

## A Christian Pentecost

By Ronald L. Dart

One of the most important occasions in the history of the Christian church is rapidly approaching. It is the Day of Pentecost! You may not know this, but it is a lot older than the church. Christians call the day Pentecost, if they take note of it at all. Considering what happened on this day, I am surprised there are so many Christians who know so little about the day. And I suspect an awful lot of them come to this season with no idea that Pentecost is occurring. Consider one statement from the book of Acts to explain what I mean. In Acts 2, it states: “When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.” (Acts 2:1, NKJV).

That the disciples were there observing the Feast of Pentecost is beyond dispute. They were all Israelites, these disciples, and they had observed these festivals all their lives. There was absolutely nothing in all the teachings of Jesus up to this point to suggest any change in that practice. In fact, there were three pilgrimage festivals every year. These festivals came with the expectation to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple. Those three were: Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus had told them to wait there and not go home. If they had gone home, they would have had to turn right around and come back to Pentecost. There is one curious thing about the Feast of Pentecost. The other two, the Feast of Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles, occur on specified dates in the Hebrew calendar. But there is no date specified for Pentecost. How do you know when Pentecost has fully come or finally arrived? Well, you have to count. The Law on this matter is in Leviticus chapter 23: “And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘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. He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to

be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.” (Leviticus 23:9-11, NKJV).

The idea was that you were going to have a whole new harvested crop, grain in this case. The grain harvest started about Passover time and ended at just

about the time of Pentecost with the wheat harvest. What were they supposed to do before they could eat any of the year’s harvest, cook anything with it, make beer out of it, or do whatever they were going to do? They were not to do anything until they had made an offering first before God. On what day was this done? The Law says it was on the day after a Sabbath, at the beginning of the grain harvest. That places it in the Spring or early in the year. The Jews understood it to be connected to the Passover, although the Law

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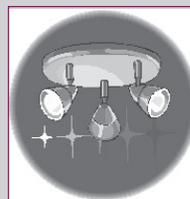
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#### **Scripture Spotlight**

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.” (Galatians 5:22-26 NKJV).

# Honoring Parents – Part I

By David Havir III

Mother’s Day has just occurred and Father’s Day is right around the corner. Are these days worth mentioning? Aren’t they just “Hallmark holidays” that we shouldn’t spend our money on? I wrote an article in February about the crown jewel of these days, Valentine’s Day. I shared a story about my grandmother and her request to be treated right every day, not just on these invented days. Her quote was “Every day is Mother’s Day”. While I definitely respect my grandmother’s opinion and agree with her premise—she was a wise lady after all—maybe there is still something that we can take away from these days. We can take a minute to remind ourselves about the relationship that God intended us to have with our parents. What does the Bible say on that topic?

Let’s look at the most obvious place to start. In Exodus 20, we are given the first commandment with a promise attached: “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.” (Exodus 20:12, NKJV).

In fact, this is the only one of the Ten Commandments that has a promise attached. What does it mean to honor your parents? In Proverbs, we are told to listen to our father and to not despise our mother. Probably the most graphic imagery that comes to mind concerning the repercussions for not honoring your parents is found in a different Proverb: “The eye that mocks his father, and scorns obedience to his mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out, and the young eagles will eat it.” (Proverbs 30:17, NKJV).

There’s nothing subtle about that. There are some passages that are written with a degree of complexity—that take a while to decipher. This is not one of them. We are first offered a promise and then given a threat. It is pretty clear that God places value on this.

But what exactly does honoring your parent mean? What is the definition of honor? The Hebrew word

used here is *kabad*. *Kabad* means to be heavy, weighty, or burdensome. That is an interesting collection of words. To me, showing honor means acknowledging something is important in our lives. I don’t think it means burdensome in the way that we use the word today.

But that does lend itself to another question. Are

we supposed to stay with our parents and take care of them our entire lives? The passage in I Timothy lends itself to taking care of them: “But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God...

But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” (I Timothy 5:4 and 8, NKJV).

