

PENTECOST & THE MEANING OF LIFE

“What is man that You magnify him, and that You are concerned about him.”
(Job)

“When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; What is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him?” (David)

“I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and striving after wind.” (Solomon)

“At the root of humanity I see only sadness and boredom.” (Jean Paul Sarte)

Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, Nietzsche, and many other philosophers have asked the same question: What is the meaning of life? Likewise, Job and David pondered life's meaning, and how it relates to God. Others like Solomon and Sarte saw only vanity and drudgery in life.

“But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase” (Daniel 12:4). Since the invention of the printing press, knowledge has increased considerably. The computer and internet have contributed mightily to the diffusion of knowledge. Despite this, many of us still ask the question posed by the ancient philosophers: What is the meaning of life?

God provides the answer, and it's inextricably linked to Pentecost.

The First Pentecost

“Gathering them together, He (Jesus) commanded them (His apostles) not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’ So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, ‘Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?’ He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but *you will receive power when the Holy Spirit* has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth’” (Acts 1:4-8).

The “power of the Holy Spirit” arrived in 31 AD, fifty days after the ascension of Jesus to heaven, where He was presented as the symbolic *wave sheaf offering* (Leviticus 23:12) who died as our “sin offering” (Romans 8:3). Jesus' ascension occurred on the Sunday following His resurrection on late Saturday.

Fifty days after Jesus' first ascension into heaven, the apostles had gathered in one place, in Jerusalem. During the previous weeks thousands of other Jewish people from the

Mediterranean world had traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate the *Feast of the Firstfruits*, alternately called the *Feast of Weeks*:

- a) “Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year: You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty); and the ***Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits*** of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field. Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD. You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; nor shall the fat of My sacrifice remain until morning. The ***first of the firstfruits*** of your land you shall bring into the house of the LORD your God” (Exodus 23:14-18);
- b) “And you shall observe the ***Feast of Weeks***, of the ***firstfruits*** of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year's end” (Exodus 34:22);
- c) “And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, (weekly 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***” (Leviticus 23:15-17).

Over a thousand years before Christ, God delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. Afterward God revealed His Festivals and Holy Days, which occurs during the spring, summer, and fall harvests. “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘The ***feasts of the LORD***, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, ***these are My feasts***’” (Leviticus 23:1).

God instructed the Israelites to present an offering during each of these Festivals and Holy Days. In other words, they had to dedicate the first portion of their harvest to the Levitical priesthood, who were responsible for maintaining the tabernacle and performing priestly rites and obligations. These Holy Days and Festivals, and the associated offerings, reminded the Israelites that:

- 1 God had rescued them from slavery in Egypt (Passover & the Feast of Unleavened Bread);
- 2 God had blessed them (the Feast of Firstfruits, or Weeks);
- 3 God will protect them when they're in battle, and He has provided them with special events throughout the year, announced by the blowing of *shofars*, or trumpets (hence the Feast of the Memorial of the Blowing of Trumpets);
- 4 God will forgive them when they repent of their sins (Day of Atonement); and

- 5 God provided for them during their forty-year trek in the wilderness, and will continue to do so (Feast of Tabernacles and the day - hereinafter referred to as the Last Great Day - following this Feast).

Three times during the year - the spring, summer, and fall harvests - the Israelites were commanded to “appear before the Lord, the LORD God of Israel” (Exodus 34:23). After David founded Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, the Israelites flocked there to celebrate the Passover (collectively, Passover Day and the ensuing Feast of Unleavened Bread), the Feast of Firstfruits or Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles, sometimes called Booths or Ingathering.

Fifty days after Jesus’ first ascension into heaven, the apostles and several thousand Jewish pilgrims were in Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Firstfruits or Weeks. In Christian terminology, this day is known as Pentecost, translated from the Greek word for “fiftieth.”

On this first day of Pentecost the Apostles received the gift of the Holy Spirit. “When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. They were amazed and astonished, saying, ‘Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs--we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God.’ And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’ But others were mocking and saying, ‘They are full of sweet wine’” (Acts 2:13).

God wanted to create a stir. The “power” of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-8) enabled the apostles to speak in the several languages spoken by the thousands of Jewish pilgrims celebrating the Feast of Firstfruits. Obviously God wanted everyone to understand what the apostles were about to say. And to get their attention, the power of the Holy Spirit appeared as “tongues of fire” atop the apostles’ heads.

