

Why God Commands Our Presence at His Feast!

The first great command Jesus Christ will issue after His return will be that all nations must keep the Feast of Tabernacles! (Zechariah 14:16-19). Today, many "Christian" churches and organizations believe God's annual holy days are "done away," nailed to the cross! WHY, then, will Jesus Christ issue this command at the very beginning of His millennial reign? Must we keep the feast today? What does the Bible really say?

by Garner Ted Armstrong

When God brought ancient Israel out of slavery in Egypt, He constituted them as a *new nation, a theocracy*, ruled directly by God Himself. They had grown up in a foreign land, had known nothing of the worship of the true God—but had been heavily influenced by the rank paganism of the Egyptians; men who worshipped flies, fish, birds, lions, scarabs; who believed in demoniacal, Satan-inspired religion.

It was no accident God deliberately hardened Pharaoh's heart, causing him to *refuse* to let God's people go, time and again! God had a *purpose* in doing so!

God said, "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and *multiply my signs and my wonders* in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 7:3). God had commanded Moses concerning the PASSOVER! Earlier, Moses had said to Pharaoh, "... Let my people go, that they may *hold a feast* unto me in the wilderness" (Exodus 5: 1).

Pharaoh's retort? He knew of no such "God." He said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord [Heb., YHVH, or "the Eternal"] neither will I let Israel go" (Exodus 5:2).

Time and time again, during the plagues of the frogs, the waters turning to blood, the boils on man and cattle, the plagues of lice, Moses was ordered to speak to Pharaoh and say, "Thus saith the *Eternal* God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me" (Exodus 9:1).

God told Moses the very purpose for this particular Pharaoh's life was so God's great POWER could be demonstrated throughout the earth! God *purposely* hardened Pharaoh's heart—BECAUSE HE KNEW ISRAEL WOULD FORGET VERY QUICKLY UNLESS THEY COULD BE CONTINUALLY REMINDED OF HIS POWER!

Notice! "And the Eternal said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the Eternal God of the Hebrews, let my people go, that they may serve me. For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that you mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth...and in very deed FOR THIS CAUSE HAVE I RAISED THEE UP, for to shew in thee MY POWER; and that MY NAME may be declared throughout all the earth" (Exodus 9:13-16).

Later, God said, "...I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these *my signs* before him: and that THOU mayest tell in the ears of *thy son*, and of *thy son's son*, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them; THAT YE MAY KNOW HOW THAT I AM THE ETERNAL" (Exodus 10: 1, 2).

What if Pharaoh had quietly acquiesced to Moses' first request? What if the Egyptians had cooperated—had actually *helped* the Israelites on their way?

First, the Israelites would have REFUSED TO GO!

Plenty of murmuring occurred, during which Israel wanted to go *back* to Egypt; during which they yearned for the "garlics and leeks," and the variety of foods they had enjoyed there. God knew they would not COME OUT of that slavery; COME OUT of their deeply-rooted way of life IN PAGANISM except that God DESTROYED the nation of Egypt; left it in *ruin*, made them *anxious, desperate to escape* Egypt! Yet, in spite of this, some of them still yearned to return to their old ways.

The twelfth chapter of Exodus explains how, following the awesome display of God's power, the Israelites were THRUST out of Egypt! God said, "And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying What is this? [the Passover celebration] that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the Eternal brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage: and it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the Eternal slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beasts: ... and it shall be for a token upon thine hand, and for frontlets between thine eyes: for by STRENGTH OF HAND the Eternal brought us forth out of Egypt!" (Exodus 13:14-16).

The account of the Exodus concludes, "And Israel saw that GREAT WORK which the Eternal did upon the Egyptians: and the people *feared the Eternal, and believed the Eternal, and His servant Moses*" (Exodus 14:31).

Then came the *test* commandment, the weekly Sabbath! Read Exodus 16 and 17. God said, "...Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Eternal..." explaining the people were not to gather manna on that day. Instead, they rebelled.

"God then said, "... HOW LONG refuse ye to KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS and my laws?" (Exodus 16:28).

Later, at the foot of Sinai God gave the Israelites His commandments, including many statutes and laws. He expounded His annual Sabbaths to them, commencing with the Passover and progressing through all *seven* of the annual feasts and the *seven* annual holy days.

Notice how God described the *Feast of Tabernacles*: "Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, the fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles [Heb., "*Succhoth*, " meaning "*booths*, " or *tents*] for seven days unto the Eternal ... and ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Eternal your God seven days ... and ye shall keep it a feast unto the Eternal seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations; ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month.

"Ye shall dwell in *booths* [Heb., "*Succhoth*"—the *identical* word rendered "tabernacles" in verse 341 seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: *that your generations may know* that I made the children of Israel to *dwell in booths*, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Eternal your God" (Leviticus 23:33-43).

God had *uprooted* the captive Israelites from their enslaved condition—by a series of *great miracles!*

Notice the parallels!

Egypt is used as a *type of sin*. As God brought His nation Israel out of Egypt, so He brings us individually, and collectively, *His church*, out of "spiritual Babylon," this evil world—and sin, which holds us captive!

