



The Church of God International

HOME BIBLE

Study Course

14

Understanding the Feast of Tabernacles

Doctrinal Statement:

This festival portrays the Millennium—the thousand years of Christ’s reign on earth. The true harvest of mankind can now take place. Without the influence of Satan—the source of evil—all nations can be brought to God. For one thousand years, a “golden age” shall reign: happiness and peace shall be reality and worldwide salvation shall be possible. This harvest of persons is far larger than the first one, just as the fall harvest is much larger than the spring harvest in the agricultural cycle. The Millennium shall be the time when God sets His hand to save the world. It shall be a time of rebuilding, the forging of a new modern society under God’s laws.

Over and over again, God reveals to us that the Feast of Tabernacles is a time of rejoicing! It portrays for us the millennial reign of Jesus Christ: a glorious golden age, the new world of the future.

The holy convocation of the Feast of Tabernacles (*Succoth*) was the most joyous event of the year for the Israelites. For seven days they were required to live in booths made of branches, living out under the stars (Leviticus 23:40).

The Feast of Tabernacles brought an end to the harvest season and a beginning to their celebration (Deuteronomy 16:13). It lasted seven days and was observed from the fifteenth day through the twenty-first day of Tishri (Leviticus 23:34–35), according to the Hebrew calendar.

In Jerusalem during the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, the Temple area was filled with light from the torches of the worshipers. The twelfth chapter of Isaiah was chanted, and water from the pool of Siloam was poured out upon the altar of burnt offering by the anointed priest. “Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; ‘For YAH, the LORD, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.’ Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation” (Isaiah 12:2–3).

It was during the Feast of Tabernacles that the law was read to all Israel (Deuteronomy 31:9–11).

As a reminder of their rescue from Egypt, the Israelites lived in booths. Once in the Promised Land, they were to meditate about the protection and guidance that they had received from God during their years of wandering.

Later, in the post-Exile period, Nehemiah read from the law and taught the people about the Feast of Tabernacles. They had forgotten the law and knew little or nothing of the Feast of Tabernacles. But now they were discovering that the fall festival was one of “very great gladness” (Nehemiah 8:17).

Review

1. *The Feast of Tabernacles is revealed as a great time of rejoicing.*
2. *Ancient Israel lived in booths for seven days.*
3. *The celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles began at the end of the harvest.*
4. *The feast began on the fifteenth and ended on the twenty-first day of Tishri.*
5. *During the Feast of Tabernacles the law was read.*
6. *The feast was a great time of gladness.*

Rejoicing Commanded

God intends that all mankind keep the Feast of Tabernacles—each and every family from every social strata and economic level. They are required to come and rejoice in the feast (Deuteronomy 12:5,7,12; 16:14). It is also mandatory for all grown males to appear at the feast (16:16).

It is God’s overall intent that we should enjoy the very best of food and drink at His feast (Deuteronomy 14:26) because it portrays the wonderful abundance that will be available to all people during the millennial rule of Jesus Christ. Of course, moderation in all things is God’s way. God does not like overindulgence of any kind, but He does want us to rejoice with all our heart.

Obedience to God's commandments and revealed way of life will make the new world a place of happiness, peace, and prosperity beyond our ability at this time to fully comprehend. Those accounted worthy to be in the first resurrection will have at their fingertips all the powers and possessions of God, to use for the good of the whole created universe.

When the Holy Spirit of God is poured out freely it will be a marvelous thing to witness. The natures of men and animals will be changed (Isaiah 11:6–9). God will even change the internal digestive systems of carnivorous animals so they will be able to receive their nourishment from vegetation (see Isaiah 11:7; 65:25).

Looking into the future, Isaiah gives us another picture of the Messiah (Isaiah 11:1–2). The "Branch" comes from the stem of Jesse (as David did), indicating that the Branch—the Messiah—would be a second David. *David* means "Beloved." When the voice of the Father from heaven said, "This is my *beloved Son*," He was stating that Jesus was His second "David" (Matthew 3:17), fulfilling what David represented.

Isaiah also prophesied that He would sit on the throne of David (Isaiah 9:7). The feminine form of the Hebrew word for "Branch" (*netser*) became the name of Nazereth (*netsereth*). Therefore, Jesus of Nazareth (or Jesus the Nazarene in the Hebrew) would be *Yeshua Hannetseri*. *Hannetseri* can mean either "the Man of Nazareth," or "the Man of the Branch." "And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, 'He shall be called a Nazarene'" (Matthew 2:23).

The millennial condition of the earth, including man and animal, is depicted clearly to us by the imagery

of an infant child crawling safely among poisonous snakes, or a small child putting his hand into a nest of deadly adders without harm (Isaiah 11:8).

God's "holy mountain" means millennial Jerusalem. There will be nothing in it that will hurt or destroy because the whole earth will be changed, and the personal saving knowledge of Messiah (Jesus Christ) will be everywhere (Isaiah 11:9).

All of these wonderful changes that will come about in the natures of humans and animals is the major reason the Feast of Tabernacles is observed with such great rejoicing.