This is also pretty clear. We are to make sure they are provided for. But again, does this mean that we are to stay with them always? Let’s look at an often-read verse at weddings: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24, NKJV).

We are supposed to go out on our own but still make sure that our parents are cared for. That makes sense. God is all about balance. As I have mentioned before, Ecclesiastes 3 has always been one of my favorite passages of Scripture.

What happens when actual people are involved though? The concept is clear, but humans have a way of muddying the waters. And what obligation do parents have to the children? Are we instructed to have blind obedience in the name of honor? In the next issue of this newsletter, I am going to expound upon this topic when things get complicated. The principle is a simple one; how to apply this principle in the real world can sometimes be very tough.

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# Pure Religion

By Richard Glasgow

Does religion really have to be so complex and confusing? Why are there so many different religions when there is only one God? Any number of philosophies or ideologies can be considered a religion; but, just for the record and to avoid any confusion, this article is written in the context of Christianity and the Word of God.

Before going further, we should probably define what we mean by “religion.” Dictionary.com offers three definitions. Here’s the one that most applies to our scenario: “A specific fundamental set of beliefs and practices generally agreed upon by a number of persons or sects: the Christian religion, the Buddhist religion, (as well as other religions).” Since we’re dealing here with Christian beliefs set forth in the written Word of God (the Bible), that’s where we’ll look to find what it says about this all-encompassing subject of religion.

If you have an interest in religion, there may be some forms of piety or self-righteous religiosity that have a negative effect on you. That’s not the way God intended religion to be. If you’re turned off by religiosity, it might surprise you that Jesus *shares* that aversion with you. Take a few minutes to read Matthew 23. He severely chides the Pharisees for their self-righteousness and holds them up as examples of how we’re *not* to be.

Bible readers are well aware of the fact there are many components to living God’s Way. The written Word of God lays down everything we need to know so we can live our lives in the way that’s pleasing to him. And even though those Divine instructions fill up 66 books, 1189 chapters, with 31,102 words (in the King James Version), the very essence of God’s Word was summed up by Jesus in four short verses when he was asked, “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

Matthew recorded Jesus’ simple reply in Matthew 22: “‘. . . Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.’” (Matthew 22:37-40, NIV).

The second half of that great commandment is the

crux of the Golden Rule we see in Matthew 7: “So in everything, do to others what you would have them to do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 7:12, NIV).

That’s pretty simple. We all know how *we* would like to be treated; but since we aren’t all the same and have different interests, we might not know or understand how *others* may wish to be treated. Because we are to love others, we may have to do some creative thinking to find out what they may need or how they might wish to be treated since their needs may be different from ours. If we can better identify with others, we may be better able to serve them as we would like to be served, were we experiencing similar situations.

Sometimes it doesn’t dawn on us what the needs of others might be, because we become so encumbered with our own problematic life. Still, the needs of others may be ongoing and their needs may be much more severe than our own. How would we ever know if we aren’t aware of what’s going on in their life?

Part of loving our neighbors as we love ourselves is finding out how they are doing—certainly not by meddling, but by having real concern about what’s transpiring in their lives. We can love them better by getting to know them better; and, in so doing, we’ll come to know their needs.

The Book of James is sometimes called the Proverbs of the New Testament. James 1:22 says, be *doers* of the word, and not hearers only. He offers further instructions in verse 27, on what we can *do* to better serve our neighbor: “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world” (James 1:27 NIV).

But, *how* can we “look after orphans and widows in their distress”? Once we become aware of their needs, we can do whatever we’re able to do to fulfill those needs. Those who are fatherless would probably love to take part in activities they don’t get to do all that often: like going to a baseball game, *any* sporting or cultural event, or just taking them out to get ice cream or a burger. A number of activities might be fun for a child who doesn’t have a mom or dad with whom to spend special time. They long for love and individual attention.