Pharaoh is typical of Satan. Jannes and Jambres, the two magicians, are probably symbolic of the beast and the false prophet. Moses is typical of Christ. In another analogy,

Moses and Aaron are typical of the *two witnesses* of Revelation 11, who are to testify before the beast and false prophet concerning the latter-day captivity of Israel!

The Red Sea crossing is symbolic of *Christian baptism* (1 Corinthians 10: 1, 2), and the forty years' wandering in Sinai, a type of the Christian life of trials.

The fact that they dwelt in *booths* showed them that we "have no certain dwelling place" in this life (1 Corinthians 4:11), but that we *look forward* to a *permanent* dwelling place—the Kingdom of God, for *all eternity!*

For decades, the church has heard the emphasis placed on *the future* picture of the feast, but has *never* heard the rich meaning of the feast for our lives NOW!

But notice!

What will Christ do as His first great act when He arrives on this earth?

He will issue a command that *all nations* DWELL IN BOOTHS—begin to KEEP THE FEAST!

God's Word says: "And it shall come to pass, that everyone that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go *up from year to year* to worship the King, the Eternal of Hosts, and to KEEP THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES!

"And it shall be, that whoso will *not* come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Eternal of Hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.

"And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the *plague*, wherewith the Eternal will *smite the heathen* that come NOT UP to *keep the Feast of Tabernacles*.

"This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the *punishment of all nations* that come not up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles" (Zechariah 14:16-19).

Remember! This chapter begins, "Behold the DAY OF THE ETERNAL cometh..." and says plainly, "Then shall the Eternal go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle.

"*And His feet shall stand in that day* upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east..." (Zechariah 14:1-4).

No amount of "reasoning" or "arguing" will get away from the plain *fact* that Zechariah 14 is speaking of the second coming of Christ, the final subjugation of the beast power and of *all nations*, and the establishment of the world ruling *Kingdom of God* on earth!

God says, "And the Eternal shall be *King over all the earth*: In that day there shall be one Lord and His name one" (Zechariah 14:9).

But, WHY?

Yes, *why*, if the *only emphasis* on the Feast of Tabernacles is that of LOOKING FORWARD to the Kingdom of God, do those who are now BEING GOVERNED BY THAT KINGDOM; those who are *alive*, as human beings, on this earth AFTER the second coming of Christ; those who are now being *ruled* by the Kingdom of God itself, told to KEEP THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES? How can it picture ONLY the Kingdom—yet be enjoined upon human beings *after the Kingdom of God is established?*

Perhaps there is a great deal that church leadership *missed* during the past decades—a rich meaning to the feast; our *dwelling in booths*—which God intends we now learn.

Who—What Do We Worship?

One of the greatest lessons in the Christian life is the *rejection of materialism*.

Ancient Israel, even though held captive as slaves, had become accustomed to their lives in Egypt. It isn't so bad, in many ways; at least, many of them believed this. Oh, they groaned and complained under their taskmasters; yet, when Moses led them into a harsh, bleak, dry, forbidding wilderness, they were quick to yearn for Egypt.

Jesus Christ said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your *treasure* is, there will your *heart* be also!" (Matthew 6:19-21).

He continued, "No man can *serve two masters* [think of Ancient Israel, in Egypt, and of *ourselves*, when held captive by Satan's world, and our own sins]; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon [this world; its economic, social, religious systems]. Therefore I say unto you, take no [anxious] thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" (Matthew 6:24-34).

Read the remainder of Jesus' words in the sixth chapter of Matthew!

He gave the example of Solomon, in all his glory; of the lilies of the field; then concluded by saying, "...your heavenly Father knows you have need of these things. But *seek ye first* the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you!

Christ says it is a matter of *emphasis*.

Where are our hearts? Where are our minds, our thoughts, our hopes and dreams, our plans? What do we worship?

Are our hearts on material things—homes, autos, boats, vacations, trips, salaries, bonuses, clothing, toys, food, a glittering array of *material* goods—or are our thoughts, plans, hopes, and dreams centered on GOD'S GREAT KINGDOM?

God commands, "...COME OUT of her [*spiritual Babylon—Egypt*], my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues!" (Revelation 1:4).

Yes, *once again*, God is going to call His people—physical, national *Israelites* OUT OF SLAVERY. Once again, He will have to *break* the yoke of bondage, of slavery, with an outpouring of *plagues*!

God "made a difference" (Exodus 11:7) between His people Israel and the Egyptians because of the shed blood of an innocent little lamb, painted on their doors and Windows. During the Day of the Lord, and the outpouring of *God's wrath* against Babylon the great, it is only those who have the shed blood of their Saviour, Jesus Christ, figuratively painted on *their hearts* who will be spared the plagues!

Are Our "Roots" in This World?

Jesus said, "REMEMBER LOT'S WIFE!" (Luke 17:32).