After gaining their attention, the apostle Peter spoke: “Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words, for these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: ‘and it shall be in the last days,’ God says, ‘that I will pour forth of my spirit on all mankind; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth of My spirit and they shall prophesy. And I will grant wonders in the sky above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and glorious day of the Lord shall come. And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the lord will be saved.

“Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as

you yourselves know-- this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. For David says of Him, 'I saw the Lord always in my presence; for He is at my right hand, so that I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue exulted; moreover my flesh also will live in hope; because you will not abandon my soul to hades (literally, the grave), nor allow your holy one to undergo decay. You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.

"Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to hades (the grave), nor did His flesh suffer decay. This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'the Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.' Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ--this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:14-36).

We don't know what else Peter and the other apostles said. But we do know that the miraculous events of Pentecost (including the speeches) inspired many people, some of whom had mocked and taunted Jesus during His trial and crucifixion, and had approved of His death, to repent and be baptized. "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.'

"And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation.' Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:37-47).

This first day of Pentecost was splendidly unique. Never again were thousands of people baptized in one day. Never again was the power of the Holy Spirit manifested in such an amazing - 'you had to see it to believe it' - way. On the first day of Pentecost, Christianity was born. Many of these Jewish pilgrims returned to their hometowns throughout the Mediterranean world with the gospel of Jesus. And God created His Church on the day of Pentecost, anciently the Feast of Firstfruits. How fitting! God created His Church of firstfruits - Christians are called "firstfruits" (I Corinthians 15:23) - during the Feast of Firstfruits.

The Church of God

“I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hades (literally, the grave) will not overpower it” (Matthew 16:18). Jesus built His Church and said it will never die.

Jesus was the Lord God of the Old Testament (John 1:1), the second deity in the Godhead (I Corinthians 8:6). “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Jesus died so that we may “not perish.” He became our sin offering: “God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering” (Romans 8:3). Jesus’ sacrifice removed the penalty, or curse, of the Law from us: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13). Because sin is defined as the transgression of God’s Law (I John 3:4), and because everyone has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), then we’re doomed without the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf.

While here, Jesus taught a gospel about the future Kingdom of God on earth, and referred to our roles as kings and priests in it (Revelation 5:10). During His ministry, and especially after His resurrection, Jesus commissioned His apostles to “make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20). Jesus then ascended to heaven, where to this day He awaits God the Father’s order to return and establish His Kingdom (Isaiah 2, Zechariah 14, etc.).

Upon His resurrection, Jesus became the *firstborn from the dead* - “and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead” (Revelation 1:15) - and thus the *firstborn of God’s family*.

Usage of the word “firstborn” implies that there will be others: “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that *we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures*” (James 1:18). According to Paul, Jesus was the First of the firstfruits of God (I Corinthians 15:23), and those who have God’s Spirit are, according to James, “a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.”

The symbolism is unmistakable. Anciently, God commanded the Israelites to dedicate the first portion, or “firstfruits,” of their harvest to Him. Fast-forward over a thousand years to when Jesus built a Church of people symbolically called firstfruits, who are “redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb” (Revelation 14:4).

Therefore, the ancient Feast of Firstfruits not only reminded people of God’s blessings, but it foreshadowed the creation of God’s Church - again, a “kind of firstfruits of His creatures.”

A brief interlude: the Plan of God as revealed in His Holy Days and Festivals

“So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a *festival* or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a *shadow of things to come*, but the substance is of Christ” (Colossians 2:17). We’ve already seen that the ancient Feast of Firstfruits foreshadowed the creation of God’s Church. Likewise, the other Festivals and Holy Days have spiritual and prophetic significance. In fact, they reveal God’s seven-step plan for man:

