

CHURCH OF THE
G O D
E T E R N A L

“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

August 29, 2002

Dear Members and Co-workers:

The Fall Festivals are almost upon us. On Saturday, September 7 (beginning with the previous day, at sunset), we will be celebrating the Feast of Trumpets, followed by the Day of Atonement on Monday, September 16. Then, from September 21 to September 28, we will be assembling together for eight days for the highlight of the year – the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day.

What a tremendous blessing it is to know about, and to keep, God’s weekly Sabbath and His annual Holy Days. They picture the entire plan of God for mankind. They give us hope for the future and an understanding why this world is in the terrible shape in which it is today.

God had originally decreed that angels were to live on this planet, which had been created in a beautiful state. When Lucifer (the “light bringer”) and his angels rebelled against God, thereby becoming Satan (the “enemy”) and his demons, this earth became void and empty. At the same time, God’s government of love, cooperation, justice, peace, and equity was removed from this earth, as Satan, the prince of darkness and the god of this age, had replaced it with his government of anger, competition, hate, prejudice, injustice and war. God renewed the face of this earth within six days, and He created Adam and Eve to replace Satan and his rule and to restore God’s government on this earth.

At that time, God set aside for man the *weekly Sabbath*, to be kept holy (Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 20:8-11). The Sabbath was established to remind man that GOD is the Creator of everything and to provide special time for the development of a personal relationship between God and man, thus constantly reminding man to be subject to God and to resist Satan. Adam and Eve, however, gave in to Satan’s influence and deception, and thus mankind lost that close relationship with God. Now being cut off from God – mankind also lost the opportunity to restore God’s government on this earth.

However, God had devised a plan to ultimately replace Satan and to restore happiness and peace on this planet. While this plan would encompass some 7,000 years in developing – yet, the weekly Sabbath would continually point to man’s future of universal happiness (compare Hebrews 4:1-10).

In due time, Jesus Christ became a flesh and blood human being for the purpose of dying for man’s sins, thereby paying the penalty for sin – which is death – and restoring a unique relationship between God and those who would accept Christ’s sacrifice and follow His way of life. Today we observe the death and sacrifice of Christ once a year – during the *Passover* ceremony (Luke 22:14-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

Even after one’s past sins have been forgiven, he must strive to live in obedience to God. We therefore keep annually the *Days of Unleavened Bread* for seven days, immediately following the Passover. Since leaven is used in the Bible as a symbol for sin and false teaching (Matthew 16:6,12), these days remind us of our *commitment* to live a sinless and truthful life (Acts 20:6; 1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

It is impossible for man, however, to live in obedience to God and His truth without God’s Spirit dwelling in man. God decreed that man, after he has repented and received forgiveness of his past sins, and after he has shown his willingness to remain obedient to God’s word, would receive a Helper enabling him to stay obedient – that Helper being God’s Holy Spirit of power. God founded the New Testament Church on the *Day of Pentecost*, by pouring out His Holy Spirit on those whom He had individually called – as He had spoken His LAW of the Ten Commandments on the day of Pentecost to the ancient nation of Israel. Now, with the gift of the Holy Spirit, man can in fact keep God’s law. (And when man breaks the law, after having received the Holy Spirit, he can obtain forgiveness, if he repents of and confesses his sin, 1 John 1:7-9, and he can continue, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to overcome sin in his life). We keep the Feast of Pentecost to remind ourselves of God’s precious gift of His Holy Spirit, which He bestowed on His Church (Acts 2:1-4; 20:16; 1 Corinthians 16:8).

However, only very few are chosen in this time and age to receive the gift of God’s Spirit, and to prepare for the time, when God will replace Satan and restore His government over all the earth. Those who are called today are to be trained and taught by God to be able to later teach mankind to reject the rule of

Satan and to submit to God's authority. That time of massive re-education will begin, when Jesus Christ returns – in great power and great glory, as the KING of kings, and the LORD of lords – to restore ALL THINGS on this earth. God wants us to keep the *Feast of Trumpets*, reminding us of the monumental future event of Christ's return. At the same time, we, if we are still alive, will be changed to immortality, and those who have died in Christ, will be resurrected from the dead to eternal life (1 Corinthians 15:49-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; John 3:3-8).

In order to bring perfect peace and happiness to this earth, Satan – who has become the arch enemy of God and man – will have to be removed from his throne over this earth (compare Revelation 2:13). Only then can man truly become “at one” with God. God created the *Day of Atonement* to remind us of the event of Satan's removal in the near future (Acts 27:9; compare, too, Romans 16:20).

Following the removal of Satan, Christ and His saints will begin the awesome task of restoring all things. Those who qualify will rule with Christ on this earth for one thousand years (the “Millennium”), governing those who survived the incredible time of suffering just prior to Christ's return, and those, who will be born during the Millennium. We will restore, with and under Christ's leadership, what had been taken away through Satan's rebellion, and what Adam and Eve failed to restore. We celebrate this unique and unparalleled time in the entire history of mankind every year for seven days, when we observe the *Feast of Tabernacles*, as outlined in the scriptures (John 7:2-14; Daniel 7:27; Revelation 20:4).

God's plan, as pictured in His weekly Sabbath and His annual Holy Days, will still not have been totally completed even then. One tremendous event will still have to occur. It involves the masses of people who have died, without ever having known about Jesus Christ, without whom none can be saved (Acts 4:12). God established that all of those will be resurrected to physical life after the Millennium, to receive a chance to accept Christ and to live a godly life – the same chance, which was given to us today, and which will be given to mankind during the Millennium. Although virtually no one outside the Church of God understands this vital aspect of God's plan for mankind, God has revealed it to His people. God is fair in His dealings with man, and so He *had to* make it possible that EVERYONE would be given an equal chance to accept and respond to – or to reject God's calling. And so, the *Last Great Day*, which immediately follows the Feast of Tabernacles, symbolizes a 100 year-period – called the “Great White Throne Judgment – during which all persons who had not been called before will be resurrected to physical life, and who will then be given their first real opportunity to accept and respond to – or to reject God's calling (John 7:37; Revelation 20:11-12).

Then – we, now immortal members in the very Family of God, will rule with God and Christ for all eternity over all things (Revelation 22:5). This will be the KINGDOM OF GOD ruling over creation – God's plan for mankind now having been completed.

Without the weekly Sabbath and the annual Holy Days, we could never understand God's great plan for mankind. Without obeying God by keeping these days faithfully and in their entirety, we would eventually lose this tremendous knowledge as to what they picture. What a great privilege it is to know what most people do not understand. What a priceless gift it is to be able to keep God's weekly and annual Sabbaths in spirit and in truth – realizing the awesome and incredible human potential, which they portray. What a tragedy it would be for us to lose this precious knowledge – to let it drift away –, knowledge which can truly give us hope, comfort and strength in times of trials and discouragement.

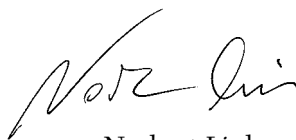
Christ is soon coming back to make the impossible possible. Let us all remember why we are here – why God has called us and given us this understanding. And let us be eternally thankful for being able to know the Great God whom we serve, and His awesome master plan for all mankind.

We wish all of you a happy and uplifting Fall Holy Day Season.

In Christ's service,



Edwin Pope



Norbert Link



Dave Harris



Rene Messier