Why? Because Lot's wife was so thoroughly corrupted by the filthy, homosexual community of ancient Sodom that, once she reached the wilderness—having *escaped* that rotten, evil, sin-sick environment—she *looked back in longing* toward the filth of Sodom! Instantly, she was turned into a pillar of salt, as a perpetual monument to the folly of longing for *this world* with all its filth, instead of bravely *looking ahead*, toward the Kingdom of God!

Now, notice two outstanding examples!

First Noah: God called Noah at a time when the world was in such evil it was virtually unimaginable. Every kind of perversion—murder, even cannibalism—was rampant. God was sick to His heart that He had made mankind! Only *Noah* was found to be righteous—**IN THE WHOLE EARTH!**

Noah was instructed to build an *ark*, a *temporary dwelling place*, as a means of protection and survival for himself, his family, and a select group of animals. The project may have required most of Noah's lifetime to complete! But as Noah built, he was constantly reminded that he was NOT building something to take root *in this world*, but something which would be home up by the waters, to be taken wherever God's will and ocean waves and currents directed. He was **BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE!** His whole life's effort was aimed toward the project which would save his family, save his life, save *mankind*. Few ever learned the lesson of looking toward a *temporary dwelling-place* more than Noah.

Second, consider Abraham: God called Abram (his name before God changed it to mean "father of many nations") while he was in his own land, among his own kinsmen. God said, "Get thee *out* of thy country, and *from thy kindred*, and *from thy father's house*, unto a land that I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing..." (Genesis 12:1, 2).

Abraham didn't argue. The Bible account is beautifully simple, direct.

"So Abram *departed*, as the Eternal had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran" (Genesis 12:4).

Next, we learn that Abraham lived in *tents* for the remainder of his life, that he moved from place to place. We do not know if he lived in a permanent home in Haran. We *do* know God told him to "pull up stakes," to uproot from his permanent place of 75 long years, and to "go to a place" God would show him.

That place? It was the place of **ETERNAL INHERITANCE!** God promised Abraham **ETERNAL POSSESSION OF THE LAND** he could see, from one horizon to another! It was the promise of *salvation*; yet it *also* carried the connotation of possession of the land. (Genesis 13:14-18).

Now notice what God says about Noah and Abraham: "By faith Noah, being warned of God of *things not seen as yet*, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, *obeyed*, and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

"By faith he *sojourned* in the land of promise, *as in a strange country*, dwelling **IN TABERNACLES** [tents, booths!] 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 11:7-10).

Abraham, like Noah, worked hard for the remainder of his natural life, *not* to accumulate great material

wealth, physical possessions, or to build a place of permanent residence. Instead, he dwelt in *tents*, going from place to place in a land which he was promised he would inherit *in the future!*

Notice the lesson of Hebrews 11: "These all *died* in faith, *not having received the promises*, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS ON THE EARTH!" (Hebrews 11: 13).

Now, what was the purpose for the Israelites dwelling in "booths" immediately upon being *wrested* from slavery in Egypt, which was a type of *sin*? God said they should *dwell in booths* for the duration of the Feast of Tabernacles "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!" (Leviticus 23:43).

Notice the *emphasis* Almighty God HIMSELF placed upon the Feast of Tabernacles when His original instructions were given!

It was *not* a futuristic lesson; He did not tell them they were "dwelling in booths" *looking toward* the promised land—although this was *implied!*

The important lesson the Israelites were to learn was the IMPERMANENCE of this physical earth, its corrupt nations, its bankrupt institutions, its sinful socioeconomic systems!

Almighty God *uprooted* the Israelites *by force!*

In the same fashion, He sometimes has to perform *miracles to force* some of us to *let go* of our tenacious grasp on our materialistic possessions, our homes and families, our earthly pursuits and concerns! Like plucking a tree from the earth, to the sounds of tearing roots and rupturing soil, God has *to pry* us loose from our material environment if we are to become fit servants of His—to become "sojourners and pilgrims" in *this life*, having no "certain dwelling place" during our human, physical life span, but *looking for* an eternal inheritance with Almighty God in His Kingdom!

The Feast of Tabernacles includes a lesson in *values*.

It is a time for us to examine our *hearts*, our priorities.

As God requires us to *leave* our physical homes and dwelling places for seven days (plus the extra holy day *after* the Feast of Tabernacles, making eight days in all), He reinforces, year by year, the lesson He taught Noah, Abraham, many other righteous men and patriarchs; the lesson the apostle Paul learned, the lesson to which Jesus Christ referred when He said, "The Son of man hath nowhere to lay His head," and the lesson of Hebrews 11, the "faith" chapter.

That lesson? Peter put it this way, "...ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar [purchased, or 'unique'] people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light:

"Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God..." (1 Peter 2:9, 10).

Thus, in a very real sense, a great deal of the emphasis of the Feast of Tabernacles is on the fact that DURING THIS LIFE we are "strangers and pilgrims" on this earth; that we *have* no deep "roots" in *this life!* Rather, as we dwell in "booths," or temporary dwelling places; be they tents, campers, trailers, motor homes, condos, hotel or motel rooms; we are away from our own homes, away from our familiar surroundings, away from our "stuff," our "things" with which we are so familiar and which we tend to treasure so highly!