1. **Passover:** Acceptance of Jesus as our atoning sacrificial Lamb that was foreshadowed by the ancient Passover sacrifice. “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (I Corinthians 5:7);
2. **Feast of Unleavened Bread:** In accepting the sacrifice of the unleavened “bread from heaven,” that is, Jesus (John 6:41), and understanding that, biblically, leaven represents sin (I Corinthians 5:7), Paul thus urges us to “*keep the feast* (of Unleavened Bread), not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (I Corinthians 5:7-8).
3. **Pentecost**, anciently the *Feast of Firstfruits*: Those who have God’s Spirit are called firstfruits (I Corinthians 15:23), and Jesus was the First of the firstfruits (same verse). Pentecost is also the birthday of God’s Church, which is the collection of God’s saints or firstfruits.
4. **Feast of the Memorial of the Blowing of Trumpets:** The plan of God unfolds in these Festivals. Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread point back to Christ, as does Pentecost in pointing us back to the birthday of the Church. Sequentially, the Feast of the Memorial of Blowing of Trumpets looks forward to the return of Jesus and the first resurrection: “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the *trumpet of God*, and the dead in Christ will rise first” (I Thessalonians 4:16).
5. **Day of Atonement:** What happens after Jesus returns? The banishment of Satan, itself symbolized in an ancient Israelite ceremony conducted on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). The ceremony foreshadowed Jesus’ sacrifice in the first century and Satan’s banishment during the Millennium. Only at that time will man be “at one” with God.
6. **Feast of Tabernacles:** After Satan has been banished, Jesus will establish His Kingdom. We shall be kings and priests in that Kingdom (Revelation 5:10). Since this Feast follows the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles represents the establishment of God’s Kingdom on earth.
7. **The Last Great Day** immediately follows the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. This Day represents the second resurrection for everyone not resurrected one thousand years earlier, and the ensuing 100-year judgment period in which everyone will have an opportunity for salvation.

Pentecost - anciently the *Feast of Firstfruits* - celebrates the birthday of God’s Church. How do we become a *firstfruit*? “Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:37-38). The answer hasn’t changed: repent of your sins, be baptized, and “receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

First, Repent

Repent of what? Sin, of course. What is sin? The transgression of God's law: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4). In other words, whenever we break God's commandments, we commit sin. And by realizing we are sinners in need of God's mercy, we thus acknowledge the monumental importance of accepting Jesus as our "sin offering" (Romans 8:3).

"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:17-19).

Jesus did not abolish God's law; they weren't nailed to His stake. Just the opposite: He magnified the law, as foretold by Isaiah the prophet: "The LORD is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; *He will exalt the law and make it honorable*" (Isaiah 42:21). In fact, Jesus spiritualized the Law of God. Keeping the letter of the Law was no longer enough; we must keep both the letter **and** spirit of the Law. For example, in His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment" (Matthew 5:21-22). In other words, in God's eyes, unjustifiable and extreme anger is a sin. Lust is also a sin: "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-28).

Jesus kept the Law of God, including the seventh-day Sabbath and the Holy Days and Festivals (e.g. Passover, John 2:13 & 23; Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day, John 7:10-14 & 37). Why should we be any different?

Baptism

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin" (Romans 6:1-6).

First, repent of our sins. Then, symbolically, the waters of baptism will wash away our sins in God's eyes. It's a symbolic act of gigantic spiritual proportions. Baptism signifies our commitment to God and His laws, and our acceptance of the redeeming sacrifice of Jesus our Passover.

The Holy Spirit

Peter urges us to repent and be baptized. Then we'll receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. That doesn't mean fires will dance atop our heads. Nor does it mean that, suddenly, we'll become multilingual.

"It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but ***you will receive power when the Holy Spirit*** has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:4-8). Indeed, the power of the Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to become multilingual on that first day of Pentecost. What, then, is the Holy Spirit?

Some believe that the Holy Spirit is the third part of a mysterious triune God. "The doctrine of the Catholic Church concerning the Holy Ghost forms an integral part of her teaching on the mystery of the Holy Trinity, of which St. Augustine (De Trin., I, iii, 5), speaking with diffidence, says: 'In no other subject is the danger of erring so great, or the progress so difficult, or the fruit of a careful study so appreciable.' The essential points of the dogma may be resumed in the following propositions:

- 1 The Holy Ghost is the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity.
- 2 Though really distinct, as a Person, from the Father and the Son, He is consubstantial with Them; being God like Them, He possesses with Them one and the same Divine Essence or Nature.
- 3 He proceeds, not by way of generation, but by way of inspiration, from the Father and the Son together, as from a single principle.

Such is the belief the Catholic faith demands" (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, article on the Holy Spirit).

