

Bible Study Series:

The Nations in the World Tomorrow Part 8

Feast of the Nations

Ingathering of the gentile peoples

By C M White v. 1.3

"Turn to me and be saved, **all the ends of the earth!** For I am God, and there is no other" (Is 45:22)



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Bible Study Series Outlines: The Nations in the World Tomorrow

The prophecies have much to say about the Millennial reign of the Messiah which includes peace, prosperity and of course a great spiritual harvesting of human souls which some non-Church of God preachers and writers emphasise.

However, they generally do not focus on the many prophecies concerning how He will reign; the actions He will take to enforce his rule; judgment and punishments upon nations; the role of Israel; the length of time it will take for Him to conquer the entire world; the New Covenant with Israel; the Temple of Ezekiel and such like.

The oracles against the nations are virtually ignored or glanced over. While many or most of the oracles are historical, they foreshadow or type future end-time events including the Day of the Lord; others are clearly Millennial. As we read the prophecies it becomes clear that God wants to have a relationship with all the peoples and nations of mankind – but only after they are broken and turn to Him. They will need to repent, serve Him and live in peace with each other. Then, and only then, will the Millennial blessings be provided to the nations.

So much is overlooked about His method of rulership over the nations, curses upon them for rebellion and punishments. The Millennium will not be a proverbial 'bed of roses' and world conquest will take some time. Gradually the nations will be brought to heel and national sins will decline over time.

For God is not only interested in personal relationships and repentance, but also national relationships and repentance.

This apparent gap in understanding of the Millennium (in many cases), I hope, is filled to some degree by the following studies. These are straight-forward Bible studies containing cross-references to other pertinent or parallel Scriptures, comments and references to assist. They are not exhaustive studies, scholarly works, study papers, or articles as such. They are elementary and uncomplicated studies that are easy to follow and read.

Bible Study: The Second Exodus and the Last Trump (part 1)

The Last Trump proclaims the Second Exodus for the Houses of Israel and Judah, commencing, it would seem, around the same time as that of the resurrection of the saints.

This Bible study teases out all Scriptures that details Israel's rescue from the jaws of national death during the Tribulation; the means of their transportation to the Holy Land; the purging out of the last rebels in the wilderness; and their entry into the Holy Land to be part of the first stages in the Messiah's global reign.

Israel and Judah will be re-united, the New Covenant made and the world's central Temple built and inaugurated (Ezekiel 40-48).

What will Israel be doing in the World Tomorrow? (part 2)

What is the Millennial role for Israel? Will it be just another nation or will she have the primacy? Does the Church replace Israel or will she rule through and with Israel?

This Bible study explores in detail the role that Israel will play in ruling the world under the Messiah.

It concentrates on an issue which has been neglected or forgotten due to a number of reasons, not least political correctness.

When do the Armies of Ezekiel 38 and 39 Invade Israel? (part 3)

In this study I set out to prove that the various peoples (mainly Japhetic and Hamitic) listed in Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39 constitute the remnants of the 200 million horde that warred with German-led Europe during the years just prior to the Messiah's return. This remnant will still be extant after the Messiah's return and are brought to heel by Him some years into His reign.

From the context, it is clear that this famous 'Gog & Magog' war will occur after Israel's arrival in the Holy Land but prior to or at the time of the building of the Temple (Ezekiel 40-48).

The Judging of the Nations (part 4)

The purpose of this study is to attempt to find clarity about Christ dealing with the ingathering of the nations during His reign on earth.

Many or most Christians totally overlook the fact that God does not only work with individuals and families – but also with nations. In other words He deals with societies or families that have grown big into nations – as one unit.

The interpretation of the word *judging* is determined by the context: it can be to sternly deal with; reign over with justice; settle disputes etc. A lot is said about His judging of the nations that it would behoove us to study this topic.

Status of the Nations in the World Tomorrow (part 5)

What will the nations be doing in the World Tomorrow? What will be their role? How will they relate to the House of Israel?

An elementary collation of the Millennial prophecies of the nations under the Messiah's reign will provide us with some information and insights into a topic seldom or never addressed

In this short, straight forward Bible study, all the various Scriptures concerning particular nations that are mentioned in millennial prophecies are sought out and assembled in order of their names.

The nations as found in the Millennial prophecies are listed and where appropriate cross-referenced or commented upon

“Kiss the son before he becomes angry, and you die where you stand”: The Messiah and the Nations (part 6)

Aspects of Millennial prophecy are over-looked by today’s Christendom. This includes the absolute determination of God and His Messiah to bring all nations to heel during His reign.

This includes severe wrath and punishment for any nation or leader that resists His reign. There is so much revealed on this in the Scriptures that it is almost bewildering why this aspect of the Millennium is overlooked. For a lot is mentioned about the judgment upon the nations - many are even mentioned by name. God does not merely judge individuals, but entire Church groups and even individual nations collectively. Why is this overlooked?

The Messiah is coming to forcefully reign over and judge the nations!

The Invisible Rulers over the Nations (part 7)

Why do we have such a vast variety of human nations (or species) on this earth? Is there a purpose for such human diversity?

The non-Israelitish peoples are mentioned so often throughout the Bible – either named specifically – or generally as *nations*, that we tend to read over these Scriptures.

This Bible Study seeks to inform the reader about God Himself ordaining human diversity – that is nations. Unfortunately, these gentile nations have powerful spirit Princes ruling over them, and empowering them on a predatory course or to inculcate negative attributes.

Yet He has a Plan for the nations – a means to offer them salvation with both the Church and Israel as His instruments in this endeavour, freeing them forever from these evil forces.

Abstract

As with so much Scripture and doctrines, the holy days are 'multi-layered' or dual in nature.

The Feast of Tabernacles is likewise multi-layered portraying several themes. One that will be given attention to in this Bible study is that of the ingathering of the gentile nations during the Millennium.

Introductory Comments

Many or most people who have an understanding of God's overall plan that is outlined in the Biblical holy days understand that the Feast of Tabernacles (also known as Sukkoth, Booths and Ingathering) portrays the future Millennial reign of the Messiah over the entire earth. [a list of Scriptures on the Feast of Tabernacles may be found in *Appendix One*]

It is a festival that also looks back at the Sinai wanderings where God's presence was so real – His presence in the cloud by day and pillar of fire at night. Their clothes and shoes did not wear out and the Israelites dwelt in temporary abodes.

The Covenant was made, laws introduced and righteous judgment was enforced.

Bible students are aware that this particular Feast also has historic reference; spiritual teaching of our temporal nature; Christ's central role in salvation; and various other typologies. None of these will be explored in much detail in this Bible Study.

It also portrays the future great 'harvest' of mankind – the bringing of all peoples under His reign and care. Israel is to be the instrument in doing so. The conversion of the gentile nations during the 1,000 years of the Messiah's reign which was taught in the old Worldwide Church of God and subsequent offshoot groups – but taught in only a minor way – is nigh.

It is the Ingathering or harvest aspect of this feast that is emphasised in this study.

