

**Bible Study - Restored Truth #6 - The First fruits**  
**June 8, 2013**

Restored Truth #3 explained the Holy Spirit, what it is, what is not and how it works. The reason for doing so shows how God the Father gave His Spirit to His Church, thus establishing God's Church on the earth. Studying the Holy Spirit in Restored Truth #3 sets the stage for understanding the topic of this study, the firstfruits.

*Acts 2:1 When the day of Pentecost had fully come, and they were all with one accord in one place...[A reference to 120 disciples gathered in Jerusalem, as Christ instructed them to be] (vs 2) And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and filled the whole house where they were sitting. (vs 3) Then there appeared to them divided tongues as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. (vs 4) And they were all filled with Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.* This is one of the manifestations provided for those who received the Holy Spirit. These disciples received the ability to communicate in foreign languages, something they could not do prior to receiving God's Spirit.

Matt. 16:18 Notice a promise Christ made during His earthly ministry concerning God's Church. This is one of five reasons why Christ came to the earth. Christ told Peter: *I also say to you that you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades...[the grave] shall not prevail...[be victorious] against it.* Christ's statement reveals once the Church of God was established, it would never physically die out.

The word 'church' in Greek means a calling out. It can refer to a popular meeting; but especially to a religious congregation, be it a Jewish synagogue, or a Christian community of members on the earth.

A closer look at the word church will pinpoint its exact meaning and biblical usage.

*Acts 8:1 Now Saul was consenting to his death...[The death of Stephen, which Paul was responsible for] and at that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions Judea and Samaria except the apostles...[The Church is the people God calls out of this world. The Church of God is composed of the people of God. It is the people who were scattered in this persecution throughout Judea and Samaria. The people had to flee from those intentionally wanting to do them physical harm] (vs 3) As for Saul he made havoc of the Church entering every house and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.* The Church of God are those called out of this world by God, who believe and follow God's truth. The Bible's use of the word Church always refers to people.

In Gal. 1:13, Paul admits to his crimes against God's Church. *For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism...[Paul was not a member of the Church of God at the time he persecuted it. Judaism is not the true faith of*

God] *how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.* Paul's admission to destroying the Church of God, means he was trying to kill off its members. The Church of God is not a building.

Acts 2:41 It is very important to understand what the Church of God is before going any further in this study. *Then those who gladly received his word...[People responding to Peter's sermon on Pentecost] were baptized. And that day about 3000 people were added to them [Initially only 120 people were given the Holy Spirit at the beginning of chapter 2. The number increased to 3000 people later on the day of Pentecost. 3000 souls, means 3000 people] and they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine...[teaching] (vs 42) and fellowship in the breaking of bread and in prayers (vs 47) and the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.* What was being added to the Church? People! God's people are those individuals who hear, accept, live by, and contend for God's truth to the end of their physical lives. These people are called out of this world by God the Father.

The events of Pentecost in Acts 2 play an important in understanding the content of Restored Truth #6. This study expands on the meaning of Pentecost, as it relates to the firstfruits.

Gen. 2:15 provides God's instructions to Adam concerning the two trees. *Then Eternal God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it. (vs 16) and Eternal God commanded the man saying...[This is a command, therefore it is not optional] of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, (vs 17) but the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat of it: for in the day you eat of it you shall surely die.* God is very clear death will be the outcome of eating from the wrong tree. There is no doubt as to what God means, if Adam makes the wrong choice.

Gen. 3:17 Adam and Eve chose not to follow God's command, therefore God said to Adam: *Because you have heeded the voice of your wife...[Because you listened to someone else and not Me] and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you saying you shall not eat: cursed is the ground for your sake. (vs19) In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground...[God created man from red clay. Because Adam disobeyed God, upon death he would return back to red clay] for out of it you were taken: for dust you are and to dust you shall return...[And notice something else happened because of Adam's disobedience] (vs 24) So he drove out the man, and 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.* God cut Adam and therefore all of humanity off from having access to the tree of life.

Gen. 5:5 Adam did die, but God cut off access to His Holy Spirit. *So all the days that Adam lived were 930 years and he died.* People ought to pay attention to God - God means what He says. People are used to having options. And while options aren't a bad thing, there are certain things in life that aren't optional. The right thing must be done, regardless of whether one wants to do it or not. God means what He says. This is an important point to understand. Obedience to God is not optional.

Ezezial 18:4 Why did Adam die? So far, what has been covered is a review of things covered in previous studies. This review will prove helpful in understanding the details of Restored Truth #6. God says through Ezekiel: *Behold, all souls...[all human beings] are mine, the life of the father, as well as the life of the son is mine...[soul = physical life] The person who sins shall die.* It's very simple. The cause of death is sin. God gave Adam a command. Adam refused to follow God's command. Therefore, when Adam sinned, he died.

1 John 3:4 What is sin? The Bible answers this question in a straightforward manner. *For whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law...[What law? The Ten Commandments God thundered down from Mt. Sinai] for sin is the transgression...[violation] of the law.* When a person violates the Ten Commandments, that person has committed sin. Sin is very simple to define. Many in the world of traditional Christianity believe keeping the Ten Commandments is not necessary for receiving eternal life. But Christ would differ on such a belief.

