

The Seven Weeks of Harvest Leading to the Resurrection

(Day 49)

Fred R. Coulter—June 7, 2003

Greetings, brethren! This is Day 49, the Sabbath before Pentecost!

Today we're going to cover on how we count to Pentecost. We are going to do this because there are so many different ideas out there that have come along. It's interesting that these heresies concerning the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread, counting to Pentecost and Pentecost all sort of run in cycles.

This year we've had a new twist added to it, which is that there is one man who goes over to the supposed Holy Land and goes to the Karaite Jews and he observes how they harvest the wave sheaf of barley. He claims that you cannot keep Passover until the barley is ripe. Well, let's understand something:

1. today the climate in Palestine—which it really is; not the 'Holy Land'; *it's as unholy as can be*—is far different than it was during the days when the Israelites lived there
2. it is a temple ritual, which Jesus Christ fulfilled
3. because the Church is spread worldwide, God provided the Calculated Hebrew Calendar so it would be the most accurate means of determining the Holy Days

Even in spite of that we need to be able to count Pentecost, because we are told to do so!

So let's begin by going to Deut. 16 and let's look at one of the problems that developed because people do not rightly put the Scriptures together, and each has his own idea on how things should be. Then I will show you the source of two problems that we had concerning counting Pentecost for years, and years, and as a matter of fact there are some who still count it incorrectly.

Deuteronomy 16:9: "You shall count seven weeks to yourselves. Begin to count the seven weeks from the time you *first* began to *put* the sickle to the grain."

This is the Wave Sheaf Offering. Now the Hebrew word for *weeks* is 'shabua'—*a week, a complete week*. So, here we have that you shall number unto you *seven complete weeks*.

Verse 10: "And you shall keep the **Feast of Weeks** to the LORD your God..."—another name for Pentecost. Pentecost means *count fifty*.

"...according to the sufficiency of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give according as the LORD your God has blessed you. And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you, and your son, and your daughter, and your male servant, and your female servant, and the Levite inside your gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, those among you, in the place which the LORD your God has chosen to place His name there. And you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt. And you shall be careful to do these statutes" (vs 10-12).

With this we can also remember that we were a bondman (slave) in *spiritual Egypt*, that is *this world!*

Lev. 23—here we have a little more detail on the counting, and here is where we get the 50th day. Deut. 16 gives us the 7 weeks, but it does not give us the 50th day.

Leviticus 23:9: "And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, "When you have come into the land, which I give to you, and shall reap the harvest of it, then you shall bring *the premier* sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest" (vs 9-10).

Let's look at v 10 for just a minute. First of all, there is one error out *there that some ministers say and teach and people believe*, that the harvest had to be in the second year when they went into the land because the Canaanites were the ones who planted the seeds for the harvest. When they came in just before the Passover they couldn't use that harvest because they were planted with unclean hands, and they need to have sanctified seed planed only by the hands of Israelites. **Verse 10 says nothing of any of those requirements!**

- "...When you have come into the land..."—that's when they came into the land, **not a year after**
- "...which I give to you..."—if God gives them the land and there is a crop to be harvested, who's crop is it? *It is theirs!*
- "...and [you] shall reap the harvest of it..."—It doesn't say that you shall reap the harvest *that you shall plant!* It says that you shall reap the harvest *that you have already there, that is planted, and you take over.*

- “...then you shall bring *the premier* sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest”—this was the Wave Sheaf Offering.

They were to do this when they came into the land. This was not kept in the sense of the Wave Sheaf Offering all during the forty years that they were in the wilderness. They kept Pentecost as a memorial of giving the Ten Commandments. When they came into the land—another way—the exact way of determining it is according to the grain harvest. As we are going to see, it is the grain harvest that leads up to Pentecost, and Pentecost is a grain harvest Feast.

This *firstfruits means the premiere sheaf*. This is the one that symbolized Christ. This is the one that He fulfilled. So, we count from—as we will see in Christ fulfilling this—when He was accepted of God the Father, and was the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. Let’s read a little more detail about this.

Verse 11: “And he shall wave the sheaf... [elevate and wave the sheaf] ...before the LORD to be accepted for you. On the next day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.”

We have during the week of Unleavened Bread, like this year:

- Passover Tuesday night
- Night to be Remembered Wednesday night
- Holy Day Thursday
- Friday was the preparation day
- weekly Sabbath

Christ was resurrected at the end of the weekly Sabbath, He ascended and was accepted of God the Father on *the morrow after the weekly Sabbath during Unleavened Bread*.

Therefore, the beginning of *the count always is with the day that Jesus was accepted!* That becomes day #1 of the 50-day count, which is also according to the ritual here when the priest waves the Wave Sheaf Offering.

Let’s come to John 20. We’ll come back here to Lev. 23 and look at the count a little bit more, but let’s see where we find this literally fulfilled right after the women came to the tomb early in the morning on the first day of the week. They came there early in the morning, actually Mary Magdalene left the house before the sun had risen, but it was getting light and she left while it was yet dark. Then she came to the tomb and saw that it was empty. She ran back and told Peter and John; they came and looked at the tomb, and then they left and Mary Magdalene stayed there.

John 20:11: “But Mary stood outside the tomb weeping; and as she wept, she stooped down *and looked* into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white who were sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been laid. And they said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ She said to them, ‘Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.’ And after saying these things, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but did not know that it was Jesus” (vs 11-14).

So, as a resurrected spirit being, Jesus was able to manifest Himself in a way where people would not necessarily recognize Him. Just like it was here with Mary Magdalene, and as we find in Luke 24 with the two disciples as they went to Emmaus. When she turned herself she saw Him standing there, didn’t know it was Jesus.

