



REPENT AUSTRALIA

"If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

2 Chronicles 7:14

BROTHERS & SISTERS

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GOD'S PRIORITIES

When God commanded Israel to observe certain festivals, He was establishing a yearly commemoration of those things which were dearest to His own heart. These festivals were: Passover; the Feast of Unleavened Bread; The Feast of First Fruits; the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost); the Feast of Trumpets; the Day of Atonement; and the Feast of Tabernacles. And lest we tend to ignore them we should realise that He is the same, yesterday and forever and that His priorities are exactly the same now as they were in Old Testament days. It certainly behoves us to consider them carefully and reverently – lest we lose our focus on the tasks He prescribes and the discipline He inflicts on us.

Passover: the Blood of Jesus

At the very heart of God, the heart of the Bible, the heart of history is the SACRIFICE OF JESUS. Though instituted in the Old Testament, Passover (which included the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb) is also mentioned 28 times in the New Testament, most notably in 1 Corinthians 5:7 – "For indeed Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us". He was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world and everything that God's grace has done gravitates around the completed work of Jesus and that instant when He hung upon the cross and breathed those momentous words, "It is finished". Moreover, He not only washed us from our sins in His own sinless blood, He has made us kings and priests to His God and Father. Therefore, "God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father". (Phil. 2:9-11) No wonder His blood is God's Number One Priority!

Unleavened Bread: Fellowship and Communion with God

When Jesus provided deliverance from sin by His blood, God immediately made a covering for those sins; not by condoning them but by making provision for those who believe to be accepted by Him. As leaven is a type of sin, eating unleavened bread represented sin pardoned. Under the New Covenant, leavened bread is used because God provides justification. Instead of sin, fault and failure, God sees through the covering He provided holiness, blamelessness and perfection. The Scriptures assure us of this: "For by that one offering He made forever perfect in the sight of God all those whom He is making holy". (Heb. 10:14) This feast is a reminder that God wants us to have rich and satisfying communion with Himself. In fact, Jesus promised that He and the Father would make their home in our hearts by His Spirit. What is more, Christ living within gives us the sure hope of future glorification as the divine children of God. Thus, the Days of Unleavened Bread are a celebration reminding us of the resurrected Christ who not only saves us from our sins but, by His living Spirit dwelling in us, we have fellowship with Him daily.

First Fruits: Jesus Is Alive!

The Festival of First Fruits represents the resurrection of Jesus and His Life. Death has been conquered. Not only is He alive, moreover, but it is already recorded in God's Book that we who are His will follow after Him in the great resurrection. The Apostle Paul confirms it: "But now Christ is risen from the dead and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruit, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming". (1 Cor. 15: 20, 22, 23) Though we may die physically, the death of the soul (the real death) has been vanquished. Like Jesus, neither death nor hell can hold us. Satan is defeated. Furthermore, as Jesus is now crowned with glory and honour because He suffered death for us, we too shall carry our cross daily and share in His glory. It is all in the big heart of God. Hallelujah!

Pentecost: The Promise of the Holy Spirit

The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was not an afterthought to God; He had planned it before the world was made. The word *Pentecost* simply means fifty, because it was fifty days after Passover. And when Jesus told His disciples to tarry in Jerusalem it was God's plan unfolding, as exactly fifty days after Passover a mighty change was wrought in them. As God wants to conform each one of His servants to the image of His Son, so that all are transformed into the same image from glory to glory He baptised them in the Holy Spirit and they were suddenly filled with power and boldness. No longer separate individuals in the Lord they were bonded together as one body, the Body of Christ. Today Pentecost reminds us that His Holy Spirit is constantly in and with us, empowering us to do His will and to preach the gospel, ever careful not to resist, grieve or quench the precious Spirit of the Living God.

Trumpets: Go Tell the World

The Festival of Trumpets was held for the people to meet together praising and rejoicing as they heard a herald of good news. The Good News for the world to hear today is that Jesus saves! Christ has defeated the devil. "Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them through the Cross" (Col 2: 15) The battle is over and we can go forth blowing the trumpet of God! That is what He meant when He said, "...you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth". (Acts 1: 8) To a sin-sodden world - lost in a maze of hedonism, terrorism, anarchy and hopelessness - Christ Jesus is a Light in the darkness - and there is no other!

The Day of Atonement: The Atonement Is Everlasting

Perhaps the most unusual of the biblical holy days, the Day of Atonement was a reminder that Israel's probation has expired and that their covering must be renewed. On this day the Israelites sacrificed a goat as a sin offering and released a second goat, the scapegoat, into the uninhabited wilderness. Though this annual offering for sin could never make the people perfect, it nevertheless gave them another year of probation. We, who believe and receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, however, are *born again* and, because the Holy Spirit gives us new life in Christ Jesus from heaven, our probation does not expire. The covering is not just renewed; we have an everlasting covering through the blood of the Lamb shed at Calvary. Yet should we sin we have a way out -- the way of repentance and faith and a return to fellowship. Since there is no other sacrifice, there is no other way. The Scriptures assure us: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness". (1 John 1:9)

Tabernacles: The Return of Jesus

The seven-day Feast of Tabernacles was a time when the people of Israel dwelt in booths made of the boughs of fruit trees laden with fruit, palm fronds and leafy branches to rejoice together in worshipping God. It typified God dwelling with men following the return of Jesus for His millennial reign. When He does return (and that should be very soon) then will be fulfilled the promise of Acts 1:10-11: "And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men robed in white said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.' " Then there will be a 1,000 - year period of peace, prosperity and no sickness as He reigns in righteousness and justice over the Kingdom of God on earth. Thus will be fulfilled God's desire to live among His people forever. For long ago, when He told Moses to institute this feast, God had said, "I want to tabernacle with you". The return of Jesus is the priority God is looking forward to now and will bring to completion God's great plan of redemption, a plan revealed in the seven feasts given to Moses over three thousand years ago.

Now may the God of love, truth and peace Himself in Christ Jesus sanctify you entirely in the omnipotent power of His Holy Spirit -- and may your spirit, soul and body be preserved complete without blame at the coming of our King of Glory, the Lord Jesus Christ, to rule and reign with us. Amen

Let us rejoice and yield to the Holy Spirit in prayer: Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your Name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen

Wishing you and your family a blessed and glorious New Year 2006.

R.A.: Led by our Lord Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit to glorify God with the Brotherhood of Man and in love and faithfulness to bring glory and honour to His Holy Name. Amen.

REJOICE & SHARE IN FAITH THIS MESSAGE IN PRAYER WITH OTHERS & BE BLESSED TO BE ONE IN CHRIST JESUS.