

Monthly Letter, April-May 2018

Truth of God-CBCG

April 17, 2018

Dear Brethren,

We have just completed a great spiritual Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Passover is the most important of all the "appointed times" of God. God declares through Isaiah that the Passover was planned even before there was a *day*: "I, even I, am the Lord; and besides Me there is no saviour. I have declared, and have saved, and I have shown, when *there was* no strange *god* among you; therefore you *are* My witnesses,' says the Lord, 'that I *am* God. **Yea, before the day was, I am He'...**" (Isa. 43:11-13). Passover was *set* from the "foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8)—the very day on which Jesus the Christ, as God manifested in the flesh, would die for the sin of the world (John 1:29, 36) and be victorious over Satan the devil.

In the "Foreword" of our book *The Day Jesus the Christ Died*, I wrote: "From eternity past, before the foundation of the world, God the Father and God the Son planned for and predetermined the day that Jesus the Christ would die. In the history of the universe, no other day can be compared with it. So profound was this day that it will always be remembered even into the ages of eternity to come.

"This day of destiny was the ultimate culmination of the spiritual battle for the lives of men [and women]: a battle waged between Jesus the Christ, Son of God and Saviour of mankind, and Satan the devil, adversary of God and destroyer of mankind. This fierce battle was centered in Jerusalem, but its outcome would determine the destiny of the world. It was the power of God versus the power of Satan, the Advocate vs. the adversary, love vs. hatred, good vs. evil, humility vs. pride, compassion vs. brutality, righteousness vs. sin, and forgiveness vs. condemnation.

"All the evil forces and powers of the world were gathered together against one man, Jesus the Christ—the Son of God. Who would be victorious? Would good finally triumph over evil?" The answer: Jesus Christ was victorious over human nature, the world, Satan the devil, and death! As the *firstborn* from the dead, He proclaims: "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" (Rev. 1:4, 17-18). Being victorious means to *overcome* or *conquer*, which Jesus admonishes us to do just as He did: "**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" (Rev. 3:21).

This year Pentecost falls on May 20. One of the reasons Pentecost seems to be earlier is the "count" for this year. Whenever Passover day falls on a Friday, we have a double Sabbath: the following Saturday is both the weekly Sabbath *and* the first day of Unleavened Bread (which this year was March 31). Whenever this sequence occurs, the count to Pentecost begins with the day *after* that double Sabbath—Sunday, or April 1 this year. The count then runs for seven complete weeks *plus* the day after the seventh Sabbath (Lev. 23:9-16).

We have a booklet, *How to Count to Pentecost*, which shows that the first day of the count to Pentecost is the "wave sheaf offering day." This was the day Jesus ascended to God in heaven to be accepted as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world—and be accepted as the first of the firstfruits harvest. In Leviticus 23, Jesus' resurrection was symbolized by the premier sheaf, the first of the firstfruits, waved by the priest before the Lord on the day after the Sabbath, on the first day of the week during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This day begins the count of 50 days to Pentecost.

The last day of the count, the day after the seventh Sabbath, day 50, finishes the harvest of the firstfruits. This feast of God always falls on the first day of the week because it is the day *after* seven complete weeks, each ending on a weekly Sabbath. Remember, **Monday is never the next day after a Sabbath**. Also, no partial weeks are allowed in counting to Pentecost—meaning that **the 50th day can never be on a Monday**. In addition, Pentecost does not fall on a fixed day of the third month—Sivan 6, as the Jews believe. Each week must contain seven days—day one through day seven—for seven complete weeks, for a total of 49 days. Then, the day after the seventh Sabbath—the 50th day, a first day of the week—is the day of Pentecost. It marks the end of the barley and wheat harvest. Pentecost pictures the harvest of the first resurrection of the saints to eternal life (James 1:18; Rev. 14:14-16).

Jesus explained that the harvest of the firstfruits can be compared to grain that has been sown in the earth. He also showed the various problems faced by all those who are called. Notice: "Therefore, hear the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand *it*, the wicked one comes and snatches away that which was sown in his heart. This is the one who was sown by the way. Now the one who was sown upon the rocky places is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; but *because* he has no root in himself, *he* does not endure; for when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, he is quickly offended. And the one who was sown among the thorns is the one who hears the word,

but the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. **But the one who was sown on good ground, this is the one who hears the word and understands, who indeed brings forth fruit and produces—one a hundredfold, another sixtyfold and another thirtyfold**" (Matt. 13:18-23).

