

# The Fall Festivals

## *Portrait of God's Plan for Reconstruction*

**In spite of the insurmountable problems of today's world, your Bible foretells a time of massive economic and political reform—a time of global *reconstruction*, when the nations will “beat their swords into plowshares.” The fall holy days—the Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Feast of Tabernacles—reveal how God plans to reconstruct our world.**

When Christopher Columbus made his famous voyage to the “New World,” he probably never dreamed that one day men would actually walk on the moon. And, probably, the Wright brothers never envisioned the modern space shuttle, never imagined that man would one day orbit the earth.

Just look at how our world has changed within the last *fraction* of human history. From the simple telegraph to communications satellites; from steam locomotives to supersonic jets; from herbal remedies to microsurgery; from simple electronic gadgetry to microchips and supercomputers—and the list goes on and on.

Indeed, we live in an everchanging world—a *rapidly* changing world.

We are amazed at the quantum leaps man has made in science, in technology, in industry. Yet, in spite of the explosion of scientific and technological knowledge that has so changed our world, the human *heart* remains unchanged! From the time Cain murdered Abel to the present, the world of man has been dominated by greed, lust, selfishness; by the inordinate desire to acquire for the self at the expense of others. Until these components of human nature can be altered, science can bring us no closer to the utopian society we so yearn for.

We can put men in space; we can communicate instantaneously with people halfway around the world; we can travel distances in mere hours that formerly took weeks, or months; we can enjoy the many luxuries, the appliances and gadgets, provided by modern technology. But we seem unable to put an end to the horrible drug scourge that has ruined countless lives, unable to squelch the crime plague that infects our cities, unable to achieve any real, lasting *peace!*

And then there are the problems of failed marriages and broken homes, suicide, sexual promiscuity and sexually transmitted diseases, child abuse, and homeless citizens wandering aimlessly through life.

In spite of our advanced agricultural technology, millions are starving; and in spite of the explosion of knowledge in the health and medical sciences, malnutrition and disease epidemics still exist in various parts of the world.

The truth is, utopia is not possible; that is, it is not possible unless or until every aspect of human society is drastically changed—the economic and political structures and the philosophical and religious concepts on which governments and nations are built.

Believe it or not, that's exactly what is going to happen. Jesus Christ is going to come back to this earth. He is going to step into the affairs of humankind and bring about some drastic changes in government, in the economy, in education, and in religion. In other words, He is going to instigate a massive project of *reconstruction*!

And most important, He is going to set out to change that condition of the human heart which lies at the roots of so many of today's problems.

God's plan of spiritual salvation, as well as His plan for reconstruction of human society, is pictured in His annual festivals. Let's briefly review them.

## **The Feasts of the Lord**

In Leviticus 23, God says, "These are the *feasts of the Lord*, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons" (verse 4).

The first of the "feasts of the Lord" is named in verse 5: "In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's Passover."

Each year, at the "Lord's Supper," we symbolically imbibe "Christ our Passover" (1 Corinthians 5:7) by eating a small piece of unleavened bread (symbolizing His broken body) and drinking a small amount of red wine (symbolizing His shed blood). Jesus says: "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day ....He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him" (John 6:54,56).

Passover pictures our acceptance of and reliance upon Jesus Christ, the true Lamb of God, who shed His life's blood that we might be saved. Passover, then, is the beginning of God's plan of spiritual salvation.

Then follows immediately the next of God's feasts: the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

"And in the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread unto the Lord: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. But ye shall offer an offering made by

fire unto the Lord seven days: in the seventh day is an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein” (Leviticus 23:6-8).

By eating unleavened bread for seven days, we symbolically ingest the “Bread of life” (John 6:33); and by abstaining from leavened products during this period, we picture the ideal of living without sin, of growing spiritually and overcoming our prideful, covetous human nature, and we are reminded that Christ has freed us from the bondage of sin.

Next, fifty days after the first weekly Sabbath on or following the first high day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, we come to the Day of Pentecost, or Feast of Firstfruits (see Leviticus 23:15-21). This feast pictures the fact that God’s church is the “firstfruits” of God’s spiritual harvest, that He is calling only a comparative few now; and reminds us that a much greater harvest of souls, wherein salvation will be offered to *billions*, lies in the future.

The Day of Pentecost has been called the “birthday of the New Testament church,” for it was on this day that the Holy Spirit descended upon and converted the believers who were gathered at Jerusalem (Acts 2).

The feasts described above are primarily concerned with spiritual conversion and the means whereby we are saved. Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread point directly to Jesus Christ, the Source of our salvation. The Day of Pentecost tells us that God is calling a comparative few to salvation today, and reminds us of our need for the Holy Spirit in living the Christian life.

