

# Come to the Feast!

**In the Millennium, everyone will “go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles” (Zechariah 14:16). But why wait? You can experience the joy of keeping God’s feast now, before the Millennium. Will you do it? Or will you let the opportunity pass you by?**

Can you think of a single reason why you should not keep the Feast of Tabernacles? Some suppose the festival laws were abolished along with the rest of the “Old Testament” Law. If so, then we might as well abolish the words of Jesus, too. He said: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 5:17-19).

Last time I checked, heaven and earth were still in place. That means the Law is, too! And since the Law is still in place, we must dismiss the idea that the Feast of Tabernacles has fallen into obsolescence.

So, again, can you think of a good reason for not keeping the Feast of Tabernacles?

Some reply, “Because there is no New Testament command to keep it.”

That old line won’t work for at least two reasons. First, it’s inconsistent with Jesus’ declaration (quoted above). Second, who says that every commandment, to be valid, must be repeated in the New Testament? You can’t find a New Testament commandment specifically forbidding bestiality. Does that mean no such commandment exists? You know the answer to that!

“But,” some retort, “the Feast of Tabernacles was given to a specific people in a specific time and was not meant for modern, non-Israelite peoples.”

Indeed, the festival laws were given to ancient Israel, but does that mean they were for ancient Israel only? Remember, Zechariah prophesied of a future time when “every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles” (Zechariah 14:16). In time, “all the families of the earth,” including the “family of Egypt,” will keep the feast (verses 17-19).

“Yes, but,” some continue to object, “the annual festivals were given specifically for the purpose of offering special sacrifices, and since New Covenant believers are not commanded to offer sacrifices, we need not observe the festivals.”

The Old Testament itself renders that objection null and void. The Passover festival was established as a memorial of Israel's departure from Egypt (Exodus 12:14-20). The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) was given as a harvest celebration (Deuteronomy 16:9,10). The Feast of Tabernacles was given as both a harvest festival (Leviticus 23:39) and a memorial of Israel's dwelling in booths when God brought them out of Egypt (verses 42,43). Sacrifices were of secondary importance in the observance of these days.

The idea that the feasts and holy days were given in order to have fixed times for special sacrifices is classic "cart before the horse" theology. The truth is, the special sacrifices underscore the importance of the holy days, not vice versa.

Are you beginning to see how hard it is to find a good reason for not keeping the Feast of Tabernacles? Indeed, good reasons for not keeping the feast hardly exist. But good reasons for keeping it are plentiful-and they're easy to find.

Let's look at a few.

## **Holy Days More Meaningful to Church Than to Israel**

Some argue that since the annual festivals and holy days were designed as celebrations of important events of Israel's history and as harvest festivals, they are of little or no practical value to New Covenant believers living in the modern world. After all, most of us do not live in agrarian societies, and many of us have no ancestral connections to the peoples of ancient Israel. Why, then, should we observe festivals that pertain to pre-Christian events and to harvesting crops?

The answer is simple.

First, the annual festivals and holy days pertain to far more than gathering crops and celebrating ancient events. As the apostle Paul says, they are "a shadow of things to come" (Colossians 2:17); and as the New Testament plainly reveals, they are connected with the events of Christ's redemptive work and the plan of God for all mankind.

Second, the need to commemorate and celebrate meaningful events is an inherent human quality and is seen in every religion and every culture. For God's people, the church, the annual holy days meet this need as nothing else can. It just doesn't make sense that Christ would have established His church and then left it without special days for commemorating and celebrating events significant to Christianity.

Those who feel they must have a specific New Testament admonition to keep the holy days fail to understand that God's will for Christians is expressed in means other than specific New Testament commandments. Once we recognize that God is the Author of the human need for special commemorative occasions and meaningful celebrations, and once we understand the New Covenant significance of the special festivals and holy days

He instituted, we have more than ample grounds for establishing that the feasts and holy days are indeed for Christians living in this modern world.

Briefly, let's review the annual feasts and holy days.

1. (1) The Passover (Leviticus 23:5) reminds us that "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7). Just as the firstborn of Israel were spared when the "death angel" saw the blood of the sacrificial lamb on the doorposts and lintels of their houses (Exodus 12), so we are saved from death through the substitutionary death of "Christ our Passover."

(2) The Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:6-8) was, for the Israelites, a seven-day celebration of their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. For us, it is a celebration of our deliverance from the bondage of sin. Paul spoke of this festival when he said, "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:8).

