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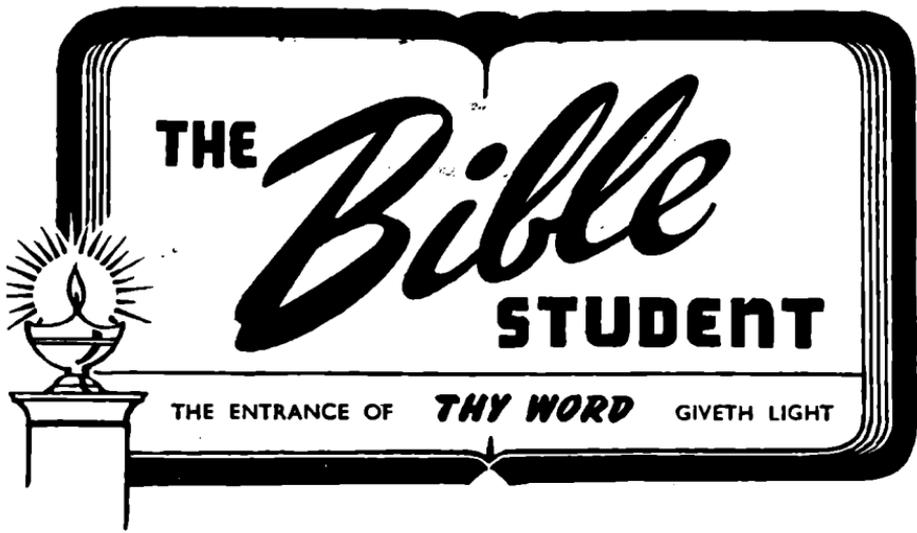
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New Series
Vol. XXV. No. 2

APRIL
1954

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Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

SEVEN OLD TESTAMENT FEASTS

A TYPOLOGICAL STUDY OF LEVITICUS 23

A. MCD. REDWOOD

IV. The Subject Considered Analytically

4. THE FEAST OF WEEKS

We should keep in mind what has already been said regarding the difference between Weeks (or Pentecost) and Firstfruits¹.

This Feast bears more than one name. In Exod. 23:16 it is called 'Feast of Harvest'; in Exod. 34:22 and Deut. 16:10 and 2 Chron. 8:13 'Feast of Weeks'; in Num. 28:26, 'Day of Firstfruits.' We are told that in Rabbinic literature it is called 'Feast of the Fiftieth day,' and sometimes 'Feast of the Conclusion' (i.e., of the Passover Session); and in 'reference to the prevailing belief that it was the anniversary of the giving of the Law, it is called "The Day" (or season) "of the giving of the Law".' The word Pentecost refers to the Greek word for fifty—the number of days that elapsed between Firstfruits and Weeks.

We have pointed out that this Feast foreshadows the Church of God. Not the mere visible, external 'organization' of Christendom, but the true Body, composed of all the redeemed, Jew and Gentile, in heaven and on earth, since the day of Pentecost to the Return of Christ. It consisted of one offering of two wave-loaves, baked with leaven, and presented before Jehovah, the significance of which has been stated above. Its fulfilment is intimated in Acts 2:1. It was the direct result of Christ's Resurrection.² It was the inauguration of the Holy Spirit's work in this dispensation, in the which God is visiting the earth to take out of (it) a people for His Name (Acts 15:14).³ This is the great 'Harvest Festival' to which all creation hastens.

Before passing on we may well pause to consider a little more this truly wonderful community. If we have never been struck with the wonderment of it, it is possibly because we have not sufficiently looked into it as it is presented to us in the New Testament. There is one passage at least that shows up, as in a flash of light, something of its mystery and meaning, where the great

¹ See October 'B.S.' pp. 172-174.

² Cf. Acts 2: 32, 33.

³ See footnote at end of article, p. 94.

Apostle sets down one of the purposes of his ministry—'a make all men see what is the stewardship of the mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God who created all things; to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenlies might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God.'¹

The passage is full of suggestiveness. It reveals the church as being a disclosure of what once was kept secret in God—a disclosure of the heart and mind and purpose of God.

In the individual believer is revealed the superabounding riches of His grace and love; in the aggregate body of believers, the Church, is manifested the 'manifold (the multi-coloured)' wisdom of God. Here the Church is seen as the means by which countless myriads of angelic hosts and holy intelligences are now beholding this same awe-inspiring wisdom of God.