Think for a moment!

Is Almighty God surrounded by "things"? That is, does God sit in His heavenly armchair, gazing about Himself at bric-a-brac, artifacts, family heirlooms, treasured paintings, family albums, pictures of His "relatives," a prized piece of silver, a battered old phonograph player—the bits and pieces of *human lives*, so carefully hoarded and collected together?

Of course not!

Almighty God says the UNIVERSE, the heavens and the earth, and everything that is in them are HIS!

Thus, Almighty God is far, *far above* the pecuniary motive of measuring Himself by His "material" surroundings; far, far above the picayunish, miserly, greedy, smallness of men and women who tend to place great emphasis on passing "things" which can be so quickly destroyed by earthquake, fire, storm, mildew, insects; which can be broken, burnt, or become yellowed with age and illegible.

"Treasure" is not always merely money. Sometimes, people "treasure" certain things—material, physical possessions they have accumulated over a number of years, and without which they feel they simply *could not live!*

But to Almighty God, whether He looks down upon the lofty alps, the Andes mountains, the veins of rich gold which yet lie beneath the mountains of this earth undiscovered; the multiple BILLIONS of dollars, of diamonds, rubies, emeralds, sapphires, which have *never* been discovered—or the great diamonds which now repose in the vaults of great banks, or the British crown jewels at the Tower of London—He can gaze upon it all and say "That's *mine!*"

Therefore, since Almighty God *owns everything*, He does not have the *need* of gathering "things" around Himself, and placing His heart, mind and attention upon those "*things!*" "

God says "Look to the Future!"

Always, Almighty God called righteous men and women *to leave* their secure, comfortable, material possessions and to embrace the great WORK to which He has called them!

Jesus Christ, for example, was a "sojourner" on this *earth*—*knowing* He had but a certain span of years, and that His *life* was going to be forfeited!

The righteous examples of "the faithful" as enumerated in Hebrews 11 tells us a great deal about the rich tapestry of the *Feast of Tabernacles!*

Notice, the writer of Hebrews, speaking of all of the righteous patriarchs who "died in faith, not having received the promises," and who were "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," goes on to say "for they that say such things *declare plainly* that they *seek a country*."

"And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out [in other words, if, like Lot's wife, they yearned for the old environment and all of their material possessions] they might have had opportunity to have returned [which would have meant their destruction]."

"But now they desire a *better* country. That is, an heavenly: wherefore God is *not ashamed* to be called *their God*: for He hath prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11: 13-16).

And remember the description of some of these great men and women of the past? God said they "...had

trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they 'wandered about' in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

"And these all, having obtained a good report through *faith*, *received not the promise*; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Hebrews 11: 33-40).

Remember what Jesus said about possessions, friends and family? Remember, Jesus' disciples left their homes and families, and *followed Him*. On one occasion, Peter asked "Behold we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?"

"And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have *followed me*, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

"And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall I receive an *hundred fold*, and shall inherit *everlasting life!*" (Matthew 19:27-29).

Can You Stay at Home and Keep the Feast?

Sometimes, people begin to "reason" about God's annual holy days! *Some*, of course, *delude* themselves into believing the annual holy days are not *important!* Perhaps they are disappointed or chagrined at a human leader, or a church organization. Perhaps they simply "grow weary with well doing," and are "too tired" to go to all the "trouble" to go to the feast!

Others believe that as long as they "take note of it," or somehow realize that it is the *time* of the feast, that it is perfectly alright for them to remain *in their own homes!*

Yet, Israelites during Jesus' day actually moved out of their homes and pitched tents on their *roof tops* just to *ensure that they learned the lesson* of getting OUT of their familiar surroundings, and that they lived in "booths," or temporary dwelling places during the seven days of the *feast!*

What about that fourteenth chapter of Zechariah, which tells us that Jesus Christ is going to issue a great *command to all nations to keep the feast?*

Those who believe they are "Christian," and yet find "excuses" for not keeping the Feast of Tabernacles, must soberly and seriously *ponder this chapter*.

Obviously, the very *first published edict* of the new super WORLD RULING KING, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, will be an absolute COMMAND, punished by *horrible plagues* if any *disobedience* is found, to come up to the new world capitol to KEEP THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES!

If you are one who is somewhat in doubt, this chapter presents to you a *question*. Do you intend being *alive* at that time? Whether human, or spiritual, will you then OBEY the voice of the Eternal your God?

Do you plan, now, in other words, to *begin keeping the Feast of Tabernacles* when Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the KING OF KINGS, *commands* you to?

Surely no rational person remotely calling himself "Christian" could contemplate *disobeying* that future command.

Have you never read how the nations say they are *eagerly willing* to go up to the new world capitol to *learn of God's ways* ?

Notice! "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain [symbol of GOD'S GOVERNMENT] of the Eternal's house shall be established in the top of the mountains [symbol of earthly governments] and shall be exalted above the hills [symbol of smaller earthly governments] and all nations shall flow unto it.