"It is remarkable how many allusions to this feast occur in the writings of the prophets, as if its types were the goal of all their desire" (Alfred Edersheim in *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services*, p. 215, footnote1).

It will take time to bring all the nations to heel. Recall that the House of Israel would have been severely dealt with in the Tribulation and liberated at the Second Exodus.

But then it will be the time for the nations to be brought into the fold although that will take some time. One major rebellion during the early years of the Tribulation will be the famous battle outlined in Ezekiel 38 & 39 as understood by the old Worldwide Church of God – it was taught that these

forces would be the recalcitrant remnants of the 200 million strong Eastern hordes referred to in Rev 9:14-16 and 16:12. For instance, in the old booklet *Russia and China in Prophecy* we read:

“Notice, these nations [listed in Ezekiel 38 & 39] do not see and recognize the dread divinity, the might and power of the Eternal Christ, even after he has returned. He has to teach them that he is the Eternal!” (page 25)

“These ... Asian armies are also described in Ezekiel, chapters 38 and 39, where elements of those forces are prophesied to invade the Holy Land when all 12 tribes of Israel have returned ... These circumstances will be extant only after the coming of the Messiah, when surviving Eurasian forces will be supernaturally punished” (page 31).

“As we have seen, the coming Eurasian confederacy will devastate much of Western Europe. After Christ decimates the armies of all nations gathered at Armageddon, Gog will assemble a large army from among his surviving Eurasian forces ... The demise of Gog and his allies will furnish a powerful witness to the nations of the world.” (page 43)

Once every few years a sermon might mention this momentous event in passing. In addition, there were *World Tomorrow* radio programs explaining this in the 1950s and early 1960s because the protestant evangelists of that time (and decades thereafter) promoted the idea that Communist Russia and China would invade America. Herbert Armstrong set them straight on this issue while also warning about Communist infiltration in the West.

The *Good News* magazine contained an article that made reference to this as well:

“Ezekiel 38 and 39 describe a war that will take place against Israel after they have been reestablished and will be living in peace and prosperity. Isaiah 30:20-21 shows how we will need to be constantly ...

Problems? Certainly. But every Feast of Tabernacles will see more people coming to rejoice before the Lord. Every year greater numbers of people from every nation will venture to Jerusalem to learn the laws and ways of the God of Israel (Isa. 2:1-4, Mic. 4:1-5).” (“But what if ‘everything goes wrong’?,” *Good News*, Sept 1982, p. 9)

Even the *Systematic Theology Project* made mention of these battles:

“Then begins the millennial rule of Christ and the saints over the earth. After some continuing confrontations and battles (described in Ezek. 38 and 39), God's Kingdom shall be set up over all peoples; and Jesus Christ shall teach them God's laws, the way of happiness and eventually of eternal salvation.” (chapter on “Prophecy”, page 8 (or page 108 of the entire document))

Jewish Traditions and Explanations

To the Jews at the time of Christ, the Feast of Tabernacles was prophetic of the spiritual enlightenment that will be offered to the gentiles – with this task being granted to Israel on behalf of and guided by the Messiah and His representatives.

Pilgrims came from all over the region and in fact, some would take weeks to reach Jerusalem. Then they still had to prepare for the Feast by constructing a booth in which to dwell during this exciting and eventful period.

They dwelt in the booth for 8 days which represented tabernacling with God Himself.

Before you knew it there were thousands of booths all along the roofs, open areas and rooftops of Jerusalem.

Great celebrations took place at the Temple Mount and it is said that these spilled over into the Court of the Gentiles

Note what is expected for Feast of Tabernacle observation:

"On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD seven days. On the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest.

And you shall take on the first day the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days.

You shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It is a statute forever throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month.

You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All native Israelites shall dwell in booths,

that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God."

Thus Moses declared to the people of Israel the appointed feasts of the LORD." (Lev 23:39-44)

I would like to emphasise two aspects of these days, dwelling on verse 40:

1. It is the only festival that one is required to rejoice
2. On the first day they had to take fruit from trees, branches of palms, boughs of leafy trees and willows.

As a backdrop, let us take a look at Jewish traditions which may sometimes prove helpful in studying and understanding certain aspects of holy day typologies:

"The Bible does not specify precisely which trees and fruits are to be taken.

"Jewish authorities have interpreted the 'fruit of goodly trees' to mean the etrog [ie large citrus fruit tree], and the 'branches of palms' to mean the lulav [ie date palms]. The 'boughs of thick trees' refers to the myrtle, and 'willows of the brook' are the familiar willow trees. These four species were to be held in the hand and blessed each day of the Sukkot holiday" (A Kolotch, *The Jewish Book of Why*, p.250).

In the book *Celebrate! The Complete Jewish Holidays Handbook*, we read:

"Khag HaAsif (Festival of Ingathering) was to take place once the produce of the vineyards and product of the threshing rooms was collected (Exo.23:14-17; 34:22). Beginning on the fifteenth of the seventh month, this Khag Adonai (Festival of God) would last seven days, the first a sacred occasion when no work was to be done. **The Israelites were to take the 'product of hadar trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook' (later called the four species) and rejoice with them before God.**

"Then another dimension was added as a 'law for all time.' For the duration of the festival the Israelites were to live in booths (sukkot) 'so that future generations will know that I made the Israelite people live in sukkot when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I the Lord your God' (Leviticus 23:39-43)" (p.211). [emphasis mine]

"The specifics of the Jewish harvest festival were designed to protect the Israelites from the pagan influences they would encounter once they entered Canaan. While heathens worshipped nature itself, the Jews were to worship the Creator and Renewer of nature. While the pagans celebrated with excess and debauchery, the Israelite pilgrims were to focus on the moral significance of the festivities.

"The purpose of rejoicing was not sensual abandon but to honor and thank God for His blessings, spread good fortune, and act with sensitivity" (p.212). [emphasis mine and a lesson for us today]

Josephus adds to this historical knowledge:

"Upon the fifteenth day of the same month, when the season of the year is changing for winter, the law enjoins us to pitch tabernacles in every one of our houses, so that we preserve ourselves from the cold of that time of the year; as also that when we should arrive at our own country, and come to that city which we should have then for our metropolis, because of the temple therein to be built, and keep a festival of eight days, and offer burnt offerings, and sacrifice thank offerings, that **we should then carry in our hands a branch of myrtle,**

and willow, and a bough of the palm tree, with the addition of the pome citron" (*Antiquities of the Jews*, bk.3, chap. 10, par.4). [emphasis mine]

An intriguing clue what all this means is found in Nehemiah 8:15

“And they found it written in the Law that the LORD had commanded by Moses that the people of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month,

and that they should proclaim it and publish it in all their towns and in Jerusalem, "Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths, as it is written.” (Neh 8:14-15)

<http://www.wildolive.co.uk/sukot.htm> explains this

“Literally translated it lists, "branches of *zayith* (wild olive), and branches of tree *shemen* (oil) (cultivated olive) and branches of *hadas* (Myrtle) and branches of *Tamarim* (palms) and branches of trees thickets.