In another parable about the sower of grain and the harvest of the crop, Jesus identifies Himself as the sower and the enemy as Satan. The good seed are the children of the kingdom and the tares are the children of the devil: "And after dismissing the multitude, Jesus went into the house. Then His disciples came to Him, saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.' And He answered *and* said to them, '**The one Who sows the good seed is the Son of man; and the field is the world; and the good seed, these are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one. Now the enemy who sowed them is the devil; and the harvest is *the end of the age*, and the reapers are the angels.** Therefore, as the tares are gathered and consumed in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this age. The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all the offenders and those who are practicing lawlessness; and they shall cast them into the furnace of fire. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. The one who has ears to hear, let him hear**" (verses 36-43).

From these parables we can understand why Pentecost is a harvest feast that pictures the first resurrection—the harvest of the saints. The apostle Paul makes this clear: "But Christ has now been raised from *the* dead; He became the firstfruit of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man *came* death, by man also *came* the resurrection of *the* dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: **Christ *the* firstfruit; then, at His coming those who are Christ's**" (I Cor. 15:20-23). Jesus was the first one to be resurrected from the dead to eternal life—the firstborn from the dead (Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5). Since the creation of the world, no one else has been resurrected to eternal life—nor will anyone be resurrected to eternal life until Christ returns. Only Jesus Christ has gone to heaven—no one else, not even the virgin Mary.

In the same way there are seven weeks of the wheat and barley harvest, the harvest of the Church down through the ages is symbolized by the prophecies of the seven churches in Revelation two and three. While the actual time spans for each church era do not correlate to seven equal periods, the seven eras do represent the Church harvest as pictured by the 49 days in the count toward Pentecost.

God's Fiftieth-Day Harvest: But there is an additional final harvest of firstfruits by God Himself, which is represented by the 50th day. The 50th-day harvest is Jesus Christ's special, final harvest of the firstfruits. This is the harvest of 144,000 of the children of Israel—12,000 from each tribe—and the "great innumerable multitude" of Revelation seven. They repent and are saved out of the "Great Tribulation."

Jesus explained this in the parable of the laborers: Those who were the first ones called as apostles and disciples during Jesus' ministry represent the ones who were hired at early morning and labored all day. On the other hand, those workers who were hired at the eleventh hour symbolize those who are saved out of the "Great Tribulation," only one year before the first resurrection. But they receive the *same* wage as those who were hired at early morning.

In both cases, the wage received represents the treasure of eternal life. Jesus explains the meaning of this parable: "The kingdom of heaven shall be compared to a man, a master of a house, who went out **early in the morning** to hire workmen for his vineyard. And after agreeing with the workmen on a silver coin *for the day's wage*, he sent them into his vineyard. And when he went out about **the third hour**, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; and he said to them, 'Go also into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' And they went. Again, after going out about **the sixth hour** and **the ninth hour**, he did likewise. **And about the eleventh hour**, he went out *and* found others standing idle, and said to them, 'Why have you been standing here idle all the day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'Go also into my vineyard, and whatever is right you shall receive.' And when evening came, the lord of the vineyard said to his steward, '**Call the workmen and pay them *their* hire, beginning from the last unto the first.**' **And when those who *were hired* about the eleventh hour came, they each received a silver coin. But when the first ones came, they thought that they would receive more; but each of them also received a silver coin.** And after receiving *it*, they complained against the master of the house, saying, 'These *who came* last have worked one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who have carried the burden and the heat of the day.' But he answered *and* said to them, 'Friend, I am not doing you wrong. Did you not agree with me on a silver coin *for the day*? Take *what* is yours and go, for I also desire to give to the last *ones* exactly as I gave to you. And is it not lawful for me to do what I will with that which *is* my own? Is your eye evil because I am good?' **So the last shall be first, and the first shall be last; for many are called, but few are chosen"** (Matt. 20:1-16).

God's 50th-day harvest will be the special harvest of the 144,000 from the children of Israel and the "great innumerable multitude." This will be a tremendous event and will probably occur on Pentecost one year before the

first resurrection—from Pentecost to Pentecost. **These are the workers hired at the eleventh hour.** God will directly intervene to save them right after the sixth seal is opened and the fearful and awesome heavenly signs begin: "And when He opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, **there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as *the hair of sackcloth*, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its untimely figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then *the heaven departed, like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.* And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the powerful men, and every bondman, and every free *man* hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, 'Fall on us, and hide us from *the* face of Him Who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; because the great day of His wrath has come, and who has the power to stand?' "(Rev. 6:12-17).**

The *sign* of the Son of man appears in heaven when the heavens are rolled back as a scroll. This spectacular event takes place after two years of tribulation against the twelve tribes of Israel. When it first appears, it will probably be like a great burst of light illuminating the heavens and the earth—an astonishing sign! It will become like another sun. Because of the rotation of the earth, it will appear to shine, as does the sun, from the east to the west: "**For as the light of day, which comes forth from *the east* and shines as far as *the west*, so also shall the coming of the Son of man be**" (Matt. 24:27).

