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Dear Brethren,

The Feast of Pentecost is just around the corner, set this year for May 24. As members of body of Christ, we especially look forward to this festival. After all, it points not only to the first resurrection—to our becoming immortal spirit beings at Jesus’ return—it also pictures the marriage of Christ to His affianced wife, the Church.

With that in mind, we must endeavor to learn all we can about this vital high day.

The Coming Great Pentecost

God’s holy days are indispensable components of His master plan. From that perspective, no one holy day or festival is more important than another—for each one is vital to the whole. Indeed, where would we be without that all-important starting point—the Passover, which allows for forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God. And the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which emphasizes our commitment to change and our need to fight against the sin in our lives.

But for Christians, the Feast of Pentecost is special in the sense that it represents the *culmination of our journey* into God’s kingdom and our marriage to Jesus Christ. (Of course, the fall high days have their place and meaning too—but they deal primarily with the end of the age and the actual establishment of God’s kingdom.)

So Pentecost—originally known as the “feast of firstfruits”—is indeed special to God’s people. We read in Revelation 19: “Let us be glad and shout with joy; and let us give glory to Him [God]; for the marriage of the Lamb has [now] come, and His wife [the Church] has made herself ready” (verse 7). This is a profound passage—and it has everything to do with Pentecost, the Church’s marriage to Christ—at the first resurrection.

Pentacost at Sinai

Let’s go back in time to Israel’s ancient journey to Mt. Sinai following their release from captivity in Egypt. From the time Israel left Egypt, crossing the Red Sea on the last day of Unleavened Bread, they reached Mt. Sinai in the third month, some 47 days later. Keep in mind that only Passover and Unleavened Bread had been enjoined upon Israel at this point. All the other holy days would not come into effect until Israel had “come into the land” of promise (see Lev. 23:10-16; 25:2; etc.). This means that even though Israel approached Sinai at the time we would later call Pentecost, they had no knowledge of such a day. In a way, Israel “kept” Pentecost without even knowing—because what happened anciently at Sinai was a *type* of what will yet occur between Christ and the Church (bride) at Jesus’ return.

The apostle Paul writes that many of the events and teachings of the Old Testament are to serve as an “example”—the Greek means a *type* or a *figure*—to the saints, upon whom the end of

the age has come (I Cor. 10:11). In other words, the *physical type* often points to a greater *spiritual reality*.

As shown from Exodus 19, in the third month after the children of Israel had left Egypt, they encamped at the base of Mt. Sinai. Moses was instructed by God to have the Israelites “sanctify themselves *today* and *tomorrow*, and be ready for the *third day*”—for God was coming down to speak directly to them on the third day. Indeed, on the morning of day three, God came down and began revealing the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20).

This was the very day that would later be known as Pentecost!

Days later, as we see in Exodus 24, a covenant was made between Israel and God. In fact, a *marriage* was taking place between the God of Israel and the nation. This marriage was a *type* of the coming marriage between Christ and the Church. Moreover, there were some interesting elements to the events that occurred just after Pentecost. For example, Moses and the leading men, along with 70 elders, went up the mountain where they saw a beautiful “sea of glass.” Notice: “And Moses went up, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. And they saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the heavens in clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hands. Also they saw God, and ate and drank” (Ex. 24:9-11).

This “sea of glass” may serve as a *type* of the “sea of glass” mentioned in Revelation 15:2. (More on this later.)

Pentecost in the New Testament

Typically, God uses His feasts and holy days as benchmarks as He fulfills His will and purpose, often involving powerful historical—as well as spiritual—events. As we have seen, God personally spoke the Ten Commandments to the children of Israel in an awesome display of power and glory **on the day of Pentecost** (Ex. 20:1-17). To begin the New Testament era, God again **used the day of Pentecost** with an awesome demonstration of power as He granted the Holy Spirit to His Church.

On the day of Pentecost, in the morning, when the apostles and disciples were assembled together in a meeting room on the Temple grounds, God sent the Holy Spirit upon them in a unique display of spiritual power. “And when the day of *Pentecost*, the fiftieth day, was being fulfilled, they were all with one accord in the same place. And suddenly *there* came from heaven a sound like *the* rushing of a powerful wind, and filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them divided tongues as of fire, and sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with *the* Holy Spirit; and they began to speak with other languages, as the Spirit gave them *the words* to proclaim

“Now *there* were *many* Jews who were sojourning in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. And when word of this went out, the multitude came together and were confounded, because each one heard them speaking in his own language.... And they were all amazed and greatly perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’ ” (Acts 2:1-6, 12).