It is interesting to see wild olive branches included in the Feast of Ingathering right back in the times of the prophets.

The Four Species

The Jews have a pictorial ritual using a citron (or Etrog) and branches from three trees, bound together, representing four sorts of people, all bound together in one (Jewish) nation under GOD'S care .

At various times during the celebrations, the four species (*Arba minim*) are waved in all six directions (North, South, East, West, up and down) to emphasise that God is everywhere. They are also carried in procession around the *bimah* in the synagogue. The processions, carrying the arba minim are called *Hoshannas* because a prayer including the refrain *Hosha na* is recited. *Hosha na* means "Save us". (Here we have the connection with palm branches and hosannas as *Yeshua* rode into Jerusalem)

The Nations

The bundle of the four species is waved to all four points of the compass, signifying that the ministry is to the whole world through God's chosen people of priests (Israel). Also, seventy bulls were sacrificed during *Sukkot*; seventy being the number of nations in the known world at that time. Thus *Sukkot* is a feast for the nations - not just Israel.

Tabernacles figures prominently in the last chapters of Zechariah. The prophet talks of the nations coming to attack Jerusalem and then, after God has defeated them, of the nations coming up to Jerusalem at Tabernacles. Clearly this talks of

representatives of the nations (the armies first, and then the nations' chosen representatives)

Remember that Tabernacles is all about the culmination or completion of God's purposes, when Jerusalem is the metropolis of God's Kingdom on Earth - not just of Israel. Tabernacles is also about Ingathering. The *Talmud* and the *Mishna* single out Tabernacles as being prophetic of when, after Israel's national Day of Atonement, **the nation will be the channel of blessing for the world - spreading the knowledge of their Messiah over the whole earth.**" [emphasis mine]

Alfred Edersheim writes in *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services* throws additional light on this intriguing matter:

"As usual, we are met at the outset by a controversy between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The law had it: 'Ye shall take you on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook,' which the Sadducees understood (as do the modern Karaite Jews) to refer to the materials whence the booths were to be constructed, while the Pharisees applied it to what the worshippers were to carry in their hands. The latter interpretation is, in all likelihood, the correct one; it seems borne out by the account of the festival at the time of Nehemiah, when the booths were constructed of branches of other trees than those mentioned in Leviticus 23; and it was universally adopted in practice at the time of Christ" (p.273).

"The most joyous of all festive seasons in Israel was that of the 'Feast of Tabernacles.' It fell on a time of year when the hearts of the people would naturally be full of thanks-fulness, gladness, and expectancy. All the crops had been long stored; and now all fruits were also gathered, the vintage past, and the land only awaited the softening and refreshment of the 'latter rain,' to prepare it for a new crop ... If the beginning of the harvest had pointed back to the birth of Israel in their Exodus from Egypt, and forward to the true Passover-sacrifice in the future; if the corn harvest was connected to the giving of the law on Mount Sinai in the past, and the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost; the harvest-thanksgiving of the Feast of Tabernacles reminded Israel, on the one hand, of their dwelling in booths in the wilderness, while, on the other hand, **it pointed to the final harvest when Israel's mission should be completed, and all nations gathered unto the Lord**" (p.268-269). [emphasis mine]

"... Thus in its reference to the harvest it is called 'the feast of ingathering' (Exo.23:16; 34:22); in that to the history of Israel in the past, 'the Feast of Tabernacles' (Lev. 23:34, and specifically verse 43; Deut.16:13, 16; 31:10; II Chron.8:13; Ezra 3:4); while its symbolic bearing on the future is brought out in its designation as emphatically 'the feast' (I Kings 8:2; II Chron.5:3; 7:8,9); and 'the Feast of Jehovah' (so literally in Lev.23:39). In this sense also Josephus, Philo, and the

Rabbis (in many passages of the Mishnah) **single it out from all the other feasts**" (p.269-270). [emphasis mine]

During the Feast of Tabernacles 189 animals were sacrificed as explained in several Bible studies over the years.

The figure of 189 included 70 bullocks representing the 70 gentile nations (Noah's 3 sons, 16 grandsons and 51 other descendants). The offering of the bullocks representing the redemption of the nations and their being offered to God – to be accepted by Him. (NB 70 people of the household of Jacob journeyed as pilgrims to Egypt (Gen 46:27) – as if to portray Israel were the first peoples God was dealing with and would rule the nations.

Another work to take note of is *The Fall Feasts of Israel*:

"The order of sacrifices on Sukkot is spelled out in minute detail in the book of Numbers. Never before had so many sacrifices been required of Israel on any one day. The vast number of sacrifices were commensurate with Israel's depth of thanksgiving for a bountiful harvest.

"A fascinating and mysterious pattern emerges from the seemingly endless list of sacrifices. No matter how the offerings are grouped or counted, their number always remains divisible by the number seven. During the week are offered 70 bullocks, 14 rams and 98 lambs -- altogether 182 sacrifices (26 x 7), to which must be added 336 (48 x 7) tenths of ephahs of flour for the meal offering ...

"It was no coincidence that this seven-day holiday, which took place in the height of the seventh month, had the perfect number, seven, imprinted on its sacrifices. It was by divine design that the final holiday ... bore on its sacrifices the seal of God's perfect approval" (p.163 of *The Fall Feasts of Israel* by M & Z Glaser).

As pointed out above, there are a number of different categories of 182 sacrifices and the meal offering that are divisible by 7, viz:

- 70 bulls = 7 x 10
- 14 rams = 7 x 2
- 98 lambs = 7 x 14
- 336 tenths of ephahs of flour = 7 x 48

In addition, consider that this is the seventh holy day held in the seventh month.

"The sacrifices made throughout the week -- a total of seventy-- were understood to represent the seventy nations that then existed in the world. Their well-being, like Israel's, depended on whether or not they would receive the rain needed for food supplies. Blessings like rain were understood as rewards for proper behavior (Deut. 11:13-15) (In his vision of messianic times, Zechariah presents lack of rain as punishment for the nations that fail to make pilgrimage to Jerusalem on Sukkot to worship God, which would show that they

accept His sovereignty. This prophecy, and those of Isaiah and Micah calling on all nations to show their acceptance of God's sovereignty by going to His Temple -- combined with the connection between Sukkot and fulfillment, **the ultimate being messianic redemption -- encouraged many proselytes to join the pilgrims in Jerusalem**" (p.214 of *Celebrate! The Complete Jewish Holidays Handbook*)

This will be the time that God will be calling all to salvation – when He will be saving the world. A time of true global evangelisation when Israelitish missions will be sent to the nations in all corners of the world.

Of further interest is the Solomonic typology.

Many scholars of Biblical typology are of the view that, amongst other things, the Solomonic era and Temple portrayed the Millennium in a number of ways.

For instance, when the Temple was dedicated it was during this Feast – which pictures the Millennium. Notice:

"Likewise, when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a far country for your name's sake

(for they shall hear of your great name and your mighty hand, and of your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this house,

hear in heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name.