The whole world will think it is being invaded from outer space—which will be true, because Christ will be coming as a conquering king. Jesus described these coming days. "But immediately after the tribulation [against Israel] 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**" (verses 29-30). The people on earth will think Jesus is the enemy and will begin to marshal their armies to fight against Him.

However, right after the sign of the Son of man first appears in the heavens, an astonishing thing happens. Jesus Christ directly intervenes and sends a mighty angel to save the 144,000 of the children of Israel and the "great innumerable multitude"—sealing them in their foreheads with God's Holy Spirit. To help this mighty angel, God sends four other angels to hold back the four winds until this sealing is complete. Notice what John writes: "And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth,

holding back the four winds of the earth, so that the wind might not blow on the earth, or on the sea, or on any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from *the* rising of *the* sun, having *the* seal of *the* living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to damage the earth and the sea, saying, 'Do not damage the earth, or the sea, or the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.' And I heard the number of those who were sealed: one hundred forty-four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of *the* children of Israel.

"After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no one was able to number, out of every nation and tribe, and people, and language, was standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and *holding* palms in their hands; and they were calling out with a loud voice to Him Who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, saying, 'The salvation of our God *has come*.' Then all the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, 'Amen. Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might *be* to our God into the ages of eternity. Amen.' And one of the elders answered *and* said to me, 'These who are clothed with white robes, who are they, and where did they come from?' Then I said to him, 'Sir, you know.' And he said to me, '**They are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and have made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb**' "(Rev. 7:1-14).

Next, the seven "trumpet plagues" begin to be poured out on the earth. The first plague probably begins on the Feast of Trumpets—the year before Christ and the resurrected saints return to the earth on the *next* Feast of Trumpets. The first four plagues are poured out rather quickly, but the fifth plague lasts five months. After that the sixth trumpet plague is unleashed (Rev. 8 and 9). Sometime after the sixth trumpet sounds, the "two witnesses" will finish their work (Rev. 11). Then, three and one half days before the next Pentecost—when the seventh trumpet sounds, the last trump, the trumpet for the first resurrection—the "two witnesses" will be killed. Their bodies will lay in the streets of Jerusalem for those three and one half days.

Since they are the last ones who are martyred for Christ, they will be the first ones to be resurrected—literally "the first will be last and the last will be first." We find this account in Revelation 11: "And when they [the "two witnesses"] have completed their testimony, the beast who ascends out of the abyss will make war against them, and will overcome them, and will kill them. And their bodies *will lie* in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. Then those of the peoples and tribes and languages and nations shall see their bodies three and a half days, for they will not allow their bodies to be put into tombs. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, and will make merry, and will send gifts

to one another, because these two prophets had tormented those who dwell on the earth. Then *I saw the* spirit of life from God enter into them after the three and a half days, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were watching them. And they heard a great voice from heaven, say, 'Come up here!' And they ascended into heaven in a cloud; and their enemies saw them *rise*. And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell, and seven thousand men were killed in the earthquake. And the rest were filled with fear, and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming immediately" (Rev. 11:7-14).

As the "two witnesses" are rising up into heaven, the seventh trumpet sounds and the first resurrection begins to take place—which occurs on Pentecost one year after the 144,000 and "great innumerable multitude" are sealed: "**Then the seventh angel sounded his trumpet** [the last trumpet]; and *there* were great voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become our Lord's and His Christ's, 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, that 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 the *promised* 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.' And the temple of God in heaven was opened, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple; and there were lightning's, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake and great hail" (Rev. 11:15-19).

Revelation 14 also depicts the first resurrection, the harvest of the firstfruits: "And I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and *one* like *the* Son of man sitting on the cloud, having a golden crown on His head; and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him Who was sitting on the cloud, '**Thrust in your sickle and reap, because the time has come for You to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe** [the first resurrection, the harvest of the firstfruits].' **And He Who was sitting on the cloud thrust forth His sickle upon the earth, and the earth was reaped**" (Rev. 14:14-16).

Paul wrote that the first resurrection will occur **at the last trumpet, which is the seventh trumpet**. Remember, it was on the Day of Pentecost when God came down on Mount Sinai and spoke the Ten Commandments to the children of Israel. On that day the trumpet (singular) sounded loud and long (Ex. 20:18). From that time forward, the trumpet was always blown on the Feast of Pentecost at the tabernacle and later at the Temple. The seventh

trumpet of Revelation 11 is the last trumpet blown, and this undoubtedly occurs on Pentecost.

