

The Feast of Tabernacles

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Almighty God gave clear instructions in His word regarding the days that are to be set apart for worship, study, fellowship, and rejoicing (Ex. 23:14, 17; Dt. 16:16). These days are referred to as God's Holy Days (Neh. 8:9-11; 10:31), a Sabbath of rest (Ex. 35:2), feasts of the Lord, Holy convocations (Lev. 23:1), and High Days (Jn. 19:31). These Holy Days are to be kept at exactly the time appointed by God according to His calendar (Nu. 9:2-3, 7, 13), and not altered in any way by some humanly devised method of reasoning or calculating (refer to: www.ccg.org/english/s/P156.html; cf. Dt. 4:2; 12:32). As all of God's Holy Days are considered Sabbaths (Ex. 31:13; Lev. 26:2; Jn. 19:31), they fall under the great commandment to, "remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Ex. 20:8). They are to be observed by everyone, according to Jesus Christ (Mk. 2:27), not just those from the nation of Judah (the Jews). After the return of Jesus Christ, refusing to observe these days as "feasts of the Lord" will result in penalties being exacted,

And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left (after Christ's return) of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. ¹⁷And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth (not limited to the Jewish people) do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, **on them there will be no rain.** ¹⁸If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, **they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague** with which the Lord strikes the nations **who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.** ¹⁹This shall be the sin of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles (Zec. 14:16-19; cf. Isa. 66:22-23; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

In addition to the weekly Sabbath, which falls on the seventh day of the week (known as Saturday in most current secular calendars; see study: The Weekly Sabbath), and the monthly New Moon, God's Holy Days are to be observed three times each year, and these times generally fall within the three growing seasons - Spring, early Summer and Fall,

Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread (*seven day period, in the Spring, inclusive of the Passover and Wave Sheaf; cf. Ex. 12:1-28; Lev. 23:4-8; Nu. 28:16-25*), **at the Feast of Weeks** (*calculated by counting seven full weeks from the weekly Sabbath that falls during the Days of Unleavened Bread [after the vernal equinox] and then observing it on the following day [50th] - the name Pentecost means count fifty; cf. Lev. 23:15-22; Nu. 28:26-31*), **and at the Feast of Tabernacles** (*which falls in the seventh month and is inclusive of the Holy Days which involve blowing trumpets [Nu. 29:1-2; Lev. 23:23-24], Atonement [i.e. fasting; Lev. 23:26-32; Nu. 29:7-11], and observance of the Last Great Day at the conclusion of the seven day festival of Tabernacles [Lev. 23:36b; Nu. 29:35; Neh. 8:18; Jn. 7:37]*) **and they shall not appear**

before the Lord empty-handed (Dt. 16:16; Lev. 23:33-44; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

The Feast of Tabernacles is to be observed for seven days. The first day is a Holy Day during which regular work is to cease, except those activities associated with the animal sacrificial system and food preparation (Ex. 12:16),

Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the Lord. ³⁵On the first day there shall be a holy convocation (gathering). You shall do no customary work on it' (Lev. 23:34-35; Ed. note in parenthesis).

This seven day period pictured a number of important events and truths. It was an annual reminder that Almighty God brought the nation of Israel out of Egyptian slavery and they dwelt in temporary booths, tabernacles, tents, or shelters made from the boughs of trees while they were in the wilderness, and lived this way for forty years (Ex. 16:35; Neh. 9:21),

You (Israel) shall dwell in booths (SHD 5521) for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, ⁴³that your (future) generations may know (remember) that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God (Lev. 23:42-43; Ed. notes in parentheses).

At this time the nation of Israel was between countries, having left Egypt but not yet in possession of the Promised Land (Ex. 12:25; Nu. 14:40; Dt. 9:28). Consequently, there was no plan for them to build permanent dwellings anywhere in the wilderness. However, had they exhibited a willingness to trust God's word and follow His instructions, they could have inherited the Promised Land forty years sooner,

How long shall I (Almighty God) bear with this evil congregation who grumble against Me? I have heard the murmurings which the children of Israel murmur against Me. ²⁸Say to them, 'As I live,' says the Lord, 'just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you. ²⁹The carcasses of you who have murmured against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number from twenty years old and above. ³⁰Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I solemnly promised I would make you dwell in. ³¹But your little ones, whom you said would be victims (cf. Nu. 14:3), I will bring in, and they shall be acquainted with the land which you have despised' (Nu. 14:27-31; Ed. notes in parentheses).

