

Good Morning.

The world of religion can be a confusing place. Religious ideas abound, and most of those ideas are false.

I personally believe that the God of the Bible is the one true God, and that the church founded at Pentecost is the one true church. If you are here today, you likely believe that as well.

I also believe that each man has to work out his own salvation with “fear and trembling,” searching the scriptures, relying on the Spirit of God to open his mind.

Paul preempted his statement to the Philippians by saying: “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (2:12).

He encouraged the Corinthians “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1).

Jesus Christ, and by extension, the apostle Paul, were examples of the only true religion every given to mankind.

So when I have any doubt about what I find people doing in the name of religion, I always look to their actions, the way they walked and the things they said – first, of course, to Christ, then to His disciples.

Today we are going to look at the festivals these first-century men observed and what they signified for them, and for us. How these holy days outline God’s plan of salvation for all

mankind. And on an individual level, how they show us what our walk should look like and just where that walk is ultimately taking us.

I think we can learn a great deal from these occasions, and I hope that each of you takes away something from this message.

Paul told the Colossians to “Let no man ... judge [them] in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days,” (2:16) and I have no intention judging anyone. We have enough that going on already.

I present these messages as a witness to what God has given me, and to give you the tools and maybe some insight to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

Now everyone knows what a “holiday” is. And if you look in the *American Heritage College Dictionary* you’ll find the definition of holiday includes “a religious feast day; a holy day.”

“Holiday” is a shortened version of “holy day,” it literally means “a religious feast” or festival. So don’t let the Biblical terminology throw you, “holiday” is simply an inclusive word covering these same ideas.

Most of us grew up celebrating supposedly Christian holidays: Christmas, Easter, Valentines, Halloween – even though none of these are mentioned by name anywhere in Scripture.

You’ve never read a text in the Bible where Jesus threw

Himself a birthday party, or His apostles got together to hunt for Easter eggs, exchange candy hearts or dress up like goblins. It's just not there.

There is, in the King James, a mistranslation of the word for Passover in Acts 12:4, where the Greek *pascha* was rendered "Easter." But the mistake is corrected in every other translation of Scripture and is easily identified through Strong's or any other lexicon. That's about as close as the Bible comes to legitimizing any of these days. (Jeremiah 10:3-4, the x-mass tree?)

The difference between the pagan-inspired holidays that our culture observes and the holy days God revealed to Israel is that Jesus Christ Himself observed the holy days, and His apostles continued the practice in the first century Church.

We're going to look at just a few examples today, as we take a broad overview of the first three holy days leading up to our main subject. These days cover, in significant symbolism, what God has done thus far in bringing children into His family.

As for the pagan roots of Christmas, Easter, Halloween and the rest, I'll leave that up to your own study. Since you can't find them in Scripture, the library is a good place to begin.

Most encyclopedias will give you all the information you need to get started. And the further you dig into it, and the better the resources you acquire, the more disturbing the information you'll find.

There are seven Biblical feast or festivals, and within these festivals, there are seven annual Sabbaths. The first three holy days memorializes God's infinite mercy and love in sending His only begotten Son to this earth to die for the sins of all mankind. That last four foreshadow events of His second coming.

God the Father loves us so much, that He was willing to permit His Son's murder by the gruesome death of Roman crucifixion. Christ, who was also God, God in the flesh, permitted Himself to be nailed to a tree – to have His blood spilled to cover our sins (1 Peter 2:24; etc.).

Paul described it this way, in 1 Corinthians, chapter 5, he said, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (v.7). Please turn there, 1 Corinthians, chapter five, starting in verse 6. 1 Corinthians 5:6.

Paul made the comparison between Christ and the sacrificial lambs of the Passover Feast. Every year, at the command of God, the Jews commemorate the day when the blood of a spotless substitute caused the death angel to "pass over" the homes of the Israelites, while bringing death to the firstborn of their Egyptian masters (Leviticus 23:5).

A careful study of the gospel accounts, with particular attention to the book of John (ch.13), will bare-out that Christ gave up His life at the precise time the first of these temporary offerings were made in the year AD 31.

The whole sacrificial system itself was a foreshadowing of

the work of Christ on the cross.

