

Acts 20:16: *'For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hastened, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.'*

Paul is now on his way down to Jerusalem; he has two reasons for wanting to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost: one is Hebrew, the other is Christian. Pentecost is 50 days after Passover; it always falls on a Sunday, the first day of the week. Passover falls on a Sabbath, a Saturday; Tabernacles is, then, 7 more Sabbaths plus 1 day: $49+1=50$, which is what the word pentecost means: Greek: pentekoste' meaning 50th day.

Paul is a faithful Hebrew; he continues to observe and attend the Feasts. Another reason he very much wanted to arrive in Jerusalem for Pentecost was that it would have been one of two major celebrations of the new Church: first, what came to be called Easter, celebrating Jesus Christ's Resurrection and then Pentecost, celebrating God's having sent His Holy Spirit to fill every True Believer at the birth of the new True Church. However... Paul knows full well that his Salvation is in no way dependent upon his observation of Jewish Feasts but he also understands that all the Feasts find their complete fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul continues to observe the Feasts because he is a Hebrew and they were given to Israel as everlasting Feasts; as to Passover, *'And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever.'* Ex 12:14

These were to be continually observed by Israel because they do, in fact, all point to their promised Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Feasts/Appointed Times were given for Israel to observe because their entire history is wrapped up in, and pointing to, their Messiah but they were not given as everlasting observations to Gentiles; we have no such national history. We are the True Church but we are not Israel! We are the Gentile Church gathered from every tribe, tongue, family group, etc which also includes all Born Again Israelites.

I often refer to the *'True Church'* and to *'True Christians.'* We live in the 'Last Days' of the True Church on Earth. Soon, we will be removed in the Rapture but still, down here there will remain many 'churches' filled with professing 'christians.' We know, from God's Word and from obvious observation that there has been a 'great falling away' *within* and *from* the True Church. Many who call themselves 'christians' are not born again and many groups have the words 'church' and 'christian' in their titles and on their signs and websites who are not a part of the True Church at all. Many are deceived in these Last Days and after the Rapture they will be ripe for the ultimate deception when the Antichrist presents himself as the *'Christ for the New Age.'*

Even during the life and ministry of Paul, he had to warn the Galatians about the Judaizers who were bringing in a false gospel of teaching the necessity of Gentile Christians to follow the Law of Moses: false christians attacking the faith of True Christians and it has always 'made perfect sense,' to those being deceived, when false teachers tell them that we must perform certain good works in order to be more acceptable to God: Catholics, Mormons, J.W.s, Christian Science and all the other false religions of the World. And, by the way, unbelievers in the World are never becoming saved by seeing our good works; they are only saved by hearing the Gospel!

Why is it so important to Paul that he be in Jerusalem to observe Pentecost, the final Spring Feast?

Pentecost is one of three major festivals for which all adult males are required to make the trek to Jerusalem: Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. Passover celebrates the final plague in Egypt which brought about the Israelites' release from slavery. Pentecost celebrates the giving of the Law at Sinai, and Tabernacles, living for 7 days in temporary dwellings/tents, recalls the 40 years of wilderness wandering between Egypt and their entrance into the Promised Land.

God prescribed the seven Feasts/Appointed Times in Leviticus 23: the first four are in Springtime and were fulfilled in Jesus' first coming: Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits and Weeks/Pentecost. The final three Fall Feasts are Trumpets, Day of Atonement and Tabernacles.

Passover harkens back to Egypt when every home was to sacrifice a lamb and spread its blood over the doorway, leading to life and freedom from the slavery to Egypt; Jesus is the Spotless Lamb of God, sacrificed

for the forgiveness of our sin; this was fulfilled on the very day of Passover. His Blood leads us to Life Eternal and freedom from the slavery of sin.

Unleavened Bread: leaven is a Biblical type for sin; Jesus is the Bread come down from Heaven; His sinless Body fulfilled the Unleavened Bread. His unleavened Body was planted in the ground as a grain of wheat dies and falls to the ground to then produce a great harvest. That great harvest then begins with:

First Fruits: *'But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.'* 1 Cor 15:20 He is the Firstfruits of the True Church of which He is the Head and we are His Body.

Pentecost: this was fulfilled when the Lord Jesus Christ sent His Holy Spirit into the World to fill and enliven His Body: every Born Again Believer.

The three Spring Appointed Times, Passover, Firstfruits and Weeks/Pentecost required every able bodied male to travel to Jerusalem and to make an offering of first fruits as an expression of gratitude for God's provision of a good harvest and, so, we see Paul making every effort to arrive in Jerusalem for Pentecost.

The final three Feasts/Appointed Times of the Lord, in the Fall are: Trumpets, Day of Atonement and Tabernacles.

The Feast of Trumpets looks to the day when the Lord Jesus Christ will come to receive His Bride in the Rapture which is associated with the blowing of a Great Trumpet blast: the Trumpet 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: ¹⁷ 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.' 1Thes 4:16

The Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled the first four Feasts on their exact day and there is no reason to doubt that the same will be true of the final three, beginning with the Rapture occurring on the day of the Feast of Trumpets. Now, you say, but how can that be true because Jesus, Himself, said: *'But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.'* Matt 24:36 Ahhh ... I'm so glad you asked because that very statement even further links the Feast of Trumpets with the Rapture.

