

The Feast of Temporary Dwellings

“Speak to the children of Israel, saying, on the fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles [5521, *booths, a temporary dwelling*] for seven days to the LORD. On the first day shall be a holy convocation....You shall dwell in booths seven days...” (Leviticus 23:34, 35, 42).

Does the Feast of Tabernacles represent the millennium, as many suppose? Why were the children of Israel told to dwell in booths for seven days? What do the booths represent? What are the lessons that we can learn from the Festival of Booths? By following the blueprint that God has provided, the true meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles will be made plain.

The Seven Day Plan

God’s seven annual holy days follow the same pattern as the seven days of creation. “In six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it” (Exodus 20:11).

All of God’s work of creating physical things was accomplished in **six days**, but that was not the end of His creative work. Everything that is physical is temporary and subject to decay. “While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporary; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18).

He capped off His work by resting on the seventh day, and making it holy. The seventh day was a spiritual creation. You could not hear, see, smell, taste, or touch it. There was no “evening and morning” to define its boundaries because it represents eternity.

The seventh day is the only day that was given a name. “Remember the **Sabbath day to keep it holy**. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work: but **the seventh day is the Sabbath** of the LORD your God: in it you shall not do any work...” (Exodus 20:8-10). The Sabbath day represents the eternal kingdom that man is to labor to enter into.

“There remains therefore the keeping of a Sabbath to the people of God. For he that is entered into His rest [2663, *place of rest, abode, dwelling, habitation*], he also has ceased from his own works as God did from His. Let us labor [4704, *make haste, exert oneself*] therefore to enter into that rest...” (Hebrews 4:9-11). On what day did God rest from his work? “...And God did rest the seventh day from all His work” (v. 4).

On the sixth day of creation, “...God created man in His own image...” (Genesis 1:21). Man was created as a physical representation of God. That was not the end of the creation of man, but only the beginning. The first six annual holy days depict physical man being transformed into God’s

spiritual image. “And we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, **are changed into the same image from glory to glory by the Lord the Spirit**” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

The sixth annual holy day pictures the final step in God’s plan of creating man into His own spiritual image. When that final step is completed, then the physical creation will have fulfilled its usefulness, and everything that God created in the first six days will be destroyed. “...[T]he heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10).

At the conclusion of the period of time represented by the Feast of Tabernacles, everything that is physical will be destroyed. The six days of labor will have been completed, but the seventh day will remain, which will be a spiritual kingdom of righteousness. “...[W]e, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13).

The new heavens and the new earth occur after the period of time represented by the seven days of the Feast of Temporary dwellings is over. The new heavens and new earth are eternal, just as the seventh day Sabbath is eternal. They are pictured by the seventh annual holy day that begins after the Feast of Tabernacles. “...[A]nd on the **eighth day** shall be a sabbath” (Leviticus 23:39). The eighth day is the seventh and last holy day. The number eight means a **new beginning**, as in “...a **new** heaven and **new** earth...” and “the holy city, **New** Jerusalem” (Revelation 21:1, 2).

Preparing for the Sixth Day

Very few people understand that this is not the only time of salvation. There are actually three periods of salvation that are revealed by God’s appointed times. God’s plan follows a logical sequence of events. Each one of God’s appointed times builds on those that precede it.

During the first six thousand years God is creating His priesthood. “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood...” (1 Peter 2:9). Those who are chosen will be in the first resurrection, which will occur on the Day of Trumpets. “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection...they shall be **priests** of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years” (Revelation 20:6).

The one thousand years is depicted by the Day of Atonement—not the Feast of Tabernacles. For proof, see our articles under the heading, *The Day of Atonement*.

During the millennium “...a great multitude...” will be saved (Revelation 7:9). “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (v. 14). Those who will be saved during the millennium correspond to the Levites, whom God gave “...as a gift to Aaron [*the high priest*] and to his sons [*the priests*], to do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation...” (Numbers 8:19).

Aaron, the high priest, was a type of Jesus Christ, and his sons the priests, correspond to those who will be in the first resurrection. The priests, and those who will be saved during the millennium, will be used to help teach the congregation.