This is when the first resurrection takes place—not on the Feast of Trumpets. The resurrection does not occur at the end of a memorial of the blowing of many trumpets all day long on the Feast of Trumpets. Rather, **it is a single trumpet, the seventh trumpet, or THE LAST TRUMP** that the angel sounds—not many angels sounding many trumpets. Notice: "**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 trumpet; 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. 15:51-54).

When the seventh trumpet sounds, the first resurrection of the saints will take place and Jesus will send the angels to gather His elect who have been raised from the dead. "**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. 24:31).

Why are those in the first resurrection taken up into the air by the angels? Where will they be taken? When Paul wrote to the Thessalonians about the first resurrection, he partially answered those questions. "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.**** Therefore, encourage one another with these words" (I Thess. 4:13-18).

Now, where will the meeting in the air take place? Why is it necessary? What will happen at that "great meeting"? After about a year of shining in space and appearing as a second sun, the sign of the Son of man in the heavens, which signals His return, will suddenly streak towards the earth. This is when all the people of the earth will see Jesus Christ coming on the clouds of heaven in great power and glory! At that time, instead of smashing into the earth, as

would an asteroid, this "light" will settle in the clouds. Then it will suddenly become a great "sea of glass" in the clouds over Jerusalem.

In the book of Hebrews, Paul shows that our prayers come up to a *heavenly* Mount Zion: "But you have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of *the* living God, heavenly Jerusalem; and to an innumerable company of angels, **to the joyous festival gathering; and to the church of the firstborn, whose names have been registered in the Book of Life in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all; and to the spirits of just men and women 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. 12:22-24).

There will be a "**joyous festival gathering**" of the resurrected saints, who will be carried by the angels in the air to meet Christ. That "joyous festival gathering" could only be pictured by Pentecost, the completed harvest of the firstfruits, the first resurrection. On the other hand, *the Feast of Trumpets is not a feast of joy, but a feast of war.*

But where will the resurrected saints meet Christ? Do the saints go up into the air, meet Christ, and immediately return to the earth? If the first resurrection is on the Feast of Trumpets, that is precisely what would have to happen. However, as we will see, that is not the case.

Paul wrote that we shall meet Christ in the air. How can that be? Where will that be? As we will see, **the angels will carry us up to the "sea of glass,"** where Christ will be. The apostle John saw this in vision and recorded it in Revelation 15: "Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and awesome: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is filled up. **And I saw a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who had gotten the victory over the beast, and over its image, and over its mark, and over the number of its name, standing on the sea of glass, having *the* harps of God.** And they were singing the song of Moses, *the* servant of God [symbolizing those in the first resurrection from Old Testament times], and the song of the Lamb [symbolizing those in the first resurrection from New Testament times], 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. 15:1-4).

At this point the first resurrection is finished and all the saints will be in the air with Christ on the "sea of glass"—which is in the clouds over Jerusalem. We will then be the "Great Congregation of God." While we are on the "sea of glass," many things will happen before we return with Christ back to the earth

on the following Feast of Trumpets to fight against the armies of the world and to begin to rule and reign with Him for a thousand years:

1. We will meet Christ in person and meet all the resurrected brethren
2. He will proclaim us to the Father
3. We will all receive our rewards and new names
4. The marriage of the Lamb and the wedding supper will take place
5. The seven last plagues will be poured out
6. We will receive our assignments
7. We will be organized into Christ's army
8. Then we will return with Jesus Christ to the earth on the Feast of Trumpets after the resurrection.

There are other passages that complete story. However, there is not enough room in this letter to include all the references. As the Scriptures show, this is what we have to look forward to and why the Day of Pentecost is such a tremendous feast. It is the "joyous festival gathering" of all the saints who are resurrected at the first resurrection.

Keep Our Minds on Spiritual Things: As we look at the world, we can see the way it is going—so we need to keep our minds on spiritual things. We should be *aware* of what is taking place in the world, but keep our *focus* on the spiritual things of God and the hope of the first resurrection. Paul shows us how to do this: "Therefore ... let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that so easily entraps *us*; and let us run the race set before us with endurance, having *our minds* fixed on Jesus, the Beginner and Finisher of our faith; Who for the joy that lay ahead of Him endured *the cross, although* He despised *the shame*, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Now meditate deeply on Him Who has endured such great hostility of sinners against Himself, so that you do not become weary and discouraged. You have not yet resisted to the point of *losing* blood in your struggle against sin" (Heb. 12:1-4).