"If your people go out to battle against their enemy, by whatever way you shall send them, and they pray to the LORD toward the city that you have chosen and the house that I have built for your name, then hear in heaven their prayer and their plea, and maintain their cause." (IKings 8:41-45)

This seems prophetic of the Millennium:

"For I know their works and their thoughts, and the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory,

and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow [Heb for *draw* is *maw-shak'* which may refer to the ancient Moschi or Meschech], to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations." (Is 66:18-19)

Other typologies include:

- His Temple was full of splendour, typing the Millennium (IKings 6:1-14. Cp Zech 6:12-13)
- Fair judgment and rulings were the order of the day (IKings 2:25-46. Cp Matt 25:31-32)
- Rule with great wisdom (IKings 3:5-13. Cp Is 11:1-5)
- A time of peace – as the Millennium will eventually be a time of peace (IChron 22:6-9; Cp Is 2:2-4; 9:6-8; 11:6-9)
- Glory of the Lord visible (IKings 8:6-11. Cp Is 24:23; 40:5; 60:1-3 Is 4:2-6; Ezek 43:1-5; Hag 2:3-9)
- Israel will reign supreme (IKings 10:23-27. Cp; Mic 4:2; Zech 8:20-23)

Gathering in of the nations – their time to be offered salvation

So as we can see, there was great rejoicing and celebration during the Feast of Tabernacles for the Lord gathering in all the nations – by offering them salvation.

Starting in a small way, gentile peoples were being called during the time of the early Church and ever since:

“Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take from them a people for his name.

And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written,

“After this I will return, and I will rebuild the tent of David that has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it,

that the remnant of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old.’

Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God” (Acts 15:14-19)

Over some period of time during the Messiah’s reign, the nations will learn to repent gradually and sequentially and will, at last, be considered to be like Israel as a number of Scriptures demonstrate.

“Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!” (Ps 33:12 *ESV*. Cp Ps 47:7-9; Jer 18:6-10)

“All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you.

For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations.” (Ps 22:27-28)

“For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm!

God reigns over the nations; God sits on his holy throne.

The princes of the peoples gather as the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God; he is highly

exalted!" (Ps 47:7-9) [cp Ps 33:12; Ezek 25:14; Is 11:14; 19:24-25; Gen 27:29]

"To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song. May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, Selah.

That your way may be known on earth, **your saving power among all nations.**

Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. Selah.

Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!

The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, shall bless us.

God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!" (Ps 67:1-7)

"On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.

And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations." (Is 25:6-7)

"Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, "The LORD will surely separate me from his people"; and let not the eunuch say, "Behold, I am a dry tree."

For thus says the LORD: "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant,

I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.

"And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant—

these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples."

The Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel [Second Exodus], declares, **"I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered."** (Is 56:3-8)

"For I know their works and their thoughts, and **the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory,**

and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations.

And they shall bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to the LORD, on horses and in chariots and in litters and on

mules and on dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD.

And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the LORD.” (Is 66:18-21)

“At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the LORD, and **all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the LORD in Jerusalem**, and they shall no more stubbornly follow their own evil heart.” (Jer 3:17)

“In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old, that they may possess the remnant of Edom and **all the nations who are called by my name,**” declares the LORD who does this.” (Amos 9:11-12)

“Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for behold, I come and I will dwell in your midst, declares the LORD.

And **many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people.** And I will dwell in your midst, and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.” (Zech. 2:10-11).

This great harvest of humans – the nations – to be converted, offered salvation and come under the control of the Messiah is one of the meanings of this holy day period.

How will it be executed? Through Israel as His instruments to rule and help convert the nations to Him. The nations conquered by Israel during the early part of the Messiah’s reign will also be tried and tested to see where their hearts really are: with Him or with selfishness.

As explained in the Bible study *The Judging of the Nations*, this great harvest (and judging) is God assessing the nations to see if they really do want salvation or not.

Metaphorically, a *harvest* is normally an allusion to some sort of judgment, assessment or punishment.

He is God of harvests and Israel can become His harvest (Hos 6:11) and He can even take the harvest away (Hos 2:9; Is 18:4-6; Jer 12:13).

His harvest can be severe such as that on sinful Babylon (Jer 51:33). These sorts of harvests do not display the rejoicing that occurred during the Feast of Tabernacles – it portrayed severity of punishment.

Similar language is used by Christ in Matthew 13:30, 38-39 and also used as a metaphor for judgment in Rev 14:15.

But Israel must be punished and cleansed prior to them being upright and ready to execute the conquest and conversion of the nations. Their ultimate duty as a servant people to help uplift the nations will then be fulfilled.

“In that day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and honor of the survivors of Israel.

And he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning.

Then the LORD will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory there will be a canopy.

There will be a booth for shade by day from the heat, and for a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain.” (Is 4:2-6)

Refer to the Bible studies *The Second Exodus and the Last Trump* and *What will Israel be doing in the World Tomorrow?* for further information and detail.

Now Israel will be ready to invade and bring to heel the nations:

“I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, **and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.**

As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double.

For I have bent Judah as my bow; I have made Ephraim its arrow. I will stir up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and wield you like a warrior's sword.” (Zech 9:10-13)

Why Rejoicing?

The Feast of Tabernacles is a time of special rejoicing by the Jews. Why is this the case?

Answer: they realize that God actually **commands** His people to rejoice during that Feast. It is a time to be happy, celebrate and demonstrate to Him your gratitude for all He has done for you, Israel and soon – all the nations of mankind.

Note the following Scriptures on rejoicing of which are millennial prophecies:

“The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them (Israel); and the desert shall blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and **rejoice** even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God.” (Is 35:1-2)

“Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, in the city of our God, His holy mountain. Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion in the far north, the city of the great King. God, in her palaces, has made Himself known as a stronghold ... Let Mount Zion be glad, let the daughters of Judah **rejoice** because of Your judgments. Walk about Zion and go around her; count her towers; consider her ramparts; go through her palaces, that you may tell it to the next generation” (Psalm 48:1-3, 11-13).

“This is our God, we have waited for Him and He will save us; this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and **rejoice** in His salvation” (Isa. 25: 9).

Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; Let the sea roar and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein; Then shall all the trees of the wood **sing joyously** Before the Lord; for He is come. He is come to judge the earth. He judges the world in righteousness And the peoples in His faithfulness.” (Ps 96:11-13)

“Jehovah reigneth, let the earth exult: Let the multitude of the isles **rejoice**. Cloud and darkness are round about Him, Righteousness and judgment are the foundations of His throne. A fire goeth before Him, And consumeth His adversaries all around. His lightnings flash over the world: The earth saw and trembled, The mountains melted like wax at the presence of Jehovah – At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.” (Ps 97:1-5)

“Let the sea roar and the fulness thereof; The world and its inhabitants. Let the rivers **clap their hands**, Let the hills together **sing for joy** Before Jehovah - For He came to judge the earth; He shall judge the world in righteousness. And the peoples with fairness.” (Ps 97:7-9)

“... the mountains and the hill; shall break forth before you into **singing**, and all the trees of the field shall **clap their hands**” (Isa. 55: 12).