Verse 15: “Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?’ Thinking that He was the gardener, she said to Him, ‘Sir, if you have carried Him off, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.’.... [then Jesus revealed Himself to her]: ...Jesus said to her, ‘Mary.’ Turning around, she said to Him, ‘Rabboni’; that is to say, ‘Teacher.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Do not touch Me, because I have not yet ascended to My Father. But go to My brethren and tell them that I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God’” (vs 15-17).

Then she went. Jesus apparently then ascended to heaven, was accepted by God the Father, and then came right back to the earth.

First of all, He appeared to the two disciples that were walking on their way to Emmaus. They were talking about the things that had happened and were telling Jesus, and Jesus appeared to them in a way that they couldn’t recognize Him, so He walked with them all the way down to Emmaus. He went into the inn, and they sat down to eat and when He broke bread and blessed it then they recognized it was Jesus. Jesus then immediately disappeared from them, and the two disciples went on back to where the apostle were. Here is John’s account of this and then we’ll go see Luke’s account of it.

Verse 19: “Afterwards, as evening was drawing near that day, the first *day* of the weeks, and the doors were shut where the disciples had assembled **for fear of the Jews**... they weren’t having a special Sunday meeting here] ...Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, ‘Peace *be* to you.’”

He just immediately appeared right in the room. He either walked through the wall, or through

the doors to get into the room. Only as a spirit being could He do this.

Let's understand, this is on the morrow after the Sabbath, being the first day of the week during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. That's when Jesus was ascended and went to the Father. Now let's see the rest of the account and what Jesus did, and how He appeared to them:

Luke 24:36—*the two ran back from Emmaus*: “Now, as they were telling these things, Jesus Himself stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace *be* to you.’”

This was an astonishing thing because you see, never in the history of the world has there been someone raised from the dead as Jesus was raised from the dead. Never has it happened until Jesus, someone was raised from the dead as a fleshly human being to be an immortal spirit being.

As an immortal spirit being Jesus has the ability to appear in His full glorified form (Rev. 1) where His countenance shines as the sun, and His feet shine as if they were molten brass in a furnace, and His eyes are as a flame of fire.

The vision that the apostles saw of *The Transfiguration*, Jesus' whole countenance and visage shined as the sun in its full strength. However, He also has the ability to appear as a human being, to appear as flesh and bone. This is what He told them here. So, let's see this.

Remember, all of this occurred on the Wave Sheaf Offering Day after Jesus had ascended to the Father to be accepted as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, and came down and then appeared to them.

He told Mary not to touch Him because He had not yet ascended to the Father, and that was early in the morning. The Wave Sheaf Offering by the priest was generally at about nine o'clock, just right at the time after the morning daily offering. So, the wave sheaf was waved. That's the time that Jesus ascended to heaven, was accepted of the Father, came back down to the earth and appeared to the two disciples and then to the apostles.

Verse 37. “But they were terrified and filled with fear, thinking *that* they beheld a spirit *apparition*”—*a demon spirit!*

The reason that they were afraid is because a demon spirit cannot appear as a human being. It cannot appear as one that has flesh and bone as Jesus did. A demon can only appear as an *apparition*. It doesn't have the power to appear as a human being.

Verse 38: “Then He said to them, ‘Why are

you troubled? And why do doubts come up in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, that it is I. Touch Me and see *for yourselves*...” (vs 38-39).

This tells us that He had already ascended to the Father and returned. Before He went up, He told Mary, ‘Don't touch Me.’ Now He says:

“...for a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see Me having.’ And after saying this, He showed them *His* hands and *His* feet. But while they were still disbelieving and wondering for joy, He said to them, ‘Do you have anything here to eat?’ Then they gave Him part of a broiled fish and a *piece* of honeycomb. And He took these *and* ate in their presence” (vs 39-42).

I don't know how that combination would taste. It would be interesting. I'd like to try it sometime. But anyway, that's what He ate.

Verse 43: “And He took these *and* ate in their presence.”

Then He immediately began to open their minds to the Truth of the prophecies concerning Himself.

Verse 44: “And He said to them, ‘These *are* the words that I spoke to you when I was yet with you, that all *the* things which were written concerning Me in the Law of Moses and *in the* Prophets and *in the* Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures...” (vs 44-45).

This is a key important thing. To really understand the Scriptures through the Spirit of God, you have to have your mind opened to do so.

In *The Christian Passover* book, you can go and you can read *The Fourteen Rules for Bible Study*, or if not we have that in booklet form.

Verse 46: “And said to them, ‘According as it is written, it was necessary... [obligatory] ...for the Christ to suffer, and to rise from *the* dead the third day. And in His name, repentance and remission of sins should be preached to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. For you are witnesses of these things” (vs 46-48).

Now let's understand something. Just as we do not offer animal sacrifices today because Jesus fulfilled that part of it, *likewise Jesus fulfilled the Wave Sheaf Offering!* So, we do not need to go and align ourselves with the Jews. Jesus said beware of the leaven of the scribes and the Pharisees.

We do not need to go align ourselves with the Karaite Jews who reject Jesus, don't believe in Him, and look at a physical Wave Sheaf Offering

and determine when it is that we ought to be able to keep Passover and begin to count Pentecost. That's why we have the calculated Hebrew Calendar. It's very important to understand that.

Now let's look at the way to count. Let's finish up the Wave Sheaf Offering. It gives all the things that they were to offer with it, the burnt offering, the meal offering, and so forth.

Leviticus 23:14 *is a very important thing*: "And you shall eat neither bread, nor parched grain..."

They take the green ears that are not quite ripe but ripe enough—and they parch them and make them hard.

"...nor green ears until the same day, until you have brought an offering to your God. *It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings*" (v 14).