1. (3) The Day of Pentecost, or Feast of Weeks (Leviticus 23:15-21; Deuteronomy 16:9,10), was a harvest festival for Israel. It is the "birthday" of the New Testament church (Acts 2), and reminds us of the ongoing "harvest of lives" for the Kingdom of God. It also tells us of a much greater fume "harvest."
2. (4) The Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:24,25) was a "memorial of blowing of trumpets" for the people of Israel. It directs our attention to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and resurrection of the saints. Paul wrote, "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" (1 Corinthians 15:52).
3. (5) The Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:27-32) was the only day of the year the high priest went into the "most holy place" to "make an atonement" for the people of Israel. This day of fasting pictures the binding of Satan and the reconciliation of God with the world, beginning with the people of Israel.

(6) The Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:34-36, 39-43) reminds us that we are "sojourners" in this world, that we dwell in temporary fleshly "tabernacles," as we await the establishment of the Kingdom of God on this earth. (More on this feast later.)

(7) The Eighth Day (Leviticus 23:36,39), or Last Great Day, as we have traditionally called it, immediately follows the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. It pictures the post-millennial Day of Judgment, when the billions who never had a full chance to be saved will be raised to life again and will be granted the opportunity to come to full repentance and receive salvation.

As anyone should be able to see, the annual festivals and holy days have far more meaning for Christians than they ever had for the people of Israel. Does it make sense to label them "archaic," "obsolete," and "out of date"?

No, it does not! On the contrary, through observing God's holy days, we both celebrate the future and commemorate the most important events of redemptive history. The idea that God never intended that Christians observe them makes no sense at all.

The more we study the holy days, the more meaning we derive from them-and the more we realize the importance of observing them.

Let's see how this is so by focusing our attention on the tremendously rich, deeply spiritual meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles.

## **Why "Tabernacles"?**

God said to the people of Israel: "And ye shall keep it [the-Feast of Tabernacles] a feast unto the Lord seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month. Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths" (Leviticus 23:41,42).

Notice that the people were to dwell in booths, or tents, for seven days. Why? What did dwelling in tents mean to the Israelites?

God answers: "That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God" (verse 43).

The Feast of Tabernacles was to perpetually remind the Israelites that their forefathers wandered in the wilderness, dwelling in temporary abodes, as they sought permanent homes in a permanent homeland.

Had the people of Israel not rebelled in the wilderness, God would have allowed them to go into the promised land and possess it without delay. But because of their faithlessness and stubborn refusal to obey God, they wandered in the wilderness for forty years, dwelling in tents, moving from one place to another. Finally, when the "Exodus" generation had all but died out, the new generation of Israelites was allowed to enter the land of promise. But once there, they were to dwell in booths every year at the Feast of Tabernacles so they would not forget the plight of their fathers-so they would not forget that just as rebellion kept their fathers out of the land, rebellion could cause them to lose it.

Doubtless, dwelling in booths each year also pointed the Israelites' attention to their forebears-Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob-who dwelt in tents as they sought a permanent homeland.

The book of Hebrews tells us: "By faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same

promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:8-19).

Noah, too, understood what it was like to leave his own country behind and dwell in a temporary abode. “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of righteousness which is by faith” (Hebrews 11:7).

Indeed, many men and women of faith acknowledged the temporary nature of their earthly sojourning, but, through eyes of faith, looked beyond it, peering into the realm of the heavenly. Of such, the writer of Hebrews said: “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

“For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city” (Hebrews 11:13-16).

The meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles for New Covenant believers is obvious. It reminds us of the temporary nature of our earthly “tabernacles,” our physical bodies, while turning our attention to the millennial “land of promise,” when the City of God will be established, and when the saints will reign with Christ on this earth.

Paul wrote: “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle [i.e., our physical bodies] were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

“For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

“Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him” (2 Corinthians 5:1-9).

Paul was not speaking of “going to heaven” at the moment of death. To him, being “in the body” meant that he was still tabernacling in this world, still enduring the difficulties of his fleshly existence. He looked forward to the time when he would be “absent from the body,” when he would no longer be bound by his fleshly tabernacle, but would be

“present with the Lord,” having been raised from the state of death, “clothed upon” with immortality.

But won't the saints rise with “immortalized” physical bodies, as many believe?

Not according to Paul! Speaking of the resurrection body, he stated, “It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:44). He said, “And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall [at the resurrection] also bear the image of the heavenly” (verse 49), and insisted that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption” (verse 30).