"And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let *us* go up to the mountain of the Eternal, 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 Eternal from Jerusalem.

"And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: Nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:2-4).

Now, according to Zechariah 14, WHEN—at WHAT TIME OF YEAR—will these many nations be *willing* to journey from whatever point of the compass to the *new world capitol* to "learn of His ways"?

On *what great annual occasion* will Almighty God COMMAND the representatives of nations to come to His headquarters?

You cannot avoid it—you can't get around it—no amount of human reasoning or argument will change it—these great conclaves will assemble in Jerusalem AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES!

The Significance of the Feast

As tens of thousands assemble all around the world, it is time to realize more fully the *deep significance* of the Feast of Tabernacles.

It is through the *annual holy days* of Almighty God that we learn, thoroughly and completely, GOD'S GREAT PLAN!

By "acting out, " *by mimicking* our Saviour, Jesus Christ (who KEPT God's annual feasts and is *Lord* of the weekly Sabbath!), we come to resupport, reinforce, *profoundly and indelibly impress* upon ourselves, the ingrained knowledge and acceptance of God's great plan until it becomes HABIT!

The entire world-girdling plan of Almighty God is encompassed in the annual holy days! Review them in your mind, briefly, reading the entire 23rd chapter of Leviticus!

Notice that these are called "GOD'S FEASTS," and never "festivals of the *Jews*."

First comes the *Passover looking back* toward God's miraculous deliverance of Israel in Egypt, and the blood of the slain lamb spread on the doors and lintels of their houses, causing the death angel to "pass over" the firstborn of the Israelites, while striking the firstborn of every Egyptian home.

It was observed with the "bread of affliction," for God brought them out of the land of Egypt "in haste."

When Jesus Christ changed the symbols of the roast lamb and instituted, instead, the practice of sipping a little wine and partaking of a bit of unleavened bread, He told His disciples, "Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you," and told them that the wine symbolized His "blood of the *New Testament*"! (Matthew 26:26-28).

Study the latter half of 1 Corinthians 11, where the apostle Paul plainly tells us that he was urging *gentile*

Christians to observe the Passover as a continual memorial of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ!

Immediately following the Passover come the Days of Unleavened Bread. For decades, God's people have had reinforced in their minds the concept that, even as the physical forebears wandered in the wilderness eating food provided miraculously from God, so must the individual Christian undergo his lifetime of trials and tests; living a life of *overcoming*, *putting sin out* of his life, even as he cleanses his home and foodstuffs of *leaven*.

Almighty God caused His original apostles to *wait* in Jerusalem a good bit *more than a month* AFTER the ascension of Jesus Christ to heaven, so God could send the Holy Spirit on an ANNUAL HOLY DAY, the Feast of "Firstfruits," or the Day of PENTECOST (which means "fiftieth").

Thus, in a completely altered *New Testament feast*, the true Church of God has observed the *Day of Pentecost* ever since!

It is the "birthday" of the church, the commemoration of that great event when Almighty God the Father first sent His Holy Spirit to the world *as a whole—fulfilling* Jesus' promise that if He "did not go into heaven the 'other comforter' would not come"!

On that very day, 3,000 human beings were *begotten as* the sons of God!

The commemoration of this day answers the question "Why are there so *few* who are called NOW?"

It is the Feast of *the firstfruits!* Jesus Christ tells us that we are the "firstfruits," even as Christ was the "firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29). Likewise, the scattered few who represent the *spiritual organism* that is the "mystical" *body of Christ* (the REAL "body of Christ" is in heaven with God the Father!) represent the "firstfruits" of the *harvest of the earth!* Observing the Feast of Pentecost each year *humbles us* with the knowledge that, through no deeds, good works or special character of our own, Almighty God performed the MIRACLE of opening our minds, "drafting" us from among the billions of human beings on this earth, making us His sons and daughters, and giving us an opportunity to be among the very FIRST to be *changed into spirit beings* "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, *at the last trump*," when Jesus Christ returns! (1 Corinthians 15:52-54).

Later, as the first feast of the fall season, the *Feast of Trumpets* is observed by God's people.

In gleaning every bit of information we can from the Word of God, we are struck by the following points:

Trumpets were used as a means of *mass communication* in ancient Israel, in their camps in the wilderness. The trumpets were used to summon the leaders of the tribes; to commence the march in specific order; to announce special assemblies and convocations; to give a sound of *alarm; or* to call to *war!*

From time immemorial, the military organizations of the world have used *trumpets* because of their shrill, strident, exciting and piercing tones, in marshalling and moving military bands and groups of men.

What veteran of the service is not familiar with reveille, general quarters, "chow call" and "taps"?

Also, we learn that God's prophets and evangelists are to "lift up their voices like a *trumpet* and show God's people their sins" (Isaiah 58: 1).

The very *work of God* of being a witness and a WARNING (like a warning trumpet blast!) is characterized by the *Feast of Trumpets*.