After that first Wave Sheaf Offering Day that they did after they crossed the Jordan and went into the 'promised land,' then they would always have old grain to eat after that coming up to the next time of the Passover and Unleavened Bread season, and the Wave Sheaf Offering Day. These are instructions for the very first day when they entered into the land. Now let's see how they were to count:

Verse 15: "And you shall count to you beginning with the next day after the Sabbath... [including that day, always inclusive counting] ...beginning with the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths shall be complete."

Years ago the Worldwide Church of God, Herbert Armstrong decided that in counting to Pentecost you excluded Sunday and began with Monday, *which was incorrect!* They had a great debacle over this in 1952. At that particular time, to settle the issue, Herbert Armstrong asked Dr. Herman Hoeh to examine the Scriptures here and tell him whether it was beginning with the day or after the day.

Dr. Hoeh reasoned this way, and he told us when they changed in 1974 back to the correct count, he admitted to all the ministers that he did this: He said that since Herbert Armstrong was God's apostle, therefore as God's apostle he had to be right and this had to be inspiration. So, he went into these verses right here, which say Sabbath:

- v 15—seven Sabbaths
- v 16—seventh Sabbath

Dr. Hoeh said that that means *weeks*. Well that was not true. Sabbath here is 'shabbat' and means *Sabbath*. Weeks, as we started out, is 'shabua' and means *weeks*.

If you begin counting on a Monday, ***you cannot have*** seven Sabbaths and then the morrow after the 7th Sabbath. It's an impossibility to do. There is no way that it can be configured. It means exactly what it says.

Verse 15: "And you shall count to you beginning with the next day after the Sabbath, beginning with the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths shall be complete"

This means a complete week ending in a Sabbath for seven Sabbaths. That's why Deut. 16 has seven weeks. Those mean seven *full* weeks. Here we have it further defined that each week is to end in a Sabbath. So it means that each week begins counting on Sunday including the day Sunday. You can look at any calendar and check that out. Actually you can look in *A Harmony of the Gospels*, and we've got a chart: Counting to Pentecost in 30 AD when Jesus was resurrected, and how we come to Pentecost.

Notice that it says here as a double check; v 16: "Even unto the day after the seventh Sabbath you shall number fifty days...."

If you begin day one, which is Sunday, and you go 49 days, the 49th day is on Sabbath, which is the 7th Sabbath. The morrow after the 7th Sabbath has to be the 1st day of the week. This does not justify Sunday-keeping because God had this way before the Catholics and Protestants ever came up with their rationale for Sunday-keeping, and we've covered that very thoroughly in the In-Depth Study: *Refuting Sunday-Keeping*.

Now then, from this point forward, let's look at how the harvest leading up to the resurrection, yes and including the resurrection, which we will see tomorrow. I want us to see ***leading up to the resurrection, that this is a harvest.***

Let's go back to day one and see that the Apostle Paul also verifies that ***Jesus is the Firstfruit, that Wave Sheaf Offering*** that was accepted by God the Father on behalf of all the children of Israel, and with Jesus Christ being the sin offering for the whole world on the behalf of all human beings, ***was accepted as that Premiere Sacrifice!***

1-Corinthians 15:20—*this tells us something very important concerning Jesus Christ: "But now*

Christ has been raised from *the* dead; He has become **the Firstfruit of those who have fallen asleep.**”

He fulfilled the Firstfruit Wave Sheaf Offering when He ascended to heaven.

Verse 21: “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 those who are Christ’s at His coming. (vs 21-23).

This tells us when the resurrection will be. This tells us that it’s going to be at His coming, ***but Christ is the Firstfruit, and we also know that He is the Firstborn! He is the Firstborn from the dead!***

If you understand this, then you also realize this is how Jesus was born again; this also tells us how **we** will be born again.

Colossians 1:18: “And He is the Head of the Body, the Church; Who is *the* Beginning, **the Firstborn from among the dead...**”

- He’s the *first* one
- He’s the *first* of the firstfruits
- He is the *firstborn* from the dead

All of those have to do with combining that very first day counting to Pentecost!

We also know in Rom. 8:29 that ***He is firstborn among many brethren***, who are going to be resurrected at Christ’s return, when He returns.

Now then, let’s see how Jesus, in this series of parables, shows that what He is doing toward the resurrection from His first coming to His second coming is likened unto a harvest. That’s why the first resurrection, as we will see tomorrow, has to be on Pentecost. What we are going to do is look at this harvest, see what He says and see how He lays it out, and then we will look at some other Scriptures, which also show how we are tied in as firstfruits and the Church of the Firstborn.

Matthew 13:10—*the disciples wanted to know about the parable*: “And His disciples came to Him and asked, ‘Why do You speak to them in parables?’ And He answered *and* said to them, ‘Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it has not been given’” (VS 10-11).

God has not opened the minds of the people of the world, just those whom He’s calling in this age.

Verse 12: “For whoever has *understanding*, to him more shall be given, and he shall have an

abundance, but whoever does not have *understanding*, even what he has shall be taken away from him. For this *reason* I speak to them in parables, because seeing, they see not; and hearing, they hear not; neither do they understand” (vs 12-13).

Parable of the Sower

Verse 18—*He explains it*: “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” (vs 18-19).

There are a lot of people who love to hear the Word of God, and it’s kind of in and out, and it never registers. Those are the ones He’s talking about.

Verse 20: “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...” (vs 20-21).

These are good parables for us to really, how shall we say, sink our roots into, if we could put it that way, rather than our teeth into. We can ask ourselves how do we fare in the explanation of the parables:

- How is our crop?
- How is our field?

Spiritually speaking, and so forth!

Yet, “...he has no root in himself, *he* does not endure; for when tribulation or persecution arises because of the Word, he is quickly offended” (v 21). *People leave, and we’ve seen that!*

Verse 22: “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.”