“**Sing and rejoice**, O daughter of Zion, for behold, I come and I will dwell in your midst, declares the LORD.

And **many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people**. And I will dwell in your midst, and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.” (Zech. 2:10-11).

“For the LORD has ransomed Jacob and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. [ie the Second Exodus]

They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and **they shall be radiant** over the goodness of the LORD, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall be like a watered garden, and they shall languish no more.

Then shall the young women **rejoice in the dance**, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy; I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.

I will feast the soul of the priests with abundance, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, declares the LORD.” (Jer 31:1-14)

Why rejoice so much? Because so many nations will be joined to the Lord during His reign. It will be a time of outgoing concern for others, prosperity and security for all.

“To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song. May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, Selah.

that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations.

Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. Selah.

Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!

The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, shall bless us.

God shall bless us; let all the ends of the earth fear him!” (Ps 67:1-7)

We should be so happy for what God will do among the nations. Rejoice in this future event!

[refer to *Appendix Two* that contains an old Worldwide Church of God article concerning rejoicing at the Feast]

Concluding Remarks

This Bible study has highlighted a very important aspect of the Feast of Tabernacles: the ingathering or conversion of the gentile nations under guidance from Israel, during the millennial reign of the Messiah. This is the great Fall Harvest that Herbert W Armstrong used to mention, though little detail was provided.

The old Worldwide Church of God taught throughout its sermons and literature that God is not calling many people today to spiritual salvation whether they be Israelite or gentile. Here are extracts from the literature of that time:

“God's Spiritual Harvests

In the land settled by ancient Israel (later known as Palestine and now occupied by the modern state of Israel), there is a small spring grain harvest followed by a much larger late summer and autumn harvest. These yearly agricultural harvests are symbolic of God's spiritual "harvests" of mankind!

Today, we can understand from the teachings of Christ and the apostles that God intends the spring festivals to illustrate that all those He has called to become His Spirit-begotten children before Christ's Second Coming are only the "firstfruits" harvest (Jas. 1:18)—only the relatively small beginning of His spiritual harvest of individuals into His divine Family.

The festivals of the much larger autumn harvest season picture God's calling of thousands of millions of humanity to salvation and Sonship in His glorious Family after Christ's return.

In Leviticus 23, we find a summary of these annual festivals. The first three, beginning with the Passover, are memorials of the first part of God's Master Plan. They picture the firstfruits of Christ's labors. The last four festivals look forward to the future and show how and when God will reap the great autumn harvest of people into His Family!" (*Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course, Lesson 23, "What is God's Purpose for Mankind?"*, pp4-5)

Herbert W Armstrong wrote the following in his famous booklet *Pagan Holidays – or God's Holy Days – Which?*

"Notice that the Festival of Tabernacles is to be held "at the year's end" (Ex. 34:22). In this verse the Festival of Tabernacles or Booths is specifically called the "feast of ingathering." The harvest year ended at the beginning of autumn. Just as Pentecost pictures the early harvest — this church age, so the Festival of Ingatherings or Tabernacles pictures the fall harvest — the great harvest of souls in the Millennium!" (p. 44. A longer extract is found at Appendix Four)

The Jews, some scholars and many Messianics understand that to one degree or another. Yet the Churches of God have given very little attention to it.

The millennium, as we know, will be a time when Godly knowledge and practice will be spread by Israel across the entire world and engulf the gentiles:

"They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." (Is 11:9)

Yet the nations will be tested during this period, to see where their hearts are. This has been written on extensively in the Bible studies *The Judging of the Nations* and "*Kiss the son before he becomes angry, and you die where you stand*": *The Messiah and the Nations*.

"As the Millennium, therefore, although a vast advance ... upon this present time, will not be a perfect state to the inhabitants of the earth because they will still be in the flesh; **it will be necessary ... that there should be ... a test of their obedience ... in the Millennium.**" (*Outlines of Prophetic Truth* by R Brown)

This great 1,000 year period itself has a variety of purposes, including being a foretype of the eternal Kingdom itself:

"In the light of the whole Scripture, it appears that the Millennium is like a "firstfruits" of the eternal state. **The Millennium will be like a preview of the eternal messianic kingdom that will be revealed fully in the eternal state.** Therefore, because the two are alike in nature, they share distinct similarities. Yet because they are both different revealed time periods, they would likewise reflect some dissimilarities ..." (Ralph H. Alexander, *Ezekiel, Everyman's Bible Commentary*, Vol.6, page 945, note on *Does Ezekiel 40-48 Relate to the Millennium or to the Eternal State?*)

Professor James McGrath concurs

"... the millennial period either foreshadows or symbolises this eternal ideal" (Prof James McGrath in *The Only True God: Early Christian Monotheism in its Jewish Context*, page74).

It will be a time of extraordinary splendour and happiness, though with some trials and tests. It will not be a 'bed of roses.' But it will be **the wonderful world tomorrow!**

"All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and **all the families of the nations shall worship before you.**

For kingship belongs to the LORD, and **he rules over the nations.**" (Ps 22:27-28)

"On this mountain the LORD of hosts will **make for all peoples** a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. [foretyped by the Feast of Tabernacles]

And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations." (Is 25:6-7)

Then, and only then, will the nations be free of sin and come to salvation.



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Appendix One

Scriptures on the Feast of Tabernacles

Exodus 23:14

"Three times a year you shall celebrate a feast to Me."

Exodus 23:16

"Also you shall observe the Feast of the Harvest of the first fruits of your labors from what you sow in the field; also the Feast of the Ingathering at the end of the year when you gather in the fruit of your labors from the field."

Exodus 34:22-23

"You shall celebrate the Feast of Weeks, that is, the first fruits of the wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the turn of the year. "Three times a year all your males are to appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel."

Leviticus 23:33-34

"Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'On the fifteenth of this seventh month is the Feast of Booths for seven days to the LORD."

Leviticus 23:40

"Now on the first day you shall take for yourselves the foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days."

Leviticus 23:37

"These are the appointed times of the LORD which you shall proclaim as holy convocations, to present offerings by fire to the LORD--burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each day's matter on its own day"

Numbers 29:12-15

"Then on the fifteenth day of the seventh month you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work, and you shall observe a feast to the LORD for seven days."

You shall present a burnt offering, an offering by fire as a soothing aroma to the LORD: thirteen bulls, two rams, fourteen male lambs one year old, which are without defect; and their grain offering, fine flour mixed with oil: three-tenths of an ephah for each of the thirteen bulls, two-tenths for each of the two rams, and a tenth for each of the fourteen lambs"

Deuteronomy 16:13

"You shall celebrate the Feast of Booths seven days after you have gathered in from your threshing floor and your wine vat"

2 Chronicles 8:12-13

"Then Solomon offered burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of the LORD which he had built before the porch; and did so according to the daily rule, offering them up according to the commandment of Moses, for the sabbaths, the new moons and the three annual feasts--the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Booths."