But now let’s turn our attention to the remaining “feasts of the Lord,” which outline God’s plan for transforming this present evil world into a global paradise

## **The Feast of Trumpets**

After Pentecost we come to the *Feast of Trumpets*. God says, “In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation” (Leviticus 23:24).

This feast reminds us of the coming “trumpet plagues” (Revelation 8-11) that will be “poured out” in the terrifying *Day of the Lord*, and of our present job of lifting up our voice “like a trumpet” (Isaiah 58:1) to warn the nations of the coming Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21).

In the book of Revelation, the opening of the “seventh seal” marks the beginning of the Day of the Lord, the prophesied time of God’s wrath. Notice John’s description of this momentous event:

“And when He had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given *seven trumpets*” (Revelation 8:1,2).

The seven trumpets symbolize a series of plagues which are to fall upon the hostile powers that oppose and oppress God’s people. The first four are poured out in the land, the sea, the rivers, and the atmosphere—the basic components of man’s *life support system!* But this is only the beginning—the worst is yet to come!

John writes: “And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, *Woe, woe, woe*, to the inhabitants of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound” (Revelation 8:13).

The first two “woes”—the fifth and sixth trumpets—are described in chapter 9.

After witnessing the horrible plagues brought on by the fifth and sixth trumpets, John sees a “mighty angel come down from heaven...and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth” (Revelation 10:1,2).

John continues: “And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And swore by Him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, *that there should be time no longer*” (verses 56).

Six trumpets have sounded; and now, the time has come for the seventh and final trumpet—“that there should be time no longer.” What does this trumpet picture?

Notice verse 7: “But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the *mystery of God should be finished*, as He hath declared to His servants the prophets.”

Keeping in mind that the seventh trumpet is the *last trump*, turn to 1 Corinthians 15, and read verses 51 and 52. Paul writes: “Behold, I shew you a *mystery* [compare with Revelation 10:7]; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last *trump* [notice!]: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

Paul is clearly speaking of the *Second Coming of Jesus Christ!* He says that Christ will return, and the dead in Christ will be raised, at the “last trump.”

Let’s now see that this “last trump” Paul speaks of is the same as the *seventh trumpet* of the Day of the Lord.

Notice Revelation 11:14,15: “The second woe [sixth trumpet] is past; and, behold, the third woe [seventh trumpet] cometh quickly. And the seventh angel sounded; and there

were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He *shall reign for ever and ever.*”

Clearly, the seventh trump signifies the return of Jesus Christ! Therefore, the Feast of Trumpets pictures the Second Coming. It portrays the long-awaited intervention of Almighty God into the affairs of humankind—the first step in His plan of *global reconstruction*.

Of course, before reconstruction can commence, Christ must deal with His enemies; He must “destroy them which destroy the earth” (Revelation 11:18).

When He came the first time, He came as the meek and lowly Lamb of God whose mission was to die for the sins of the world. But when He comes the second time, He is coming as a Mighty Conqueror—as King of kings, and Lord of lords (Revelation 17:14; 19:16)—and He will *wage war* with the nations that oppose Him.

John writes: “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth *judge* and make *wax* His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He himself. And He was clothed with a vesture *dipped in blood*: and His name is called the Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should *smite the nations*: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the winepress of the *fierceness* and *wrath* of Almighty God” (Revelation 19:11-15).

Once the Conquering King destroys His enemies with the “brightness of His coming” (2 Thessalonians 2:8), He will establish world headquarters at Jerusalem, and then proceed to gather the peoples of Israel and Judah into Palestine to repopulate the land (Hosea 1:10; Ezekiel 37:21,22)—thus, Israel will be restored as a nation; the people “shall dwell safely all of them” (Ezekiel 38:8); and “Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls” (Zechariah 2:2-5).

Christ will restore true worship in the land. “And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, as in the former years” (Malachi 3:3,4).

At long last, Israel will be *reconciled* with God, and will become the model nation she was intended to be.

And that brings us to the next holy day...

## The Day of Atonement

God says: “Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a *Day of Atonement*; it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls [which means to *fast*]...” (Leviticus 23:27).

The word *atonement* in this verse is translated from the Hebrew word *kippurim* (singular: *kippur*), and is defined “coverings” (*Young’s*), or “expiation” (*Strong’s*).

The Day of Atonement, then, pictures the *covering*, or *expiation*, of something.

The sacrificial rituals of the Day of Atonement are described in Leviticus 16. The ceremony involved two a goats, which were to be presented “before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation” (verse 7). One of the two goats was to be a sin offering for the people.