The congregation of Israel corresponds to the vast majority of people who will have lived and died during the six thousand years of man, but who were never called. They will be in the second resurrection, and that is when they will receive their first opportunity to receive eternal life. The second resurrection is the third and final period of salvation. The second resurrection will occur on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, which is **the sixth day**.

The Resurrection of the Congregation

“And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works” (Revelation 20:11-13).

The “books” that were opened are the books of the law. The people will have to be taught God’s law before they can be judged “according to their works.” It is the duty of a priest to teach the Word of God that has been entrusted to him. “For the priest’s lips should keep [8104, *guard, protect, hedge about*] knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of Hosts” (Malachi 2:7).

Teaching the Congregation

Before the children of Israel entered the Promised Land, which is a type of the Kingdom of God, Moses gave the priests definitive instructions concerning the Feast of Tabernacles and the reading of the law. His instructions explain the real purpose of the festival.

“And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it to the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity [4150, *set time*] **of the year of release, in the Feast of Tabernacles**, When all Israel is come to appear before the LORD your God **in the place which He shall choose**, you shall **read this law before all Israel in their hearing**. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and your stranger that is within your gates, **that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: and that their children which have not known, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live in the land where you go over Jordan to possess it**” (Deuteronomy 31:9-13).

Another example of the people being instructed in the Word during the Feast of Tabernacles is found in the Book of Nehemiah. “And they found written in the law which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths [5521] in the feast of the seventh month....So the people...made themselves booths...upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim. And **all the congregation** of them that were come again **out of the captivity** made booths, and sat under the booths...**Also day by day, from the first day to the last day, he [Ezra] read in the book of the law of God.** And they kept the feast seven days...” (Nehemiah 8:14, 15-18).

Those who will be in the second resurrection were deceived during their time on the earth, and were in bondage to sin and death. On the sixth annual holy day they will be resurrected from the ground and will receive the breath of life. “...Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live...and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army” (Ezekiel 37:9, 10).

On the sixth day of creation, “...the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7). We see the great similarities between the sixth day of creation and the sixth annual holy day. Both days represent a resurrection from the ground.

You Shall Not Appear Before the LORD Empty

“You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, after that you have gathered in your grain and your wine: and you shall rejoice in your feast...seven days you shall celebrate a feast to the LORD your God...because the LORD your God shall bless you in all your increase, and in all **the works of your hands**, therefore you shall surely rejoice...**[You] shall not appear before the LORD empty** [7387, *empty condition, vainly*]: every man shall give [4979, *a gift, a present*] as he is able [3027, *hand*], according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you” (Deuteronomy 16:15-17).

Man is likened to “clay jars” (2 Corinthians 4:7). An empty container does not have anything in it to present. Just hearing the Word is not enough. It must be obeyed, if it is going to produce fruit. “But be you doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he beholds himself, and goes his way, and straight way forgets what manner of man he was. But whoso looks into the perfect **law of liberty, and continues therein**, he not being a forgetful hearer, **but a doer of the work**, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (James 1:22-24).

The “work” is the creative process by which man is being formed into God’s image. “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God has prepared before that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). By obeying God a transformation process takes place,

which produces fruit. "...[P]resent your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but **be you transformed** [3339, *to change into another form*] **by the renewing** [342, *complete change, renovation*] **of your mind, that you may prove** what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1, 2).

The gifts that God wants from His people are not monetary. "If I give away all that I possess, and deliver up my body to be burned [4983, *to glory, boast*], and have not love, it profits me nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:3). Just giving up physical possessions does not gain you anything, but producing the fruits of the spirit does.

Love is a fruit of the Spirit, and the foundation of God's law. "Love works no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:10). Jesus, "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from **all lawlessness**, and purify to Himself a special people, **zealous** [2207, *deeply committed to something, passionate*] **of good works**" (Titus 2:14).

