

WE ARE THE EARLY HARVEST HARVEST
PENTECOST 2020
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Here we are doing something quite unusual ... gathering together for a Sunday service! Why? Because it's Pentecost ... and we assemble together because God commands it. Why does God command us to keep Pentecost?

A common teaching among many churches today is that this time we are living in is the only day of salvation. We must decide now — in this life — it's our only chance. You've got to accept Jesus as Saviour. That's the general belief of most Christian groups.

If that is correct — if these are the only days of salvation — then it would seem that God's plan is a total failure? This is disheartening to some people. If you look around the world ... it looks like the vast majority of all people are "lost".

There are about 1.4 billion Chinese ... 1.8 billion Muslims ... over 1 billion Catholics etc. They worship a whole lot of stuff ... but not the true God.

It seems that very very few seem to have chosen God's way?

So ... almost any assessment of people ... shows only a tiny handful of today's 7 billion people on the earth have any real hope of salvation.

What's going on? Billions lost? Thank God ... NO!!

This Feast Day explains to us why so few are called today ... and why there is a great hope for the rest of mankind!

Leviticus 23:2

2 "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: '**The feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts.**

Leviticus 23:4

4 "**These are the feasts of the Lord, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times.**

THESE ARE GOD'S FEASTS ... NOT THE FEASTS OF THE JEWS ... NOT THE FEASTS OF ISRAEL ... NOT THE FEASTS OF THE CHURCH OF GOD ... NOT THE FEASTS OF MANKIND. Why can't the world see that?

Leviticus 23:15-17

15 "And **you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed.**

16 **Count fifty days ("Pentecost" is the Greek for "count 50") to the day after the seventh Sabbath; (the day after Saturday — Sunday)** then you shall offer a new grain offering to the Lord.

17 **You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves** of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. **They are the firstfruits to the Lord.**

Leviticus 23:20-21

20 The priest shall wave them with **the bread of the firstfruits** as a wave offering before the Lord, with the two lambs. **They shall be holy to the Lord for the priest.**

21 **And you shall proclaim on the same day that it is a holy convocation to you.** You shall do no customary work on it. It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.

This day is closely linked to firstfruits. A Holy Day ... a Holy convocation.

Numbers 28:16-17

16 **"On the fourteenth day of the first month is the Passover of the Lord.**

17 **And on the fifteenth day of this month is the feast; unleavened bread shall be eaten for seven days.**

Numbers 28:26

26 **"Also on the day of the firstfruits,** when you bring a new grain offering to the Lord **at your Feast of Weeks, (Shabua)** you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work. **(That's us today)**

Today is the day of the firstfruits.

Exodus 23:14-17

14 **"Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year:**

15 **You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread** (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty);

16 **and the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labours** which you have sown in the field; and **the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year**, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labours from the field.

17 “**Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord God.**

So today is Pentecost ... the Feast of Weeks ... the Feast of Harvest.

There are two harvests mentioned. That is the biggest key to understanding God's plan of salvation. Most churches believe there is just one harvest — and this is it now — the only day of Salvation.

But notice. God's Holy Day plan shows 2 harvests ... the Early-Harvest and the Latter-Harvest — the Feast of Ingathering.

Exodus 23:16 (NLT)

16 “... celebrate the Festival of Harvest, when you bring me the first crops of your harvest.

“Finally, celebrate the Festival of the Final Harvest at the end of the harvest season, when you have harvested all the crops from your fields.

We can see some of God's Feasts described as Harvest Feasts ... but is that a purely physical description? Or does God use the term “Harvest” for spiritual purposes? Yes. We can see that from Jesus' own lips.

Matthew 9:35-38

35 Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing (Jesus had a three-part ministry ... teaching, preaching, healing) every sickness and every disease among the people.

36 But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.

37 Then He said to His disciples, “**The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few.**

38 Therefore **pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest.” (God sees people as a potential harvest. That's what He's interested in)**

The true genuine Harvest is a harvest of men ... women ... children — people!

Today is the Feast of Harvest ... God's Firstfruits.