It’s like the richest man I ever met in the Church who drove a Rolls Royce—one of those huge big models—and I was riding in the back seat and he looked up in the rear-view mirror, looked me right in the eye and says, ‘Fred, I don’t believe the New Testament teaches tithing.’ ***I would say that the deceitfulness of riches got him!***

“...choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful” (v 22).

True to this, he has many doctrines that are not true. All we have to do is to understand the Word of God, and when we are confronted with situations in life, we can see that’s exactly how it

comes as Jesus said it would.

Verse 23—*hopefully this is us*: “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...”

That means you go out and you have works, see, because your faith is made perfect by works. That’s what James said.

“...one a hundredfold, another sixtyfold *and* another thirtyfold” (v 23).

Parable of the Wheat and Tares

Verse 24: “And He put another parable before them, saying, ‘The Kingdom of Heaven is compared to a man who was sowing good seed in his field; but while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares...’” (vs 24-25).

It’s an interesting thing concerning how wheat and tares grow up. As they are growing, it is very hard to tell the difference between one and the other. But when the grain starts to head out then the tares are recognized for what they are because they have no heads of grain. In other words, they have no fruit.

Verse 27: “And the servants came to the master of the house *and* said to him ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? Then where did these tares come from?’ And he said to them, ‘A man *who is* an enemy has done this.’ Then the servants said to him, ‘Do you want us to go out and gather them?’ But he said, “No, lest while you are gathering the tares, you *also* uproot the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest...” (vs 27-30).

This is what’s important. There is always going to be a cycle within the Church of God, which comes around to the time that the tares are sowed in among us. What will happen is that when they are manifest, if we stay true to the Word of God then they cannot harm us, they cannot take away our fruit, they cannot, as the agents of the enemy, take us down.

Now in many cases they leave. But here, to give the explanation of this parable, the disciples came to Jesus:

Verse 36: “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’” (vs 36-37).

This is a harvest! What I want us to understand is that the time from the Wave Sheaf Offering through to Pentecost is a great harvest. All of us are likened unto firstfruits.

Verse 38: “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 then, let’s see how we can distinguish between the children of the Kingdom and the children of the devil. This tells us the difference between the children of God and the children of the devil.

1-John 3:4: “Everyone who practices sin is also practicing lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness.”

Why does he put this verse right here? Because he’s going to make a point and he’s going to show that the children of the devil break and transgress the commandments of God.

Verse 5: “And you know that He appeared in order that He might take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. Everyone who dwells in Him **does not practice sin**...” (vs 5-6).

- 1-John 1—if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive our sins
- 1-John 2—He is an advocate for us if we sin

This cannot mean *without sin*; this means “...does not *practice* sin...”.

“...anyone who *practices* sin has not seen Him, nor has known Him. Little children, do not allow anyone to deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous” (vs 6-7).

Now the reason is, as we saw during the Days of Unleavened Bread is this, that God imputes the righteousness of Jesus Christ to us **IF**

- we yield to God
- we are growing and overcoming
- we are standing in His grace
- we are repenting of our sins
- we are constantly coming to God and coming to the Light

THEN we are righteous as He is righteous!

Verse 8 [*tie in with v 4*]: “The one who practices sin is of the devil because the devil has been sinning from *the* beginning. For this purpose the Son of God appeared that He might destroy the works of the devil”—*which He began to do with the crucifixion and the resurrection!*

Verse 9. “Everyone who has been begotten

by God does not practice sin, because His seed of *begettal*... [the seed of God the Father] ...is dwelling within him, and he is not able to *practice* sin because he has been begotten by God.”

- those who *practice sin* are of the devil
- those who *do not practice sin* are the children of God

Verse 10: “By this *standard* are manifest the children of God and the children of the devil...”

Even within the midst this is defining the children of the devil or the tares that come within the Church. We’re going to see a little bit later in the seven week harvest as we come down through history that, yes:

- the devil is there
- the devil is ready
- the devil is working
- the devil confronts every Church of God from without and from within

“...Everyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, and neither is the one who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you heard from *the* beginning: that we should love one another” (vs 10-11).

Let’s understand something. John throughout 1-John and 2-John says ‘*that which you’ve had from the beginning, that which we have seen from the beginning.*’ When you go back to the beginning of the gospel, what did they do?

- they kept the Sabbath
- they kept the Holy Days
- they did the things that pleased God

Here’s how we discern between the children of the devil who are the tares, and the children of the Kingdom who are the children of God, not yet born into the Kingdom; that happens at the end of the age. We haven’t come to the end of the age.

Matthew 13:38: “And the field is the world; and the good seed, these are the children of the Kingdom...”

We have the seed of begettal of God the Father in us, so here’s a direct parallel.

“...but the tares are the children of the wicked one’ (v 38)—*the children of Satan the devil, and they practice sin!* They are the ones who come in and:

- bring false doctrines
- bring their own ideas
- destroy the faith of the saints

That’s why you have to be strong!

Verse 39: “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.... [symbolic of the war and destruction at the end-time] ...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**” (vs 39-43).

Now let’s look at the seven weeks of harvest leading up to the resurrection. Let’s see where we are called the firstfruits of God’s creation. This ties right in with what Paul wrote that Christ is the firstfruit, afterward those that are Christ’s at His coming. They are a different harvest. And the harvest takes place all at once.

James 1:17: “Every good act of giving and **every perfect gift**...”

- God’s Spirit
- God’s love
- God’s faith
- God’s blessing
- and *the physical things* that we have
- the perfection of character
- the growing in grace and knowledge
- the developing of the mind of Christ

“...is from above... [comes to us through the Holy Spirit] ... coming down from the Father of lights...” (v 17).