Matt. 19:16 Notice what Jesus Christ said, the very one traditional Christianity looks to and upholds in high esteem. *Now, behold, one came and said to him, Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?...[Christ is being asked what a person must do to live forever] (vs 17) If you want to enter into life...[Want to receive eternal life] keep the Commandments...*

Next Christ is asked, which ones? Christ names a number of the Commandments. In this passage, Christ summarizes six of the Ten Commandments. The world of traditional Christianity takes issue with Christ's response because Commandments one through four aren't listed. But when one reads to the end of this exchange, it is clear the individual who is asking the questions is violating both the first and second commandments because he would not give up his material possessions. Those material possessions were his god. When Christ asked him to give them up, he couldn't do it. Therefore he will not receive eternal life until he does. Keeping the Ten Commandments leads to receiving eternal life.

Ps. 119:172 In this passage, notice what David says about God's commandments. *For all your commandments are righteousness.* If a person wants to be righteous, the Ten Commandments must be kept. This is the definition of righteousness. Feeding the poor is not righteousness. Government healthcare is not righteousness. Welfare is not righteousness. Socialism is not righteousness. Keeping the Ten Commandments defines righteousness.

Rom. 6:23 This verse is a restatement of Ezekiel 18:4. Paul writes: *For the wages of sin is death.* What are wages? The compensation a person is paid for work done. Death is what a person gets paid for sin. Sin is the violation of God's law. To do so incurs the penalty of eternal death.

Rom. 3:23 Notice the dilemma every human being faces. *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* Everybody, every human being who has walked the face of this Earth, except Jesus Christ, has sinned, has broken

God's law. Therefore, every human being is under the death penalty and receives the wages for their sin, death. Sin puts every human being under the eternal death penalty. This is what Paul is talking about in Romans 6:23. This passage could be better read: For the wages of sin is eternal death. Eternal death is a real dilemma for human beings because it affords no opportunity to live again.

An eternal death penalty means a person has 'x' number of years to live on earth, enjoying the pleasures of physical life. Upon death, life ends forever, with no chance of being able to live again. This ends any opportunity to ever be reunited with loved ones again. A person confined to the grave has no way of ever getting out. Just like Adam, from dust human beings came, to dust human beings will return. It's that simple.

How then can the problem of eternal death be solved? The answer to this question will be discussed later in this study.

God's servant Job understood man's dilemma of living under the penalty of eternal death.

*Job 14:1 Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble...*

This describes the life of human beings. It is a life of a few days, full of trouble [or turmoil]. A look at this world and the history of mankind reveals mostly turmoil.

*(vs 2) He comes forth like a flower and fades away.* [Little children are like fresh flowers. They brighten up the day. Young children are innocent, sweet and show lots of love and affection. They have not been corrupted, yet, by an evil society in which they live] *He flees like a shadow and does not continue.* [death] *(vs 7) For there is hope for a tree, if it is cut down that it will sprout again...*[The stump of a tree will come to life again] *if it is cut down that it will sprout again and that its tender shoots will not cease.* *(vs 8) Though its root may grow old in the earth and its stump may die in the ground* *(vs 9) Yet at the scent of water it will bud and bring forth branches like a plant.* *(vs 10) But if man dies and is laid away...[expires] indeed he breathes his last and where is he?*

What happens when man's life is cut down or off? Does a human being come back to life when water is poured on the grave? Does the dead human being have opportunity to come back to life like a tree? Absolutely, not!

*Job 14:14 If a man dies shall he live again?* Shall man live again after death? Job understood man's dilemma. This is one of the Bible's greatest questions. When a person dies will they ever live again? The answer to Job's question is found in the pages of the Bible.

Rom. 6:23 This time read the second half of the verse. The first half says the wages of sin is death. *But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Eternal life comes through Jesus Christ. The word 'gift' in Greek means a divine gratuity. The tip left for a waitress is considered gratuity. But there's nothing divine about it because human beings aren't divine. Only God's gratuity is divine. God's gratuity can also be deliverance from danger or passion. It's a spiritual endowment. It can also refer to a religious qualification.

God's gift of eternal life is a free gift. It's not something that can be earned. Ephesians 2 provides details about the free gift of eternal life. However, there are certain standards and expectations God requires before the free gift can be given. One can't earn God's free gift based upon a human standard of righteousness or behavior. All sinners die and fall short of the glory of God. All sinners deserve the penalty of eternal death. How does God's gift solve the dilemma of mankind being confined to the grave forever?

John 3:16 says: *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him should not perish...[Should not receive or have executed on them the eternal death penalty] but have everlasting life. (vs 17) For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. So they would be delivered from the penalty of eternal death. God the Father had to give up His son in order to be able to give human beings His free gift of eternal life.*

Jesus Christ had to give up something too. The following verses are typically read during the Passover service. Luke 22:19 *And he took bread, gave thanks, and broke it, and he gave it to them saying, this is my body which is given for you: do this in remembrance of me...[Christ changed how the Passover was to be observed. No longer did observing the Passover require killing a lamb and eating it. Christ wanted His disciples to eat unleavened bread, which symbolized his broken and beaten body] (vs 20) Likewise he took the cup after supper saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you. Christ took wine symbolizing His blood, shed for the forgiveness of sin.*

Heb. 9:22 *And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood...[cleansed] and without shedding of blood there is no remission...[forgiveness]. Blood must be shed to pay the penalty of sin. Jesus Christ shed His blood for every human being. (vs 28) So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many...[For the sins of all. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God] To those who eagerly wait for him, he will appear a second time apart from sin for salvation. When Christ returns, He is not coming back to be crucified again. He is coming back to rule. He is coming back to remove Satan the Devil from authority and power over this earth. Christ is going to rule this earth. No longer will human beings have to live under corrupt governments, filled with corrupt government officials. Christ paid the penalty of eternal death to free every human being who desires to be free.*

Before God could give eternal life, the penalty of sin had to be paid. Jesus Christ paid the penalty by coming to the earth as a human being. As a sinless human being Christ went through a very agonizing and excruciating crucifixion and then He died. After spending three days and three nights, a full 72 hours - not part of three days and three nights (as is taught in the world of traditional Christianity to justify the keeping of Easter) Christ was resurrected to eternal life.

