

Little Changes – Big Changes

(Sermon Notes) By Warren Zehring 5/5/2018

The Feast of Pentecost is two weeks away on Sunday, May 20th, 2018. We have been counting seven weeks since the day of the Wave Sheaf offering (Leviticus 23:10-16). In today's sermon we will be considering—**meat in due season**—the meaning of The Lord's Feast of Pentecost as it unfolds in the pages of the Bible. (Matthew 24:45).

Leviticus 23:9 And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying,

Right here in Leviticus 23 we find God giving Israel a ritual – which is not one of the Holy Days. But it is extremely important to us in understanding what God **is working out** – detail by detail, point by point. God established His annual Holy Days around the **harvest** seasons (Leviticus 23:9-16; Exodus 23:14-16).

However, the Wave Sheaf offering is **not** a Feast of the Lord, **but** it is inexorably tied to God's Feasts - that is why it is placed here in the midst of the Holy Days of Leviticus 23.

Moses is not told by God what this Wave Sheaf offering means entirely. To Moses and Israel, this Wave Sheaf offering is mainly a ritual marking the start of the Spring harvest.

Leviticus 23:10 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of **the firstfruits** of your harvest unto the priest:

We are privileged to know that Jesus is the **Wave Sheaf offering** – the **firstfruits** of the harvest. God has lavishly bestowed so many more details on us – of the meaning of this ceremony.

Jesus is "**first**" indicating that there is **more** fruit to follow.

Leviticus 23:11 And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be **accepted** for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.

"Accepted" – indicates that Jesus would ascend into heaven on the day of the Wave Sheaf – to have His life's work and redemptive sacrifice **accepted by His Father**.

John 20:17 Jesus saith unto Mary Magdalene, Touch me not; for I am not yet **ascended** to my Father:

Jesus was the sinless / spotless sacrifice offered to cover our sins.

Leviticus 23:12 And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the sheaf an he lamb **without blemish** of the first year for a burnt offering unto the LORD.

Leviticus 23:13 And the food offering thereof shall be two tenth deals of fine flour **mingled with oil**, an offering made by **fire** unto the LORD for a sweet savor: and the drink offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of an hin.

"Fire" – indicating the severe trial and sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

"Oil" – indicating that Jesus had His Father's **Spirit** without measure (John 3:34).

We come to the Feast of Pentecost

Pentecost is called the Feast of Weeks because we **count seven** weeks.

Leviticus 23:15 And ye shall **count** unto you from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; **seven Sabbaths shall be complete**:

Leviticus 23:16 Even unto the **morrow after the seventh Sabbath** shall ye number **fifty** days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD.

That's **Pentecost** – but this Feast was not known as Pentecost in the Old Testament. No other Feast day goes by so many other names.

Exodus 23:16 And the **Feast of Harvest**, the firstfruits of thy labors, which thou hast sown in the field:

Exodus 34:22 And thou shalt observe the **Feast of Weeks**, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest,

Numbers 28:26 Also in the **Day of the Firstfruits**, when ye bring a new meat offering unto the LORD, after your weeks be out, ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work:

It is "count fifty" – "**Pentecost**" in the New Testament.

At Pentecost, we've come to the end of the Spring **harvest**.

Pentecost, very importantly, marks the **resurrection** of the Saints – the Church of God brethren – caught up to the marriage Feast of the Lord.

God gave us the earnest of His Holy Spirit—which is His guarantee to us of our resurrection to eternal life (2 Corinthians 5:5). Pentecost is the day each Christian will be **accepted** by the Father – as Jesus was. (cp Leviticus 23:11)

The Church brethren are **of** the same Spring harvest as Jesus is. On the other hand, the Fall harvest of the **entire world** will come later – they will not be **first** fruits at all.

Leviticus 23:17 Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with **leaven**; they [too] are the **firstfruits** unto the LORD.

Did you notice that because we have been **sinful** – we are represented with **leaven** – and not **oil** as Jesus was? Though we do receive **God's Spirit** (That is what Pentecost is about)

Romans 8:23 ...we have the **firstfruits** of the Spirit,

The world reads right over these defining details in the Scriptures.