The New Testament is packed with references to “the Lamb of God,” noting His silence before Pilate (Mark 15:4) “as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth” (Isaiah 53:7; cf. Acts 8:32). The unbroken bones of Christ on in His death, just as the Israelites were commanded to keep their Passover offering (Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12; Psalms 34:20; John 19:32-36).

The sinlessness Jesus maintained throughout His life and the spotlessness required of the lamb. The obvious symbolism runs throughout the New Testament text, where Jesus is directly referred to as the “Lamb” some 30 times.

And there are more indirect references. Peter said, “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19). The New Testament Passover pictures Jesus shedding His blood for the sins of mankind.

Following Passover is the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This Feast was originally revealed as a seven-day festival during which leavening (such as yeast) was put out of dwellings and not eaten to mark the haste in which the Israelites were cast out of Egypt (Deuteronomy 16:3; Leviticus 23:6-14).

A fuller meaning is realized in the New Testament where leaven is equated with sin. Jesus warned His disciples to

“beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees” (Matthew 16:6; cf. Mark 8:15). Leaven causes bread to rise, to “puff up,” just as the attitude of sin – or self will – causes us to puff up and “do our own thing,” ignoring or twisting the commandments of God.

Paul warned the former gentiles in the Church at Corinth, chapter 5, verse 6 – 1 Corinthians 5:6 “Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” (*see also* Galatians 5:9).

Paul knew the pervasive nature of sin, like leaven it would spread throughout the congregation if left unchecked. Now notice the instruction Paul gives these gentile converts, verse 7:

“Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. 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.”

The Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures the Christian’s duty to “put sin out” of their life as they yield to Jesus Christ. This marks the beginning of discipleship in the life of the believer and makes way for the next step: the receiving of God’s Holy Spirit, represented by the Day of Pentecost.

Pentecost in the Old Testament was a day celebrating the gathering in of the first and smaller of the two annual harvests. It is observed 50 days from a fixed point in the previous

feast (Leviticus 23:15-22).

This point finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus' presentation before the Father on the Sunday morning He first appeared to Mary Magdalene.

Remember how Christ told Mary, "Touch Me not; for *I am not yet ascended to My Father*: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, *I ascend unto My Father*, and your Father; and to My God, and your God" (John 20:17). Later that day the disciples held him and worshiped Him (Matthew 28:9; Luke 24:39).

His presentation to the Father marks that point described in the Old Testament as the presentation of the first "of the firstfruits" (Leviticus 23:10). Jesus Christ is "the firstborn from the dead," (Colossians 1:18) "the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29) and the "firstfruits" of God's spiritual harvest (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23).

Pentecost, therefore, is always on a Sunday, 49 days following the Sunday which falls every year within the feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:14-16).

It was on the first Day of Pentecost, after Jesus' ascension, that God poured out His Spirit upon the Church of God in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-21). In the life of the individual, this day pictures the true Christian receiving God's Holy Spirit.

So we have in the spring feast the plan and the path of salvation for those being called into God's family during this age

of man.

Passover: showing us the price that was paid. Unleavened Bread: showing us the way we must walk. And Pentecost: showing us the Power made available to us to overcome.

And that's where the spring feast end, with all three being fulfilled and magnified in their meaning by Jesus' first coming and the establishment of His Church.

But is that the end of the story? What was the purpose in Jesus' sacrifice – in offering eternal life to His followers – in establishing His Church – in shedding His Spirit abroad?

“If in this life *only* we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable ...”

Jesus didn't commission His Church to save the world. If He did, we've done a really poor job of it. Jesus gave us the gospel of the Kingdom of God, and in Matthew 24 He predicted that “this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world *for a witness* unto all nations: and then shall the end come” (v.14).

We are to be a witness to the world until the time that man's kingdom, Satan's dominion, this evil age of deception, comes to an end.

Please turn over to chapter 15. 1 Corinthians, chapter 15, and verse 19.

“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men

most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; *afterward they that are Christ's at His coming*" (vv.19-23).

The hope of the Christian faith is the resurrection of the saints, *at the return* of Jesus Christ. Verse 51 gives us more detail.