1 Cor. 15:12 *Now if Christ is preached that he has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?...[Keep in mind that the Apostle Paul is talking to the Church of God. He is not talking to the world. So the word 'preached' is evangelizo. It means to teach. Paul is talking about teaching within the Church of God. Yet within the Church of God at Corinth, people were saying there was no resurrection] (vs 13) but if there is no resurrection of the dead then Christ is not risen.* It is very clear. If there is no resurrection, Christ didn't come back to life. If Christ was not resurrected then He is still in the ground. Christ is now dust just like anybody else who died nearly 2000 years ago would be. Paul is laying it on the line. The word 'resurrection' in the Greek means a standing up again. What do people do when they bury the dead? The dead are laid down when put in the ground. Standing up again means the dead will come to stand back on their feet, come back to life. This word literally refers to a resurrection from death. It can also mean a moral recovery of spiritual truth. That's what happened when God restored the 18 truths back into His Church. In this instance, Paul is speaking of a person who has died literally coming back to life, being resurrected back to life. The only way to come back to life is through a resurrection] (vs 14) *And if Christ is not risen then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.* There is no hope of life after death if Jesus Christ was not resurrected from the grave.

If Christ hasn't been raised from the dead, if Christ hasn't been resurrected, then Paul's teaching is worthless. If Christ were not resurrected, then, what the Church of God in Corinth believed at the time was also worthless. It is of no value. There is no meaning in it. There is no truth. This is what Paul is saying.

1 Cor.15:15 *Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he did not raise up, if in fact the dead do not rise. (vs 16) For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen.* [Which means He would have been in the grave at the time Paul was teaching in Corinth. And He would still be in the grave today] (vs 17) *And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile. You are still in your sins.* Yes, this would be the reality, if Christ had not been resurrected after shedding His blood for the sins of mankind.

Rom.5:8 *But God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that, while we were still sinners Christ died for us. (vs 9) Much more then, having now been justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. (vs 10) For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.* Christ had to die and be resurrected before human beings, could benefit from his sacrifice. This is what Paul is talking about in 1 Corinthians 15.

1 Cor. 15:18 *Then also those who have fallen asleep...[died in Christ] have perished...*

In other words, people who believed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and died prior to I Corinthians 15, would remain confined to their graves forever. (vs 19) *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable...*[If one believes in the resurrection and Christ hasn't been raised, then people are believing in something that is not true. Paul knew Christ had been resurrected] (vs 20) *But now Christ is risen from the dead...[Christ has been resurrected] and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.* Those who have died.

Christ is the firstfruit or as will be seen later the first of the firstfruits. There are more firstfruits who will join Christ. The plural use of the word firstfruits doesn't accurately convey biblical teaching about the topic of firstfruits. Christ is the first of those who have died and will be resurrected. He is the first to be resurrected of those who will become the first members of God's family. 1 Cor. 15:21 *For since by man...[Adam] came death, by man...[Jesus Christ] also came the resurrection of the dead.* (vs 22) *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all those who believe in Christ all shall be made alive...[resurrected].*

In verse 35 Paul deals with two very important questions. The answers are very important in understanding the firstfruits and their connection to being resurrected from the dead. (vs 35) *But someone will say...[some will ask] how are the dead raised up... [1st question] and with what body do they come?...[2nd question].* These aren't off-the-wall questions being asked. In talking about resurrection from the dead, these questions are very logical, reasonable ones to ask. Paul actually answers the second question first. (vs 44) *Indeed it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body...* [The natural body is a body of flesh. And then there is a spiritual body, as described in Revelation 1:13-16] (vs 45) *And so it is written, the first man Adam became a living being...[A physical human being] and the last Adam...[Referring to Jesus Christ] became a life-giving Spirit.* [Christ was resurrected as a spirit being] (vs 47) *The first man was of the earth...[Made of dust] the second man...[Jesus Christ] is the Lord from heaven.* (vs 48) *As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust. As is the heavenly man, so also are those who are heavenly.* Paul is providing a side-by-side comparison to explaining the meaning being resurrected. If one is a human being, made out of flesh, that person is like Adam. If one is in the Spirit, that person is like Jesus Christ.

1 Cor. 15:49 *As we have born the image of the man of dust...[What human beings currently are now] we shall also...[In the future] bear the image of the heavenly man...[A body just like that of Jesus Christ]* In verse 50, Paul answers the first question on how the dead are raised. (vs 50) *This I say, brethren, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God...*

A person cannot be a physical being and be in God's Kingdom. This is why the teaching of traditional Christianity, which states God's Kingdom is established on earth now is such a foolish and false teaching. God's Kingdom is not on

the earth now because no human being can be in God's Kingdom as a human being. Flesh and blood cannot be part of God's Kingdom.