By the power of His Holy Spirit, God miraculously caused the apostles to speak simultaneously in a multitude of languages. Thousands of Jews and proselytes from all over the world heard the apostles powerfully preach the message of God about the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ—each in their *own* language!

Because God had placed His name and presence in the Temple in Jerusalem, He likewise began the Church there. This was the reason He sent the Holy Spirit in the way that He did on this particular holy day. Had it been done in any other location, no one would have believed that this was an act of God. However, the manner in which God poured out His Spirit—in the presence of *multiple thousands* of Jews and proselytes assembled at the Temple observing Pentecost—left no doubt that this was a powerful act of God. It was clearly His personal, divine interven-

tion—not the work of men. This amazing display of God’s power also provided the spiritual seal of authority confirming the apostles as His called and chosen witnesses.

At that time, Peter stood up to preach a dynamic message about the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. After convicting his audience in conscience, he called on them to repent toward God for their sins that led to the death of the Messiah: “ ‘Therefore, let all *the* house of Israel know with full assurance that God has made this *same* Jesus, Whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.’ Now after hearing *this*, they were cut to the heart; and they said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?’ Then Peter said to them, ‘**Repent and be baptized each one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for *the* remission of sins, and you yourselves shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**’ ” (Acts 2:36-38). As a result, three thousand were baptized and added to the Church on that momentous day of Pentecost in 30 AD, the day the true Church of God began.

Pentecost and the First Resurrection

There is also a tremendous *prophetic aspect* to the Feast of Pentecost. God will again use this feast to fulfill His will and purpose at Jesus’ second coming. Christians are called spiritual “firstfruits” (James 1:18), and the harvest of the spiritual firstfruits is at the end of this age (Matt. 13:18-43; Rev. 14:14-16). This spiritual harvest, as pictured by Pentecost, will be a resurrection to eternal life for all who are called and chosen. This is the first resurrection at Jesus’ return (I Cor. 15:20-23; Rev. 20:6).

Paul draws a special comparison between the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai and the assembling of the resurrected saints as they meet Jesus Christ. He emphasizes how much greater this event will be when compared to what the children of Israel had experienced: “For you [the Church] have not come to *the* mount [Sinai] that could be touched and that burned with fire, nor to gloominess, and fearful darkness, and *the* whirlwind; and to ***the* sound of the trumpet**, and to *the* voice of *the* words, which those who heard *begged* that *the* word not be spoken *directly* to them. (For they could not endure what was being commanded: ‘And if even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned, or shot through with an arrow’; and so terrifying was the sight *that* Moses said, ‘I am greatly afraid and trembling.’)

“But you [the Church] have come to [spiritual] Mount Sion, and to *the* city of *the* living God, heavenly Jerusalem; and to an innumerable company of angels; ***to the joyous festival gathering*** [Pentecost resurrection]; and to *the* church of *the* firstborn [the firstfruits of God], registered *in the book of life* in heaven; and to God, *the* Judge of all; and to *the* spirits of the just who have been perfected; and to Jesus, *the* Mediator of *the* New Covenant; and to sprinkling of *the* blood of *ratification*, proclaiming superior things than *that of* Abel” (Heb. 12:18-24).

The prophetic significance of the trumpet blown on Pentecost is that it pictures the “last trumpet”—blown at the time of the resurrection of the saints. Jesus Himself foretold this: “But immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. 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 upon 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 *the* other” (Matt. 24:29-31).

Paul also declared that the first resurrection to eternal life would occur at the *last trumpet*: “And as we have borne the image of the *one* made of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *one*. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit *the* kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all fall asleep, but **we shall all be changed, in an instant, in *the* twinkling of an eye, at the last trum-**

pet; for *the* trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruptibility, and this mortal must put on immortality. Now when this corruptible shall have put on incorruptibility, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory’ ” (I Cor. 15:49-54).

In Paul’s first epistle to the Thessalonians, he wrote that the first resurrection takes place at the *last trumpet*: “But I do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, that you be not grieved, even as others, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, in exactly the same way also, those who have fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say to you by *the* Word of *the* Lord, that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall in no wise precede those who have fallen asleep because **the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first;** then we who are alive and remain shall be **caught up together with them in the clouds for the meeting with the Lord in the air;** and so shall we always be with *the* Lord” (I Thess. 4:13-17).