During the Millennium, which the feast pictures, all the tribes of Israel will keep the feast. Even Gentile nations will join with Israel in the keeping of the Feast of Tabernacles (Zechariah 14:16). Christ and the elect who come up in the First Resurrection will start immediately to reeducate all the people of the world through God's holy days. The people will come to know the Lord, His plan, and His purpose for all mankind. But to receive this salvation, all will have to keep this festival, and it is of course commanded forever (Leviticus 23:41).

The people of the nations that refuse to come up and be reeducated and indoctrinated with God's way of life, and in their ignorance continue to refuse salvation, will be punished by receiving no rain on their land (Zechariah 14:17). In the beginning it will be necessary for Jesus Christ to rule with a rod of iron (Revelation 12:5).

And if the nations still remain stubborn, not obeying Jesus Christ and not coming up to keep the feast, then God will plague them with no rain until they do come to obedience (Zechariah 14:18–19).

In honor and respect of God, all nations will have to send emissaries,

representatives of their respective governments, to Jerusalem to worship the King, rejoicing joyfully in the Lord Jesus Christ (Zechariah 14:16–17).

Review

1. *God intends for all the families of the earth to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.*
2. *All grown males are to appear before the Lord during the Feast of Tabernacles.*
3. *God wants us to enjoy the best of everything during the feast.*
4. *Enjoying the best we can afford now during the feast portrays the abundance that will be available during the Millennium.*
5. *Obedience to God's commandments and revealed way of life brings happiness.*
6. *The natures of mankind and animals will be changed during the Millennium.*
7. *It is this change of nature that will bring great rejoicing during the Millennium.*
8. *All the tribes of Israel will keep the feast during the Millennium.*
9. *Gentile nations must also keep the feast during the Millennium or suffer drought.*
10. *In the beginning of the Millennium, Jesus Christ will have to rule with a rod of iron.*
11. *Representatives of all nations will come to Jerusalem to worship the King, Jesus Christ.*
12. *If they do not come, they will be plagued with a drought. No rain will fall on their land.*

All Mankind Converted

Many people believe today is the only day of salvation, and all who are not saved now will be sent to an everburning hell.

In previous lessons we have learned that this is not true. It is God's plan to call only a few to repentance at this time, and the

much larger harvest of souls will be reaped during the Millennium.

Paul reminds us that “all Israel shall be saved,” meaning the vast majority of Israelites (Romans 11:26). In addition, many people of other nations will be converted. “And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob: and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:3).

It is clear that God’s intention is to call every individual on earth to His banquet, the facts of the gospel and the love of God compelling them to come. In the context of Luke 14:23–24, those who would not taste of the supper (salvation) were those Jewish leaders and their disciples who turned down the offer by rejecting Christ. The invitation is still open to “whosoever will” come today. The Prophet Joel informs us, God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh. He goes on to say, “and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions” (Joel 2:28).

Now is the time to “rend your heart, and not your garments” (Joel 2:12–13; also 22–27). We see, portrayed in Joel 2:23, both spiritual and physical abundance. This verse can be translated and read in this manner: “For He [God] will give to you that which gives *instruction in righteousness*; that is, He will send down to you the early and latter rain as before.” The arrival of these rains on schedule as in prior times would demonstrate the blessing of God on the heart that was now prepared (by repentance) before Him.

Not only will God supply *renewed fellowship* and *renewed rain*, but also renewed provisions, as seen in

Joel 2:24–25.

There is going to be a moderate outpouring of the Holy Spirit for the benefit of those called to be in the first resurrection and a larger outpouring for the much greater harvest during the Millennium. The “rain” falling on repentant hearts will produce *righteousness*. There will also be an abundance of crops available for the people on earth to rejoice in, even causing the desert areas of the earth to blossom as the rose. Best of all, the desert areas of the hearts of men will blossom and be full of good things, restoring fellowship with God. (Acts 2:16–17; Isaiah 44:3; John 7:37–39).

Review

1. *Today is “a” day of salvation, not the only day.*
2. *Today is “a” day of salvation for the Firstfruits.*
3. *The Firstfruits will rule with Christ during the Millennium.*
4. *The Millennium is a day of salvation.*
5. *People of many nations will go to the mountain (government) of the Lord to be taught His ways.*
6. *The law will go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*
7. *Those who reject Christ will not eat of God’s banquet.*
8. *God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh.*
9. *Now is the time to repent.*
10. *There is a moderate outpouring of God’s Spirit for those in the first resurrection.*
11. *There is a much larger outpouring of the Spirit for the much greater harvest during the Millennium.*
12. *The rain (Spirit) falling on repentant hearts will produce righteousness.*

Feast of Ingathering!

Promptly after bringing His people out of Egypt, God formally initi-

ated a fall harvest festival (Exodus 23:16).

In Leviticus 23 we will find all of God’s holy days summarized, including the weekly Sabbath. All seven of God’s holy days portray for us His plan of salvation for mankind, and they were given to His congregation at the very time the congregation (church) of Israel was first formed.

The Feast of Ingathering is also known as the Feast of Tabernacles and the Feast of Booths (Deuteronomy 16:13; Leviticus 23:40–44).

The very word “Ingathering” invokes a picture of the gathering in of a great harvest of souls (lives) for a thousand years (Exodus 23:16).