(vs 50) *...Nor does corruption inherit incorruption.* (vs 51) *Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep...[Remain dead] but we shall all be changed* (vs 52) *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.* Paul is referring to those who died in “the faith” and those physical members of God’s Church alive at the sound of seventh trumpet.

Paul’s words make clear that flesh and blood cannot be in God's Kingdom. This ties in with the conversation Christ had with Nicodemus. Nicodemus came to visit late at night so nobody would know he had talked with Christ. This shows the tremendous animosity the Pharisees had toward Christ.

John 3:3 *Jesus answered and said to him, most assuredly I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.* (vs 4) *Nicodemus said to him how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?...*[Nicodemus doesn’t grasp what Christ was saying about a person being born again] (vs 5) *Christ said, most assuredly I say to you, unless one is born of water...[baptized] and receives the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.* (vs 6) *That which is born of flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* Christ’s words tie directly in with what Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 15.

John 6:44 Notice how the words of Christ and Paul connect with those of God’s Church, who have been called out of this world. *No one can come to me...*[Know who Christ really is, understand what He taught and meet the expectations set for those who follow Him. It doesn’t matter how many church signs say ‘come as you are’, or ‘come to Jesus here today’ it can’t be done. Christ said:] *No one can come to me unless the father who sent me draws him: and I will raise him up at the last day.* Unless one is called by God the Father, no relationship with Jesus Christ can be established.

Two very important points are in this scripture. No one can come to understand who Jesus Christ is and what He taught unless God the Father calls a person. Once the calling has been accepted, a person must followed Christ to the end their physical life. Only then, will Christ resurrect that person at the last day or His 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming.

God’s Word teaches the resurrection of the dead will take place in stages. In other words the dead are not all resurrected at the same time.

A review of some scriptures covered previously will establish the correct biblical teaching for how the resurrection of the dead occurs in stages. 1 Cor.15:20 *But now Christ is risen from the dead and has become the firstfruit of those who have fallen asleep* [died]...[Christ was resurrected from the dead first. Those who died in “the faith” remain in

the grave until Christ returns] (vs 21) *For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.* (vs 22) *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive...*[Paul is speaking of the future. All shall be made alive, in the future; but not when Christ was resurrected] (vs 23) *but each in his own order...*[Notice each in his own order:] *Christ the firstfruit...*[Christ the first to be resurrected from the dead] *Afterwards those who are Christ's at his coming.* Paul pinpoints a specific time when a group of people, identified as Christ's, who are going to be resurrected from the dead at Christ's coming. Christ is the first in the order of the resurrection of the dead. The word firstfruits in the Greek means a beginning of sacrifice, the Jewish firstfruits, from the beginning, the first ripe fruit.

In an agrarian society not all the harvest matures at the same time. There are also different growing seasons. Some crops mature in the early growing season which occurs in the spring of the year. These matured crops are considered the firstfruits. The crops which mature at the end of the year, are harvested in the fall. These crops are never recognized as firstfruits. These crops can be considered the last fruits.

Within a harvest there is a lag time in maturity. A small portion of the crop will mature first before the majority of the crop matures. The first maturing portion of the crop is called the first of the firstfruits. This is the very first portion that can be eaten and enjoyed. The very firstfruit of God's family to be harvested was Jesus Christ, singular.

What verse 20 is referring are the firstfruits, plural, those who have died. When the word firstfruits is referring to Christ it carries a singular meaning to it because it's referring to one person. But when it is firstfruits referring to a group of people, it is the firstfruits of the resurrection of believers who are resurrected later at the sound of the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet.

1 Cor.15:23 This is what the latter half of verse 23 is pointing to: *afterwards those who are Christ's at his...*[Second] *coming.* These firstfruits are the first group of human beings to be resurrected from the dead at Christ's second coming. Now turn to the book of Leviticus.

This information was not covered in detail in Restored Truth #3. God uses physical objects as symbols or representations of realities concerning His plan. The Old Testament sacrificial system is prime biblical example. Leviticus 23 lays out God's Holy Day plan of salvation. Each of these holy days have tremendous meaning and picture the sequential steps of God's plan. These holy days revolve around the spring and fall harvest seasons of the Promised Land. The area known today as the modern State of Israel.

Pentecost is the third step in God's plan which deals with firstfruits. God uses the early grain harvest to represent this part of His plan. There are three elements connect to the meaning of Pentecost in Leviticus 23. These are 1) the priest, 2) the wavesheaf and 3) the wave loaves. A full understanding of Pentecost requires knowing who these three elements to represent.

Lev. 23:9 *And the Eternal spoke to Moses saying (vs 10) speak to the children of Israel and say to them, when you come into the land which I give to you and reap its harvest then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest...*[This sheaf is the very first portion of the spring grain harvest. It does not represent the whole spring harvest, just the very first portion of it. This sheaf was brought to the priest (high priest)] (vs 11) *and he shall wave the sheaf before the Eternal to be accepted on your behalf: on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.* Here are two of the three elements found in understanding the meaning of Pentecost: the priest and the wavesheaf.

This sheaf of the firstfruits was to be waved by the priest before God on the first day of the week, Sunday, following the regular weekly Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong identified the wave sheaf as Jesus Christ ascending to God the Father after His resurrection. The scriptural backing he used for this teaching can be found in two conversations Christ had after His resurrection.

The first was with Mary Magdalene hours after His resurrection in John 20.

