, is that God said they were to "dwell in booths" so they would remember that God made them to "dwell in booths."

It is only when one looks at all other relevant scriptures concerning the meaning of

dwelling in temporary domiciles; only when one considers the Feast of Tabernacles in light of its logical seasonal progression, viewing it from the perspective of all the other annual Sabbaths, that the rich, detailed, inspiring picture of the meaning of the festival of temporary booths, or tabernacles, becomes clear.

God reveals that He has placed within each human being the "spirit in man," or the human spirit, which, while it has no separate consciousness or intelligence apart from the brain, it is nevertheless spiritual.

Paul wrote, "The spirit itself [God's Holy Spirit] beareth witness with OUR SPIRIT that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16). All of us are endowed with the human spirit. This entire eighth chapter of the book of Romans says a great deal about how God's Holy Spirit is to dwell inside our mortal bodies.

Jesus said we are not to fear man, who after he has destroyed the body, cannot destroy the "soul."

The traditional concept of the "immortality of the soul" misses the mark by a wide margin. There is no separate, intelligent, feeling, living "soul" which departs the body at death.

That there is something which is spiritual in connection with the human brain which man cannot destroy is obvious from Christ's words. Christ said, "...fear not them which kill the body [Greek: soma] but are not able to kill the soul [Greek: psuche]: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna" (Matthew 10:28). Notwithstanding the fact that the traditional concept of the "immortal soul" is erroneous, it is clear from Jesus' words that there IS something spiritual in connection with the human mind which man simply cannot destroy.

That is why the Bible speaks of a complete conversion by the receiving of God's Holy Spirit.

Paul put it this way, "...put off concerning the former conversation [conduct] the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind: and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-24).

Few have understood that God is begetting children, that a new spiritual life is engendered within each human being who repents and receives God's Spirit. Plainly, it is "created." Conversion—receiving the begetting of the Holy Spirit—is not merely a change in attitude or outlook; not turning over a new leaf, or making minor adjustments in life style. It is the creation of a new creature in Christ!

He wrote to the Colossians, "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

"And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him..." (Colossians 3:9,10).

Paul also wrote, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17). The word for "creature" is used for "creation" in many instances.

To be sure, there IS something "spiritual" about each human mind.

Almighty God is reproducing after His own kind. Creation was not completed in the Garden of Eden—only begun, in physical prototype.

God is the author of all life, Creator, and Life Giver. God has created the process of reproduction in all species of life, and is the Inventor and Designer of human procreation.

You will come to understand the beautiful analogy of human reproduction; where you came from; the miracle of human birth as it portrays the spiritual begetting, and ultimate spiritual rebirth into the very family of God.

What has this to do with the Feast of Tabernacles? Everything!

As Christ showed, though man can destroy this mortal, temporary body, he cannot destroy the real you!

Notice how the apostle Paul expounded this beautiful concept: "...we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

"But we have this treasure [and it is real treasure, the priceless truth of eternal life] in earthen vessels [our physical bodies], that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (II Corinthians 4:6,7).

Paul went on to explain, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish [the aging process, and the ultimate fate awaiting every human being, death] yet the inward man [the new "creature in Christ"] is renewed day by day.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

"While we look not of the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; [like a temporary domicile, or "booth" made of branches, leaves and other materials, which will soon perish] but the things which are not seen are eternal.

"For we know that if our earthly house of this TABERNACLE were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

"For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

"If so be that being found clothed we shall not be found naked.

"For we that are in this tabernacle [the new creature in Christ, dwelling temporarily in these physical bodies] do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality [this human body, this temporary existence] might be swallowed up of life" (II Corinthians 4:16-18; 5:1-4).

What a beautiful analogy. Notice how many times our physical bodies are likened to a "tabernacle," or a little booth, a temporary dwelling place.

The apostle Peter put it this way: "Yea, I think it meet [fitting], as long as I am in this tabernacle [Peter, the "new man in Christ" living in his human, physical body], to stir you up by putting you in remembrance;

"knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, [knowing his death was approaching!] even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me" (II Peter 1:13,14).

Can anything be plainer?

The apostle Paul plainly wrote, "There are also celestial [heavenly] bodies, and bodies terrestrial [earthly, of the flesh]: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another...so also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

"It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body...as is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the

heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

"And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (I Corinthians 15:40-49).

-End-

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The Garner Ted Armstrong Evangelistic Association

P.O. Box 747

Flint, TX 75762

Phone: (903) 561-7070 • Fax: (903) 561-4141

[E-Mail: info@gtaea.org](mailto:info@gtaea.org)

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