Finally, and *most important*, the Bible uses the type of TRUMPETS for the great ear-splitting cry from

heaven above announcing the SECOND COMING OF CHRIST! "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

"And He shall send His angels with a GREAT SOUND OF A TRUMPET, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:30, 31).

Also, at the moment of the RESURRECTION, God says, "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be *changed*, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, AT THE LAST TRUMP: For the TRUMPET SHALL SOUND, and the *dead* shall be raised incorruptible, and *we shall be changed*!" (1 Corinthians 15:51, 52).

Think of the insane, ridiculous, childish "reasons" why many nations celebrate various "national holidays." Think of the demonic, satanic, ridiculous frivolities associated with "Halloween," with decorations consisting of witches, goblins, ghosts and ghouls! What about "April Fool's Day," "New Year's Eve with its drunken ribaldry and revelry; "Easter," with its sex and fertility symbols of rabbits and eggs?

It would seem, if there was ever an *excuse* or a "reason" to *observe an annual festival*, it would be one of the greatest excuses in all of history to observe a festival commemorating the FACT of the death, burial and *resurrection* of Jesus Christ—which guarantees that WE, TOO, can be RAISED FROM THE DEAD—made IMMORTAL, changed into SPIRIT, given ETERNAL LIFE!

Then WHY such resistance to observing the same ceremony (called "the Passover") as did Jesus Christ?

What could be a greater "excuse" than a gigantic FALL FESTIVAL celebrating the coming establishment of the very KINGDOM OF GOD on earth? What could be GREATER than celebrating, *not only* the physical harvest of the land, but looking forward to the vast, SPIRITUAL HARVEST of the WHOLE EARTH?

In looking at all of the holy days simultaneously, we celebrate, seven times annually, the very PURPOSE OF LIFE! If there was ever a "CELEBRATION OF LIFE," the seven annual holy days of God constitute such a celebration!

But, of course, God's people have *not* merely sought "an excuse" to observe the feast!

How Should We Worship God?

What is idolatry? Why are the Ten Commandments so arranged that the first two have to do with *false* worship; worshipping other gods and making idols? Probably because God knew these would be the very FIRST commandments men would tend to break! What is *true worship*? It is *mimicking*, IMITATING, obeying, *servng* the one being worshipped! It is love, adoration, adulation and a desire to BE LIKE the one being worshipped!

Almighty God portrays to us His feasts; Jesus Christ shows that the first GREAT COMMAND to be issued from His exalted throne as supreme WORLD RULER will be: "You must come up to keep the FEAST OF TABERNACLES!" How can it be *conceivable* to ANY human mind that an individual will DISOBEY that thunderous command?

Yet the book of Zechariah seems to predict that some nations will have to be FORCED through back-breaking drought and famine; through the SHATTERING of their remaining economy, to OBEY GOD!

If you are a worshiper of God, then God requires that you DO WHAT HE SAYS! *False worship*, idolatry, is illustrated by millions of human beings who "mimic" the actions, voice mannerisms, dress, appearance, hair

styles and other affectations of their "matinee idols."

Some people worship other people; some people worship *themselves*. Though few recognize it, MILLIONS are literally worshipping Satan the devil, who masquerades as "an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11: 13-15) and are worshipping a FALSE Christ, and "another gospel"!

This FALSE Christ they are perfectly willing to "obey," for the FALSE Christ that is portrayed to the world hands the world easily palatable, easily acceptable, meaningless, lackadaisical, empty, weird FANTASIES instead of *obedience!*

The world lets out nary a whimper as it rushes madly about spending literally BILLIONS of dollars on nonsensical "gifts" in lavish commercialism during the "Christmas season."

It protests with nary a word as it scampers about, carefully attempting to avoid razor blades or needles in apples, LSD or poisons in candy, ground glass in cookies, shouting "trick or treat" from behind the grotesque mask on "the Evening of All Hallows" (Halloween).

Of course, all of this nonsense teaches nothing, educates not a whit and only in a remote manner—totally overshadowed by the pagan accoutrements of the season—allegedly represents "Christianity. "

But inform some of these same partygoers at Christmas time over the eggnog bowl, or kissing under the mistletoe, that they OUGHT to be observing God's FEAST OF TABERNACLES, and you may find yourself forcibly ejected from the scene!

But God says we are to WORSHIP God! Jesus said we are to worship God in spirit and in truth. Paul urged, "Be ye followers [imitators] of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). Peter said Jesus Christ set us an *example* that we *should follow in His steps* (1 Peter 2:21).

God has ordained that we must *act out* a part of His plan by observing His annual holy days. By living for eight short days with converted brethren in the *actual conditions which* will soon prevail on earth, we come to impress upon ourselves His great plan.

Rejoice in the Feast

God says: "But unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose ... thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and your flocks, and there ye shall eat before the Lord your God, and ye shall REJOICE in all that ye put your hands to, ye and your household, wherein the Lord thy God has blessed thee" (Deuteronomy 12:5-7).

