

The foundation for this relationship begins with instruction on God's law and these very Holy Days. Notice Zechariah's words: "And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles" (Zechariah 14:16). Other prophets described the time as an era of God's law covering the earth "as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14).

Many will assist Jesus Christ in this universal educational program of helping others understand God's way. Speaking of this time, Isaiah says teachers "will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it,' whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left" (Isaiah 30:20-21).



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The Feast of Tabernacles: Jesus Christ Reigns Over All the Earth

**God's plan for mankind involves restoration.
The Feast of Tabernacles symbolizes the
restoration process.**



In his first inspired sermon after receiving the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, the apostle Peter summed up God's instruction for mankind: "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:19-21).

What are these "times of refreshing" and "times of restoration" of which Peter spoke?

God's plan for mankind involves restoration. The Feast of Tabernacles symbolizes the restoration process, which will start with the return of Jesus Christ, pictured by the Feast of Trumpets, and the banishment of Satan, depicted by the Day of Atonement. Once these events have taken place, as represented by the previous Holy Days, the foundation is in place for the restoration of the creation to peace and harmony with God.

The seven-day Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:27, 34) pictures the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ over the earth after His second coming (Revelation 20:4). This period is often called the Millennium, which simply means "1,000 years."

This Feast also reflects the "rest" symbolized by the weekly Sabbath (Hebrews 4:1-11) that celebrates the great harvest of humanity when all living people will learn God's ways. Humanity will at last be restored to a right relationship with God (Isaiah 11:9-10).

In the beginning, God created mankind to cooperate with Him in a beautiful relationship characterized by love, peace and obedience to His laws. At the completion of His creation, "God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good" (Genesis 1:31).

This time of peace and harmony abruptly ended because of Satan's deception and man's disobedience (Genesis 3:1-6). Disobedience cut mankind off from God's way (Genesis 3:21-24). Genesis 6:5 describes the tragic result: "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

This broken relationship between God and man has continued through

conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Peter 2:11-12).

One final conflict

All through God's plan for saving humanity, He never forces anyone to obey Him. Every person is free to choose what he or she will do and whether to accept or reject God's way of life.

After the 1,000 years, God will allow Satan to test the spiritual convictions of the earth's inhabitants. Revelation 20:7-10 describes this time. God will loose the devil from his place of restraint and allow him to deceive those who are not convicted of the perfect righteousness of God's way. God will destroy by fire those who follow Satan in this rebellion. Satan's futile efforts will be thwarted. This final, tragic rebellion against God will come to nothing, and Satan's destructive, deceitful influence over humanity will finally draw to a close.

The stage is now set for the events depicted by yet one more Holy Day. The Feast of Tabernacles offers a marvelous opportunity for salvation to those left alive at Christ's return, as well as their physical descendants during the Millennium. But what about the thousands of millions of people of past generations who have lived and died without ever understanding—or even hearing—God's truth? And what about those who will die in the cataclysmic upheaval preceding Christ's return? How will God offer them salvation? The next chapter provides the answer.

in earnest as Christ brings "many sons to glory" (Hebrews 2:10). These scriptures show that this judgment is a time of universal opportunity for salvation. For this purpose God has allocated 1,000 years during which the resurrected saints, the firstfruits of God's harvest, will reign with Christ on earth as kings and priests so many others can enter God's Kingdom (Revelation 5:10; 20:6).

Jesus promised that "he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations" (Revelation 2:26). People whom God resurrects at Christ's return will experience the unparalleled opportunity to work with Him to help all nations build a relationship with God.

Hebrews 11 recounts the examples of many of God's faithful servants down through the centuries. It then concludes that "these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (verse 13).

The Feast of Tabernacles is an annual reminder of our temporary state and that we also "seek a homeland" (verse 14). This lesson is reinforced when we travel to a site of the Feast of Tabernacles and stay in temporary dwellings such as hotels and campgrounds.

This festival reminds us that, in spite of our material possessions, we are still mortals in need of a literal transformation so we may possess eternal life (1 Corinthians 15:50-54).

In the accounts of the vision that has come to be called the "transfiguration," Jesus gave a glimpse of the Kingdom of God to Peter, James and John. Christ appeared to be talking with Moses and Elijah. Peter's immediate response was to suggest that they quickly construct three tabernacles. He seemed to understand the important connection between tabernacles and our quest for eternal life in God's Kingdom (see Matthew 17:1-9; Luke 9:27-36).