Belief in a mysterious triune God - comprising God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit - is false. Paul said, "yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live" (I Corinthians 8:6). In this simple scripture, Paul states that the Godhead consists of two deities: God the Father and Jesus. Moreover, time and again, Paul opened his epistles by extending wishes of grace and peace to his readers from "God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Colossians 1:2). He never extended the same wishes from something called the Holy Spirit.

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with *child of the Holy Spirit*" (Matthew 1:18). If Jesus was born by the Holy Spirit, why, then, did Jesus continuously refer to God the Father as His Father?

The archangel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the ***power of the Highest*** will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Luke, the inspired author of the book of Acts, uses similar language in relating Jesus' last command to His apostles: "***you will receive power when the Holy Spirit*** has come upon you" (Acts 1:8).

Paul referred to the Godhead as comprising God the Father and Jesus. He also referred to God the Father and Jesus in his salutations, never to the Holy Spirit. Jesus always referred to

God the Father as His Father, not the Holy Spirit. And Luke spoke of the Holy Spirit as “power.” We must therefore conclude that the Holy Spirit is **not** one part of a mysterious triune God. Rather, the Holy Spirit is the power of God; in Luke’s words: “the power of the Highest.” And it’s the method by which God is creating a *family of firstfruits*. We receive the “power of the Highest,” that is, the Holy Spirit, when hands are laid on us after baptism.

Receipt of the Holy Spirit is the third part of the three-part formula for salvation: repent, be baptized, and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. When we receive this Holy Spirit, we have thus discovered the meaning of life.

The meaning of life

“For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are *children of God*, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him” (Romans 8:15-17).

God is creating children. *His Spirit interacts with our spirit (the “spirit in man” - Job 32:8, I Corinthians 2:11) to create a new creature in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17)*. We are thus begotten, or conceived, by God. This is analogous to human creation. When our fathers’ sperm united with our mothers’ egg, we were conceived and born nine months later. Likewise, God’s Spirit unites with our spirit to create a new spiritual creature in Christ. We are spiritually conceived but not yet born. The nine months we spend in our mothers’ womb is analogous to the lifetime we spend nurturing this new creature in Christ. We feed it through Bible study, prayer, fasting, and obedience to God.

Although our temporal bodies decay daily, this new creature in Christ is renewed: “Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (II Corinthians 4:16-18).

Paul contrasts our fleshy bodies, which he calls “tabernacles” or “tents,” with the spiritual new creature in Christ. “For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life” (II Corinthians 5:1-4). We “groan” in our temporal bodies, forever yearning for the day when our spiritual bodies will emerge. The difference between our physical and spiritual bodies is almost indescribable. “There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body” (I Corinthians 15:40-44).

We cannot inherit the Kingdom of God in our temporal bodies. But the new creature in Christ will: "I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed - in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed" (I Corinthians 15:50-52).

At the resurrection, this new creature in Christ is born. If we're living when Jesus returns, we'll be changed. If not, God will resurrect us, or rather, the new creature in Christ. We'll shed our temporal bodies and be clothed with immortality. This will occur in the "twinkling of an eye." At one moment, we're flesh; at another, spirit beings. Jesus described the spirit body to Nicodemus: "You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (John 3:7-8).

*The meaning of life is that God is creating a family who are conceived at baptism, **through the receipt of His Spirit when hands are laid on them**, and born when Jesus returns. Jesus became the firstborn from the dead - "and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead" (Revelation 1:15) - and thus the firstborn of God's family. And people baptized with the Spirit of God are His firstfruits (James 1:18, Revelation 14:4).*

The miracle of Pentecost

Pentecost is the birthday of the Church. It's the birthday of Christianity. It's one of God's seven Festivals and Holy Days, which reveal His plan for us. Pentecost also reveals the meaning of life.

We often refer to the miracle of birth. The miracle of Pentecost is more miraculous. God created a family when He resurrected Jesus, the "firstborn from the dead" and the firstborn into God's family. On the first day of Pentecost He added to His family. When someone repents and is baptized, he or she receives the Holy Spirit, which unites with the "spirit in man" to create a new creature in Christ. This new son or daughter in Christ is conceived at baptism, and born when Jesus returns.

By understanding the miracle of Pentecost, you have thus discovered the elusive meaning of life.

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