That’s why when we pray, we pray directly to God the Father. And as Jesus said we are to pray to Him because He loves us. So, this is really a very important and profound part of the Scriptures here.

“...with Whom there is no variation, nor shadow of turning” (v 17). *That’s something! God is always the same!*

Hebrews 13:8: “Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, and today, and forever.”

You can always count on God the Father and Jesus Christ, without a doubt!

James 1:17: “...with Whom there is no variation, nor shadow of turning.”

Let's understand that in relationship to the world's way of believing in Sunday and the holidays:

- God never changed from the Holy Days
- God never changed from the Passover

What He did, *He changed how they are observed; He did not change the day!*

Verse 18. "According to His own will... [by God's own desire] ...He begat us by *the* Word of Truth..."

Jesus is called: John 1:1: "In *the* beginning was the Word, and the Word was with the God, and the Word was God"

With His Holy Spirit and the Scriptures He begat us. He put His seed into us. We become the children of God, though it's not yet manifest what we shall be, but as John says when Christ returns and is manifest we will see Him as He is because we will be like Him. Here we have combined the begetting and firstfruits.

James 1:18: "...that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all His created beings." ***What God is creating in us now!***

As we know, the character that we have, the new man that we are putting on, is created in ***true*** Righteousness and Holiness by the Spirit of God, the power of God, that we be that fruit which brings forth thirty-fold, sixty-fold, or one hundred-fold.

Heb. 12:18—here we see the parallel between the giving of the Law on Pentecost (Exo. 20), and our coming to Mount Sion in heaven above. Just like God said that Israel was His firstborn under the Old Covenant, so likewise we are called, as we will see, the Church of the Firstborn.

So we have the same thing applied to us as was applied to Christ. Christ was the First of the firstfruits and the First of the firstborn. We are the firstfruits because we are in the first resurrection, and we are the *firstborn church*. Now let's see the comparison:

Hebrews 12:18: "For you have not come to *the* mount that could be touched and that burned with fire, nor to gloominess, and fearful darkness, and *the* whirlwind; and to *the* sound of *the* trumpet, and to *the* voice of *the* words..." (vs 18-19).

Remember the trumpet sounded loud and long on the Day of Pentecost. We'll see that's important when we come to tomorrow and the resurrection.

"...which those who heard, *begged* that *the* word not be spoken *directly* to them. (For they could

not endure what was being commanded: 'And if even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned, or shot through with an arrow'; and so terrifying was the sight *that* Moses said, 'I am greatly afraid and trembling')...." (vs 18-21).

Our situation is different than that. We have direct access by the blood of Christ, right into the Holy of Holies in heaven above, right to God the Father with Jesus Christ as our High Priest sitting at His right hand.

Verse 22: "But you have come to Mount Sion, and to *the* city of *the* living God, heavenly Jerusalem; and to an innumerable company of angels... [tie in Rev. 4 & 5] ...***to the joyous festival gathering; and to the Church of the Firstborn...***"

That's what we are. We are the firstfruits, likened unto a harvest. We are the Church of the Firstborn because we will be in the first resurrection.

"...registered *in the Book of Life* in heaven and to God, *the* Judge of all, and to *the* spirits of the just who have been perfected" (v 23).

What happens when we die? The spirit of man, which is in us, which has been perfected with the Spirit of God, that goes back to God. He keeps track of every human being that has ever existed. They are in two categories:

1. the first resurrection—those who are the saints
2. the second resurrection
 - ✓ first phase—those who have not done evil unto the unpardonable sin
Those are the good and sincere, and honest people of the world if you want to put it that way!
 - ✓ second phase—the resurrection of the wicked, *unto the second death*

God keeps track of all of those, and He even says that not even a sparrow is going to fall that He doesn't know about it.

This tells us great things about God, which is hard for us to understand. Therefore, when we die, our body goes into the grave. Our soul, that is the chemical life that we have in the blood and the nervous system, and so forth, dies. The spirit of man, which is in our mind, goes back to God and then He puts that into a new spirit body at the resurrection.

So, we're called "...the Church of the Firstborn, registered in the Book of Life in heaven; and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the just 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" (vs 23-24).

Now then, let's look at the fulfillment of the seven-week harvest as it applies to the Church. Remember where we started? ***You are to count seven weeks unto the harvest!*** Now we will see there's a reason for the 7 weeks, and there is a reason for the 50th Day. Both have special meaning. The 7 weeks have special meaning, and the 50th Day, Pentecost, has special meaning; you'll have to come back tomorrow so you get the rest of the story on that. But let's look at the 7 weeks. In the prophecy of the Churches (Rev. 2 & 3).

- Why do we have only seven churches?
- Why do we not have fourteen?

These seven churches, each pictures one week of the harvest leading up to Pentecost!

Let's look at that. Let's understand something about the Church. We are perfected in Christ; that is true. The Church is always as the parable of the tares show, attacked from outside and inside by the agents of Satan the devil. They have varying degrees of success. As God looks down on the world there are the seven churches as He sees it.

Rev 2 & 3 are very important because the seven churches picture many different things.

1. they are literally the seven churches to whom this message was originally written by John

That was in his day right toward the end of the first century!

2. we also have of the seven churches the seven basic attitudes that individuals in any congregation can have at any time

Combine this with the parable of the sower where some fell by the wayside, some fell in a rock, some fell in the weeds.

3. this tells us the prophetic history of the Church down through time, from the time that John wrote this until the end of the Church harvest, which then leads up to the return of Christ
4. in the book of Revelation we have seven
 - ✓ out of which come seven seals
 - ✓ out of which comes seven trumpet plagues
 - ✓ out of which come seven last plagues

Likewise with the seven churches we have seven in the beginning

- ✓ out of which there are seven down through history

and when we come to the end

- ✓ out of which there will be seven at the end as God views the Church

These are not defined by human corporate organizations. ***These are defined by spiritual attitudes and by the works that we do!***

God knows the works that we do. The works that we do are important because they are perfected in Christ, and these have to do with the reward that we will receive.