Paul says: "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, *at the last trump*: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

This is the next step in the transformation process: birth into the family of God. Scripture tells us that only God has immortality (1 Timothy 6:16) and that eternal life is the gift He offers. But this gift is offered for a specific reason and at a specific time, *at the last trumpet*.

The Feast of Trumpets represents the day and time when God will intervene in this world's affairs, stop mankind from annihilating himself and setup His Kingdom on the earth.

To those who have never made the connection, to the Jews who deny Christ and many scholars who doubt the integrity of the Bible, the purpose of this feast is often obscured.

Notice this entry in *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Under the heading, ***Seventh Month Festival***, the dictionary reads:

“This festival is mentioned in Leviticus 23:24-25, 27-32 and Numbers 29:1-40. It was introduced with the blowing of trumpets, the halt of labor, sacrifices, and a testing (Lev. 23:24-32; Num. 29:1-40). The exact reason for its observance is not clear. *Some scholars believe* it originated during the Babylonian Captivity as a way of counteracting the influence of the Babylonian New Year Festival. This feast is also known as the Feast of Trumpets.”

Now what do you suppose was wrong with the Babylonian New Year Festival? Why would the Jews struggle to avoid the pagan holidays of their captors?

And if that was actually the purpose for Trumpets, how exactly would this holy day have ***originated*** during the Babylonian Captivity, when Moses lived roughly 800 years before Babylon's rise to power? (Moses c. 1446-1406; Babylon's rise c. 625 – Strong's)

Leviticus 23:23 reads: “And the LORD ***spake unto Moses***, saying, (verse 24) Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, 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.”

So the observance obviously didn't originate during the Babylonian Captivity, but its modern name among the Jews

likely did. This coming Monday, they will celebrate what's known as *Rosh Hashanah*, the Hebrew expression for "New Year." The Jews begin what they call their "civil calendar," in the month God told them was the seventh month, not the first.

The New Manners and Customs of the Bible says about Leviticus 23:24: "This festival, commonly called the 'Feast of Trumpets,' is universally regarded by the Jews as the Festival of the New Year, which began with the seventh month, *Tisri*. As it occurred at the new moon, and on the first day of the month in which the Great Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles took place, it was an occasion of great interest. It has been observed by the Jews as connected with the Day of Atonement, and the ten days between the two are considered days of preparation for the solemn day. The silver trumpets, which were ordered to be prepared for the purpose of calling people together (Numbers 10:1-10), were blown on this day more than at all other times

"The day was kept as a Sabbath, and so no work was performed on it. ... In the New Testament the blowing of the trumpet is associated with the return of the Lord (Matthew 24:31; 1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16)."

Turn to Exodus 19:17. Exodus, chapter 19 and verse 17.

For those who have taken the time to study the Scriptures as a whole, it should come as no surprise that the trumpet announces Jesus' return. The first time the trumpet is mentioned in the Bible, it's in association with a manifestation of the LORD – a meeting between God and His

people.

Exodus 19:17 - “And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the neither part of the mount, And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses up ...” (vv. 17-20).

The Ten Commandments follow five verses later in Chapter 20, where God vocalized for His people the royal law He would later codify in tablets of stone.

The next time our LORD sets foot on this planet, it will be to the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:1-4) with His Church in tow – the saints who have been judged and found worthy of eternal life.

The apostle James, the brother of Jesus (Acts 1:13) and leader of the first century church in Jerusalem (v.12:17) tells us in the epistle bearing his name, chapter 2 and verse 8:

“If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,’ [Leviticus 19:18] ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty

of all. For He that said, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ [Exodus 20:14] said also, ‘Do not kill’ [20:13]. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, *as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty*” (vv. 8-12).

Peter says in the next epistle, chapter 4 and verse 17, that “the time *is* come that judgement must begin at the house of God ...” It is God’s royal law that separates the wheat from the chaff today and by which the nations of the world will be judged tomorrow.

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, ‘Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths’: *for out of Zion shall go forth the law*, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem, And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isaiah 2:2-4).

This Kingdom of peace shall be announced by the blast of the trumpet. The prophet Joel said, “Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD

cometh, for it is nigh at hand” (Joel 2:1).