And **your sons shall be wanderers in the wilderness forty years**, and bear the brunt of your infidelity, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness (Nu. 14:33; emphasis added).

So despite numerous miracles and interventions by God (Ex. 15:22-27; 16:1-35; 17:1-7; Dt. 29:5), Israel refused to believe what He said and refused to obey the instructions they were given. They even refused to enter the Promised Land,

And all the children of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, 'If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had

died in this wilderness! ³Why has the Lord brought us to this land (the Promised Land) to be killed in battle, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?' ⁴So they said to one another, 'Let us select a leader and return to Egypt' (Nu. 14:2-4; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Thankfully, there were two honest and faithful witnesses who had gone ahead and spied out the Promised Land, and they encouraged the people to step out in faith trusting that God would give them this land as He had promised,

And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes (an outward expression of their deep sorrow for Israel's lack of faith in God's word), ⁷and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: 'The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. ⁸If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land which flows with milk and honey. ⁹Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they shall be as food for our consumption; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them' (Nu. 14:6-9; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Sadly, after forty years in the wilderness the nation as a whole still did not trust God or desire to obey His commands. Instead of repenting after the positive message given by Joshua and Caleb, they wanted to kill these righteous men. This trend of killing God's messengers has continued throughout man's history (Mt. 23:29-35),

And all the congregation said to stone them (Joshua and Caleb) with stones... (Nu. 14:10a; Ed. note in parenthesis).

If those in the nation of Israel were able to live for a thousand years at that time, they still would have continued in the same rebellious and ungrateful mindset. Their descendants were able to enter the Promised Land due to God's mercy and forgiveness combined with the faithfulness of a few people who pleaded on behalf of this rebellious nation,

And now, I (Moses) pray, let the power of my Lord be great, just as You have spoken, saying, ¹⁸'The Lord is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but He by no means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third generation. ¹⁹Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.' ²⁰Then the Lord said (to Moses): 'I have pardoned, according to your word' (Nu. 14:17-20; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Had ancient Israel obeyed Almighty God and observed His Holy Days, they would eventually have taught all the Gentile nations about these appointed times along with the rest of God's law and commandments. Israel was chosen and set apart for this purpose, but failed to fulfill this important responsibility,

Moreover, concerning a foreigner, who is not of Your people Israel, but has come from a far country for Your name's sake ⁴²(for they will hear of Your great name and Your strong hand and Your outstretched arm) when he comes and prays toward this temple, ⁴³hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, **that all peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You**, as do Your people

Israel (ideally, but not consistently in practice), and that they may know that this temple which I (Solomon) have built is called by Your name (1Kgs. 8:41-43; cf. Dt. 4:1-8; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

This brief summary of events associated with Israel living in temporary dwellings during their forty years in the wilderness helps explain why God set aside a seven day period for the Feast of Tabernacles (or booths; cf. Lev. 23:42-43). The number seven represents a complete cycle just as the seven day week does. This seven day cycle during the Feast of Tabernacles symbolizes the time that mankind will have inhabited temporary dwellings (their physical bodies; cf. 2Cor. 5:1; 2Pet. 1:13) waiting for entry into the everlasting Promised Land, which is not a physical place. Instead, it is a spiritual abode that is often referred to as the kingdom of (from) God, or the kingdom of (from) heaven (Mt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Ac. 1:3; 8:12; 19:8; 14:22; 28:23). Due to rebellion against God's law and commandments, the majority of mankind does not know they have earned the wages of sin, which is death (Rom. 6:23). As a result, they will not have an opportunity to enter the kingdom of God until they repent of sin (1Jn. 3:4). The Feast of Tabernacles, in combination with Last Great Day, are poignant yearly reminders that God's plan of salvation is going to reach completion at a specific point in time, but not without allowing everyone an opportunity to repent and enter into it,

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward you, not willing that any should perish (in the sense of everlasting death) but that all should come to repentance (2Pet. 3:9; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Some had an opportunity to repent of sin during the Old Testament period (Ps. 25:18), others since the time of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, while others will hear God's truth after Christ's return. Those who are not in any of these categories will have their opportunity after they are resurrected at the conclusion of the millennial rule of Jesus Christ. This final group will be in the second resurrection which is a separate subject (see the study: The Last Great Day).