Matthew 13:24-30

24 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “**The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field;**

25 but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.

26 But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared.

27 So the servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’

28 He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us then to go and gather them up?’

29 But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them.

30 **Let both grow together until the harvest,** and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “**First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.” ’ ”**

Is Jesus just teaching about agriculture principles that they need to follow? No. This is spiritual truth. Jesus is talking about the Harvest.

Matthew 13:36-43

36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.”

37 He answered and said to them: “**He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.**

38 **The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one.**

39 **The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels.**

40 Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age.

41 The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness,

42 and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

43 **Then the righteous (the Firstfruits) will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.** He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

This harvest will consist of the righteous people ...the firstfruits ... at the end of the age.

It is quite common today to refer to believers as “firstfruits” — an agricultural/harvest term.

James 1:16-18

16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

17 **Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.**

18 **Of His own will He brought us (believers) forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.**

Not everybody in the world is part of this first harvest. We are a kind of firstfruits ... the first to be harvested at the end of the age. Then there are latter fruits.

There doesn't appear to be many of us firstfruits? That is hinted at in the following verses.

1 Corinthians 1:18, 22-29

18 **For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (Some are being saved ... others are perishing)**

22 For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom;

23 **but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,**

24 **but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (Implying that not everyone is called now)**

25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

26 For you see your calling, brethren, **that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. (In fact — not many at all!)**

27 **But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;**

28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,
29 that no flesh should glory in His presence. (***We aren't special ... but ... God can make us special. We have had the common sense to respond***)

Not all are harvested at the same time. Not just one day of salvation. There is a sequence ... an order ... to the harvest.

1 Corinthians 15:20-26

20 **But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruit of those who have fallen asleep.**

21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead.

22 **For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.**

23 **But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruit, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. (The harvest of the firstfruits. The believers)**

24 Then comes the end, **(the final harvest ... separated by 1,000 years... pictured by The Last Great Day) when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.**

25 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.

26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

“All shall be made alive” —everyone will get their chance ... eventually. But many people have heard repeatedly about this time ... today ... being the “only day of salvation”.

One of Billy Graham’s main messages was: that’s what the Bible teaches and warned people not to leave their conversion “too late”.

Is it Biblical? Let’s have a look.

2 Corinthians 6:1-2

1 We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

2 For He says:

"In an acceptable time I have heard you,

And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. (*The Greek translates it ... "a day of salvation" ... "behold, now is an accepted time; behold now is a day of salvation"*)

2 Corinthians 6:2 (YOUNGS LITERAL TRANSLATION)

2 for He saith, '**In an acceptable time I did hear thee, and in a day of salvation I did help thee, lo, now [is] a well-accepted time; lo, now, a day of salvation,'**

The Bible does not say that today is the only day of salvation ... though it is our only day of salvation!

So today God is dealing with His firstfruits ... those who will be in the first Harvest when Jesus returns. Our day of salvation is now.

The rest ... the vast majority ... will form part of a much larger Final Harvest ... pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles and The Last Great Day.

But how did God's plan come to be this way? Why have two harvests? What is the reason behind this?

Back to the beginning.

Genesis 2:8-9

8 The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed.

9 And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. **The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Two trees)**

The Tree of life was still available here and also the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 2:15-17

15 Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.

16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; (including the Tree of Life)

17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Hebrew: dying you shall surely die)

Choose! They had Free Choice.

Genesis 3:22-24

22 Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”—

23 therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken.

24 So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.(making sure no one got back to The Tree of Life)

Mankind was cut off from access to the Tree of Life. There was no way to now live forever. (Even though it was God's original plan). No way back!

Throughout Old Testament days that was the norm. We see mankind doing things "his own way". Nearly always rebellion ... pain ... suffering ... destruction.

At the time of the Flood ... there was only one righteous man ... Noah.

After that ... just a small handful ... Abraham ... Isaac ... Jacob ... Joseph. Then ...some prophets ... some kings (David for instance).

God's focus was also largely Israel. God was not dealing with India ... China ... Russia ... the Americas etc? God worked with only a tiny handful of people. Not many going God's way.