*'And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work: **it is a day of blowing the trumpets** unto you.'* Num 29:1

You'll notice that Day of Trumpets, Yom Teruah, begins on the first day of the 7th month, Tishri (our Sept/Oct) and is not connected to a Sabbath or to any number of days past a previous Feast. The months of the Hebrew calendar were either 29 or 30 days, depending upon the Moon's cycle; every month begins on the New Moon; then, after a certain number of years, they would insert an additional month to then bring it back to a correct yearly cycle but the month's first day was dependent upon the New Moon's first appearance: the evening when the first tiny sliver of the New Moon was seen. Once two priestly witnesses reported seeing that first sliver of the moon, Yom Teruah/Feast of Trumpets would begin. Trumpets is the only Feast like this and certain idioms developed: it is called: **'the hidden day,' 'The day and the hour no man knows;'** Jesus knew this and was giving a very important clue as to His Return for His Bride when He said, *'But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.'* Matt 24:36

Yom Teruah/Feast of Trumpets, then begins Ten Days of Awe leading up to Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement leading to the final Feast: Tabernacles. 100 Trumpets are blown during these 10 Days of Awe; the Last Trumpet blast being the longest and loudest: *'Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trump:** for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.'* 1Cor 15:52

Since the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled all four Spring Feasts on their exact day, there is no reason to doubt that the same will hold true for the three final Feasts, beginning with the Feast of Trumpets and the Rapture.

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, will be fulfilled when Jesus returns at Armageddon, destroying all His enemies and delivering all His people, Israel and then, finally, the Feast of Tabernacles will be fulfilled when He tabernacles, when He lives among His people forever.

Paul understood much of this which is why he was insistent upon arriving in Jerusalem before the beginning of the Feast of Trumpets.

Verse 17: *'And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. ¹⁸ And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, ¹⁹ Serving the LORD with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews'*

This will be Paul's final interaction, his final message to the church at Ephesus; he has called together all the elders of that church. Paul established that church and helped set up its leadership: a pastor and elders, etc. Later, he will write to these elders: *'And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; ¹² For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:'* Eph 4:11

To these, he reminds them of what he has done in every city and to every person:

Verse 20: *'And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, ²¹ Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.'*

But now he drops the bomb which no one ever wanted to hear:

Verse 22: *'And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: ²³ Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.'*

Paul is relaying what the Holy Spirit has told him, that he will be arrested which will lead, finally, to his Earthly death. Notice that Paul says the Holy Spirit has given him this same message in every city. Perhaps Paul has been told directly or, perhaps, through prophetic words given to others. In just a short time, we will see this played out when one, Agabus, a prophet from Judea comes to the house of Phillip, the Evangelist and ties his own hands with Paul's belt and then predicts that the Jews in Jerusalem will bind Paul and turn him over to the Romans. Paul continues, to the Ephesian elders:

Verse 24: *'But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵ And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.'*

This is the bomb: 'You won't ever see me again.' Just like with every good leader, the Christians of Syria, Turkey and Greece just assumed that Paul would always be there but eventually, every good leader's course is finished and he must be replaced; hopefully, a competent replacement will be trained early enough that a smooth transition can take place but, sadly, too often a leader cares more for his own position and power and less for the care of those being led and so, upon the leader's death or incapacity, the whole thing just falls apart. Thankfully, here, our retiring leader had the love and foresight to bring in his replacement to facilitate a smooth transition.

Later, to Timothy, who will Pastor the church at Ephesus, Paul will write:

'I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; ² Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; ⁴ And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. ⁵ But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. ⁶ For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷ I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: ⁸ Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.' 2Tim 4:1

And remember, as we've said before, Paul is telling Timothy, us and every True Christian over the following 2000 years that not only is the Rapture of the Church a very real and true doctrine of the Faith but that we are so encouraged to not only believe its veracity but, rather, to actually anxiously look forward to its realization knowing that God has promised a wonderful and special Eternal Reward to all who do so and, that is, the **Crown of Righteousness!** Throughout eternity, as we Christ-glorifyingly don our many different and various rewards we will all know who it was and, also who it was not, who believed in and looked forward to the Lord Jesus Christ's faithfulness to fulfill His promise when He said: *'Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.'* ² *In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.* ³ *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.'* John 14:1

Verse 26: *'Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.'* ²⁷ *For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.'*

Paul is saying that he has been faithful to tell the Gospel, the whole Gospel to anyone and to everyone with whom he has had contact since the Lord Jesus Christ miraculously saved him on the road to Damascus so many years before. Previously: *'Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.'* ⁶ *And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.'* Acts 18:5

He is remembering God's warning to Ezekiel:

'Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.' ¹⁸ *When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.* ¹⁹ *Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.'* Ezekiel 3:17

Verse 28: *'Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.'*

'You elders... you've been given a deadly serious charge from the Holy Spirit; God has lifted you up to lead His flock; they are not your flock! They are not your personal money machine! They are not for the stroking of your pride and they are not there to serve you! The Lord Jesus paid for each and every one of them with His Blood and you had better never forget that! Faithfully feed, watch over and care for them; guard and watch over them as His precious treasure! If you are faithful, you will be richly rewarded when you stand before Me; if you fail you will pay a terrible price! Be a good and faithful servant and I will bless you.'

Verse 29: *'For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.'* ³⁰ *Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.'*

We could venture that this very real fear plagued Paul throughout his ministry. He warned the Church that this would come as soon as he was removed from ministry; others foresaw this very real danger as well:

Peter wrote: *'But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.'* 2Pet 2:1

Jude wrote: *'For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.'* Jude v4

Thankfully, the life and growth and protection of the True Church has always been the responsibility of the only One capable of such: the Lord Jesus Christ: *'I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'* Matt 16:18