This feast, like all of God’s feasts, is a commanded assembly, which is required whether one wants to assemble or not (Deuteronomy 16:16; Exodus 34:22–23 and 23:17). God determines the place or places appointed as feast sites, and only God can change it when necessary (Exodus 20:24).

We are also informed that we must “surely rejoice,” also rendered “be altogether joyful.” This is a command of God. When we do those things that God requires us to do it will automatically produce a life that brings forth happiness. So all mankind will ultimately be joyful and happy, whether they want to obey in the beginning or not (Deuteronomy 16:14–15).

This annual feast continues for seven full days, God says, so that we may receive His blessing of our increase and the blessing of the work of our hands. Therefore, we shall surely rejoice (verse 15).

To make clear His plan of salvation, God took the harvest seasons in the Jerusalem area as the picture of the spiritual harvest of lives.

There are two annual harvests in Palestine, the first one being the

spring grain harvest which pictures the firstfruits, and the second one which is much larger being the *great fall harvest* (Feast of Tabernacles or Ingathering). People will be born into the God Family all during the thousand years (Millennium) upon completing their life's work.

According to God's instructions, the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles is a holy high day, and there is no ordinary work to be done. This annual Sabbath and its seven-day festival is commanded to be observed forever on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (Tishri) according to the Hebrew calendar (Leviticus 23:35,39,41).

Review

1. God initiated His fall harvest immediately after bringing His people out of Egypt.
2. All of God's holy days are summarized in Leviticus 23.
3. The Feast of Ingathering is also known as the Feast of Tabernacles and the Feast of Booths.
4. We are told we must surely rejoice at this festival.
5. The Feast of Tabernacles continues for seven full days.
6. The spring grain harvest in Palestine pictures the firstfruits.
7. The second fall harvest being the much larger harvest pictures the thousand years, or Millennium.
8. The first day of the Feast of Tabernacles is a high holy day and commanded assembly.
9. God says the feast is to be observed forever.

Jesus and Paul Kept the Feast!

At the time of the ministry of Jesus Christ we find some of the descendants of the Jews who returned to Jerusalem during the time of Cyrus the Great keeping the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7: 2). John referred to it as the "feast of the

Jews" because the northern ten tribes of Israel had been dispersed and were no longer keeping God's holy days. Only Judah (the Jews) faithfully preserved the Old Testament Scriptures.

John records Jesus telling His brothers to go to the Feast of Tabernacles while He waited in Galilee. When He did go to the feast He went in secret because it was not yet time for His death. He did not want to be taken before His time, and if He went with His brothers He would arrive in a large entourage being openly seen and that would attract attention (John 7:2-10).

"Then the Jews sought Him at the feast." The Jewish temple authorities, not the people who had come to the feast, were searching for Him to destroy Him (John 7:11-13).

Jesus had been in attendance at the feast from the first day, but He did not reveal Himself by teaching until about the midst of the feast (John 7:14). Jesus was not just obeying the Old Testament practice of observing the feast, but was also setting an example for those who would be His followers in New Testament times. Jesus taught not only by preaching, but also by His example. We must walk as He walked and also teach the world (Matthew 28:20; 1 John 2:4-6; 1 Peter 2:21).

The "traditions of the elders" He always spoke against (Matthew 15:2,3,6,9). If anything in the law was to be changed, He made it abundantly clear. Compare Matthew 5:21-22: "You have heard...but I say..." He never gave any example of animal sacrifice that we should follow or perform. However, He kept each and every one of God's holy days.

It is quite apparent that Peter, James, and John were accustomed to keeping the Feast of Tabernacles by living in temporary shelters, or booths (Mark 9:5).

Please read carefully Mark 9:2-10, and you will see how it fulfills verse one.

The apostle Paul instructed the Corinthians, "Be followers of me, even as I also am of Christ," (1 Corinthians 11:1).

It is no surprise, then, to find Paul keeping the Feast of Tabernacles as Jesus did (Acts 18:21).

In A.D. 50, Paul crossed over from Asia into Europe and began preaching the gospel at Philippi "on the day of weeks" (according to the original Greek), or Day of Pentecost (Acts 16:13). Pentecost is also called the "feast of weeks" in Deuteronomy 16:10.

Paul spent a few weeks at Philippi, then Thessalonica (Acts 17:1), Berea (verse 10), and Athens (verse 16). Paul came to Corinth in the late summer of A. D. 50 teaching in the synagogue (Acts 18:4). For a year and a half he continued to hold meetings in the house of Justus (verses 7,11). This brings us to the spring of A.D. 52. By this time the Days of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost were past, and time was drawing near for the Feast of Tabernacles. Only a feast of this size would make it worthwhile for Paul to go all the way to Jerusalem. This probably explains why he spent so little time at Ephesus after spending so much time at lesser places (verse 20).

The Catholic version and even some modern translations of the Bible omit Acts 18:21. Nearly all Greek manuscripts include it. The manuscripts that leave it out are those copied in Egypt and Italy under the influence of Simon Magus' followers. They date from the days of the Emperor Constantine, who forced his *Sunday* and *Easter* on the followers of Christ in place of God's holy days.

No one had a good reason to add this verse, but many had a reason to

omit it. Undoubtedly, therefore, the verse is authentic.