And such present revelation of God's wisdom is seemingly but the prelude to a certain wider and universal pageant in the succeeding ages, when will be displayed in scenes of unutterable glory to countless galaxies of heavenly principalities and powers the '*exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus*'.²

The thought is stupendous—and humiliating! Stupendous, because it opens out unseen vistas of God's wonderful work in the present, far beyond the ken of mortal minds; humiliating, because these holy intelligences must witness many a scene of failure and folly in the members of this Body. But there stands the statement nevertheless, and there is revealed the glory of God's ways!

Fix your gaze then on this Church: 'the Fulness of Him that filleth all in all'—no other description so fitly expresses the mystery of the Body. Beyond the cavils of men, beyond the apparent failures, and the evidence of earth-stains on her fair garments—regal and glorious, stands revealed the Church of our God, 'looking forth as the morning, fair as the moon, pure as the sun, terrible as bannered hosts.' So God views her, so is she.

How then, we may ask, does this Church exhibit the manifold wisdom of God? In at least five ways:

(1) *In its Conception* (Eph. 1: 9, 10; 3:5, 6, 11, etc.). It is

¹ Eph. 3: 9, 10 R.V.

² Eph. 2: 7.

clearly indicated that the idea of an 'ecclesia' of God was one of the 'hidden subjects' in God's eternal counsels. It was not some hastily concocted experiment on the part of God, nor some happy chance of man's devising, but a divinely conceived Plan of the Ages. As Bishop Moule says: 'The redeemed church *corresponds* to this Plan; it is (in kind, in essence) the *realization* of the Divine Idea. No other and better thing in that kind is to succeed it. The past "ages," angelic, paradisaic, patriarchal, Mosaic, prophetic, have led up to the Universal Church, in its spiritual reality, as their goal'. What was hidden is now manifest. Here before us is the disclosure of the heart and mind and will of God—Calvary, the Tomb, the Resurrection morn, the Ascension into glory, the waiting time, and then the 'rushing mighty Wind' gathering into Itself, filling, uniting all the blood-bought company, henceforth called His Body!

(2) *In its Constitution* (1 Cor. 12:12, 13, 14; Eph. 1: 22, 23). It is a *spiritual* Body, constituted as such and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Something far greater and grander than what men call 'the church'. It is a *mystical* Body, of which Christ is the Head: 'As He without measure is the Fulfilment, or Ideal, of Divine Attributes, so she in measure is the Fulfilment, or Ideal, of Divine Graces; which are, we may venture to say, the Attributes in their reception and manifestation by the regenerate Church. She is the Body through which is realized the Will of the Head, the Fulfilment in which is realized the Grace of the Head' (Moule).

Another equally important feature of its constitution is that it might be a 'habitation for God.'¹ The Tabernacle of Old was God's dwelling place, but it had long since passed away. In this dispensation God does not dwell in temples made with hands, but in human temples regenerated and made by the Holy Ghost,² and in the aggregate of those regenerated temples together forming a habitation for God. Peter speaks of this habitation as a 'spiritual house', and of each believer as a 'living stone' in that house, quickened and bound together by the all-pervading Spirit of Christ.³ It is thus a Living Temple which for ever shall resound His praise—'ye are God's Building.'⁴

¹ Eph. 2: 21-22.

² 1 Cor. 3: 16; 6: 19.

³ 1 Pet. 2: 5.

⁴ See 1 Cor. 3: 9; cf. 2 Cor. 6: 16.

(3) *In its Comprehensiveness* (Acts 15:14, etc.). Lift your eyes my soul beyond paltry bricks and mortar, beyond party walls of exclusion and inclusion, beyond the gaudy paraphernalia of little men and minds—lift them high and far towards the horizon of God's eternal vistas, view the boundaries of His 'City Foursquare'! Find therein a multitude that no man can number, out of every nation and people and tongue!