John 20:11 *But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. (vs 12) and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet where the body of Jesus had lain. (vs 13) Then they said to her, woman, why are you weeping? And she said to them because they have taken away my Lord and I do not know where they have laid him...*[She still thought Christ was dead] (vs 14) *Now when she had said this she turned around and saw Jesus standing there and did not know that it was Jesus. (vs 15) And Jesus said to her, woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking? She supposing him to be the gardener said to him, Sir, if you have carried him away tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away...*[She didn't realize Christ had been resurrected] (vs 16) *Jesus said to her, Mary. She turned and said to him, Rabboni; which is to say, Teacher...*[Christ said her name in a way she recognized] (vs 17) *Jesus said to her, do not cling to me...*[She wanted to give Christ a hug. This would be a natural reaction upon seeing someone taken for dead. Notice, Christ said, *do not cling to me:*] *for I have not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father and to my God and your God.* Christ had only been resurrected a few hours prior to sunset on the weekly Sabbath. Yet, He had not ascended into heaven to be accepted by God the Father.

Later, on the first day after His resurrection, Christ appeared to His disciples who were gathered behind closed doors in fear of the Jews. Notice what Christ tells His disciples to do.

Luke 24:36 *And now as they said these things...*[They is reference to the two disciples Christ appeared to on the road to Emmaus] *Jesus himself stood in the midst of them and said to them peace to you. (vs 37) But they were terrified and frightened and supposed that they had seen a spirit. (vs 38) And he said to them why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? (vs 39) Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I, myself, handle me, and see; for a*

*spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have...*[Christ is manifesting Himself as a spirit being into a human being. Notice Christ says to His disciples *handle me*, touch me. This is much different from what He told Mary Magdalene in John 20] (vs 40) *When he had said this he showed them his hands and his feet*. He gave them a chance to examine and touch His scars.

Mr. Armstrong taught these verses represented the wavesheaf because they pictured the ascension and descension of Christ. They showed Christ going before God the Father to be accepted or waved as the firstfruit of God's family. As the wave sheaf Christ had presented Himself and been accepted by the Father before returning back to earth to spend 40 days with His disciples.

Mr. Armstrong's explanation of Christ as the wavesheaf seems to be a plausible explanation of the scriptures. But a further examination of the wavesheaf ceremony reveals a different explanation than previous understood by Mr. Armstrong.

Keep in mind there are 3 separate elements to Pentecost found in Leviticus 23. They are 1) the priest, 2) the wavesheaf and 3) the two wave loaves. Each of these elements have their own distinct meaning.

In explaining the wavesheaf ceremony, Mr. Armstrong didn't address the identity and role of the priest. The priest of the Old Testament sacrificial system always represented a resurrected Jesus Christ.

*Heb. 8:1-2 Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.*

Mr. Armstrong's explanation requires accepting Christ as priest and wavesheaf. This means Christ as priest would be presenting Himself as the wavesheaf. This does not fit the instruction of Leviticus 23, which says the wavesheaf is to be presented to the priest. When Christ ascension to the Father, He presented Himself to be inducted into the office of High Priest.

*Heb. 10:11 And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. (vs 12) But this Man [Christ], after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, (vs 19) Therefore, brethren having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, (vs 20) by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, (vs 21) and having a High Priest over the house of God. [God's Church]*

Christ does not represent the wavesheaf of Leviticus 23. In this ceremony, Christ is pictured by the priest who waves the wavesheaf before God the Father. If Christ does not represent the wavesheaf then who does the wavesheaf represent? Paul provides the answer in I Corinthians 15.

1 Cor. 15:23 *But each in his own order; Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at his coming.* Who are those who are Christ's? Who are those who are next in the order resurrection? Who are these people? What defines them as Christ's people?

Matt. 12:50 defines what it means to be one of Christ's people. *For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother.* Notice the reference to family relationships. The key to becoming someone belonging to Christ is to do the will of His Father in heaven. What then is God's will?

John 6:40 *This is the will of him who sent me...[Here is the will of God the Father] That everyone who sees the son, and believes in him may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.* The last day corresponds with Christ's 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming, which Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians 15:23. If a person wants to do the will of the Father, that person needs to believe what Jesus Christ taught. This not just a mental activity. It is mental activity demonstrated through action. If a person believes in something, then the belief will be shown through action. It is not enough to just believe Jesus Christ is real, that He is the Son of God. The belief must be shown through actions.

John 13:35 Belief is manifested through action. *By this all will know that you are my disciples...[student of Christ] if you have love for one another.* The word love in the Greek word is agape, meaning a principled love. If a person wants to be one of Christ's disciples, it requires a person to love others who are Christ's disciples too. Those who are doing God the Father's will also.

John 15:14 Christ says: *You are my friends if...[contingent upon a personal action] you do whatever I command you.* What is Christ's command? (vs 12) *This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.* How does Christ define the love He is talking about? (vs 10) *If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.* What commandments define the Father's love? Matt. 22:37 *Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'* (vs 38) *This is the first and great commandment.* (vs 39) *And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'* (vs 40) *On these hang all the Law and the Prophets.* God's love is defined by the Ten Commandments.

In Matthew 19, Christ connected receiving eternal life with keeping the Ten Commandments. If a person wants to be one of Christ's disciples and part of the group Paul identifies as being next in the order of resurrections, then the will of the Father must be done. The will of God the Father is for people to live by the Ten Commandments.