Very few ... anywhere ... who would be enthusiastic about going God's way.

In the New Testament ... it wasn't much better.

The majority still don't want to know God or His ways ... Apostles were martyred ... the Church was persecuted and attacked (externally) and deceived and corrupted (internally).

Today ... 6,000 years on ... there is still not much interest in the Truth! Most people don't want to know! Why is that?

Revelation 12:9

9 So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Satan ... the Great Deceiver ...of the whole world! ... even today)

So ... has God lost the battle? If the whole world is lost and deceived ... will there be a harvest? The answer is that God's not losing any battle.

Today is only about the first harvest ... the firstfruits ... those being called and prepared today ... now.

But ... how can you prepare the firstfruits for their harvest? If there is only a minority of them ... in a crazy ... deceived world ... with satan as an arch-adversary?

The answer is: The firstfruits are going to need some supernatural help. They can't do it in their own human strength. It is necessary to give them the help of the Holy Spirit ... to dwell in them ... to empower them ... to open their minds to spiritual truths.

So in God's plan ... after thousands of years of mankind being cut off from access to the Tree of Life ... the time came to call and prepare the firstfruits ... the first harvest.

Pentecost shows us how that came about.

John 14:26

26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, which the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

John 14:26 (Amplified Bible)

26 But the Comforter (Counsellor, Helper, Intercessor, Advocate, Strengthener, Standby), the Holy Spirit, Whom the Father will send in My name [in My place, to represent Me and act on My behalf], He will teach you all things. And He will cause you to recall (will remind you of, bring to your remembrance) everything I have told you.

The Father will send the Holy Spirit to help us. It is not yet generally available.

John 16:5-7

5 "But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?'

6 But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.

7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send it to you. (*Helper in Greek is: Parakletos ... one who comes alongside you to help. The Comforter, Counsellor, Helper, Advocate, Intercessor, Strengthener, Standby will not come to you ... Amplified Bible*)

If Jesus didn't go away ... The Holy Spirit couldn't be sent.

John 7:37-39

37 On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink."

38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

39 But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, which those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (*The spirit was not given until Jesus was glorified*)

Mankind has been cut off since Adam ... though some few have been called — prophets and other carefully selected people (Abraham ... Isaac ... Jacob ... Noah) ... maybe a few dozen or a few hundred?

But now ... the time is about to come that God is going to pour out His Holy Spirit on large numbers of people.

Acts 1:1-8

1 The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

2 until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen,
3 to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

4 And being assembled together with them, **He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me;**

5 for John truly baptised with water, **but you shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."**

6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

7 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

8 **But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;** and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Let's see how it all worked out.

Acts 2:1-6

1 **When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.**

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.

4 **And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.**

5 And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.

6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.

Acts 2:11-13

11 Cretans and Arabs—**we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."**

12 So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?"

13 Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine."

Acts 2:14-18

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words.

15 For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.

16 But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God,

That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;

Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,

Your young men shall see visions,

Your old men shall dream dreams.

18 And on My menservants and on My maidservants

I will pour out My Spirit in those days;

And they shall prophesy.

God would pour out His Spirit in the last days ... not before. This is the evidence ... you are hearing the witness.

Acts 2:32-33

32 This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.

33 Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

Jesus has received the Holy Spirit and has poured it out.

Acts 2:36-41

36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

38 Then Peter said to them, "***Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ*** for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "***Be saved from this perverse generation.***"

41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptised; and **that day about three thousand souls were added to them.**

Now at last ... the real harvest of God can get underway.

The Holy Spirit is freely available — Jesus has been glorified — to empower the preaching of the Gospel ... to help the believers ... the Firstfruits ... to grow and mature and be fruitful ... to be ready for the Saviour's return ... and be a part of the Great First Harvest.

It may seem only a relatively small number are called and preparing now ... but part of the Good News is that those millions and billions out there will yet get their chance.

So let's appreciate the message of this Feast Day. Be glad that we are privileged to be invited to be part of the First Harvest — the Firstfruits Harvest.

But let's remember: Although this is not the only day of salvation — it is for you and for me!