In Cox's *Literature of the Sabbath Question*, there are records of Christians, their names being mentioned, who kept the Sabbath and holy days in England over four hundred years ago.

Review

1. Jews were keeping the Feast of Tabernacles during the time of Christ's ministry.
2. Only the Jews faithfully preserved the Old Testament Scriptures.
3. Jesus told His brothers to go to the Feast of Tabernacles.
4. Jesus went to the feast in secret because He did not want to attract attention to Himself.
5. The Jewish temple authorities searched for Him to destroy Him.
6. Jesus was in attendance at the feast from the first day.
7. Jesus was setting an example for all those who would be His followers.
8. Jesus taught by example and by preaching.
9. Jesus always spoke against the traditions of the elders.
10. Jesus kept all of His Father's holy days.
11. Jesus never gave any example of animal sacrifice that we should follow or perform.
12. Peter, James, and John were accustomed to keeping the Feast of Tabernacles.
13. Paul kept the feast as Jesus did.
14. Paul traveled to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

A World Right Side Up

The Feast of Tabernacles looks forward to and portrays the Millennium, which will be a most encouraging and favorable time for people. Satan and his demons will have been imprisoned and there will be no other overpowering obstacles for people to deal with other than

overcoming their own human nature, and bringing it into alignment with God's will.

During this thousand years they will not be pitted against Satan and a world that is totally upside down and backwards to God's way of life.

The Apostle Paul tells us, "Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12: 2).

In the future world of the Millennium, God's way will become the broad, popular way, and society in general will be going that way.

Humanity today is being constantly pressured to conform to this present evil world. In the new world the pressures brought to bear on society will urge conformity towards God's standard and overcoming the self, building true spiritual character.

Jesus Christ will forcefully put down those who would fill the earth with violence. The fear of violence by warfare will be abolished for all time. "And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:4).

It is difficult for people of our day who have lived through two world wars, the Korean and Vietnam conflicts, and the cold war of possible nuclear annihilation to imagine never again needing to fear the total destruction of years of fruitful labor.

No more the waste of human life created in God's image. No more to have our finest young men and women taken from our homes, to have their minds twisted with hate for an enemy, real, unreal, or imagined, only to come home and have to face a life handicapped by loss of

limbs, eye sight, or even the loss of life itself.

In comparison to the world humanity has always known, this new world will certainly be a strange place. We will not have to fear the tyranny of world leaders ever again. Jesus Christ will rule all people with benevolence, from the least to the greatest (Psalms 72:1-8; 12-14).

No one will be able to influence His judgment by bribery of any kind. And He will judge righteous judgment (Isaiah 11:1-5).

There will be no mistakes in His righteous judgments, for He is without error.

As we have seen in other verses, there will be no fear of wild animals, for during this coming Millennium God will make a covenant with the beasts, the birds, and the little creatures of the ground (Hosea 2:18). These categories of living creatures are the same as those mentioned in Genesis 9:2. The context points out a separation from man by fear. Also the bow and the sword will be broken in pieces. These were the two main weapons during Hosea's day (Hosea 2:18).

Much of the earth today suffers from such catastrophes as floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, and earthquakes. This also shall be changed because of the beautiful relationship between the people and God. Through a series of metaphors we are told that God will hear the skies as they appeal to Him for rain (blessing) on the earth, and God responds. The earth pleads to the heavens to send rain (blessings), and the heavens respond. Now the grain, the new wine, and the oil seek the earth for its provisions, and the earth responds (Hosea 2:18-22).

No one will be afraid to be out on the streets day or night (Isaiah 32:2). Because of the Kingdom of God (God's government) and right education, human beings will become a

source of help for one another.

Nothing is more heartrending than to see an infant born deformed. In the new world of the Kingdom of God, established when Christ returns, parents will not have to *fear* giving birth to physically deformed children, for God will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more (Jeremiah 31:29–30,34). Most physical ailments can be contributed to the sin of Adam and Eve, centuries of *wrong living*, and *wrong eating habits* (John 9:2; Leviticus 11:43). Children having children, general dissipation, and the ingestion of all kinds of drugs, which cause degeneration and genetic damage, is the cause of sickness. This irresponsible way of life means deformity and ill health for future generations.

In the new world of the Millennium, those of a fearful heart (having an awesome respect for God) shall be saved; the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, and the sick shall be forgiven their iniquity (Isaiah 35:5–6; Isaiah 33:24).

In the world today people shrink from taking personal responsibility for their own actions and attempt to blame accidents and misfortune on others (Exodus 21:29, 33; 22:6). Personal responsibility will be taught when the “law goes forth from Zion” (Isaiah 2:3). We are responsible for our own actions and for the safety of others. We are our brother’s keeper. Accidents will be few.

Even the fear of drought and famine, such as plague many nations today, will be gone (Amos 9:13–14).

Those who put their trust in God will dwell in confidence; their confidence will be in Christ. They will be the ones who truly “know the Lord” because they obey Him. They will not be taught to have confidence in self, but in Jesus Christ (Ezekiel

28:26).

People will be re-educated to have a godly fear (awesome respect) for Jesus Christ and God the Father (Jeremiah 32:39–40). They will be of sound mind and mature in thinking, realizing that to break God’s laws only leads to degeneration in all areas of life (Philippians 2:5; 2 Timothy 1:7).