Notice that He included the burnt offerings and sacrifices in this scripture—speaking to ancient Israel. We know that Christ's *one sacrifice* has rendered all of these ordinances (burnt offerings and sacrifices) unnecessary—for Christ's ONE SACRIFICE has, once and for all, atoned for SINS! Furthermore, *remember* that these animal sacrifices were NOT A PART of the original *holy days of God* when He called His people out of the land of Egypt! (Jeremiah 7:22).

They were *added* because rebellious Israelites were *breaking God's Commandments*.

The important thing to notice is that Almighty God wanted families to REJOICE in the feast!

To WHOM Will You *Conform?*

Many people "kid" themselves they are willing to *obey God—so long as God does not require them to do anything that is distasteful, inconvenient or difficult!* Millions of words have been expended; thousands of pamphlets, articles, booklets and hundreds of books have been written in attempts to provide carnal-minded, disobedient human beings with myriad "excuses" for AVOIDING conformance to God's will!

God says, "For the carnal mind is *enmity* [hostility] toward God—It is not subject to the law of *God*, neither indeed can be"! (Romans 8:7).

To Catholics and mainstream Protestants, the only "excuse" required to avoid observing God's annual holy days is the mere fact that they have virtually *never heard of them!* Complacently satisfied they have already found the "truth"; satisfied with their own church affiliation and body of doctrines (in so far as they have either heard them, studied them or understand them—which in many cases is shockingly sparse), they merely shrug their shoulders, retort "What *feasts?*" or say, "Oh, those are *Jewish* holidays!"

To millions, that is enough of a retort to "justify" themselves in their rejection of God's holy days.

Proof? They have none. Have they ever *studied* the entire subject of God's weekly and annual Sabbaths throughout the Bible; in both Old and New Testaments; *through history?* No. They know nothing of the Nicene Council, the Quartodecimen Controversy, the attempts over *centuries* to STAMP OUT the observance of the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread commencing on the 14th of Nisan!

They know *nothing* of the great restorations under righteous kings centered around the rediscovery of God's annual holy days and the great BLESSINGS lavished by God upon His people for so doing. They know *nothing* of Christ's own example of holy day observance; that He is Lord of the Sabbath day (Mark 2:27-29) or that the apostle Paul taught *the gentiles* to observe God's annual holy days (1 Corinthians 5).

They are as ignorant of God's annual holy days as is a Buddhist of Christianity, a Moslem of Catholicism, or a Confucianist of Coptic Christianity.

To millions, the subject of annual holy days is completely *FOREIGN!* It is no wonder, then, that those same millions are completely *ignorant* of the entire plan and purpose of Almighty God! For, in vivid and colorful fashion, the annual progression of God's holy days, continually occurring as *yearly reminders* to God's people, portrays the beautiful PLAN OF GOD—the very PURPOSE for *your human life!*

To a truly *converted* person, God's "wish" (if there is such a thing) is the Christian's COMMAND! A truly converted, *obedient* son of God no longer attempts to "reason" around in his own mind various methods of *avoidance* of God's clearly indicated WILL!

Rather than being *conformed* to the *world*; *conformed* to the ways of life of those around him; conformed to the *Satanic deceptions of this evil world*, the truly converted, obedient Christian is CONFORMED to *Jesus Christ!* Almighty God will not bless a cantankerous, hostile, "reasoning" human mind which only seeks *excuses* to AVOID conforming to the will of God! God says, "...A broken spirit: A broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalms 51:17).

Paul says we are to present our bodies to God—GIVING ourselves to Him! "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a *living sacrifice*, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service—and be NOT CONFORMED to *this world*, but be ye TRANSFORMED by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1, 2).

Notice! The true Christian is to be *transformed* CHANGED—until he is no longer *conformed* to this world and its anti-God "excuses. "

We are to be conformed to CHRIST! "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29).

Jesus Christ IN US the Hope of Glory

Do you *belong* to Jesus Christ? If the answer is *yes*, then it would be UNTHINKABLE to you to *disobey* the example, the plans, yes, even the indicated choices or *wishes* of your Saviour, your High Priest and your soon-coming King!

Almighty God says, "I change not!" Remember, Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, today and forever"! (Hebrews 13:8).

The apostle Paul explained that, when one is converted, Jesus Christ is literally *living within* that person (Galatians 2:20-22).

Question: Did Jesus Christ observe God's annual holy days? Answer: **YES!** We see Him observing the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem; observing the Passover as a habitual, *annual* occasion, and *changing* the ancient symbol of the roast Paschal lamb, bitter herbs and the "bread of haste" into the wine and unleavened bread of the *New Testament* in His blood!

We see Him commanding His disciples to WAIT until the Day of PENTECOST (Greek meaning "fiftieth"), the annual "Feast of Weeks" or "Feast of the *Firstfruits*, " for the receiving of God's Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ inspired the apostle Paul to preach to gentile Christians: "Let us keep the feast!" (1 Corinthians 5:8).

We see Paul writing, in the late 50s A.D., approximately 25 years after the resurrection of Christ: "But I will tarry at Ephesus until *Pentecost*..." (1 Corinthians 16:8).