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Widows and widowers need that too. The daily needs of a widow or widower are probably much like your own—only more so—as they may not be as able to do what you’re able to do, due to age, health, and/or financial limitations. Many elderly people don’t have the ability to maintain a house or yard, and they may not be able to easily do errands. They may not have nearby children to care for them or they may not *have* children. Their needs and their quality of life depends on others who are willing to show their love by lending a helping hand.

Anything that needs to be maintained in your house also needs to be maintained in their house. The opportunities to serve are nearly endless, and if those needs go unattended, maintenance problems could ensue that make matters even worse. Yards have to be mowed, gutters and windows need to be cleaned, filters need to be replaced, and errands need to be run. The tasks we have to do in our *own* lives also have to be done for widows and widowers. That’s when we can show our love for our “neighbors” by lending a helping hand. It isn’t all about spending money; it’s the investment of service and time spent with the fatherless and the widow and widower.

Are you practicing pure religion by showing love to the fatherless and widow? Additionally, John 13 tells us: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:34-35, NIV).

### ***Are you practicing pure religion by showing love to the fatherless and widow?***

Is that verse encouraging to you, or does it strike fear into your heart to think you might not be considered one of his disciples? The act of having greater love for our neighbor by getting to know him better is even more applicable to our relationship with our Heavenly Father. We can love him better by getting to *know* him better, and that can be done by immersing ourselves in his Word. As our relationship with God and Jesus Christ grows deeper, so will our relationship grow deeper with our neighbor. That loving relationship will

prove to the world that we *are* his disciples.

So, back to the original question about the complexity of religion. It needn’t be the least bit confusing. God made it very plain in his two Great Commandments and his definition of pure religion. When we show that love to God *and* our neighbor, it will say a lot about us as a people.

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## **Prepare for the Feast of Tabernacles 2017**

The Feast of Tabernacles begins this year on the night of October 4th and goes through October 12th. Christian Educational Ministries will be sponsoring a Western Caribbean Cruise on board the Royal Caribbean International vessel *Liberty of the Seas!* The cruise will make stops in Cozumel, the Grand Caymans, and Jamaica. Services will be a mix of live speakers and the timeless message of Ronald L. Dart. We will be boarding the cruise out of Galveston, Texas, on October 8<sup>th</sup> and returning on October 15<sup>th</sup>. Due to the nature of cruise bookings, information on sites in and around Galveston where individuals can attend the first few days of the Feast will be available soon. Two different rates have been negotiated based on room type. Interior rooms can be booked at \$676.50 per person. Balcony rooms can be booked at \$926.50 per person. This includes great meals, taxes, and port fees.

Christian Educational Ministries will also be co-sponsoring the Super Feast Site at Land Between The Lakes/Kentucky Dam Village State Resort Park. Whether you are young or mature, the Super Site strives to ensure that no one is left out or lonely at the Feast. In addition to daily services, seminars and youth classes will be offered! Daily activities will also be scheduled in an effort to promote a joyful atmosphere and to make it very special for all! Details regarding housing, seminars, youth classes, and activities will be made available soon.

If you are interested in the cruise or in Land Between The Lakes, please call us at 1-888-BIBLE-44 or email us at [david@borntowin.net](mailto:david@borntowin.net). Hurry, before time runs out on both of these truly edifying opportunities!

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doesn't really specify that. They tried to work their calendar so that the year and the month of the year when the harvest was ready would be right at the time of the Passover. On the day after the first day of Passover, the Jews offered the sheaf of the firstfruits. When I say the Jews, I'm basically talking about the Pharisees and what is today Rabbinic Judaism. The first day of the Passover season is the fifteenth day of the first month of the Hebrew calendar, which was an annual Sabbath. If you look back, their conclusion from the Law is they would offer the wave sheaf of the firstfruits on the day after the first day of Passover. Here is the rationale: the first day of Passover always falls on the fifteenth day of the first month. That's not always a weekly Sabbath, but it is a Holy Day. But there was another tradition in Judaism that arose from what follows in the Law.