Not only does Paul admonish us to lay aside every weight and sin, but we are to follow his example. As he did, we need to consider that all the physical things of the world are nothing compared to eternal life. While they may be pleasant and good, they will perish with the using. Remember, Jesus promised that if we seek the Kingdom of God first, He will provide for us (Matt. 6:25-34).

When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he wanted to inspire them to always strive for the righteousness of Christ and the power of the resurrection: "But then truly, I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; **for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count *them* as dung that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him,**

not having my own righteousness, which *is derived* from law, **but that righteousness which is by the faith of Christ—the righteousness of God that is based on faith, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection**, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; **if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead.**

"Not as though I have already received *this*, or have already been perfected; but I am striving, so that I may also lay hold on that for which I also was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. **Brethren, I do not count myself as having attained; but *this* one thing I do—forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to the things that are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"** (Phil. 3:8-14).

This is the attitude and dedication Jesus wants us to have, so that regardless of the things taking place in the world or what our circumstances are, we will be overcoming and pressing toward the goal—the first resurrection and eternal life. Paul shows that if we have this attitude, we are being perfected in love, grace, and knowledge: "So then, let as many as *be* perfect be of this mind. And if in anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal *even* this to you. Nevertheless, *in regard* to that which we have attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be imitators together of me, and bear in mind those who walk in this way, as you have us *for* an example" (verses 15-17).

What a tremendous blessing it is to know that if we are in any way "otherwise minded," God will reveal this to us so that we may repent and overcome. **Remember, God the Father and Jesus Christ love us and are for us. Therefore, no one or anything can be against us—not even all the accusations of Satan the devil.**

However, just as it was in Paul's day, so it is today. There were those who forsook the spiritual things and turned back to the physical things—counting them more important than eternal life. They became weary and allowed themselves to give up on God and eternal life. Some had even turned against Christ by following false doctrines and false teachers. Others had marched right back into the world to serve self and Satan: "For many walk *contrary*; I have often told you of them, and also I tell *you with* weeping, *they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end *is* destruction, whose god *is* their belly, and whose glory *is in* their shame; *for* they mind earthly things" (verses 18-19).

When we consider all the trials, troubles, and tribulations Paul endured, we know that he is an excellent example for us to follow. He always looked to Jesus Christ. He always kept the goal of the resurrection in the forefront of his

mind. Here is his exhortation to us: "But for us, the commonwealth *of God* exists in *the* heavens, from where also we are waiting for *the* Saviour, *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**" (verses 20-21).

Not only are we to follow the example of Paul, we are, more importantly, to be followers of God: "**Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, even as Christ also loved us, and gave Himself for us as an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor**" (Eph. 5:1-2). This is how we can avoid being partakers of the sins of the world—Babylon the Great (Rev. 18:4).

If we continue in God's way of life, we will be walking in love and obedience—having the faith of Christ and keeping the commandments of God (Rev. 14:12). We are then *imitating* God. We will be building godly character and growing toward spiritual perfection (Matt. 5:48). Moreover, when we are doing the things that please God, we are living righteously and we automatically avoid sinning. Nevertheless, Paul warns: "But *as for* fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, do not permit it even to be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking nor jesting, which are not becoming; but instead thanksgiving. For this you know, that no fornicator, or unclean person, or covetous *person*, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph. 5:3-5).

When we are actively living God's way, day by day, we are spiritually armed and on guard—so that we will not be led astray. Today, we are confronted with so many preachers and teachers who have a multitude of false doctrines and false prophecies. Moreover, they can *sound* very convincing and their words *seem* so right. Nevertheless, the end result is not righteousness or the love of God. Rather, the end result is confusion, deception, and self-righteousness. Paul continued his warning, which fully applies to us today: "Do not let anyone deceive you with vain words; for because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not be joint-partakers with them. For you were once darkness; but now *you are* light in *the* Lord. Walk as children of light, (because the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth), **proving what is well-pleasing to the Lord; and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness**" (verses 6-11). Let us apply ourselves and live by these scriptures, keeping the hope of the resurrection and eternal life in the forefront of our minds.

Brethren, we all realize that we are facing very difficult and trying times in this world. But regardless of our circumstances, God the Father and Jesus

Christ love us and are with us, and the angels are watching over us. Once again, thank you for your love and prayers for us. We pray for you every day—that God's love, grace, and blessing will be upon you and yours in every way. We thank you for your continued support with your tithes and offerings, which help us to reach out to brethren and to the many new people who are now searching for God.

With love in Christ Jesus,

Fred R. Coulter