So, let's read the message to each one of these seven churches, and let's for each one of them ***apply the lessons that apply to us.*** As we will see it is to all the churches; yet, to the individual churches and also to the individuals within those churches. So, you can see it has great meaning. These represent the seven churches and represent the seven weeks of harvest up to Pentecost. In other words ***the seven weeks of harvest represent the church age.***

Church at Ephesus

Revelation 2:1: "To the angel of the Ephesian Church, write: 'These things says He Who holds the seven stars in His right hand...'"

We read earlier that Christ is the Head of the Church.

- He controls it
- He's the Head of it
- He determines what goes on

"...Who walks in *the* midst of the seven golden lampstands" (v 1).

He's never away from His Church! As a matter of fact in:

Revelation 5: 5: "Then one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep. Behold, the Lion Who is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome to open the book, and to loose its seven seals.'"

This is one mission of Christ as the son of David!

Verse 6 *is the spiritual fulfillment of this:* "Then I saw, and behold, before the Throne and the four living creatures and before the elders was standing a Lamb [Christ] as having been slain, having seven horns..."

- What are those horns?
- Where are horns? *In the head!*

Those seven horns represent the seven churches. It shows clearly that Christ is the head of those seven churches.

"...and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God that are sent into all the earth" (v 6).

That's how God knows what's going on in

the earth. That's how God knows what's going on, not only in the earth, but also in the Church. As well as us having the Holy Spirit of God, God knows what's going on with us at all times! Since He lives in us and dwells in us with His Spirit, **He knows us!** Notice how each one of these He starts out with:

Revelation 2:2: "I know your works... [works are required; works perfect faith] ...and your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot bear those who are evil... [so, what they did: ...and *that* you did test those who proclaim *themselves* to be apostles, but are not, and did find them liars..."

This is why we are to prove everything by what the Word of God says. We are not to accept the fact that someone says, 'I'm a minister of God' or 'I'm an apostle of God.'

- we prove it by what they say
- we prove it by the Word of God

They found them liars so they rejected them!

Verse 3: "And *that* you have borne *much* and have endured, and for My name's sake have labored and have not grown weary... [that's really quite a commendation] ...nevertheless, I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love" (vs 3-4).

What is the first love, and does this apply to many people today? *Absolutely it does!* The first love is **loving God with all your heart, mind, soul and being!** How do people leave that first love? Satan has a simple device on how to do this. You get people all wrapped up in doing social things. You get them wrapped up into alternate works instead of the works of:

- commandment-keeping
- love
- joy
- peace
- fruits of the Holy Spirit

Then they have doing good for other people in the world.

It's not wrong to do good for the people in the world, but **when** that becomes the main thrust and neglects loving God **then** you are loving the people you are serving more than you are loving God, and the project in serving people becomes a paramount important thing **instead of the project of:**

- growing in grace and knowledge
- overcoming
- loving God

becoming the paramount and important thing! So they left it. When you leave your first love, Jesus said:

Verse 5: "Therefore, remember from where you have fallen, and repent..."

He tells this to everyone of the churches but two churches. Showing that the churches collectively, and the people in the churches individually, *missed the mark and fall short and have sin!*

"...and do the first works; for if *you do* not, I will come to you quickly; and I will remove your lampstand out of its place unless you repent.... [then He commends them for one thing] ... But this you have: that you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate" (vs 5-6).

Now the Nicolaitans is *the hierarchical form of government*. Right after the Apostle John died there was a so-called saint: Justin Martyr Ignatius. Now Ignatius was one of those who was in on the beginnings of the Roman Catholic Church at that time. He even wrote epistles around 115, 116, 118_{A.D.} What his job was, was to take the brethren out of the home churches and put them into church buildings. Now we have a hierarchy. The people here in Ephesus resisted that movement. They did not go along with it. They understood what it was and they didn't do it.

Now then He says all the way through. Notice how this ties right in with Matt. 13.

Verse 7: "The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches. To the one who overcomes..."

We've got to constantly be overcoming! This is the whole message. You have got to constantly be growing as that grain harvest so that you produce the grain. If you're not growing then you cannot grow to the point of maturity and develop the grain unto eternal life, if I could put it that way. You have to overcome.

"...will give *the right* to eat of the Tree of Life that is in *the* midst of the paradise of God" (v 7).

The Church of Smyrna

He emphasizes something else; v 8: "...These things says the First and the Last, Who was dead but is alive"

This church went through a great deal of tribulation and turmoil. This was when they were forming the churches even more, getting the hierarchical structure set and more firm than before.

What we have here is that these are the ones who resisted unto death. The Church at Smyrna has no sin. Christ doesn't tell them to repent. And in this age, He says right here. Now notice it is Satan that is doing it. He is the force and the power behind every one of these things that is confronting the churches.

Verse 9: "I know your works and tribulation and poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy of those who declare themselves to be Jews... [claiming to be true Christians] ...and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan."

Remember, Paul gave the warning that false apostles come as ministers of righteousness. And he said, 'No wonder, for Satan himself appears as an angel of light.' And Satan is after his church, after the Church of God, after the brethren day and night. But you don't have to worry about that because you overcome him by your testimony, by the blood of Christ, and not loving your life unto death, and that's what the Smyrnans did here.

So Christ said, v 10: "Do not fear any of the things that you are about to suffer..." So, He's going to give them extra strength to endure the persecution and martyrdom@

"...Behold, the devil is about to cast *some* of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death..." (v 10).