Let's go back to Leviticus 23: "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. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the Lord. 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. And you shall offer with the bread seven lambs of the first year, without blemish, one young bull, and two rams. They shall be as a burnt offering to the Lord, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, and offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the Lord. Then you shall sacrifice one kid of the goats as a sin offering, and two male lambs of the first year as a sacrifice of a peace offering. 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. 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." (Leviticus 23:15-21, NKJV).

This festival, Pentecost, is a Holy Day. It is the day after the 7th Sabbath. If the first day of Unleavened Bread (the 15th day of the first month) falls on a Tuesday, then 50 days later would place Pentecost on a

Wednesday. This frequently happens the way the Jews calculate their festival. They don't call it Pentecost; they call it shavout or weeks. Did you notice that Pentecost, also known as the Feast of the Firstfruits, falls on the day after the 7th Sabbath? Here it is again: "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." (Leviticus 23:15, NKJV).

### ***This festival, Pentecost, is a Holy Day. It is the day after the 7<sup>th</sup> Sabbath.***

And, unfortunately, there just isn't any way that a Wednesday is the day after any kind of Sabbath. It is because of this distinction that some Jews and some Christians will be observing Pentecost this Sunday. It is 50 days from the day after the Sabbath that follows Passover; we are talking about the weekly Sabbath, or Saturday, that followed the Passover. That is the day you start counting from. The day when you start the count is the day that the disciples of Jesus first saw him alive after he was raised from the dead.

There is a curious thing about that day, but I am going to have to explain it. Pentecost is a Feast with three names. The Old Testament names for Pentecost are: the Feast of Firstfruits and the Feast of Weeks. The latter being shavout in Hebrew, which means weeks. The name is obviously because of the seven-week countdown. But the name Feast of Firstfruits is there because the season. The season of firstfruits was the time of the grain harvest, beginning with barley and ending with wheat. Consequently, you could have two loaves of bread—leavened, raised, baked, and browned all nicely for Pentecost.

Why is there a Christian connection in all of this? To understand that, we will have to cast our minds back to the Passover when Christ died. More specifically, we are going to focus on the day he first appeared to his disciples, alive from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus is the pivotal event in the history of God's dealing with man. Oddly, it was a matter of controversy in the early church. The apostle Paul addressed this controversy and in the process, he said something that is very important and very often overlooked. To hear about the Christian connection and the Passover when Christ died, please request a *FREE* copy of *A Christian Pentecost*.

## It Is The Little Things

By Ken Lewis

At a funeral or memorial, the great accomplishments of someone's life are noted. Major events and personal achievements of someone's whole life are recorded, along with little personal stories. It is the little things that make life so precious. These memories sometimes decades old are refreshed, experienced again, and shared with others. It is a big part of how we honor our friends and family. Often these stories are funny, embarrassing, or accounts of personal sacrifice. There are memories of joy and acts of kindness. Sometimes it is just a comment or a word of encouragement that greatly impacts a memory. It is amazing how often these stories reflect the light of the fruit of the spirit.

The verses in Galatians talk about walking in the spirit of God. This is often referred to as our Christian walk. It is how we are to live our lives. We reflect the light of Jesus Christ in the little things we do; it identifies us as a person and as a begotten son or daughter of God. "Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, 'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.'" (John 8:12, NKJV).

We have a commission from God: "Then Jesus said to them, 'A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of the light.'" (John 12:35-36, NKJV).

God expects us to reflect his light to the world. Our good example is seen by the world. This world of darkness is attracted by your light. People see you for who you are through your actions, your good language, and your attitude. You are to be that light and a witness

to the truth. Jesus Christ had some very kind words to say about John the Baptist. "He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light." (John 5:35, NKJV).

As a light in this evil world, we are also compared to a flavoring, preserving agent: salt. We are to have a good flavor, even in this dark world. People who know you see the light of God in you because of how you live your life. They notice you don't use bad language. They notice how you respect others. The world hungers for your light, and they see your light in the little things you do. It is the little things.



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*That the man of God may be proficient and equipped for every good work.*