Rev. 20:4 John defines the resurrection Paul is talking about. Notice the term John identifies these people by. *And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was committed to them: And I saw the souls...[individuals] who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God...[A reference to Laodicean Christians found Revelation 6:9-11. These are people killed because of their belief in God's truth] They were beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God who had not worshipped the beast, or his image, or had received his mark on their forehead, or on their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ for 1000 years...[The second half of verse 5 defines these people as being part of the 1<sup>st</sup> resurrection] (vs 5b) This is the first resurrection. The first half of verse 5 deals with a resurrection to occur after the thousand years are over.*

(vs 6) lists the benefits of being part of the 1<sup>st</sup> resurrection: *Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death [eternal death] has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him [Christ] a thousand years.*

Those who are Christ's will be those in the 1<sup>st</sup> resurrection. This resurrection occurs at the sound of the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet signaling Christ's return. This group of people comprises those God has called out of this world, who accepted God's calling and remained faithful to His Truth throughout the duration of their lives. This resurrection is the first group human beings to receive eternal life. This group is the Church of God, which is represented by the wavesheaf of Leviticus 23 and offered to God the Father by its High Priest, Jesus Christ.

Heb.11:13 names a few of the people who will be part of the 1<sup>st</sup> resurrection. Hebrews 11 is considered the faith chapter. The reason is because these people lived what they believed. Notice, *These all died in faith...[Went to the grave believing God's truth] not having received the promises...[Not having received eternal life] but having seen them afar off, were assured of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth...[Living on this earth, but not being part of the world] (vs 35) Women received their dead raised to life again...[A resurrection back to physical life] but others were tortured not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection.*

The better resurrection is the 1<sup>st</sup> resurrection. It is a resurrection to eternal life. It's a better resurrection for the rewards and benefits that go with it

Rev. 20:6 lists why it is a better resurrection. It is a better resurrection because these people are no longer subject to death: *over such the second death has no power... Another benefit is becoming kings and priests of God the Father and Jesus Christ: but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with him 1000 years. God calls people out of this world to become kings and priests in the Wonderful World Tomorrow.*

Heb.11:39 The 1<sup>st</sup> resurrection has not happened yet. Notice, *All these...*[Those mentioned in Hebrews chapter 11] *having obtained a good testimony through faith did not receive the promise...*[Have not yet been resurrected to eternal life] (vs 40) *God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.* Verse 39 speaks of two groups of people. “They” being those of the Old Testament Church and “us” being direct reference to the New Testament Church. Both of these groups will be resurrected at the same time.

These promises are not going to be handed out at separate times. There is going to be one time when the promise of perfection, eternal will be given, which is at the 1<sup>st</sup> resurrection. There is also one time when the positions of kings and priests will be given, which gets back to the purpose of the wavesheaf offering in Leviticus 23.

The wavesheaf was not presented on the Feast of Pentecost, but on the first day of the week (Sunday) after the weekly Sabbath (Saturday) between the first and last holy days of Unleavened Bread. This presentation signals the time when those of the 1<sup>st</sup> resurrection will be inducted into their offices as kings and priests of God’s government. They will be presented to the Father by Jesus Christ and accepted before returning with Christ to earth to establish God’s Kingdom.

Rev. 19:11 *Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. (vs 14) And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.*

Ephesians 2 identifies the two groups of Hebrews 11. (vs 19) *Now therefore you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and members of the household of God...*[Church of God] (vs 20) *Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone (vs 21) in whom the whole building being fitted together grows into a holy temple in the Lord (vs 22) in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the spirit.* The phrase ‘apostles and prophets’ refers to New and Old Testament leaders and teachers within God’s Church.

Hebrews is clear one group will not receive the promise until the other group is able to receive the promise too.

1 Thes. 4:15 Paul points to when the first resurrection will occur. *For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep...*[This is exactly what is said at the end of Hebrews 11] (vs 16) *For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an Archangel, and the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first...*[This is the same resurrection Paul was talking about in 1 Corinthians 15] (vs 17) *Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air and thus we shall always be with the Lord.*

1 Cor. 15:52 This specifically identifies when this trumpet will sound? *In the moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet will sound...*[The same trumpet of 1 Thessalonians 4] *and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.* What is the last trumpet?

Rev.11:15 *Then the seventh angel sounded...*[Seventh trumpet] *and there were loud voices in heaven saying the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever.* [One would think the world of traditional Christianity would be happy about this, but notice](vs 18) *The nations were angry...*[People talk about Jesus Christ returning; but when Christ actually returns people on this earth are not going to be happy. They are going to be very angry. They're going to be very hostile toward their Savior] *The nations were angry and your wrath has come...*[The Day of the Lord] *and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that you should reward your servants the prophets and the saints.* [Those of the Old and New Testament Church]

Rev. 14:1 There is a set number of people in the first resurrection. A specific number of people will be raised at the seventh trumpet. This is not knowledge and information not understood by the Church of God today. It is knowledge and information which has become known since the death of Mr. Armstrong. Only those who have continued in the faith, who hold fast to these restored truths. *Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion and with him 144,000 having his Father's name written on their foreheads.* [The 144,000 have the Father's name] (vs 4) *These are the ones who were not defiled with women...*[False doctrine] *for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These were redeemed from among man, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb...*[These 144,000 were sinners at one time] (vs 5) *And in their mouth was found no deceit for they are without fault before the throne of God.* They are resurrected to perfect spirit beings. These 144,000 are the ones who receive the promise.