The role of the resurrected saints in the Millennium

The judgment of the inhabitants of the earth who live during the 1,000 years as pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles (Isaiah 2:4; 51:4-5) begins

The chance to help others understand and be reconciled to God is a wonderful calling. Each who serves in this way will be called "the Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Streets to Dwell In" (Isaiah 58:12).

God calls people out of the world at this time to become His chosen people, sanctified and redeemed by Him (2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1). They are to live exemplary lives as God prepares them for service during Christ's millennial reign and beyond.

"Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul," the apostle Peter wrote, "having your

history to our time. Paul reflected upon this state: "... Through one man [Adam] sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned ..." (Romans 5:12).

Paul knew that Jesus Christ would heal the breach created by man's disobedience: "For since by man [Adam] came death, by Man [Christ] also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:21-22).

Isaiah prophesied the restoration of the world

God used the prophet Isaiah to reveal parts of His magnificent plan for restoring the world. Written at a time during which Israel faced punishment for continued disobedience, the book of Isaiah was inspired by God to give the nation encouragement through the promise of a better world ahead.

Jesus Christ, after reading in the synagogue one of Isaiah's prophecies, acknowledged the special understanding given Isaiah: "These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him" (John 12:41). Isaiah not only prophesied of Christ's earthly ministry; he wrote of Christ's return in power and glory (Isaiah 66:15-16).

The basis for the messianic rule of Jesus will be God's law. Again, as Isaiah foretold, "it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:2-3).

A world of peace and abundance

After Christ's return, He will bring the creation in its entirety into harmony with God, and peace will no longer be the exception. King David said, "Great peace have those who love Your law" (Psalm 119:165). Imagine what the world will be like when everyone knows God's law and lives by it!

More than just knowledge is needed to bring about this amazing transformation. A spiritual change will take place among people. God, speaking through the prophet Ezekiel, describes how it will happen: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them" (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

The Spirit of God will influence people to willingly and enthusiastically obey God from their hearts. People will begin to place the interests of others before their own. They will start thinking of others as "better than themselves" (Philippians 2:3, KJV). Instead of exclusive self-concern, their goal will be to help their fellow human beings. Theft will cease. Disregard for others' property and feelings will be eliminated. Because the world will finally be at peace, countries will "beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3).

During this 1,000-year period, God will change even the nature of wild animals, reflecting the peace that will descend upon society. Describing this idyllic time, Isaiah 11:7-9 says: "The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain ..."

Reversing the effects of sin

God will heal physical infirmities. Isaiah 35:5-6 prophesies of this time during which "the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing ..."

Of even greater importance will be the spiritual healing that will take place. Isaiah prophesied that Jesus Christ will complete the healing He began during His ministry on earth: "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of

our God; to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion ..." (Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 4:18-19). The accumulated results of generations of humans following Satan's sinful ways will begin to be reversed.

The Feast of Tabernacles is also called the Feast of Ingathering (Exodus 23:16). This name signified the completion of Israel's annual harvest. In this setting, God said, "you shall rejoice before the LORD your God" (Deuteronomy 12:12, 18; 14:26). The Feast is a time of celebration for the abundance God has given.

This same bountiful harvest theme continues in the future fulfillment of this festival. Through Isaiah, God spoke of the desert becoming productive land, "for waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water" (Isaiah 35:6-7).

At that time the earth will produce bountiful harvests. "Behold, the days are coming," God says, "when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow" (Amos 9:13).

The significance of tabernacles

The name of the Feast of Tabernacles derives from God's command to ancient Israel to build temporary "tabernacles," sometimes called "booths," to live in during the festival. The Israelites left their houses and built temporary dwelling places (Hebrew *succah*, meaning "hut of woven boughs") to live in while rejoicing before God. These reminded them of their release from slavery and their dwelling in booths when God brought them out of Egypt (Leviticus 23:34, 41-43). In stark contrast to the hardship of slavery, this festival emphasizes rest, peace and prosperity as it meets the needs of all people, including strangers, widows and the poor.

The Bible emphasizes that, as with booths or temporary dwellings, our physical life is transitory. The apostle Paul's writings reflect this theme: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven" (2 Corinthians 5:1-2, KJV).