One of the fundamental teachings of the Feast of Tabernacles is that we may “learn to fear God always” (Deuteronomy 14:23).

Review

1. *The Feast of Tabernacles looks forward to the Millennium.*
2. *The world today is totally upside down and backwards to God’s way of life.*
3. *We are under constant pressure to conform to this world.*
4. *In the Millennium God’s way will be the broad popular way.*
5. *Warfare and violence will be abolished for all time.*
6. *We will not have to fear the tyranny of world leaders.*
7. *Jesus Christ will rule with benevolence for all people.*
8. *There will be no need to fear wild animals during the Millennium.*
9. *There will be no catastrophes from earthquakes, floods, inclement weather, etc.*
10. *People will not have to fear being out day or night.*
11. *Drought and famine will not plague the nations.*
12. *The Feast of Tabernacles is to teach us to “learn to fear God always.”*

Marriage Supper!

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb is one of the most glorious events to come in the near future. It takes place after the destruction of Babylon and the judgment of “the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication”

(Revelation 19:2).

A great combined choir comes in response to the command from the throne to praise our God. Praise is deserved because He is the Lord, because He is omnipotent (all powerful), and because His reign is ready to begin on earth through Christ.

The great sounds that echo forth from this Hallelujah is like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder. He is worthy of praise for He is the Lord; He is our God in a personal way; He is the Lord God Almighty (Revelation 19:6). We will see in the Marriage Supper of the lamb a marvelous parallel to the gloriously happy Feast of Tabernacles.

In the biblical model we find marriage feasts lasting for seven days (Judges 14:2,10,12). Also the Scriptures tell us the Feast of Tabernacles runs for the same length of time (Leviticus 23:34).

The first book of the Bible indicates the actual ceremony and the consummation always occurred on the first of the seven days (Genesis 29:22,23,27).

From these scriptural examples we see that Christ’s wedding day is indicated in God’s holy day plan (Leviticus 23:35). These days, then, have been set aside by God as the wedding anniversary of Christ and His Bride forever.

According to the law of God a married wife is bound to obey her husband as long as he lives (1 Corinthians 7:39). So it is expected of the Bride of Christ to obey Him forever (Ephesians 5:22–27,32).

It is understandable why Nehemiah read the law to the people on each and every day of the Feast of Tabernacles (Nehemiah 8:18; Deuteronomy 31:10–11). Those who make up the Bride of Christ now must learn the law in this life to be able to teach it in the Kingdom of

God.

In a parable in the New Testament, Christ pointed out the necessity of an inner change brought about by the Holy Spirit to ready one to take part in the Marriage of the Lamb (Matthew 25:9–10). When Christ returns the Bride must be ready. You cannot buy or borrow spiritual preparation at the last minute. We must establish our own personal relationship with God now.

In the Old Testament a continuing problem of the Israelites was lack of heart for obedience (Deuteronomy 5:29; 29:4; Joshua 24:19).

Once the new creature in Christ is formed in us (2 Corinthians 5:17) by the Holy Spirit, our new nature will be permanent (Isaiah 59:2; Jeremiah 3:8,14; 31:32).

Unfaithful Israel of the Old Testament committed adultery (Jeremiah 3:8). In contrast, the great false church, the whore of Revelation 17 and 18, commits *fornication*.

The false church was never married to Christ and was never God's church.

Believe it or not, God's church—the *ecclesia*, the *called-out ones*—never was a Gentile church. God's church is an Israelitish church. A Gentile-born person gains entry into it by becoming a spiritual Israelite (Ephesians 2:11–12; Romans 9:4–5; John 4:22).

It is impossible for Christ to marry another. He must remarry Israel. Note carefully that prior to the Marriage of the Lamb, "His *wife*" has made herself ready. So the Bride is already, before marriage, His *wife* (Revelation 19:7).

Because the *wife* of verse 7 is the Bride, she must be spiritual—like Christ—if this is to be a true and permanent marriage. Kinds of animals cannot mix. Humans cannot marry anything less than human. Therefore, the Bride of Christ, His

wife, cannot be anything less than *fully God!* "For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2). The Bride must be reborn Israel, who has made herself ready.

Spiritual Israel will rule over physical Israel and all other nations (Revelation 2:26–27; 3:21).

As fleshly Israelites and Gentiles become qualified they will be born into the Kingdom of God. This will take place all during the Millennium.

The entirety of Isaiah 54 addresses itself to the contrast between spiritual Israel, now married to Christ, and the physical Old Testament Israel during the preceding 3,000 years of its history. Carefully read the first six verses. The elect, or called-out ones, have been desolate, but actually they are the truly converted few, until the making of the New Covenant, a marriage covenant. This chapter in Isaiah describes and makes clear how Israel of the flesh never enlarged itself half so fast as the church of converted Israel will multiply at Christ's return, and during the Millennium.

The God Family, God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and all those who are the called, chosen, and faithful overcomers in this life, are joyfully waiting for the majestic things to come in the future. "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Psalms 16:11). The Millennium is only the beginning.

Review

1. *The Marriage Supper of the Lamb takes place at Christ's return.*
2. *The Marriage Supper of the Lamb parallels the Feast of Tabernacles.*
3. *Marriage feasts lasted seven days in the Bible.*
4. *The ceremony and consummation always occurred on the first of the*

seven days.