The 144,000 of Revelation 14 are those who make up the wavesheaf offering of Leviticus 23. This small group of individuals qualified to become part of God's ruling family, by remaining accepting God's calling, growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ and maintaining their commitment to God's Truth throughout the remainder of their lives.

The wavesheaf is the very first of God's firstfruit harvest. The sheaf is presented by the priest without leaven, sin. This sheaf makes up a small portion of the overall firstfruit harvest, which is pictured by the two wave loaves offered on the Feast of Pentecost. Both the wavesheaf and the two wave loaves are considered firstfruits. But it is the timing of their harvest which distinguishes them as two different groups of people. One is harvested at the beginning of the spring harvest, while the other is harvested at the end on Pentecost.

Greater detail will be provided in Restored Truth Bible Studies on the Millennium and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Resurrection about who the wave loaves and the Great White Throne Judgment represent. For now a brief summation of God's harvest

plan of salvation will have to suffice. In Leviticus 23, the priest represents a resurrected Jesus Christ. The wavesheaf presented by the priest represents those of the 1<sup>st</sup> resurrection. This resurrection will take place at the sound of the 7<sup>th</sup> or last trumpet, marking Christ's return in the air to gather these resurrected saints. Their number totals 144,000 as described in Revelation 14:1-5. The 2 wave loaves represent those converted in the Millennium. These people will have to go through the process of conversion represented by the fine flour from which these loaves were to be made. The loaves are baked with leaven, picturing sin. Those in the Millennium will have to repent of their sins and overcome before becoming part of God's family. The great fall harvest is represented by the Great White Throne Judgment, when all those who lived and died prior to Christ's return will be resurrected back to physical life. At that time these people will have the opportunity for salvation.

Rev. 20:5 *But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.* This verse shows there is an order to the resurrection of people. The rest of the dead will not be resurrected to eternal life, will not be kings and priests in God's Kingdom; but will be resurrected back to physical life, be given their first opportunity to know God's truth, and still have opportunity to become members of God's family. This verse shows there is another resurrection to follow the first resurrection, specifically 1,000 years later.

Members of God's Church now, have the opportunity to be a firstfruit of God's family and part of the 144,000 firstfruits. As a member of the 144,000 firstfruits sin will no longer hold sway over them. Death will pose no threat ever again. As ruling members of God's family under Jesus Christ the 144,000 will hold positions of rulership and power in righteousness. They will teach others God's way of life and help develop world peace, happiness, and prosperity on the earth for everyone. Keep in mind, this was information not understood until it was restored back into the 6<sup>th</sup> era of God's church. Now this knowledge is once again being quickly lost by God's people.

In concluding this study, understand what the resurrection of the firstfruits is not. This can best be done by comparing the Bible to sections from the catechism of the Catholic Church. Catholic teaching dominates in the world of traditional Christianity.

Below is the Catholic Church's teaching on the resurrection. From section 989:

*We firmly believe, and hence we hope, that just as Christ is truly risen from the dead and lives forever, so after death the righteous will live forever with the risen Christ; and he will raise them up on the last day. Our resurrection, like his own, will be the work of the most holy Trinity. If the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit who dwells in you. (Romans 8:11)*

The problem with the Catholic Church's use of Romans 8:11 is that 'he' does not apply to the Holy Spirit. 'He' is speaking of God the Father. Remember, God is not a trinity, but a family. In section 990 it says:

*The term flesh refers to man in his state of weakness and mortality. The resurrection of the flesh, the literal formation of the Apostles' Creed, means not only that the immortal soul will live on after death; but that even our mortal body will come to life again.*

Catholic teaching states the mortal body will come to life again. This conflicts with what Christ and Paul taught. Remember mortal flesh cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. The next four sections deal with Catholic teaching in regards to the resurrection. Each of these sections starts off with a question. Section 997 begins with:

*What is rising? In death the separation of the soul from the body, the human body decays and the soul goes to meet God while awaiting its reunion with its glorified body. God in his almighty power will definitely grant incorruptible life to our bodies by reuniting them with our souls through the power of Jesus' resurrection. Who will rise? All the dead will rise, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. (Daniel 12:2)*

This teaching pictures "all the dead" being resurrected at the same time. This contradicts what the Bible teaches.

The Catholics believe all the dead will rise. How? Section 999 attempts to answer:

*How? Christ is raised with his own body. See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. But he did not return to an earthly life. So in him, all of them will rise again with their own bodies which they now bear; but Christ will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body into a spiritual body.*

The rest of this section finishes with quotes from 1 Corinthians 15:35-37, 42, 52-53, which were covered earlier in this study.

Section 1001 asks when:

*When will the resurrection happen? Definitely at the last day, at the end of the world. Indeed the resurrection of the dead is closely associated with Christ's parousia. (Greek word for Christ's return). For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ will rise first. (1 Thessalonians 4:16)*

The Catholic Church fails to understand Paul is not speaking of a mortal body to be resurrected. Paul is referring to a spiritual body.

What defines those who are resurrected as spirit beings? It is the spirit in man combined with the Spirit of God. Those of the 1<sup>st</sup> resurrection will be resurrected with a spirit body, having the ability to be manifested as a human body.