Had ancient Israel followed and obeyed God's instructions, they would have entered the Promised Land, which was a type of the kingdom of (from) God, and they would have enjoyed "rest" from all their enemies,

But when you cross over the Jordan and dwell in the (Promised) land which the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and **when He gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety** (Dt. 12:10; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

Therefore it shall be, when **the Lord your God has given you rest from your enemies all around**, in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance, that you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget (Deut. 25:19; emphasis added),

The apostle Paul spoke about the seven day period that culminates in the weekly Sabbath as being a type of the “rest” that ancient Israel was meant to enjoy in the Promised Land, but sadly they rejected it through their rebellion against God’s word,

Therefore, since a promise remains (since the first one was rejected by ancient Israel) of entering His (God’s intended) rest (for His people), let us (in the early church of God) fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it (as ancient Israel did through disobedience). ²For indeed the gospel (good news regarding the kingdom of [from] God) was preached to us as well as to them (ancient Israel was to believe in God’s word just as anyone today); but the word which they heard did not profit them, since they were not united by faith with those who heard it (Moses, Aaron, Miriam, Joshua and Caleb). ³For we who have believed do enter that rest (based on repentance of sin and obedience to God’s word; cf. Mt. 4:4), as He has said: ‘So I swore in My wrath, they (ancient Israel) shall not enter My rest,’ although the works were finished from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8; God’s plan of salvation was prepared in advance). ⁴For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: ‘And God rested on the seventh day from all His works,’ ⁵and again in this place: ‘They shall not enter My rest’ (Heb. 4:1-5; Ed. notes in parentheses).

So the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles pictures the time of man’s sojourn on this planet culminating in a rest that God intended for everyone since the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). This “rest”, which refers to everlasting life, is based on the same conditions that applied to ancient Israel. In order to enter it, everyone has to repent of sin and obey God’s word, which includes His law and commandments,

Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall (short) **after the same example of disobedience** (ancient Israel’s). ¹²For the word of God (which ancient Israel rejected) is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him (Almighty God) to whom we must give account (Heb. 4:11-13; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Everyone that God has created has to give account for their conduct toward Him as well as toward others,

But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the Judgment seat of God. ¹¹For it is written: ‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess (their transgressions) to God.’ ¹²So then each of us shall give account of himself to God (Rom. 14:10-12; Ed. notes in parenthesis).

This process of judgment is already in effect for those who have repented of sin and begun a new life of obedience to God’s law and commandments. Romans 14:10-12 is speaking primarily to those who are still in rebellion against God’s word, which includes His law and commandments,

For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸Now, ‘If the

righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?' (1Pet. 4:17-18).

It was mentioned previously in this document that God's Holy Days follow the three agricultural harvests (Spring, early Summer, and Fall). As the Feast of Tabernacles occurs in the Fall, and this is the time of the largest ingathering of produce, it coincides with the fact that the majority of mankind will have their opportunity to repent and begin obeying God's law and commandments at the close of man's physical sojourn on this planet. To date, most people even in religious organizations reject God's law and commandments. The apostle Paul commented on this fact,

Because the carnal mind is enmity (hostile) against God (as ancient Israel exhibited); for **it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be** (Rom. 8:7; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

In order for a large number of people to begin keeping God's law and commandments, they are going to need a change of attitude, and this change will not occur as a result of their effort alone,

And it shall come to pass afterward (toward the end of God's plan of salvation) that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh... (Joel 2:28a; Ed. note in parenthesis).

If this prophecy were fulfilled, the entire planet would be at peace and in harmony with one another due primarily to the fact they would be observing every word of God (Mt. 4:4). However, it is quite evident that this has not been fulfilled yet. Instead, the fulfillment of this prophecy is progressive and commenced after Christ's death and resurrection,

But Peter, standing up with the eleven (other disciples of Christ), raised his voice and said to them (those gathered to observe the day of Pentecost), 'Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. ¹⁵For these (who received God's Holy Spirit) are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day (9:00 am). ¹⁶But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷'And **it shall come to pass in the last days**, says God, that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh... (Ac. 2:14-17a; Ed. notes in parentheses, emphasis added).