Ezra 3:4

"They celebrated the Feast of Booths, as it is written, and offered the fixed number of burnt offerings daily, according to the ordinance, as each day required"

Nehemiah 8:17-18

"The entire assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and lived in them. The sons of Israel had indeed not done so from the days of Joshua the son of Nun to that day And there was great rejoicing. He read from the book of the law of God daily, from the first day to the last day And they celebrated the feast seven days, and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly according to the ordinance."

John 7:2-3

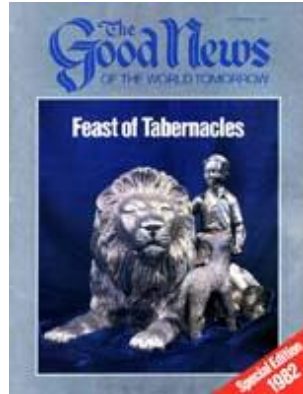
"Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near. Therefore His brothers said to Him, "Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing."

Appendix Two

Why Should You Rejoice at the Feast?

By Clayton D Steep

Good News Magazine, September 1982, VOL. XXIX, NO. 8: 7-10



You are specifically commanded by God to rejoice at the Feast of Tabernacles. But why? And what should you rejoice about?

There's no doubt about it. We all like to be happy.

God designed us that way. He knows happiness is the best state to be in.

I Timothy 1:11 calls God the "blessed God." The word blessed here actually can be translated "happy." God is the "happy God."

And that is the way He wants us to learn to be always. He ordained His commandments and laws for the purpose of producing and preserving happiness.

The Bible shows God wants us to learn to rejoice all the time. "Rejoice evermore," urged the apostle Paul (I Thess. 5:16).

Paul would, of course, be the first to agree that this life has periods of severe trial, even for Christians. But, considering the final outcome — that all things work together for good to those who love God (Rom. 8:28) — we should be able to rejoice even in trials (Jas. 1:2). "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice," Paul emphasized (Phil. 4:4).

If that is true all year long, it is especially so at the Festival season.

Among the instructions God gave about how to observe His feasts, time and again He gave the command to rejoice in regard to the Feast of Tabernacles. "Ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God," says Leviticus 23:40, for example.

Not only should you as an individual rejoice, but you should help others rejoice. The Feast is a time to come together with members of your family to worship before the Creator. It is a family occasion. And those who are alone — that is to say, without members of their physical families in attendance — are to be included in the rejoicing as well (Deut. 16:14).

Everyone is to have a happy time!

God's Church is one family. There should be no hard feelings among any of its members at the Feast (or, for that matter, at any other time!), no discourtesy, no competing for advantages, no selfishness — only seeking to give and serve in unity of spirit (Ps. 133:1). Each of us should, as much as lies within us, assure that not one unpleasant incident mars the Feast for ourselves or for anyone else. There should be only rejoicing.

God's Holy Days are rich with true meaning. Rejoice in that meaning and have a good time within the bounds of God's laws. That's the rule of the Feast.

Rejoice about the past

Whatever your background, whatever kind of life you had before becoming a Christian, rejoice about it. Rejoice about the experiences you had, the lessons you learned. Be thankful for that which was pleasant and profitable. And for that which was not pleasant, at least you can be thankful that it is past.

Since you have been called to a new life in Christ, you have left behind all the sins and mistakes of your former life. This certainly is a cause for rejoicing: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (Ps. 32:1). "My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee," David exclaimed, "and my soul, which thou hast redeemed" (Ps. 71:23).

Rejoice also about the experiences you've had so far in your Christian life. Recall what God has done for you — the times He has helped you, the strength He has given you, the lessons He has taught you.

Never forget these experiences. Take time to recall and profit from them. The very reason you are now dwelling in a temporary tabernacle of flesh is to learn lessons that will qualify you for an eternal inheritance. Rejoice that God has been working out His salvation in your life.

Rejoice about the present

The Feast of Tabernacles is an excellent opportunity to take inventory of all your blessings, to be thankful for them. And to tell others about them.

Have you ever been to a get together or party where the conversation just seemed to be stuck on trivia? Actually, it probably didn't stick there very long; it more than likely began to degenerate as conversations in such situations often do.

It is to be hoped that you will not find yourself in such a circumstance at the Feast. But if you do, start referring to some of the things you are thankful for. Do it in a natural way — not like some of the boisterous, so-called testimonies certain religious groups in the world are noted for. You aren't trying to "witness for the Lord," as they term it. You are just expressing gratitude to other brethren for some of the things God has done for you.

God listens for such conversations and they are noted in a book of remembrance, as Malachi 3:16 points out. Start the ball rolling. You may be surprised at how the whole tenor of conversation changes. (If it doesn't change, perhaps you ought to consider "rejoicing" elsewhere!)

Be thankful for the fact that God has called you, that you are among those personally and individually selected by the almighty God to be part of His Work and to partake of salvation now. Be thankful for the Holy Spirit, the Church and the brethren.

In addition to all the blessings in the spiritual realm, be grateful for all the physical blessings you have. Take time during the Feast to think about them. And to rejoice about them.

Rejoice in trials

It's easy to rejoice when all is going well, but how can you rejoice when things are not going smoothly, when you have major problems to go back to after the Feast, when you are up against an obstacle, persecution, even physical pain? That question is often asked.

But on what level are such problems? Are they not on the physical, material level — that is to say, the level having to do with this present, temporary existence? Of course they are!

Not a one of them can rob you of your eternal inheritance. Let's keep things in perspective! The reason we reside in temporary dwellings annually at the Feast of Tabernacles is to remind us that this life is only for a short while. We are only pilgrims.

We need to stop letting this limited, transitory, earthly sphere dominate our thoughts. "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth," wrote Paul (Col. 3:2, Revised Standard Version). How well we do that will determine how much we can rejoice even in the face of

severe trials.

If, with the eyes of faith, we are looking to Jesus Christ and the deliverance He shall surely provide — at the time that is best for us, in the way that is best for us — what is there that should be able to deprive us of joy?

No problem in the world can take our salvation from any of us against our will. Read carefully Romans 8:35-39, letting the meaningful words sink in: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is In Christ Jesus our Lord."

Rejoice about God's laws

We should rejoice at the Feast about the way of life God has given us — His laws and commandments. This is contrary to our carnal, natural minds. But let's let that part of us that is being converted by God's Spirit rejoice.

Paul admitted his nature was contrary to God's laws (Rom. 7:23-25). But, he wrote, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (verse 22). As David expressed it, "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart" (Ps. 19:8).

If you have been in God's Church for any length of time, you no doubt know what an exhilarating experience it is when you do everything right according to God's instructions and the results are strikingly obvious: Everything turns out just fine. And you wonder, Why can't I do that more often?

You can. We all can, if we put more effort into it. After all, what is more important during this short period of time we are dwelling in these tabernacles of flesh than to learn to obey and delight in God's laws?