Jude 1:5 How does false doctrine enter into God's Church? How do teachings from the catechism enter into God's Church? Jude states, through those who have crept into God's Church unawares. *But I want to remind you, though you once knew this...[Knowledge previously understood by God's Church] that the Lord having saved the people out of the land of Egypt afterward destroyed those who did not believe; (vs 6) and the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day. (vs 7) As Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, in a similar manner to these, had given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh... [Homosexuals] are set forth as an example suffering the vengeance...[Punishment] of eternal fire. (vs 8) Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries. (vs 9) Yet Michael the Archangel, when contending with the devil when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him reviling accusation, but said, the Lord rebuke you. (vs 10) But these speak evil of whatever they do not know: in whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves. (vs 11) Woe to them for they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perish in the rebellion of Core.*

False doctrine enters through individuals who seek to subvert God's Truth. Their false teaching is not strongly opposed and stopped from being taught. God's Truth must be defended, and protected. It cannot be compromised. Is there anyone defending God's Truth today?

Rev. 3:8 Christ says: *I know your works: see, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it: for you have a little strength, have kept my word, and have not denied my name. (vs 10) Because you have kept my command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial, which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. (vs 11) Behold, I am coming quickly: hold fast what you have that no one may take your crown.* Only a remnant of Philadelphian Christians alive today are the ones who protect God's Truth in the end times.

There are 3 purposes in creating this Restored Truth Series:

- To help God's Church thoroughly know all 18 restored truths.
- To help God's Church identify and understand the counterfeits of Satan to these restored truths.
- To help God's Church understand how these counterfeits corrupt the 18 restored truths.

In an article entitled *Why You Need the Church* from The Plain Truth Magazine, May-June 1993 edition, Greg Albrecht wrote:

*Many have broken down the word ecclesia to its two constituent parts, and have defined the intended meaning by the etymology of the word. Approached from this perspective the word means 'called' and 'out of.' On the basis of etymology (a historical study of words.) the word itself would be better translated called together.*

Here is a good example of someone who crept in God's Church unawares. This is not the context of the word 'ekklesia' as demonstrated in Matthew 13:18-23. This verse clearly shows God calls people come out of this world into God's Church. True study of the Bible does not rely on "intended meaning" for understanding. Actual meaning is what true students of the scriptures must look for and follow.

On the subject of Christ being the firstborn from the dead, Dr. Stavronides, wrote the following in an article entitled *Conception and Resurrection* which appeared in The Worldwide News, December 9, 1991 edition:

*The argument is proposed on the strength of Colossians 1:18 and Revelation 1:5 that Christ would not be called the firstborn from the dead unless others would be born in the same way later. This interpretation is wrong. There is no term 'first' or a term 'born' in the text. The term firstborn is used which is a title. The meaning of the title is not an order of birth but privilege.*

Col. 1:18. This is important material which must be correctly understood. *And he (Christ) is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he may have the preeminence.* The word firstborn in the Greek means just that – first born. It comes from two Greek words. The Greek word *protos*, # 3413, which means foremost in time, place, order, or importance; and the second word *tiktō*, #5088, which means to produce from seed as a mother, a plant, or the earth. Literally and figuratively this word can mean bear, be born, bring forth, be delivered, or be in travail. The Bible clearly uses the term firstborn to refer to first in order to be resurrected from the dead and born into God's family.

Mr. Armstrong never understood there were two groups of 144,000. During his time it was thought the 144,000 of Revelation 7 and Revelation 14 were the same group of people. Mr. Armstrong questioned the identity of the 144,000 in his book *The Book of Revelation Unveiled at Last*, on pages 34 and 35.

*Who are the 144,000 and what is sealed in their foreheads? If you will turn to Revelation 14:1, you will see that it is the Father's name that is written there. Jesus' very last prayer for his church was*

*that they would be kept in the Father's name. Twelve times in the New Testament his own church is [called] the Church of God, yes, God's Church.*

Although Mr. Armstrong did not fully grasp the difference between these 2 groups of 144,000, he did associate them with God's Church. It can accurately be said, Mr. Armstrong was half right because the 144,000 of Revelation 14 does represent God's Church, both Old and New Testament. This is what the wavesheaf offered in Leviticus 23 represents. In Revelation 14:4, 5, this group is now perfect, without sin.

It's important to appreciate this new understanding of information because all biblical information must be revealed to be understood. Revelation comes from God and He only reveals it to those who are obedient to Him. This is the only way prophecy can be properly interpreted. Yet notice what Joseph W. Tkach, Pastor General of the Worldwide Church of God wrote in a Personal from The Worldwide News, dated November 19, 1990, regarding prophecy:

*The World Tomorrow prophecy programs will present a balanced overall perspective of the purpose and value of prophecy instead of attempting to interpret specific prophecies.*

In the Worldwide Church of God under Mr. Tkach's leadership, sermons on prophecy basically became nonexistent.

This study will conclude with comments by Mr. Armstrong on the meaning of firstfruits. These comments come from his sermon entitled *Mission of the Philadelphia Church Era*, delivered on December 17, 1983. Mr. Armstrong said:

*Another, the next, piece of knowledge that has been restored to this Church that the rest don't know; and no other church knows it - that this Church is the firstfruits, that God is not trying to save the whole world now. He's calling us out now. He'll use us as teachers to help save others in their term. They in their turn, from the millennium, will help save all the rest in the Great White Throne Judgment. Ultimately God is going to go after the saving of everybody who ever lived; but no church understands that, that we are the firstfruits; that we are the embryo of the kingdom of God; the fact that we have to be called by God and that salvation is not open to just anyone whosoever will. The 'whosoever will may come' is found in the last chapter of the Bible and does not pertain to this time at all. No other church seems to know that. That knowledge has been restored to this Church.*