Producing Fruit

The children of Israel were to make their booths from "...the boughs [6529, *fruit*] of goodly [1926, *beauty, adornment*] trees, branches [3709, *the hollow of the hand, or palm*] of palm trees, and the branches of thick [5687, *interwoven, leafy*] trees, and willows of the brook [5158, *a stream, a river, a torrent*]; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days" (Leviticus 23:40).

The booths were made up of vegetation that begins to decay after it is cut. The booths picture the temporary existence of man. "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away" (1 Peter 1:24).

The items that were to be used to make the booths reveal what God expects of us. The fruits are the good fruits that we are to bring forth. The "goodly trees" represent our adornment. "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a priestly headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels" (Isaiah 61:10).

The palm, i.e. the open hand, symbolizes presenting a gift. It can also mean the open hand of friendship. The palm tree represents humility, as in bowing before a king. The people "...when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took **palm branches**, and went forth to meet Him, and cried, Hosanna: blessed is the King of Israel that comes in the name of the Lord" (John 12:13).

Leafy trees represent spiritual growth through faith in God. "Blessed is the man **that trusts in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is**. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that

spreads out her roots by the river, and shall not fear when heat comes, but **its leaves are always green**; and shall not worry in a year of drought, **neither shall cease from yielding fruit**” (Jeremiah 17:8). Green is the color that symbolizes life, and moving water symbolizes the Holy Spirit, which gives life. Without water, vegetation withers and dies and is of no value. Likewise, “It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing...” (John 6:63).

The willows of the brook symbolize the power of God’s life-giving spirit. “But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty [386, *perennial, constant, ever-flowing, strength*] stream [5158, *a stream, a river, a torrent*]” (Amos 5:24).

It is not through our strength and power that we produce fruit. “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (2 Corinthians 4:7). Jesus said, “I am the vine, you are the branches: he that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

The Seventh Day and the Final Judgment

The seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles pictures the end of all things physical. On that day the final judgment will take place.

Jesus will gather “...all people: and He shall separate them one from another...And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say to those on His right hand, Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:32-34). Those on the left hand “...shall go away into everlasting punishment...” (v. 46). Everlasting punishment means eternal death, not eternal torture.

“And He said to me, **It is done**. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to him that is thirsty of the fountain of water of life freely. He that overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the **second death**” (Revelation 21:6-8).

Lessons from the Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Temporary Dwellings emphasizes the fact that the physical creation is of temporary duration, and it will be replaced by “...a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless” (2 Peter 3:13, 14).

Therefore, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and

the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. **And the world passes away, and the lust thereof: but he that does the will of God abides forever**” (1 John 2:15-17).

Our lives in this tabernacle are short so we must use our short time here wisely. “And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and indecency, not in strife and envying. But put you on the Lord Jesus Christ, and **make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof**” (Romans 13:11-14).

The emphasis placed on the Feast of Tabernacles by the now defunct Worldwide Church of God, and her daughters who have come out of her, is the exact opposite. Their emphasis is to indulge in the things of this world. Many of their feast sites are in vacation destinations with many distractions. Thousands of dollars are spent on food, drink, amusement parks, gifts, and various attractions that have nothing to do with the Kingdom of God! Worldly type dances are held, and costume parties. After all, the feast can be pretty close to Halloween, so why not have a costume party that fits in with the season?

Is God honored by having His festivals observed in this manner? “Bring no more vain [7723, *empty, worthless*] offerings [4503, *gifts*]; incense [*symbolic of prayer*] is an abomination to Me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies—I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates: they are a burden to Me; I am weary to bear them” (Isaiah 1:13, 14).

In the latter days there is a church that says, “...I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; and you don’t know that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17). Nakedness symbolizes sin, and blindness is the result of idolatry. Jesus said to this church, “...I will vomit you out of My mouth” (v. 16). Let’s understand the plain truth that **this is a church of God that Jesus vomited out in the last days because of its worldliness!**

God says to His people, “...Come out of her [*Babylon*], My people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues” (Revelation 18:4). Babylon is this world’s religious, political, and financial system that we must come out of. “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God...” (1 Peter 4:17).

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14).