Rejoice about the future

As God's children, our lot our inheritance — is not in this life. Our hope is to awake in the resurrection, or to be instantly changed at the Second Coming of Christ (Ps. 17:15). We should never lose sight of that great occasion. At the Feast we are celebrating the fact that this fleeting life is not all there is. Far from it. What really counts is the life to come. And only what leads to that life matters now.

If, at the Feast location you attend this year, you have a view of the stars in the night sky, take time to look up at them. Gaze at the heavens. Let your mind try to encompass all those lights. Out there in the known universe are an estimated hundred billion galaxies, each with a hundred billion stars. And who knows what lies beyond that? Yet God comprehends it all. He created it all. He controls it all.

What does that say about the level upon which the God Family lives and operates? Can you imagine yourself someday stepping out of the physical existence that now confines you and "inhabiting eternity" along with God (Isa. 57:15)? Can you imagine yourself sharing the inheritance of all things with Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:17)?

Well, try to imagine it. Get used to the thought, because it is in your future and it is going to happen to you if you remain faithful to your calling!

The cheap tinsel this world has to offer can't even begin to compare to the glorified state we shall enter. The Feast of Tabernacles pictures that wonderful time. What a blessing it is to understand the meaning of God's feasts and to be able to rejoice in what they portray!

"Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound [an expression often translated "the festal sound" or "the sound of the trumpet"]: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day" (Ps. 89:15-16).

Appendix Three

But What If 'Everything Goes Wrong'?

By Art Docken

Good News Magazine, September 1982, VOL. XXIX, NO. 8: 8-9

The barracks was a long, narrow room with a door at one end and a single window at the other. Bare, unpainted, wooden walls and worn, splintered floorboards made the room about as inviting as a county jail.

Ancient cots — 10 to 15 of them — sat perpendicular to the wall. Equally aged pads served for mattresses and a single, threadbare blanket lay on each bed, to be used to ward off the near-freezing night chill. What few belongings the occupants possessed were hung from nails driven into the wall.

The common toilet was in another building down the muddy street. The shower room was in the other direction. The floor and one wall in the shower room were concrete. Out of the wall protruded several pipes from which poured water of one temperature — cold. Of course, there was no heat in any of the rooms.

Sound like a prisoner of war camp? A young man who lived under those conditions wrote to our office in Manila, Philippines, some years ago and described his feelings during his days at that camp.

"I thank God for making it possible for me to attend the Feast of Tabernacles!" he wrote. This was, he said, the first time he had ever slept on a real bed, the first time he had ever used a shower. It was also the first time he had ever eaten three balanced meals in one day, fellowshiped with God's people, sang psalms, heard a choir singing praises to God or listened to a minister of God preach a sermon.

Yes, this young man was describing his first Feast of Tabernacles at Baguio City, Philippines. The drab barracks, cold showers, sparse meals, the rather inexperienced choir and even the speakers were all something rare and wonderful to him.

"Now," he declared, "I know what the world tomorrow will be like — I can imagine how wonderful it will be."

This man truly rejoiced in the Feast in spite of what many would have considered unbearably harsh conditions. For him, perhaps, it was easy to rejoice — so much of what he experienced was new and better than he had ever known before. It's unfortunate, but many of us are not that "blessed."

God commands His people to rejoice at the Feast no matter what the conditions are (Deut. 16:14-15, Lev. 23:40). And yet we are often beset by problems, both great and small, in preparing for and attending the Feast.

How can we rejoice when our car breaks down or our accommodations are not as nice as we had hoped for? How can we rejoice when a family member becomes ill and misses sermons, dances and other activities? Does God really expect us to rejoice if everything seems to go wrong and we think we are having a terrible time?

Yes, He does. Remember, God does not promise that you will have no problems. He does not command you to "have a great time." He commands you to rejoice and there is a difference.

Certainly, most of us have a wonderful time at the Feast. It is exciting to gather together with God's people, sing praises to God with one voice, hear inspired sermons. But we will have problems. We all do. But that, too, is part of the Feast.

The first year that the Feast of Tabernacles was in Baguio City, a typhoon raged through the Philippines. Roads were washed out, airports closed, electrical power was cut. Half of the members were unable to even reach Baguio City.

At the opening service a few candles were lit and some who had flashlights brought them to shine on the minister, Pedro Ortiguero. As the members sat in the drafty hall, wet and cold, M r. Ortiguero read from God's Word the instructions concerning the Feast of Tabernacles. When he reached verse 40 of Leviticus 23 he read with special emphasis, "And ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days."

"Brethren," said Mr. Ortiguero, "God commands us to rejoice and so we are going to rejoice in spite of everything!" How could they rejoice? Because they understood that the Feast pictured a better world tomorrow. They realized that the Feast looked into the future — that it did not focus on today's problems.

The difficulties we encounter in order to observe the Feast are as much a part of the Feast as are the sermons and other activities. Do you really think that all will be perfect on this earth on the day Christ returns? Certainly not.

The earth will be a chaotic mess (Isa. 24:1-6), probably similar to the wasteland described in Genesis 1:2. Someone will have to clean up that mess and we, God's people, will be the only ones able to do it properly.

Gathering and teaching Israel will be difficult. They will have been prisoners of war, half dead and still ignorant of God's way of life. It will take patience to teach them the proper way to live. And that's just Israel. Every other nation on earth will also require training.

But we will do it, patiently working with those people just as we must carefully deal with the unconverted (and sometimes the "converted"!) at the Feast. Not everyone will suddenly rush to Jerusalem to accept God's ways -Zechariah 14:16-19 proves that.

Ezekiel 38 and 39 describe a war that will take place against Israel after they have been reestablished and will be living in peace and prosperity. Isaiah 30:20-21 shows how we will need to be constantly working with people who want to go their own way.

All mankind will learn a new language (Zeph. 3:9). Have you ever tried to learn a foreign language? That will take much time and patience right there.

The waste cities will be rebuilt (Isa. 61:4), but they will be rebuilt properly. That means a lot of tearing down and cleaning up. We will solve massive problems of food and water supply, proper sanitary facilities — even providing vines and fig trees (Mic. 4:4)!

Problems? Certainly. But every Feast of Tabernacles will see more people coming to rejoice before the Lord. Every year greater numbers of people from every nation will venture to Jerusalem to learn the laws and ways of the God of Israel (Isa. 2:1-4, Mic. 4:1-5).

As the years pass there will be less sickness, fewer dying of famine, less rebellion, less suffering around the earth. It will take time, but at every Feast we will be able to look back at a year of tremendous progress and rejoice before the Lord in person.

We have always encountered problems at the Feast of Tabernacles. Hurricanes, wind, rain and snowstorms have disrupted many Feasts. Did you ever have your tent blow down in one of Big Sandy's famous rainstorms? Remember the hurricane that almost washed out the first Feast on Jekyll Island, Ga. — the blizzards that tied up traffic in Squaw Valley, Calif.? And speaking of traffic, how about those traffic jams at Lake of the Ozarks, Mo.? Does the Feast come right at harvest time for you, or do you have trouble getting your children excused from school?