In the narrative of "The Acts [deeds] of the Apostles," written by *Luke*, concluded in approximately 59 A.D., we see Luke, the chronologer, mentioning, as a prominent, annual and seasonal occasion, the *'fast'* of the *Day of Atonement*. "Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them..." (Acts 27:9).

In the large, English-language King James Version printed by the Philadelphia Press, a marginal reference says, "The day of Atonement."

The Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread are mentioned in Acts 12:1-4.

In short, if Jesus Christ is *living His life within you*, then you will be *obeying* Him; joyfully and willingly *taking part* in the happy, exciting, joyous annual celebrations of *life itself*, of the great *plan of God*—and of the future reign of Jesus Christ on this earth!

History and the *Future* Remember!

God revealed His annual holy days to Israel (the "physical church in the wilderness") when He brought them out of Egypt.

In a sense, even as God was restoring to them the lost knowledge of the seasons, the calendar and even the *weekly cycle*, He revealed to them the ANNUAL HOLY DAYS first! Of course, they had never lost track of the weekly cycle, and yet, through the years of slavery and the adoption of Egyptian, pagan customs, the entire

nation of Israel had drifted into Sabbath breaking—ignoring the Sabbath command—and had to be *reminded* of it, shown that to break the Sabbath was *punishable by death*, before they began to *observe* the weekly Sabbath once again!

When the kings of Judah or of *Israel forgot* God's annual holy days, the land drifted into anarchy, enemies attacked and transported the peoples of the nations into slavery, rampant *paganism* ensued, the Israelites drifted into abominable *idolatries*, and God meted out swift and stern PUNISHMENT!

In the great *restorations* under such righteous kings as *Josiah*, for example, the very *hallmark* of those restorations was the REESTABLISHMENT OF THE OBSERVANCE OF GOD'S ANNUAL HOLY DAYS!

Throughout the past, Almighty God *blessed* His people for observing His annual Sabbaths, and they were under a *curse* when those annual Sabbaths were ignored!

Remember! The first great global COMMAND to be issued by the soon-coming WORLD RULER will be: "You must come to Jerusalem to *keep the feast!*"

One thing is sure.

No matter what your religious background, upbringing, points of view, concepts, or even imagined "excuses," today—you WILL KEEP IT THEN! *However*, if Almighty God detects *rebellion*; if there is a *willing* disobedience in hearts and minds who *refuse to obey God now*—it may well be Too LATE for them to rejoice in the great, GLOBAL celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles at the beginning of the millennium!

Think of the incredible festival that will be held in the environs of Jerusalem AFTER a *nuclear holocaust* has devastated perhaps more than *one-third* of the population of this *earth!*

Literally *billions* of people will *not be thinking*, then, about the so-called "Permanence" of their physical surroundings!

Rather, they will begin to realize what a *near* thing it was that ALL MANKIND might have been utterly *destroyed*—OBLITERATED from the face of the earth!

Now, suddenly, *hundreds of millions* will have awakened to the fact there really IS a great, powerful, Creator GOD!

God will have been *shaking* this earth; pouring out every kind of plague, the trumpet plagues, the seven last plagues spoken of in the book of Revelation—He will have *utterly destroyed* the great false *churches* of this earth, and the cities will run with *rivers of blood* as the ghastly scenes in the book of Revelation and other prophecies portray!

At *that* time, there will be hundreds of millions who will be WILLING to docily and meekly find their way (with the help of *angels*, no doubt!) to the environs of Jerusalem, and keep a *Feast of Tabernacles* unlike any "camp out" in the history of mankind!

Bible prophecies say that the great *return* of God's people Israel from nations all over the four corners of the globe where they have been held captive will then forever *erase* the memory of the *first exodus!*

He says, "And I that am the Eternal thy God from the land of Egypt will *yet* make thee to dwell in tabernacles, [booths] *as in the days of the solemn feast*" (Hosea 12:9).

This scripture comes *after* the picture of the *regathering* of Israel, *this time* from the "*land of Assyria* "

(Hosea 11: 11).

Now, you may have a far broader, fuller, richer understanding of the Feast of Tabernacles *than ever before!*

You see, *not only* does it show us the future Kingdom of God; it also acknowledges, in a very real sense, our day-today "sojourning" in THIS physical life, here, NOW! In that sense, the Feast of Tabernacles is a "*now*" feast!

We "uproot" from our pleasant, home surroundings—go to the place where Almighty God has set His name, where other brethren of like spirit and like mind are gathering, and *there rejoice* in God's festival, as pilgrims and strangers in a new, different and strange environment, happily sharing the festival together, acknowledging the *impermanence* of our physical, material lives on this earth—celebrating, joyously, the fact that we, together with Noah, Abraham, all of the righteous patriarchs and prophets, the apostles, and Jesus Christ Himself, are looking for a righteous KINGDOM which Jesus Christ will bring with Him when He comes!

I hope to see ALL of you at the FEAST!

-End-

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