For is not the promise of the Father to the Son: 'I will give Thee the *nations* for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession'? One of the grandest characteristics of this church is its *universality*. And, correspondingly, its Supreme Message is a *world-embracing* message—'God so loved *the world* that He gave . . . *whosoever* believeth should not perish.'¹

(4) *In its Communityship*. If the wisdom of God is displayed in sending the Good News among all nations and in gathering out of them a people for His name, it is displayed to even greater degree, if possible, in the binding of those so gathered into a marvellous *unity of organism and faith*. So that, in spite of all the innumerable points of difference between peoples of such varying origin, nationally, socially, temperamentally, and intellectually, that which stamps the Church as God's handiwork is its mystical *unity of life*. In fact, in that High Priestly prayer of Christ's in John 17, where the unity of all His flock is so emphasized, the crucial evidence of Christ's mission being Divine is this *organic oneness* of all believers. This oneness is necessarily to be expressed in fellowship, for the mutual building up, comforting, and encouragement of fellow-members of the Body.²

This idea of fellowship needs to be greatly emphasized in certain quarters. With some it is a common boast, 'I belong to no church.' If this is to be interpreted as belonging to no 'denomination' or 'sect', well and good. But if, as is usual, it means a 'free lance' unattached to any body of Christians, it is a twofold evil—it is selfishness on the one hand, and a denial of the unity of the Church on the other. Individual witness and testimony (which means service) is right in its place and necessary; but there is also

¹ See John 3:16; cf. Rev. 5:9 ff.

² Read John 17:20-23; 1 Cor. 12:26, 27.

a very definite *corporate testimony* the Church is called upon to present.

On this point we quote the pertinent remarks of Dr Griffith Thomas, he says: 'Herein lies the importance of the Church to the individual. Individualistic Christianity is a contradiction and impossibility. Justification comes alone; sanctification in connection with others. Christian character needs the Church for development; character is only possible in the Christian community. So that Christianity properly and fully realized necessitates a *community of Christians*. Mysticism is too vague and individualistic. Christianity is mystic, but it is far more. Individualism is equally against the New Testament idea of Christianity, for *unattached Christians are not found in the New Testament*. Abuse never takes away use, and no ultraspirituality (as it may perhaps be conceived) can set aside the doctrine of the Church . . . As Dr Forsyth once said, "Free lances are futilities." Again: 'It must be constantly borne in mind that the true full vigorous mature Christian life is impossible to any Christian who tries to live a solitary life. Individual Christianity can easily be carried to extremes, and become something very different from the Christianity of the New Testament. The Christian must realize in some way "the Communion of Saints," if he is to be a true saint himself. Paul prayed that the Christians of Ephesus might comprehend "with *all saints*" the love of Christ¹, each saint apprehending a little, and all together comprehending that which is intended for the whole Church.'

We may not always be able to see eye to eye with every saint in any given assembly, but herein lies an opportunity for grace and love to abound. Self-discipline, forbearance, 'coveting earnestly the best gifts', are all developed in our contact with one another in assembly fellowship. Leadership, and the power to help weaker saints to a better knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ, are forfeited by many inflicted with this type of selfishness: also remember the loss to the Church!

(5) *In its Consummation*. The Apostle describes something of the glory of this consummation later on in this epistle: 'Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for it; that He might sanctify

¹ Eph. 3: 18.

it . . . that He might present the church to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish' (Eph. 5:25-27). We need to visualize that picture in its most glowing colours, to fill every word with its fullest heavenly meaning, to catch the true import of the whole statement. And in this same connection we may not unfitly use the words of the same Apostle elsewhere recorded: 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him' (1Cor. 2:9).

With such truths before us do we well to neglect the study of God's thoughts concerning this church? Can we enjoy to the full the blessings of Christ's 'indwelling' within this Church, and the Holy Spirit's power and fulness which He longs to manifest to a distracted, war-ridden earth in the Communion of Saints irrespective of nationality?

FOOTNOTE: It is of practical interest to note how the subject of the church runs through and unites the threefold division of the N. T. books: The *Gospels* exhibit Christ as paying the price of His own precious blood for the *purchasing* of a possession, that possession being the Church of the living God (Acts 20: 28b). In the *Acts* we see Christ (for though ascended it is He Himself who still works) *entering into* that possession by the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the formation of the Church. In the *Epistles* we find Christ *perfecting* His 'purchased possession' (Eph. 1: 14—the noun *peripoiesis* is the same as that in 1 Peter 2: 9, where 'peculiar' means literally 'intended for (His) personal property.' See the R.V. in each case) until He presents it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing (Eph. 5: 25-27; also Eph. 4: 12, 13; Jude 24).