5. *The Bride of Christ will obey Him forever.*
6. *Those who make up the Bride of Christ must learn the law in this life to teach it in the Kingdom.*
7. *You cannot buy or borrow spiritual preparation at the last minute.*
8. *We must establish our own personal relationship with God now.*
9. *Unfaithful Israel of the Old Testament committed adultery.*
10. *The false church, the whore of Revelation 17 and 18, commits fornication, because she was never married to anyone, let alone Christ.*
11. *God's church is an Israelitish church.*
12. *A Gentile-born person gains entry into God's church by becoming a spiritual Israelite.*
13. *Christ must marry spiritual Israel.*
14. *Spiritual Israel, married to Christ, will rule over physical Israel and all other nations.*
15. *As Israelites and Gentiles of the flesh become qualified, they will be born into the Kingdom of God. This will be taking place all during the Millennium.*

Israel's Responsibility

When Christ returns, a remnant people made up of Israel and Judah will be found seeking the Lord God in tears. They are apparently eager to enter into the New Covenant sealed by the blood of Christ. "Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that will not be forgotten" (Jeremiah 50:4–5).

Christ's blood will cleanse all Israel, and they shall begin to live a truly converted life in serving Him and others. As a result of their conversion they will reach the pinnacle of success spiritually and physically, expressing happiness and joy along with material prosperity before all the nations (Jeremiah 33:7–9).

The small remnant of Judah (only

one tribe) returning from Babylonian captivity does not fulfill the prophecy of the previous verses. They never gained great prosperity, and they did not even reach the degree of wealth Israel had under David and Solomon. When these verses are fulfilled, all twelve tribes of Israel shall be saved (Romans 11:26).

Israel will be God's delight (Isaiah 62:4–5). The name or character of Zion in the past was "Forsaken" and "Desolate." Its new name and nature will be "Hephzibah" ("my delight is in her") and "Beulah" ("married").

Verse 5 can be translated this way: "As a young man marries a maiden, so shall your 'Builder' marry you: And as a bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you." Compare this with Psalm 147:2, where God builds Jerusalem and gathers the outcasts of Israel.

Originally, God intended for Israel to be an example to the nations. By Israel's obedience to God's laws and statutes all nations would see the wisdom of living the way that produces happiness and success (Deuteronomy 4:5–6).

In the future, the nations of the world will be so impressed with Israel's successful way of life they will say, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:3). Micah 4:2 says much the same thing.

It is only after this teaching of the ways and laws of God through Israel that the world will be filled with "fruit" (Isaiah 27:6). This is not only an indication of an earth filled with a great population, but nations that will produce the spiritual fruit of righteous character through the example of obedience set by Israel.

Abraham's offspring were to become so numerous as to be uncountable. "And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered (Genesis 13:16).

This great growth will take place during the Millennium (Isaiah 60:22; Ezekiel 36:11).

God set the boundaries of all nations according to the number of the children of Israel (Deuteronomy 32:8). God, of course, knew from the beginning the great growth the children of Abraham would experience and planned accordingly.

It is during the Millennium that God brings to pass His promise to Abraham (Genesis 13:16). The descendants of Jacob were to be a blessing to all nations (Genesis 28:14).

This future explosive growth of Israel into every part of the world is described by God as a "breaking forth" (Isaiah 54:2–3). All nations will either serve Israel or perish (Isaiah 60:12). Israel shall possess the wealth of the world (Isaiah 60:5,11). The word in verses 5 and 11 should be "wealth," not "forces."

Israel will not exploit the nations, but it will rather be a cooperative association of all nations. Each nation will do what is best suited for it according to its talents. Israelites will devote themselves to teaching and ministering God's blessings to the nations (Isaiah 61:5–6; compare Isaiah 49:22–23).

It must not be overlooked that the people of Zion will have the double portion that belongs to the heir. Their own land will be restored to them and they will rejoice in their inheritance, which will bring them everlasting joy never to be dishonored again (Isaiah 61:7).

Review

1. *When Christ returns, a remnant of*

Israel and Judah will seek the Lord God with tears.

2. *They will be eager to enter into the New Covenant.*

3. *All Israel will be converted.*

4. *Israel will be God's delight.*

5. *When the nations see Israel's success, they will seek the teachings of the Lord God from Zion.*

6. *God will bring to pass His promises to Abraham during the Millennium.*

7. *Israel will devote herself to teaching the nations.*

8. *The people of Zion will have the double portion that belongs to the heir.*

A Temporary Dwelling

A tabernacle is a temporary dwelling. God commanded the Israelites to build temporary huts or "booths" out of tree branches and live in them during the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:40–42). It is these booths that make this festival distinctive. It was to be the Feast of Tabernacles or a festival of temporary dwellings. At the feast, we may stay in hotels, motels, or houses, but they are temporary dwellings during the feast. A temporary dwelling such as a tent or camper made of any material would qualify as a "booth" also. Why do we do this, and what is it we are intended to learn from this experience? Let's learn from the Scriptures the great spiritual significance of Tabernacles.