1Corinthians 15:20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the **firstfruits** of them that slept.

1Corinthians 15:23 But every man in his own order: Christ the **firstfruits**; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

Leviticus 23:20 And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the **firstfruits** [also] for a **wave offering** [like Jesus] before the LORD...

But Pentecost is a Holy Day – because it is for us – the Church brethren.

Leviticus 23:21 And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be an **holy convocation** unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein: it shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.

Brethren, the last Holy Days we observed – Passover followed by the, First and Last days of Unleavened Bread – taught us that we must continuously avoid sin in every nuance of our lives as we **progress** in grace and knowledge toward the perfection in Jesus Christ.

God has given us the picture of old Israel harvesting their crops around three seasons – Spring, Summer and Fall. God’s Holy Days show us how and when He is gathering His harvest for eternal life into His Kingdom.

Our conversion was not complete at our baptism. Our baptism was only the beginning of a long and **arduous process** of conversion as we move toward the perfection that is in Jesus Christ. We have not yet arrived where God intends that we be.

Ephesians 4:13 **Till** we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **unto a perfect man**, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

In the same way that we were told to examine ourselves before the Feast of Passover, we will take a good look at what Pentecost means to a Christian throughout his life.

1Corinthians 11:28 Let a man examine himself, and then let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

Let’s understand that the **process of examining** ourselves does not end with Passover – but continues onward as we develop and grow in grace and knowledge (2Peter 3:18).

2Corinthians 13:5 **Examine** yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

Examining ourselves as to where we are in the progression of our growing faith is something that we never stop doing. Let’s look at how far we’ve come since first being called by God. Let us go back to when God in His infinite mercy called us out of this present evil world (Galatians 1:4). Let us go back to that time when we were **unrighteous sinners**.

1Corinthians 6:9-11 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? ...And **such were some of you**...

What were we like when we were in the world – before we began to hear the word of God? Like Job, we had to admit that we were unrighteous sinners – and **repent** in dust and ashes.

Gift of Repentance

Job 42:1, 6 Then Job answered the LORD, and said..., Wherefore I abhor myself, and **repent** in dust and ashes.

Perhaps our repentance was not that dynamic, none-the-less we began to repent—and that was a **gift of God**. Make no mistake about it, we did not **work-up** repentance on our own – we did not decide to repent – but God **led us** into repentance.

Romans 2:4 Do you despise the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of **God leadeth you to repentance**?

In dealing with us, God begins with the **forgiveness** of sin. God **granted** us repentance – we did not just decide for ourselves to repent.

2Timothy 2:24-25 The servant of the Lord must... in meekness instruct those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will **give them repentance** to the acknowledging of the truth;

2Timothy 2:26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

Acts 11:18 ...God has also **granted repentance** to the Gentiles unto life.

Jesus died for all men – and one day, repentance will be given to all Israel and the world.

Acts 5:30 The God of our fathers raised up **Jesus**, whom ye slew and hung on a tree.

Acts 5:31 God has exalted Him with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to **give repentance to Israel**, and **forgiveness** of sins.

God gave us faith – the right kind of faith.

Gift of Faith

Next in our progression of becoming Christians, God **gave us faith** – the faith of His Son, Jesus Christ, because faith too, is a gift of God (Romans 12:3)

We will see in a moment that **repentance** and **faith** are required for baptism and receiving God's Spirit. Faith is a **gift**.

Ephesians 2:8 By grace are ye saved through **faith**; and that not of yourselves: it is the **gift** of God:

With the faith of Jesus, His **righteous** (not our own) was imputed to us (Romans 3:22, James 2:23).

Romans 3:22 Even the righteousness of God which is by **faith of Jesus** Christ unto all and upon all them that believe:

Because we were given repentance and faith by God we were ready to be baptized and receive the inestimable **gift** of God's Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

Being baptized into God's Life and His Spirit is what **Pentecost** is all about. With the laying on of hands we became Children of God (Acts 8:17, 1John 3:2).

It was on the **first Pentecost** after Christ's resurrection that the Church was establish – the group of believers who are led by God's Spirit.