The book of Revelation confirms that the *last trump* is the *seventh trumpet*—when the first resurrection takes place: “**Then the seventh angel sounded his trumpet;** and *there* were great voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become *the* kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign into the ages of eternity.’ And the twenty-four elders, who sit before God on their thrones, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, ‘We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, Who is, and Who was, and Who *is* to come; for You have taken *to Yourself* Your great power, and have reigned. For the nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and **the time for the dead to be judged, and to give reward to Your servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to all those who fear Your name, the small and the great;** and to destroy those who destroy the earth’ ” (Rev. 11:15-18).

The Great Sea of Glass

At the first resurrection—which will occur on Pentecost—angels will carry the saints to a gigantic “sea of glass” in the clouds over Jerusalem to meet Christ. “And I saw a **sea of glass** mingled with fire, and those who had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, *and* over the number of his name, **standing on the sea of glass**, having *the* harps of God. And they were singing the song of Moses, *the* servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, ‘Great and awesome *are* Your works, Lord God Almighty; righteous and true *are* Your ways, King of the saints. Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For *You* only *are* holy; and all the nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been revealed’ ” (Rev. 15:2-4).

Thus the **joyous festival gathering** of the saints begins! It starts on the “sea of glass” in the sky over Jerusalem—where anyone on earth can witness it. Then this gathering of the resurrected saints—still on the vast “sea of glass”—moves to the very *gates* of the *Third Heaven*. This is where our actual marriage to Christ will be held, along with the subsequent wedding supper—with God the Father there at the gates. Finally, Christ Himself will usher His new bride *inside* the Third Heaven, taking us before the Father on His glorious throne.

Seven things will take place on this “sea of glass” before Christ and the saints return to the earth to establish the Kingdom of God:

- 1) The saints will receive their new names (Rev. 2:17).
- 2) The saints are given their rewards (I Cor. 3:8; Rev. 11:18; 22:12; II John 8).
- 3) The saints will receive their assignments as kings or priests (Rev. 20:6).
- 4) The marriage of the Lamb and His bride will take place (Rev. 19:6-8).
- 5) The marriage supper will take place (Rev. 19:9; Matt. 22:1-13).

6) The saints will witness the seven last plagues poured out—the vengeance of God (Rev. 15:5-8; 16:1-21; Psa. 149:4-9).

7) The saints will be gathered into God’s army to fight with Christ and return to establish the Kingdom of God on the earth (Rev. 19:11-21; Zech. 14:1-9).

Thus, the Word of God reveals that just as God *began* the Church on Pentecost by sending the Holy Spirit, He will *complete* the harvest of His Church—the spiritual firstfruits—on Pentecost. On that day, God will resurrect from the dead all the righteous saints—from Abel, the first martyr, to the Two Witnesses, the final martyrs. In the resurrection they will all be changed in the twinkling of an eye and given glorious, immortal bodies as the spiritual sons and daughters of God the Father. “[W]e are waiting for *the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; Who will transform our vile bodies, that they may be conformed to His glorious body*, according to the inner working of His own power, *whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself*” (Phil. 3:20-21). As glorified spirit beings, they will shine as the stars of heaven (Dan. 12:1-3; Matt. 13:43).

The saints will share the same eternal existence and glory as Christ: “The Spirit itself bears witness conjointly with our own spirit, *testifying* that we are *the* children of God. Now if *we are* children, *we are* also heirs—truly, **heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ**—if indeed we suffer together with Him, so that **we may also be glorified together with Him**” (Rom. 8:16-17). Finally, John writes: “Behold! What *glorious* love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God.... [And] we know that when He is manifested, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him exactly as He is” (I John 3:1-2).

All of this is pictured by the wonderful Feast of Pentecost!

In spite of living in troubling times, we must always stay close to God through prayer and Bible study—and be *led* by the Holy Spirit. This is the only way we can continue to overcome our own human nature and resist the pulls of the world and Satan the devil. Regardless of circumstances, remember: ***God the Father and Jesus Christ love you!*** You have Jesus’ personal promise to always be with you: “For He has said, ‘**In no way will I ever leave you; no—I will never forsake you in any way.**’ So then, let us boldly say, ‘**The Lord is my helper, and I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?**’ ” (Heb. 13:5-6).

Brethren, we appreciate you and thank you for your continued prayers. Without them, we could not accomplish what God wants us to do. We pray for you every day, beseeching God to be with you, to heal you, and to bless you in everything. And as always, we greatly appreciate your steadfast support through your tithes and offerings.

With love in Christ Jesus,

Fred R. Coulter

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