This manner of living in booths keeping the Feast of Tabernacles was to be a continual reminder of Israel's forty-year sojourn in the wilderness and deserts south of Palestine (Leviticus 23:42–43). During that period, the Israelites lived in temporary dwellings (verse 43).

What do the Old Testament Scriptures tell us is the significance of dwelling in booths? "For we are strangers before thee, and sojourn-

ers, as were all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding” (1 Chronicles 29:15). “By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, *dwelling in tabernacles* with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:9–10).

“Sojourn,” in the dictionary, is defined as “a temporary stay.” Abraham was a stranger or alien in the Promised Land, living in a temporary manner all his days. God had not yet given him any inheritance there. Canaanites occupied the land.

Dwelling in booths indicate that we are just like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God has not yet given them or us an inheritance. We are still only heirs to eternal life, eternal inheritance of land, and the Kingdom of God.

Israel’s forty years of wandering in the wilderness was meant from the beginning to be only a temporary state (Deuteronomy 8:2)—until all of that rebellious generation were dead (Numbers 14:29,33–34).

The rebellious Israelites in the wilderness are a type of all carnal rebellious people. It becomes clear that God commanded Israel to live in booths during the Feast of Tabernacles to portray the Millennium it represents, to be a period in which conditions are still only temporary.

We see also that the forty years in the wilderness were symbolic of the Millennium.

After Israel escaped from Pharaoh (a type of Satan) the nation was given a temporary period of isolation from Satan’s influence. In like manner, so will the whole world enter a period of rest from Satan’s rule for one thousand years. During the forty years Israel was in the wilderness, the people faced various tests of

faith and obedience. Many failed the tests and were unable to enter the Promised Land (Hebrews 3:16–19). Still, God managed to turn the rest of them into a nation submissive to God’s government. During the Millennium the whole world will be tried and tested and similarly established under God’s government, the Kingdom of God.

Forty is the number of trial and test. Israel in the wilderness was a type of all people who will go through tests during the Millennium in overcoming their human nature and developing godly character.

As we keep the Feast of Tabernacles, God wants us to realize that Israel’s testing in the wilderness was a type and example for us (1 Corinthians 10:6). We are sojourners in a spiritual sense, as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were physically. Peter wrote that we should “as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11).

God has called us out of spiritual Egypt, or this evil world, into His church. We consider our citizenship to be in heaven (Philippians 3:20).

Before we can enter God’s spiritual rest we must be tested. We must strive to enter the Kingdom of God. “Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall after the same example of disobedience” (Hebrews 4:11). Also, remember 1 Corinthians 10:11: “Now all these things happened unto them [the Israelites in the wilderness] for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.”

It is of great interest when we come to realize there will be no end to the increase of God’s Kingdom (Isaiah 9:7). The Kingdom begins like the proverbial grain of mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds, which grows into the greatest of all herbs and becomes a tree (Matthew

13:31–32). Similarly, the Kingdom of God began small but will eventually fill the whole earth.

Perhaps this understanding explains why the universe apparently has no end!

During the Millennium the earth’s population will increase rapidly, millions being converted and born into the Family of God.

No longer will the universe be subject to destruction, sin, or death. Revelation 21 gives a small hint of what it will be like. It will be a new heaven and a new earth inhabited solely by spirit beings. “There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (verse 4).

Review

1. *A tabernacle is a temporary dwelling God commanded Israel to build out of tree branches.*
2. *It is these “booths” that make the Feast of Tabernacles distinctive.*
3. *Living in booths during the feast was a continual reminder of Israel’s forty year sojourn in the wilderness.*
4. *Israel lived in temporary dwellings during the forty years in the wilderness.*
5. *Our lives on earth are as temporary as a shadow.*
6. *Dwelling in a hotel or motel, etc., during the feast reminds us that, like Abraham, we are heirs only.*
7. *Israel’s testing in the wilderness is an example for us as we keep the feast.*
8. *God has called us out of this evil world, as He called Israel out of Egypt.*
9. *As sojourners and pilgrims we must abstain from fleshly lusts.*
10. *There will be no end to the increase of God’s government.*
11. *The universe will no longer be subject to destruction, sin, or death.*
12. *There shall be no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain.*

Our Fleshly Tabernacles

Another vital understanding to consider is that our present physical bodies are tabernacles, only temporary. We live our physical lives in temporary shelters.

The apostle Peter wrote, “Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle [body], to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me” (2 Peter 1:13). We find many people today living their lives contrary to this simple truth, living as though they will never lay their tabernacle (body) down, acting as if they are immortal.

The apostle James warned against this approach to life: “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit’; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away” (James 4:13–14).

These temporary tabernacles we live in are a constant reminder of our own mortality. Just as our sojourn at the feast will end, so will our physical lives. Therefore, we have a limited time to prepare for the Millennium and the Kingdom of God.

These thoughts, coupled with the hope stirred by the sermons and fellowship we will receive at the Feast of Tabernacles, build urgency in us. We must make the best possible use of time. Physical life does not last forever. “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:16).

What is more valuable to us than salvation and preparing to rule with Christ? “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there

is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going” (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Christ said, “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life” (John 6:27).

Those God calls at this time are being trained, tested, and judged. The size of our reward will be based on our fruits in this life. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Our tabernacles are a continual reminder to us that we are *mortal*. While God created physical life to be appreciated and enjoyed, He did not intend that we should be totally satisfied with it.