“Then shall he [the high priest] kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil ...and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat: And he shall make ‘an *atonement* [Hebrew: *kaphar*: to cover] for the holy place, *because of the unclean ness of the children of Israel*, and because of their *transgressions* in all their *sins*: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness” (verses 15,16).

The sacrificial ritual was for the *covering* of the sins of the children of Israel. This is what is meant by the expression, “to make an atonement.”

However, “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4), for animal sacrificial offerings are merely “patterns of things in the heavens” (9:23); they portray the one true sacrifice that *does* cover, or expiate, sins—the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

“For Christ is not entered into the holy place made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entered into the holy place every year [on the Day of Atonement] with the blood of others; For then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to *put away sin* by the sacrifice of Himself” (Hebrews 9:24-26).

The Day of Atonement, then, might well be termed the *day of reconciliation*, for the expiation of sins facilitated by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ *reconciles* us to God the Father.

The deeply spiritual *present* significance of the day should be clear to all God’s people. But the day also carries tremendous *prophetic* significance.

Those called and converted in this age—those cleansed from their sins by the blood of Jesus Christ—are the “firstfruits” of God’s spiritual harvest, as the Day of Pentecost reveals. God’s work of *reconciliation* is still in the beginning stage—there is still much more to be done.

When God gathers the peoples of Israel to their own land, He will *reconcile* Himself to them—they will truly become God’s nation. They will become a model nation.

“And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations *afar* off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Micah 4:2,3).

At present, God is calling to salvation only a comparative few, but the time is coming when He will make His laws, and His way of salvation, known to the nations.

The Day of Atonement is a day of reconciliation, or “atonement.” It pictures that time when Israel and, ultimately, the nations of the world, will become “at one” with God.

Yes, the time is coming when all the nations of this world will submit—either voluntarily or by force—to the reign of Jesus Christ. God’s Word tells us that Christ and the saints will rule this earth for 1000 years (Revelation 20:4). This thousand-year reign is pictured in the next of God’s annual festivals.

## **The Feast of Tabernacles**

Turn again to Leviticus 23, and notice God’s instructions regarding the Feast of Tabernacles:

“Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath [the “eighth day” is a separate feast; it occurs immediately after the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles. For an explanation of the meaning of this day, write for our free publication, *Does God Love the World Enough to Save It?*] ...And ye shall keep it 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 [tents, or *tabernacles*] seven days; all that are Israelite born shall dwell in booths: 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” (verses 39,41-43).

The Feast of Tabernacles was an annual reminder to the Israelites that during their forty years of wandering in the wilderness, they had been pilgrims, sojourners, in search of the promised land.

Similarly, the feast reminds God's people today that they are pilgrims and sojourners in the "wilderness" of this present evil world, and directs their attention to the "promised land"—the Kingdom of God. The festival pictures the *millennial reign* of Jesus Christ. It points to that time when there will be one world government, with Jesus Christ sitting on the throne, ruling all nations. The feast portrays a time when true worship will be restored for all nations. Through the prophet Zechariah, God says, "And it shall come to pass, that 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).

Isaiah tells us, "And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall *all flesh* come to worship before me, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 66:23).

How many wars have been fought in the name of religion? How much strife has existed between people because of religious differences? How many have been persecuted, enslaved, put to death in the name of religion?

The time is coming when there will be no more religious strife, no more persecution, no more hatred, no more suspicion. Everyone will worship the same God; reap the benefits of obeying His laws. God's law will become the standard of every nation, every city, every community.

God says: "And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and do all His commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store [kneading-troughs]. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out" Deuteronomy 28:1-6).

Just think of what a wonderful world it will be when all the nations of this world really begin to obey the commandments of God. They will reap the blessings God promised to Israel for obedience. Famine, disease epidemics, flooding, drought—all these will become things of the past.

Listen to this prophecy concerning God's plan for reconstruction: "Fear not, thou worm of Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy redeemer, the



Holy One of Israel. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth: thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel. When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together: That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it” (Isaiah 41:14-20).

Yes, the time is coming when God is going to set His hand to heal our world. In spite of the enormous problems we face today, a happy, prosperous future awaits the inhabitants of planet earth.

In the meantime, we have the responsibility of submitting to God’s rule now, of looking to and relying on Jesus Christ as Lord and personal Savior, of obeying the Ten Commandments of God, of keeping His annual feasts and holy days.

What about you? Are you striving to obey God? Are you keeping His holy days? If you have not previously kept God’s feasts, would you like to begin keeping them?

The Church of God, International, will be holding holy day services in various locations across the United States and around the world-and you are invited to attend. Write or call for our *Holy Day Calendar*.

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