

## Wilfully Blind to God's Instructions?

How do you help a blind person see? Especially when they choose to be blind and believe their vision to be 20/20! Of course I speak spiritually, but it is a question which is actually posed by God's word to God's people for the end-time, and it will never be a welcome question when the blindness itself prevents the personal acknowledgment of the problem.

Worse still, this is not a minority problem, for it afflicts the vast majority of Christians even in the Church of God, organised as many of them are into splinters from the old block of the Worldwide Church of God, and largely retaining the very fault that brought about that church's destruction, Ezekiel 8:5-6, *'And behold Northward at the gate of the altar [Of God's spiritual Temple, the Church] this image of jealousy in the entry ...that I should go far off from my sanctuary.'*

The fault of course, as that prophetic symbolism pictures for Spiritual Israel in the end time, was the rejection of Jesus Christ's commandment to His Church in Matthew 20: 25-27, *'But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave."* When Christ's word is rejected by men who lust for power, wealth and control, they have to bolster belief in that supposed authority by claiming 'their' church is exclusively the 'one true church', and disobedience to *their* rule will bring about expulsion and loss of eternal life. While this concept of a very special, exclusive group appeals to the human nature of their members, at the same time it isolates such groups from other Christians, who then become 'outsiders' who do not deserve recognition as brothers and sisters in Christ, even though they may share similar beliefs. The result of this deception is failure to obey the scriptures, Galatians 6:10, *'So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.'* And 1 Corinthians 13:13, *'So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.'* Herein lies the problem!

In 2 Peter 1:7, we are reminded again of the required fruits of our faith, *'...and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.'* Now, notice that verse 9 reveals the **consequence of our failure to display that love**, *'But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.'*

The same warning is repeated in 1 John 2: 9-11, *'The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.'* How many of us have seen the bitter fruits of the dominion Jesus Christ condemned, and courageous people put out of God's Church for standing up for Christ's words, which we just read of in Matthew 20:25-27? Those who are prepared to *accept* such evil behaviour from false ministers and participate in this rejection, are *effectively hating* their rejected brothers and sisters and thus begin their walk in darkness, a darkness which blinds their eyes to any scripture not accepted and promoted by their organisation.

We can recognise that this blindness is an end-time symptom because of Revelation 3:17, which describes the **final Laodicean era** of God's Church, before the resurrection - *'For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.'* Here again we see that the *cause* of their blindness is a belief that they have all that they need spiritually, that they, as a church, are rich in spiritual knowledge and material wealth, and don't need those parts of the Bible which are ignored by *their* church organisation.

The underlying cause is that they have **replaced Jesus Christ with their organisation**, and God's word with its teaching. Consequently, any biblical message from outside their organisation's viewpoint is anathema, even if it comes directly from the Bible! Not only have they become idolaters, but blind idolaters!

Somewhere out there though, remain those who have refused to accept dominion, idolatry and a mind closed to *any* part of God's word. Some of these *faithful* Christians have even experienced repeated rejection for their loyalty to Christ and have finally shunned church organisations in despair, though, like Christ, they maintain only love and sorrow for their brethren still trapped in deception ( As does Christ, see Revelation chapters 2 and 3).

These faithful Christians understand that the test of true discipleship **is love for our brethren**, which should be evident in all our lives, John 13:35, *'By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'* If we want a future as Christ's Bride, if we want to be in the first resurrection, we cannot afford to neglect that love, 1John 3:14, *'We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love each other. Anyone who does not love remains in death.'*

Neither can we afford to reject any part of God's clear instructions to us, even those connected with the future, which are totally ignored by most of the Church of God, but which light the way for Christ's Bride-to-be so that they know what God requires of them in the end time, 2 Peter 1:19. *'And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.'* We can measure our willingness to walk *in that light* by the following scriptures, which reveal just one example of that blindness, remembering as we have seen, that a wilful blindness is all too common amongst God's people.

Now, nothing could be more central to our beliefs than the resurrection of the Saints, Romans 6:5, *'For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.'* We see that our resurrection is inextricably linked to the resurrection of Christ, Ephesians 2:5-6, *'even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:* The Greek word for 'raised together' here is *sunēgeiren*, Strong's no 4891, implying raised 'along with' Christ, *in the likeness* of His resurrection, in conformity to its pattern.

Although we have understood that the plan of God is pictured by His Holy Days, few of God's people yet recognise that the resurrection must be associated with Christ's *Firstfruit Spring harvest*, rather than His return *with* the Saints at the *Autumn harvest* pictured by the Feast of Trumpets.

