

Church of God, The Eternal

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Dear Brethren:

From all in the Texas area, a very special greeting to all of you, the children of God, all those set apart by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

God's Holy Days are central to the Word and purpose of His overall plan. Keeping these days sets God's people apart from this evil world.

I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. . . . Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth (John 17:14, 17).

If ye love me, keep my commandments (John 14:15).

When God gave the command for His people to observe His Holy Days, He had much more in mind than just giving us a few days of vacation throughout the year. The purpose is to teach us His plan of salvation, which, of course, requires faith, and the only way we can prove our faith in Him is by our works, doing those things He requires of us. The spring Holy Days have come and gone and it is all happening so fast. How time gets away! Now it is already the season for the fall festivals: Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles. What a blessing to be one of the few that make up His peculiar treasure. We begin these festivals by observing the Feast of Trumpets—a joyous and exciting day for God's people. We know that in the not-too-distant future we are going to hear the shout of the archangel with the trump of God.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17).

The Feast of Trumpets is a time of great anticipation of the coming of the Kingdom of God to be established on this earth, a time of great rejoicing for those who have accepted and remained faithful to that calling. It prepares us for the Feast of Tabernacles representing the one-thousand-year millennial rule of Jesus Christ. A time of great rejoicing!

The LORD roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth quake. But the LORD is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to the people of Israel. So you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who dwells in Zion, my holy mountain. And Jerusalem shall be holy, and strangers shall never again pass through it (Joel 3:16–17).

And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. . . . Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned (Revelation 11:15–17).

This is the beginning of the restitution of all things when Satan will be put in a place of restraint, so he will not be able to influence human minds and hearts for the next one thousand years. Hearts of stone will be changed to that of flesh. Mankind will have a desire to learn the ways of The Eternal.

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began (Acts 3:19–21).

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions (Joel 2:28).

For the next one thousand years we will be helping Jesus Christ in His millennial rule to bring about peace, joy and prosperity to all nations.

But just five days before the Feast of Tabernacles, God commands a Day of Atonement, a day of fasting before The Eternal, asking forgiveness for past sins. It is a "thus saith the Lord." We should not eat the evening meal, or we will not be afflicting ourselves for a full twenty-four-hour day. Christ fasted for forty days to draw close to God so He would be able to withstand Satan.

Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:1–4).

Let us read God's command and instruction concerning the Day of Atonement.

Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD. And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the Lord your God. For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people. And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people. Ye shall do no manner of work: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath (Leviticus 23:27–32).

The Day of Atonement is a commanded annual Sabbath. However, Christ did teach fasting throughout the year. Notice! Christ was teaching His disciples how to fast.

Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly (Matthew 6:16–18).

Remaining one of those priceless gems does not come without a price. We must put forth every effort to obey all of His commands, not just the ones that are most convenient to observe, thinking, "God will understand."

Let us read God's command for His people to observe the Feast of Tabernacles.

Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine: And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and

the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates. Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD shall choose: because the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice (Deuteronomy 16:13–15).

Our loving Father wants us to take the time off from our work and daily chores to go where He has placed His name, and rejoice with those of like faith, because He wants to bless the work of our hands and give us meat in due season to strengthen us spiritually. It is a time of great rejoicing because it represents the Millennium, when the King of Kings and Lord of Lords will take His rightful throne and control of all nations and peoples, and all will come to know Him from the smallest to the greatest. *We do not want to miss out on such an event as that.* And this is our time for training and overcoming. If we become strong, faithful, obedient pillars in God's work, loyal and dedicated to His way, then we will be pillars in the government of God in the world tomorrow.

Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty (Deuteronomy 16:16).

Attending these Holy Days were so important that if for some legitimate reason the entire family could not attend, then the males (physical heirs) were to appear before The Eternal with an offering. But keep in mind, these Holy Days are for the family (including *all* spiritual heirs) to appear and rejoice before The Eternal.

Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee (Deuteronomy 16:17).

Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD. On the first day shall be an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein. [This eighth day represents God's Great White Throne Judgment.] (Leviticus 23:34–36).

The sacrificial system was to be observed only until the sacrifice of Christ.

But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9:12–15).

Now is also a good time to remember the examples of ancient Israel, who just could not give up the ways of Egypt (sin).

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope (Romans 15:4).

Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come (1 Corinthians 10:9–11).

Remember how our forefathers complained in the wilderness? They were so attached to Egypt and its pagan worship. They wanted something they could see, feel and touch to bow down before and worship, just like the world today and its millions of churches. They all have their concepts of how to worship the god of their minds, the way that seems right to them, because every man is right in his own eyes.

For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward. Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them: Yet

they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers (Jeremiah 7:22–26).

We have witnessed the great turning away from truth prophesied in 2 Thessalonians 2:2–3.

That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.

The Worldwide Church of God no longer exists as we once knew it. The original revelation from God to Mr. Armstrong has been completely thrown out by that organization. Many spiritual lives have been destroyed, many no longer believe in anything, while many others have gone right back into "Egypt", back to the churches of this world and its holidays.

(According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them: Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see, and bow down their back alway (Romans 11:8–10).

However, God has reserved a faithful remnant to observe His Holy Days.

Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace (Romans 11:5).

And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ (Revelation 12:17).

Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them (Revelation 14:12–13).

Part of our "works" include observing God's Feast of Tabernacles, to rejoice before the Lord, because He has given His remnant understanding that He has not given this world. God's Holy Days revealing His plan of salvation is a stumblingblock to them.

Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light (1 Peter 2:6–9).

The seventh annual Holy Day of God's awesome plan of salvation explains what will happen to all those who have died without ever being previously called. All the dead (billions) must be resurrected and given the opportunity to receive the Holy Spirit. Observing this day also teaches us that this is Satan's final effort to try to turn mankind away from God. Afterward, Satan will be put into a bottomless pit, which is symbolic of a place of confinement (or prison). Chains and locks as we know them cannot restrain spirit beings.

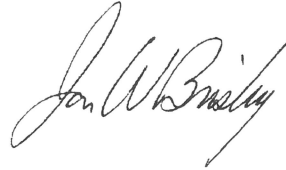
And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. . . . And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet [were cast], and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:1–3, 7–15).

This day pictures the Great White Throne Judgment, the third and final judgment period of God's plan. And there will be much, much more at the Feast of Tabernacles, so do not miss it. We are looking forward to seeing you there. We send our love.

Your brother and servant in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John R. Byrd". The letters are fluid and connected, with a large initial 'J'.

John R. Byrd

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jon W. Brisby". The signature is written in a fluid, connected cursive style.

Jon W. Brisby