Here, the doctrine was not the important point at this time. It was being "...faithful unto death..." (v 10).

"...and I will give you a crown of life. The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death" (vs 10-11).

In the next three churches you will see that there is a progressive deterioration of the churches. A progressive building of the false apostate church, known as the Roman Catholic and the Greek Orthodox churches.

The Church of Pergamos

Notice how Christ warns them, v 12: "And to the angel of the Church in Pergamos, write: 'These things says He Who has the sharp two-edged sword.... [the true Word of God] ...I know your works and where you dwell, where the throne of Satan is..." (vs 12-13).

When you live right in the middle where Satan's influence is most powerful it's going to have an effect on even the Church. In all of these Satan is there. just like the parable of the tares.

"...but you are holding fast My name, and did not deny My faith, even in the days in which Antipas *was* My faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you because you have there *those* who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak, to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication" (vs 12-14).

The spiritual fulfillment of this is, changing the Passover to the Eucharist offered to an idol, and changing Sabbath to Sunday. Now then on top of that they had one more thing:

Verse 15: "Moreover, you also have *those* who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans... [the hierarchical rigid form of government, which Jesus said]: ...which thing I hate."

Remember when the disciples wanted to know who was going to be the greatest, He said, 'You are not going to be as the princes of this world, which rule over the people, and you're not going to be as those that are the religious leaders that exercise authority. Both of these are hierarchical from the top down. Jesus said:

"...which thing I hate. Repent... [How bad is their conduct?] ...For if *you* do not *repent*, I will come to you quickly, and will make war against them with the sword of My mouth" (vs 15-16).

Now can you imagine this? That the Church of God during the era of Pergamos, got so bad that Christ had to leave the Church and come and fight against His own Church. He tried to do it through men who would come and bring the true doctrine, and they refused, and counted them as heretics and cast them out.

Verse 17: "The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who overcomes I will give *the right* to eat of the hidden manna; and I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written, which no one knows except the one who receives *it*."

The Church of Thyatira

I think it's very interesting, if you have not seen the video [Israel of the Alps](#), you might get it and watch it again. But I think it's very interesting because for years I've often thought of how similar Thyatira is to what we call the Seventh Day Adventist today. The video is produced by the Seventh Day Adventists and they relate their origin to the Waldensians and the time when this era of the Church was in full blossom.

Now notice again, we have the agents of Satan the devil coming after the Church, and this is the Church in Thyatira.

Verse 18: "...These things says the Son of God, He Who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet *are* like fine brass.... [Christ knows exactly what's going on] ...I know thy works, and love, and service, and faith, and your endurance, and your works; and the last *are* more than the first. But I have a few things against you, because you allow the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants into committing fornication and eating things sacrificed to idols" (vs 18-20).

That's exactly what has happened to the Seventh Day Adventist Church. They keep communion quarterly. They recognize the trinity, and they have many other doctrines that they derive from the Roman Catholic Church though they preach against it. That's amazing. Even though they keep the weekly Sabbath.

Verse 21: "And I gave her time to repent of her fornication, but she did not repent."

If you don't have the videos, [The Jesuit Agenda for the Seventh Day Adventist Church](#), you might write in for that because that will reveal to you how Satan attacks all Sabbath keeping churches. God means business with His Church.

Verse 22: "Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their works."

This is probably the situation that occurred with the Reformation.

Verse 23: "And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am He Who searches *the* reins and hearts; and I will give to each of you according to your works."

God knows all of these things. But look at how the tares of Satan the devil are always there working in the harvest to disturb it.

Verse 24: "But to you I say, and to *the* rest who *are* in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, and who have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak..." *That's something!*

Getting into the very depths of Satan. Can you imagine that; people in the Church of God sinking to that level? Did some of these here commit the unpardonable sin sinking to the level of getting into the depths of Satan? *Probably so!* If you haven't, He says,

"...I will not cast upon you any other

burden, but hold fast what you have until I come. And to the one who overcomes and keeps My works unto *the* end..." (vs 25-26).

Which includes the Holy Days, doesn't it? The Seventh Day Adventists don't keep the Holy Days because they believe the same teachings that the Roman Catholic Church teaches that those were ceremonial days. So here He says, "...keeps My works unto *the* end..." instead of doing their own and doing the works of Jezebel and Satan.

"...I will give authority over the nations. and he shall shepherd them with an iron rod, as vessels of pottery are broken in pieces; as I have also received from My Father; and I will give him the morning star.... [then He gives a warning]: ...The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches" (vs 26-29). *We need to listen to what God says!*

Let's begin in Rev. 3 and look at the last three churches. First of all we have

The Church at Sardis

Revelation 3:1: "...These things says He Who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your works, *and* that you have a name as if you are alive, but are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain..." (vs 1-2).

My experience has been, and I think it was a proper observation through the years, that many of the Churches of God-Seven Day fall into this category. They barely have the Sabbath, they barely have the Passover, and that's all that they do.

"...strengthen the things that remain, which are about to die..." (v 2).

Currently (at the giving of this message) the Church of God-Seven Day is being infiltrated by the agents of Satan to take it down and accept Sunday keeping. Can you imagine a Church of God-Seven Day going to Sunday worship? But that's the program that's coming.

"...For I have not found your works complete before God. Therefore, remember what you have received and heard, and hold on *to this*, and repent.... [here's a warning]: ...Now then, if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you shall by no means know what hour I will come upon you" (vs 2-3).

That doesn't necessarily mean when Christ returns, because Christ can come upon someone at anytime to correct them.

Verse 4: "You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and they

shall walk with Me in white because they are worthy.”

It looks like those who are truly dead in Sardis will have committed the unpardonable sin.