At the resurrection, the saints will be absent from their fleshly tabernacles and present with the Lord in immortal, spiritual bodies. At that time, the great men and women of faith from ages past, along with the saints of modern times, will join Jesus Christ in His Kingdom. At last, they shall have arrived home!

The Feast of Tabernacles pictures that time. It falls after Trumpets and Atonement, which picture the Second Coming, the binding of Satan, and God's reconciliation with the world, beginning with Israel. The Feast of Tabernacles, then, points to the Millennium, or thousand year reign of Christ on this earth (Revelation 20).

## **The Millennium**

God's plan as portrayed in His annual holy days is seen clearly in the book of Revelation. We are reminded of the Passover festival (which includes the Feast of Unleavened Bread-Ezekiel 45:21) when we read of Christ as “a Lamb as it had been slain” and who “redeemed us to God by [His] blood” (Revelation 5:6,9). We are reminded of the Day of Pentecost when we read of the sealing of the “firstfruits” before the momentous Day of the Lord befalls this earth (Revelation 7, 14). We are reminded of the Feast of Trumpets when we read of the “KING OF KINGS, LORD OF LORDS” who comes riding a white horse, with the armies of heaven following Him (19:11-16). We are reminded of the Day of Atonement when we read of the binding of Satan (20:1-3). We are reminded of the Feast of Tabernacles when we read of the saints reigning with Christ for “a thousand years” (20:4,5). We are reminded of the Last Great Day when we read of the resurrection and judgment of the “small and great” (20:11,12).

Let's focus on what John said about the Millennium, or thousand-year reign of Christ and the saints.

“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. [Here's the first mention of the thousand-year period.] And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a

seal upon him, that he should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season” (Revelation 20:1-3).

The devil is called the “prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2), “that old serpent... which deceiveth the whole world” (Revelation 12:9), a “liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44), a “murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44), and “your adversary...as a roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he may devour” (I Peter 5:8).

Think of it! The devil will be locked away during the Millennium. Based on the biblical description of Satan as liar, murderer, evil spirit, adversary, serpent, and deceiver of the whole world, it follows that his removal would make an immediate and enormous difference where human relations are concerned.

Moreover, the removal of his deceptive power in the world will set the stage for an effective worldwide reeducation program. Soon, false religions and the idolatrous practices and pagan ideas that have crept into Christianity will give way to truth. The barriers erected by atheistic philosophies will crumble, and the Word of God will at last penetrate deeply into territory formerly forbidden to it.

“And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:3; see also Micah 4:2).

How will the Word and Law of God go out to the people of this earth?

Return to Revelation 20: “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, on in their hands; and they lived [had been resurrected, made alive] and reigned with Christ a thousand years.... This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years” (verses 4-6).

The previous chapter describes the Second Coming of Christ. Obviously, the “first resurrection” is the resurrection that takes place at His return (compare with 1 Corinthians 15).

Notice that those who take part in this resurrection are immortal (“on such the second death hath no power”), are priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Christ throughout the Millennium. They will be both administrators (as those who “reign” with Christ) and teachers (as priests). These facts tell us how the Word and Law of God will spread throughout the earth, resulting in the nations beating their swords into plowshares

and their spears into pruning hooks (Isaiah 2:4), and causing them to say, “Come, ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord...”

Think of what a world we will have when the deceptive influence of the devil is replaced with the righteous influence of the saints of God. The thought of such a world inspires us to pray, “Thy Kingdom come.”

## **What Will You Do?**

Indeed, there are plenty of good reasons for keeping the Feast of Tabernacles. In addition to daily messages on biblical topics, plenty of time for fellowship, and lots of planned activities for everyone, the Feast of Tabernacles is a celebration of the future. It inspires hope by giving us a glimpse of what life during the Millennium will be like. It helps us grow in love by providing a warm atmosphere of fellowship, togetherness, and spiritual kinship. It enhances faith, for by going to the feast, we, like the great men and women of Hebrews 11, profess our belief through action.

What about you? Will you come to the feast this year? Or will you let this wonderful opportunity slip by?

Think of it! The time is coming when the nations of this world will keep the Feast of Tabernacles (Zechariah 14:16-19). Those who are alive at that time, no matter who they are, will keep the feast, or suffer the consequences! Even if they think of the feast as “Jewish”! Even if they have believed all their lives that the Law was “nailed to the cross”!

So why not keep it now? Why not take advantage of this wonderful opportunity?

Just do it!

Come to the feast!

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