Only this understanding actually allows for the events we read of in Revelation 14:1-5 and 15:2, where Christ's Bride is pictured after taking the Father's name, in a marriage to Christ before the Father's throne on the Sea of Glass in heaven, mentioned in Revelation 19:4,7. It is not logical to believe that all these events, including Christ's return *for* His Bride, the resurrection, the events on the Sea of Glass in Heaven, as well as His final return *with* His Bride, as part of the huge army from heaven, could all take place in one day, at the Feast of Trumpets.

This is clearly proved by the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter of Revelation from verse six to the chapter end. The first angel reaches all the world with the gospel. The second angel announces the fall of the US and Britain, who have acted as Babylon. The third angel warns people not to worship the rising Beast, who is setting out to conquer nations and also persecuting the Church. This takes 3 ½ years, and is called 'the tribulation of those days' in Matthew 24:29.

The fourth angel, verses 14-16, tells Christ that it is time for the Firstfruit Harvest of His Saints, at the First Resurrection, *'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 was a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the **harvest of the earth is fully ripe.**"* Notice that only **after** that Firstfruit Harvest of the Saints, follows the 3 ½ year harvest of the Great Tribulation, where sinful mankind is cast into 'the great winepress of the wrath of God,' Revelation 14:18-19, *'And another angel* (this is the sixth angel mentioned in this chapter, not the fourth angel who harvests the Firstfruit Harvest of the Saints in verse 15) *came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over the fire, and he called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, "Put in **your** sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe."* *'So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth **and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.**'* **That makes a total of seven years of tribulation, with the First Resurrection in the middle. (Cf. 6<sup>th</sup> Seal, revelation 6:17.)** Never has that order of events been understood before in the Church of God. (See our END TIME tab for the actual Biblical proof of chronology, and why it does not take place when the seventh angel of Revelation sounds, in Rev.11:15)

Now we can understand that the length of time the Saints are in heaven, we read of in Revelation 12:14, *'And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for **a time, and times, and half a time,** from the face of the serpent.'* It is during this same 3 ½ year period that those Christians who do not qualify to take part in the first resurrection, are persecuted during the Great Tribulation, verse 17, *'Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus,'*

Many Christians have long understood that the Great Tribulation lasts for 3 ½ years, so, counting back from the Feast of Trumpets, for 3 ½ years to find the time of Christ's return *for His Bride*, brings us to the time of the first resurrection.

No matter how hard we try, it is impossible to fit 3 ½ years between Pentecost and the Feast of Trumpets. It is too long a period of time to fit in – so those who have thought Pentecost to be the resurrection time must be wrong, for *that* Feast day does not picture the Firstfruit **barley** harvest at all.

Jesus Christ is the First of the Firstfruits, 1 Corinthians 15:23, *'But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.'* He was resurrected on Wavesheaf day (Leviticus 23:11), which occurs on the day following the Sabbath, and during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Remember, we learned that our resurrection is inextricably linked to His, *'in the likeness of His resurrection'* (Romans 6:5).

His resurrection is represented by the sheaf of barley waved by the High Priest. Then followed an offering of **abib barley** ground into flour, mingled with oil and frankincense, Leviticus 2:14-15, *"If you offer a grain offering of **firstfruits** to the Lord, you shall offer for the grain offering of your firstfruits fresh ears, roasted with fire, crushed new grain. And you shall put oil on it and lay frankincense on it; it is a grain offering,"* and 23:13, *'And the grain offering with it shall be two tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, a food offering to the LORD with a pleasing aroma, and the drink offering with it shall be of wine, a fourth of a hin.'* It may be that this **barley** flour was even ground from the Wavesheaf itself, because that sheaf alone was the very first sheaf of the barley harvest, in which case it could indeed represent the harvest of the **Firstfruit Saints** *'in the likeness of His resurrection'*.

Actually, this day, the Wavesheaf day, is the *only* day which can fit into the 3 ½ year calculation we have examined, and even then, only in special conditions which are defined by the scriptures.

If you have been able to recognise that the resurrection cannot, according to the scriptures, take place at the Feast of Trumpets, and you wish to walk in the light and *reject the blindness* that has resulted from lack of

love for your brethren, stay with us to learn more, as God reveals further details of what He requires of His end-time Saints. Always remember though that we see prophecy *“through a glass darkly.”* 1 Corinthians 13:12. No-one can be dogmatic about the details of prophecy, but God gives us a clearer understanding when we *need* it.

.....