The Church at Philadelphia

Everyone wants to claim to be a Philadelphian but they don't want to do the works of a Philadelphian. As a matter of fact, most of those who claim to be a Philadelphian Church are run by a hierarchy, which God hates, and are run by fear, which God hates. The Church of Philadelphia is the church of brotherly love, and it's the church of brotherly love because it loves God first.

Verse 7: “And to the angel of the Church in Philadelphia, write: “These things says the Holy One, the One Who *is* true; the One Who has the key of David, Who opens and no one shuts, and Who shuts and no one opens.”

The Philadelphians wait on God to open the door. They keep knocking but they wait till God opens the door.

Verse 8: “I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, and no one has the power to shut it because you have a little strength, and have kept My Word, and have not denied My name”—*kept all of His Word!* Christ does not tell this church to repent either.

Verse 9: “Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who proclaim themselves to be Jews and are not, but do lie. Behold, I will cause them to come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.”

Here Satan is after the Church at Philadelphia but does not get in and deceive it because the Church at Philadelphia are the seed sown in the good ground that brings forth the fruit thirty-fold, sixty-fold, a hundred-fold.

Verse 10: “Because you have kept the Word of My patience, I also will keep you from the time of temptation, which *is* about to come upon the whole world to try those who dwell on the earth.”

So we've got *all the world*, and then reemphasized *upon the earth*. This great temptation, which is coming, is going to be the receiving of *the mark of the beast*. {Note message: *The Temptation To Try The Whole World*}. Notice again, Christ does not tell this Church to repent.

Verse 11: “Behold, I am coming quickly; hold fast that which you have...”

We are always to hold fast the Word of God, and today we have the Word of God as never before. We need to hold fast to all of it and let none of it fall to the ground, let none of it be subverted by the agents of Satan the devil. ***We need to stand for the Truth, and stand for it at all times!***

Verse 11: “Behold, I am coming quickly; hold fast that which you have so that no one may take away your crown.”

Satan's ministers are out there and they want to take your crown. That means they want to keep you from attaining the Kingdom of God, and the reward, and the blessing, and eternal life. That's what they are after. So, you see the stakes of what we are confronting here are very, very high.

Verse 12: “The one who overcomes will I make a pillar in the Temple of My God, and he shall not go out anymore; and I will write upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which will come down out of heaven from My God; and *I will write upon him* My new name. The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (vs 12-13).

The only way that a person or a church is a church with the Philadelphia attitude is one that loves God, loves the brethren, patiently keeps His Word, and holds fast to all of it.

The Church of Laodicea

Now then, let's look at the poor Laodiceans here. the ones who are always beat upon. The reason that they are is because today we're living in a Laodicean age. We have so many things around us, we have all conveniences, we have things that can keep us busy, take our time, occupy us in doing everything. We get so wrapped up that it's hard to pray, it's hard to study because you're so busy doing things with things that you don't have time for God.

Verse 15: “I know your works that you are neither cold nor hot...”

They can't stand the harsh words of Christ. They have to have the bland words of a smooth preacher, saying you've got to be balanced. Being balanced is being lukewarm because you're neither hot, you're neither cold. What's going to happen because you are not hot or cold?

Verse 16: “So then, because you are lukewarm, and *are* neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth.”

That is for correction. I submit to you:

- Has that not happened with the collapse of Worldwide Church of God?
- Where is it today? *No longer exists!*
- Is that not being spewed out of the mouth of God?

Verse 17: “For you say... [the ‘yeah-buts’ always talk back to God] ... ‘I am rich...’”—*which is a blessing of God, but not necessarily.*

Satan can make you rich if you give in to him. After all, he told Christ, ‘If You’ll worship me I’ll give you all the nations, all the power and wealth of them all.’

“...and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’; and you do not understand that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (v 17).

Today we live in such an age of such deceit and confusion and everything to take away from God. So God gives counsel.

Verse 18: “I counsel you to buy from Me gold purified by fire...”

That’s the true righteousness! But it’s going to be by test, it’s going to be by trial, it’s going to be by fire

“...so that you may be rich; and white garments...” (v 18).

You’re running around without being clothed in Christ, and yet, claiming that you are Christ’s!

“...so that you may be clothed, and the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and to anoint your eyes with eye salve, so that you may see” (v 18).

In other words get some good eye opening repentance and Bible study and eye-salve so that your eyes are open “...so that you may see” so that you can understand what God wants for you.

Verse 19: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten...”

So when we are rebuked and chastened don’t say, ‘Oh woe is me.’ Say, ‘Thank You, Christ, because You love me.’

“...Therefore, be zealous and repent” (v 19). *That’s what we need to be:*

- zealous for God
- repenting to God
- doing the things that are right
- doing the things that are true
- holding fast to that which is good

- working and doing the things with the goods and the things that we have with us to do
- promote the Word of God
- promote the Truth of God
- promote the righteousness of God
- to build and support and to uplift the brethren

To help them likewise come to an attitude of repentance!

Verse 20: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock...”

- we have the door of our mind
- standing at the door of the second return

“...If anyone hears My voice and opens the door... [the door of the mind, and if you will return and come back to God] ...I will come into him... [with the power of the Holy Spirit] ...and will sup with him, and he with Me. 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. The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (vs 20-22).

The seven churches represent the seven weeks of harvest leading up to the resurrection. This is the church age!

There is coming a time right in the future before the tribulation, and up into the beginning of the tribulation, that the church age ends. So come back tomorrow for the rest of the story.

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- 9) 1 John 3:4-11
- 10) Matthew 13:38-43
- 11) James 1:17
- 12) Hebrews 13:8
- 13) James 1:17-18
- 14) John 1:1
- 15) James 1:18
- 16) Hebrews 12:18-24
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