So the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit on individuals and small groups has been ongoing and will continue until Christ's return, as well as after. However, as the Feast of Tabernacles is at the end of God's Holy Day sequence, it represents a time when God's Holy Spirit will be poured out in even greater power and effect. In Peter's quote above, the context of God's Holy Spirit being poured out is, "it shall come to pass **in the last days**". This period of time is associated with the return of Jesus Christ,

I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. ¹⁹I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. ²⁰The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, **before the coming of the great and notable day of the Lord** (Ac. 2:18b – 20a; emphasis added).

The coming of the day of the Lord will be announced on the first day of the seventh month according to God's calendar and only those who have repented of sin and desire to obey Almighty God will be aware of this announcement (see the study: God's First Holy Day of the Seventh Month). It is important to understand that the day of the Lord is an extended period of time that commences at Christ's return and continues until the fulfillment of the Last Great Day. This Last Great Day is to be observed as a High Day at the conclusion of the Feast of Tabernacles,

But on **the last day, the great day of the festival** (of Tabernacles; cf. Jn. 7:2), Jesus stood and exclaimed, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink."³⁸ **The one trusting in me** (believes in who Christ was, and trusted what he taught leading them to repentance of sin), **just as the scripture says, 'From out of his stomach** (inner being) **will flow rivers of living water.'**"³⁹ but this he (Christ) spoke concerning the (God's Holy) spirit that those believing in him (that Christ was the perfect sacrifice sent from the Father) were going to receive; for the spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been given glory (from the Father) (Jn. 7:37-39; RNT; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

Almighty God keeps His people in remembrance of His plan of salvation through their observance of His Holy Days each year, while the Adversary keeps the majority of mankind in a continual state of deception through the pagan holidays of this present evil system,

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ,⁴ who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from **this present evil age** (Gal. 1:3-4a; emphasis added).

So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and **Satan, who deceives the whole world** (Rev. 12:9a; emphasis added).

Keeping the Feast of Tabernacles is a vital aspect of coming out from the deception of the Adversary. This Holy Day pictures a number of important truths related to God's plan of salvation. It is a reminder that mankind is being given a complete cycle, similar to the weekly cycle that ends in a Sabbath-rest, in order to learn that rebellion against the law and commandments of God results in death (Rom. 6:23), just as the nation of Israel died in the wilderness (with the exception of Joshua, Caleb, and those 20 years of age and under). It also points to a future period of rest from our spiritual enemies (Eph. 6:12-13) during which a very large harvest of people will be given an opportunity to repent and begin living in newness of life according to God's word,

Therefore we (who repented of sin) were buried with him (Christ) through baptism into death (our old self and way of doing things contrary to God's law was symbolically put to death and buried beneath the water), 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** (Rom. 6:4; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

But now we have been delivered from the law (of animal sacrifices, which do not provide everlasting life), having died (symbolically at baptism) to what we were held by (everlasting death due to sin; cf. Rom. 6:23), so that **we should serve in the newness of the Spirit** (through Christ's sacrifice; cf. Mt. 5:17) and not in the oldness of the letter

(ordinances involving animal sacrifices; cf. Heb. 9:9-10) (Rom. 7:6; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

The lessons that the Feast of Tabernacles teaches those who obey this holy day, are a reason for rejoicing. Rejoicing is an integral part of God's festivals. God promised physical blessings upon ancient Israel if they obeyed Him and since Christ's death and resurrection God's people have been blessed with spiritual blessings (Jn. 6:47-51),

You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, when you have gathered from your threshing floor and from your winepress; ¹⁴**and you shall rejoice in your feast**, you and your son and your daughter, your manservant and your maidservant and the Levite, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow, who are within your towns. ¹⁵Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the Lord your God in the place which the Lord chooses, because the Lord your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that **you surely rejoice** (Dt. 16:13-15; emphasis added).

After Christ's return, this planet will rejoice as it begins to experience the many blessings and benefits associated with following God's law and commandments, including observance of the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. Zech. 14:16-21). However, God's plan of salvation, which is pictured in His Holy Day sequence, does not come to completion until after the millennial reign of Jesus Christ and the fulfillment of events associated with the Last Great Day. Consequently, the symbols associated with the Feast of Tabernacles will continue to have significance because numerous people will still be living in their temporary physical tabernacles, or tents (flesh and blood bodies; cf. 2Cor. 5:1; 2Pet. 1:13) until the conclusion of the millennium (which represents the end of the period of time pictured by the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles).

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor. 11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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