Joel was familiar with God’s use of the trumpet in the history of His people. And shortly after speaking the commandments from Sinai, God instructed the Israelites in the appropriate use of the trumpets to communicate important messages over vast distances.

In Numbers 10, God instructed Moses to make “two trumpets of silver ... for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps” (v.2). These trumpets were blown only by the priests and played a significant roll in calling troops together in times of war. (v.9)

The Israelites also used the shofar, made of a ram's horn.

Both trumpets were used for sounding an alarm (Numbers 10:5-6), making an announcement. They were used at celebrations, at festivals, feast and the installation of kings (v. 10; 1 Kings 1:3).

It is interesting, the Hebrew word associated with the sound of the trumpets is *teruwah*. It has the root meaning of shout, cry or blast. But it's also translated “shout for joy,” or make a “joyful noise.”

All these occasions and ideas are embodied in the Feast of Trumpets and prophesied for the Day of the LORD:

Please turn over to Revelation, chapter 8, verse 2. Revelation 8:2.

In Revelation 8 we find seven angels commissioned with sounding an alarm, verse 2: “And I saw the seven angels which stood before God: and *to them were given seven trumpets....*

“(6) And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

“(7) *The first angel sounded*, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burn up, and all green grass was burn up.

“(8) *And the second angel sounded*, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and a third part of the sea became blood. And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.

“(10) *And the third angel sounded*, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

“(12) *And the forth angel sounded*, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise. And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of

heaven, saying with a loud voice, ‘Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound.’

“(9:1) *And the fifth angel sounded*, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads....”

“(13) *And the sixth angel sounded*, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, ‘Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.’ And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.”

Turn over to Chapter 11, and verse 15: Revelation 11:15. Here we have the Kingdom proclaimed. The announcement made Satan's rule has ended ...

Revelation 11:15: “*And the seventh angel sounded*; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this

world are become the kingdoms of our LORD, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.””

Next we have the LORD calling His saints to assemble. Jesus told us that, “Immediately *after the tribulation of those days* shall the sun 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 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 the other,” Matthew 24:29-31.

First Thessalonians – “For the LORD Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and *with the trump of God*: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the LORD in the air: and so shall we ever be with the LORD” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

This final trumpet blast will cause the godless to mourn the loss of this world's system, and the saints of God to rejoice.

Revelation 19:6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. (7) Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his

wife hath made herself ready. (8) And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. ...

Matthew 24:30 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.

Now, for the journeying of the camp and the call to war. Jude says Enoch prophesied saying, “Behold, the LORD cometh with ten thousands of His saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him” (Jude 14-15).

Zachariah 14:1: “Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle. *And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives*, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain

shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south” (vv. 1-4).

The installation of the King, verse 9: “And the LORD shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and His name one.”

The Revelation of Jesus Christ reveals that war continues on until Satan is bound, pictured in the Day of Atonement. Chapter 17 says the kings of the earth, influenced by the devil, “make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for He is LORD of lords, and King of kings: *and they that are with Him* are called, and chosen, and faithful.”

Revelation 20 reveals the outcome of our struggle, verse 4: “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and *they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years*. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but *they shall be priest of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.*”

This millennial reign of Christ and His saints is represented in the Feast of Tabernacles.

God's government was established before time and creation began. With the angels, Satan rebelled and took a third with him. With man, Adam rebelled and took us all.

Yet God's government remains sovereign – God remains unchanging, and His law remains the standard: 1 John 3:4 tells us, “Sin *is* transgression of the law.”

Jesus Christ came and showed us what a citizen of God's government looks like. He came with a message the New Testament refers to as “the gospel of the kingdom of God;” the “good news” of a new government, a world-ruling monarchy, the only true theocracy, and yet not new government at all – at least not to His Church.

Today God is calling saints to conversion, children into His family, ambassadors of His Kingdom, members of His bride. And those who submit to Christ today will rule with Him tomorrow, in a kingdom completely opposite of this world's system.

Jesus told His followers, “whosoever will be chief among you, *let him be your servant.*” He said, “blessed are the meek, *for they shall inherit the earth*” (Matthew 5:5). And when He taught us to pray, He said to ask, “***Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven***” – God speed that day!