Romans 8:14 As many as are led by the **Spirit of God**, these are the sons of God.

So, those who have God's Spirit in them are true Christians. To be a true Christians are, we must do the "miraculous things," – something that only those with His Spirit can do.

John 14:12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and **greater works** than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

Pentecost is the origin of God's New Testament Church—and it happened this way:

Acts 2:1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

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

Acts 2:3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 2:5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

Acts 2:6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

Acts 2:12 They were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, **What does this mean?**

So brethren, we are beginning to look at what Pentecost means to God's people. Peter explained **how** to receive God's Spirit:

Acts 2:32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

Acts 2:33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our **God shall call**.

John 6:44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me **draw him**:

John 6:65 Jesus said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were **given unto him of my Father**.

Acts 2:40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this **untoward generation**.

Nothing has changed in that regard – has it? Save yourselves from this **untoward generation**.

Acts 2:41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized:

Step-by-step, God's Holy Day Plan reveals how God works with mankind.

Little Changes

With the onset of our Christian conversion, little changes began to take place in our lives. We can see it in Peter's life, and in Thomas' life. Peter was **cowardly**, denying Christ one moment, – and then after Pentecost He was standing **boldly** preaching Christ. It was the same with **doubting** Thomas – but after Pentecost Thomas rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and was sent to India to raise up congregations.

When first called by God we began to make **little changes** in our lives:

We rejected Sunday worship for God's Sabbath Day.

We changed our eating habits for food set apart by God for eating (1Timothy 4:5).

We began to obey the Ten Commandments and observe the Feasts of the Lord – because Pentecost pictures the giving of **God's law**.

We began to come out of the world and be separate (2Corinthians 6:17).

We began to speak differently—and do the things that set us apart from society in general.

We began to pray, fast and tithe to God (Matthew 23:23).

We began to make all those “**little changes**.”

They did not seem so little at the time – but God was placing us in the body where we could get ready for Big Changes in who and what we are.

Big Changes

Those little changes were only the beginning of our conversion process. Keeping the Sabbath may have seemed to be a major test of our faith – but it was necessary because God was setting us in an environment where we could begin to know about Him and His way. Those **little changes** in our lives paved the way for the **big changes** necessary to be in God's Kingdom.

By doing those “little things,” we slowly began to think like God does – and understand the **spiritual intent** of His laws. It is the spiritual intent of God's laws that changes us to be **like** God is.

We began to change who and what we were. Slowly but surely, we began to put on God-like attributes and the **gifts** of His Spirit—those are **big changes**!

Galatians 5:22-23 The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance...

We began to learn how to **serve and pray** for one another—and that led to Godly love of the brethren.

1John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we **love the brethren**. He that loveth not his brother abides in death.

Slowly but surely we began to make more **big changes**—we began to **forgive** one another.

We began to have **mercy** on others.

We began to **care** for others by practicing and applying God's **spiritual intent** of His law.

We began to continuously employ **Justice, Mercifulness, Faithfulness** and Godly **Love** with God's people (Matthew 23:23, John 7:24).

Those are **Big Changes**, or as Jesus called them - the **weightier** matters of the law. The messages of the Gospel writers are cumulative, so we are able to see even more of what Jesus said in Luke's Gospel:

Luke 11:42 ...You pass over judgment, and the **love of God**:

We find then that practicing justice, mercy, faithfulness and the love of God are the weightier aspects of the Law of God.

Another **Big Change** that comes as a result of God's indwelling Spirit is the willingness to **die** for the Gospel sake. We even began to lay down our reputation, our job, our sustenance, even our very lives for others—that they too might be in the Kingdom of God—because that is what Jesus did for us. Jesus said:

John 15:12-13 This is my Commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man **lay down his life for his friends**.

Pentecost makes **Big Changes** possible. It is only through God's Spirit that "**Big Changes**" take place in our lives. We need to answer the question for ourselves, "What difference does Pentecost make? Again:

2Corinthians 13:5 **Examine** yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.

It is good to review how far we've come after being called of God. What is the depth of our Christianity? God expects "Big Changes."