The list could go on. God's people have faced, and either solved or endured, every problem, and still every Feast is " the best yet."

Some few do complain, but they see the Feast only in light of the present. They forget the words of the apostle Paul: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

The young man who rejoiced in spite of the rather primitive conditions in the Philippines was able to do so because he saw a great contrast between what he had always known in this world and the conditions prevailing at God's Feast. He rejoiced because he could see that God's way is best and because he knew that in the Millennium God's influence will permeate the whole earth.

Today, most of our members in the Philippines enjoy better accommodations than were available

at that first Feast — and they still rejoice before the Lord, looking forward to the Kingdom of God ruling on this earth.

Each year God's Church grows — in spite of problems. Those problems have only strengthened our resolve that God's way certainly is the only way to live.

Jesus Christ "for the joy that was set before him [the joy of knowing about the Kingdom of God] endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds" (Heb. 12:2-3).

How much more should we endure the petty problems that may come our way during God's feasts and wholeheartedly rejoice before our God!

[emphasis mine]

Appendix Four

Feast of Tabernacles and Last Great Day

Extract from *Pagan Holidays - or God's Holy Days? - Which* by Herbert W Armstrong (pages 43-47)

NOW WE come to the festival of Tabernacles — or Feast of Booths — the sixth festival. Let us notice the instruction concerning this occasion:

"Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine. And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughterSeven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the Lord thy God in the place which the Lord shall choose: because the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice ... and they shall not appear before the Lord empty: every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee" (Deut. 16:13-17).

Here is the Festival of Tabernacles, to be kept for seven days, beginning the 15th day of the seventh month of God's sacred calendar. Notice Leviticus 23:33-35: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord. On the first day shall be an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work therein."

On the first of these days is a holy convocation — a commanded assembly. No work is to be done. "... And ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month" (Lev. 23:40-41).

Notice that it is commanded forever.

Here are pictured those final culminating events in God's great plan: after Christ has died for our sins to redeem mankind — after He has sent us the Holy Spirit and picked out a people for His Name to become kings and priests through the thousand years — after His glorious Second Coming — after He has finally restored the redeemed by placing all the sins upon the head of Satan, their real author, and separating both him and the sins from the presence of God and His people, thus finally perfecting the at-one-ment, making us finally joined in one — then we are ready for that final series of events, the commencement of the "Marriage of the Lamb," the actual making of the New Covenant, the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth and the reaping of the great harvest of souls for a thousand years.

This festival is the picture of the Millennium!

Pictures the Millennium

To portray His plan, God took the yearly material harvest seasons in ancient Israel as the picture of the spiritual harvest of souls. In the Holy Land there are two annual harvests. The first is the spring grain harvest. Second comes the main harvest.

Notice that the Festival of Tabernacles is to be held "at the year's end" (Ex. 34:22). In this verse the Festival of Tabernacles or Booths is specifically called the "feast of ingathering." The harvest year ended at the beginning of autumn. **Just as Pentecost pictures the early harvest — this church age, so the Festival of Ingatherings or Tabernacles pictures the fall harvest — the great harvest of souls in the Millennium!**

Today is not the only day of salvation. Today is a day of salvation. Isaiah said so: chapter 49, verse 8. In fact, the original Greek words of Paul in II Corinthians 6:2 should be translated "a day of salvation," not "the day of salvation."

Turn to the book of Zechariah to understand this more thoroughly. In the 12th and 13th chapters we have a picture of Christ returning and the reconciliation of the world commencing. Here the meaning of the Festivals of Trumpets and Atonement is made plain.

Next, notice the 14th chapter. The time is the Millennium. "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one ... there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited" (verses 9, 11). It is the time when "living waters" — salvation, the Holy Spirit — "shall go out from Jerusalem" (verse 8). The "waters" are literal as well as figurative. God often pictures His spiritual plan by material events.

In that day, when the earth is safely inhabited, when the Holy Spirit is granted to all mortal flesh, what happens? "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" (verse 16).

Gentiles Forced to Keep the Feast of Tabernacles

Notice this 16th verse of Zechariah 14. After Christ returns, the nations — mortal Gentiles who have not yet received salvation — will come to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Tabernacles! How could they keep a festival that was abolished at the cross? They could keep it only if it were commanded forever.

And what will happen if they refuse to obey God? "And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain" (verse 17). Strong words these!

The nations will be forced to keep the Feast of Tabernacles, from year to year, when Christ is ruling with a rod of iron!

And if the nations still won't obey? "... there shall be the plague, wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen" — there are still heathen nations just beginning to learn the way of salvation — "that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment ... of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles" (verses 18-19).

To receive salvation even the Gentiles will have to keep this festival. Of course, it is commanded forever!

Now we customarily quote Isaiah 66:23, showing that the Sabbath will be kept in the Millennium, as proof we must keep it now. Will we, then, when we read Zechariah 14:16, showing that the Feast of Tabernacles will be kept in the Millennium, be consistent by keeping it today?

Can we qualify as a son of God — a king and priest — ruling with Christ on His throne, assisting Christ at that time, if we now refuse to keep these festivals? Notice that Christ kept the Feast of Tabernacles. The Apostle John devoted an entire chapter of his gospel — the seventh chapter — to describe what Jesus said and did during the Feast of Tabernacles in the last year of His ministry.

Why Called the Feast of Tabernacles

During the Millennium, the Kingdom of God into which we may be born will rule the nations which are composed of mortal men begotten by the Spirit of God. The billions of mortal men alive during the Millennium will still be heirs to the Kingdom of God. They will not yet have inherited it as long as they remain mortal flesh, for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 15:50). "Ye must be born again" — "of the Spirit" — to inherit the Kingdom, said Jesus.

Remember that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were merely heirs when they dwelled on earth (Heb. 11:9). While heirs they dwelled in tabernacles or booths, sojourning in the land of promise. Booths or temporary dwellings pictured that they were not yet inheritors. Thus we read of the Feast of Tabernacles that "ye shall dwell in booths seven days ... 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" (Lev. 23:42-43). Israel dwelled in booths in the wilderness before they entered the promised land. Those booths pictured that they were only heirs. Even during the Millennium, when the Kingdom of God is ruling

over mortal nations, the people will be only heirs to the Kingdom. They must overcome and grow in knowledge and wisdom to inherit the promises.

What a marvelous picture. God says of Ephraim (a type of all Israel) that they will "dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast" (Hosea 12:9). Israel, in the wilderness, was a type of all people who must go through trials and tribulations to inherit the promises. They were wanderers, waiting to inherit the promises of salvation.

The contention, held by some sects, that mortal human beings in the Millennium will remain flesh and blood forever is plainly denied by the Feast of Tabernacles, for the festival itself points toward an eternal inheritance.

Besides, after Jesus gathers the Church to Himself, and after He is seated on His throne where we will be ruling with Him, He will gather the nations before Him and say: "Inherit the Kingdom" (Matt. 25:34). [emphasis mine]