Many people experience a desire for something better than this physical life. What they really desire, and may not be consciously aware of, is eternal life with God. God gives us this deep desire for His Kingdom. He also designed the feast to foster and enhance this longing for Him.

Through the Feast of Tabernacles we see the great contrast between God’s way and Satan’s ways. We long for our spiritual house in God’s Kingdom. “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).

This physical life makes us groan at times. Our earthly bodies become frail, old, crippled, or diseased.

We groan also because of our manifold struggles with our “fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11). This, then, causes us to groan for the Kingdom of God

(Romans 8:23).

Once we have accepted Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and received God’s Holy Spirit, we are then a *new creature* in Christ. “Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a *new creature*: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

We must never do anything to harm the new creature we now are. As new creatures in Christ, we are even more anxious to be clothed with our spiritual house in the Kingdom.

Abraham dwelt in tabernacles, yet longed for the permanency of his home in God’s Kingdom: “By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:9–10).

Paul says we should do the same: “For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come” (Hebrews 13:14).

What great joy we will experience when we finally inherit eternal life and receive our permanent home in the *Family of God!*

Review

1. *We must live our lives with the understanding that life is short and precious.*
2. *We must grow up in Christ and prepare for the Kingdom of God.*
3. *What is greater or more valuable than salvation and ruling with Christ?*
4. *Those God calls at this time He is training, testing, and judging.*
5. *We should labor for the spiritual food that endures to everlasting life.*
6. *The new creature in Christ longs for the Kingdom of God.*
7. *Like Abraham, we wait for the city that has foundation, built by God.*

The Church of God International

14

**Understanding
the Feast of
Tabernacles**

Test Yourself

**Write your answers on a
separate sheet of paper.**

**Check *your* answers
with the answers found
at the end of the test.**

**Detach the return
coupon at the bottom of
the page and mail back
to us. We will
send the next lesson
in the series to you.**

HOME BIBLE

Study Course

True or False Questions

1. The Feast of Tabernacles is eight days long.
2. The Israelites were commanded to live in booths seven days.
3. It was not necessary to read the law at the Feast of Tabernacles.
4. The people of Nehemiah's day considered the feast as a great time of gladness.
5. It is not necessary for all people to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.
6. All grown males must attend the Feast of Tabernacles.
7. The natures of men and animals will never change.
8. During the Millennium, if a child puts his hand in an adder's nest he needn't fear.
9. The saving knowledge of Jesus Christ will be everywhere during the Millennium.
10. Other nations will continue to celebrate their own beliefs during the Millennium.
11. Those nations who refuse to keep the feast will receive no rain on their land.
12. Jesus will rule with a rod of iron.

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The Church of God International

HOME BIBLE

Study Course

Yes!
**Send me
Lesson 15**

Code—CO15

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Tyler, TX 75710

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**Thanks for letting
us serve you!**

13. Today is the only day of salvation.
14. People will receive salvation all during the Millennium.
15. The law will go forth from the capital cities of the nations.
16. People of many nations will go to God's mountain "government" to be taught His ways.
17. The Millennium is not a time of salvation.
18. The vast majority of Israel cannot possibly be saved.
19. Hardly any of the people of other nations will be saved.
20. If you have sons and daughters who prophesy they shall be severely punished.
21. We should rejoice at the feast, but it isn't commanded.
22. The Feast of Ingathering is also know as the Feast of Tabernacles.
23. God's feast days are commanded assemblies.
24. God determines the place or places appointed as feast sites.
25. The feast is commanded to be observed any time we desire.
26. Jesus never spoke against the traditions of the elders.
27. Jesus never really intended to set an example of feast-keeping for us.
28. God's way will be the broad popular way during the Millennium.
29. Will God really make a covenant for His people with the beasts of the field?
30. We will not have any fear during the Millennium except for floods and earthquakes.
31. Marriage feasts were seven days long according to the biblical model.
32. The marriage ceremony and consummation took place on the first day of the seven days.
33. The Marriage Supper takes place after the Millennium.
34. God's church is a gentile church.
35. A Gentile person gains entry into God's church by becoming a spiritual Israelite.
36. Israel lived in temporary dwellings for forty years while in the wilderness.
37. Living in booths at the feast reminded Israel of their living in temporary shelters.
38. Abraham found the city he was looking for. It was Old Jerusalem.
39. Our bodies are only temporary dwellings.
40. The Feast of Tabernacles is to teach us to "learn to fear God always."

Answers to True or False Questions:Score Yourself: Miss 0-3 = Excellent; Miss 4-6 = Good; Miss 7-9 = Fair

39. True; 40. True

Answers: 1. False; 2. True; 3. False; 4. True; 5. False; 6. True; 7. False; 8. True; 9. True; 10. False; 11. True; 12. True; 13. False; 14. True; 15. False; 16. True; 17. False; 18. False; 19. False; 20. False; 21. False; 22. True; 23. True; 24. True; 25. False; 26. False; 27. False; 28. True; 29. True; 30. True; 31. True; 32. True; 33. False; 34. False; 35. True; 36. True; 37. True; 38. False; 39. True; 40. True