God the Father sent His Son, Jesus Christ who has set an example of how to live for us to follow. God hears the prayers of humble people all around the earth.

We avoid the things that Jesus shunned, and we do the things that Jesus commanded.

Those who are serious about their beliefs follow Jesus' instructions.

God the Father calls some people at this time – all others – in order will be called later (John 6:44, 65, 1Cor 15:23).

We do not measure ourselves according to the conduct of the world.

We work together with all Christians to promote God's Truth

We believe that the sincere preaching and publishing of the Gospel that Jesus taught will help the scattered brethren draw near to God – according to His perfect will and timing. Before Christ returns:

Mark 13:10 The Gospel must first be published among all nations.

Jesus said:

Luke 12:32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.

God well knows our physical requirements and He has promised to supply everything needed to perform His work – if we will seek His righteousness and Kingdom first. Jesus said:

Matthew 6:33 Seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things [food, clothes and shelter] shall be **added** unto you.

That is God's promise. No one would look to God if we were **rich with money** and doing great wonders because it would be expected of us; but that is not how God is working with us.

1Corinthians 1:27 God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.

Zechariah 4:6 Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.

That is what Pentecost is about. We true Christians are spiritually rich. God has blessed us with His Spirit and the priceless knowledge of His way of eternal life. Brethren, we are inheritors of the entire universe! God **expects Big Changes** in us!

James 2:5 Harken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?

We saw where Peter said the same thing:

Acts 2:39 The **promise [of God's Spirit]** is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

We direct our efforts to the world at large.

Jesus Christ did say quite clearly that the Gospel and the warning message were to go to the entire world – to all nations.

The original apostles did not fully complete that mission.

We have been called and given the Power of God's Spirit:

Like Jesus, we are about our Father's business of warning the world:

- We preach the soon coming return of Jesus Christ.
- We preach a warning message to the entire world.
- We preach that Jesus will set up His Father's Kingdom.

Matthew 24:14 This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

How much time do we have to show God that we have really, rally changed a great deal?

- We are endeavoring to grow toward God's moral excellence.
- Our beliefs are founded on the principles and doctrines of Jesus Christ, the apostles, and the first century Church of God.
- We point people to God – not to any man or organization.
- We live Christian lives of caring concern and service to one another.
- We believe that Jesus left us an example to follow when He laid His life down for us.
- We believe that it is a salvational matter that we learn to likewise lay our lives down for one another.

1John 3:16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

The **Biggest Change** – the most important spiritual accomplishment for us in this life – is the development of Godly Character.

In these precarious **last days** when so many people are just limping along spiritually, we are zealous – "on fire" – striving to live in accordance with God's highest standard. It is our desire that **God's Spirit guide** us in all that we do. Pentecost makes that possible.

God intends that all His people, who share in our true common faith, be really **unified** in and by His Spirit.

Jesus prayed the night before He died that we would all be "**one**" with Him and the Father (John 17:11, 21-23).

The love and esteem that the Children of God demonstrate toward each other extends to all within our spiritual affiliation – the Body of Christ – the Church of God.

1John 3:1-2 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the **Children of God**: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the Children of God.

It is a vastly greater love that motivates a person to give up his life for another. That criterion considerably narrows the definition of those who are true Christians!

Was Jesus a Christian? How did He prove it? He lay down His life.

Did Jesus love us? How did He show it? He lay down His life.

Are we ready to literally die for anyone? Give anything – give everything?

Leviticus 19:18 ... Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the LORD.

What is new? Jesus is saying that this commandment is entirely new?

John 13:34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; **as** I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

He lay down His life – that is how we also love one another.

Note: Jesus' emphatic definition of a Christian:

John 10:11 I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.

Galatians 6:10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

Brethren, we were all called by God at different times. We have all had different experiences in God's Church. That alone leaves us all on somewhat different pages. Look at the patience of Jesus Christ while working with His carnal disciples. None of us understand every last point exactly the same at the same time – but we help each other to be true to the Scriptures.

Matthew 7:13-14 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in there at: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Have we made all of the **Big Changes** God expects of us?

End: Little Changes – Big Changes