



"The Churches of God Outreach Ministries provides leadership, information, and biblical teaching in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Matthew 28:19-20"

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Mini Study

God's Grand Design

The Spirit Itself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God. And if children, also heirs; truly heirs of God, and joint-heirs of Christ, if indeed we suffer together, that we may also be glorified together. For I calculate that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to compare to the coming glory to be revealed in us (Romans 8:16-18).

Death and taxes. They are considered to be the only certainties of life. It's what follows death that's a concern for all of us - the odd atheist excepted. Some assume that death ends all, and perhaps strive to leave a positive inheritance to the world. Some seek to lead *'a good life'* with the expectation that they will return to a physical life higher in the grand scheme of things. Or, we can tap into the divine plan for man. What the Creator has in mind for all who so desire is unimaginably more dramatic, more exciting, more satisfying than all the weird and wonderful scenarios dreamed up by philosophers and theologians.

- Of course, if there is no God, the matter of an afterlife doesn't arise (but see Psalm 14:1, Hebrews 11:6).
- To start at the beginning: *'God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.'* (Genesis 1:27 KJV). Such a plan implies purpose.
- Through human choice that image was marred, and man embarked on the long journey to an extinction that God alone can prevent. The divine purpose is to enable us to become part of His Family (Romans 8:16-18).
- As a practical illustration of God's step-by-step plan, He instituted a series of weekly and annual festivals. They are showcased in the religion of the Israel nation, and detailed in Leviticus 23.
- Since the beginning of the Christian church it has been understood that the seven day week is a model. There would be six *'days'* - each of a thousand years - when mankind would have (almost) a free hand to conduct his affairs. It is followed by a millennial *'day of rest'* for which the seventh-day Sabbath is a model.
- The *'day of rest'* is known as *'the Millennium.'* Jesus will return to reign over all political and religious entities: *'King of kings and LORD of lords.'* The annual Day of Trumpets pictures this momentous event. Pictures, too, the resurrection to unending life of all in whom is the Spirit of God - the *'first resurrection.'* (Revelation 20:7) It will initiate a time of rest from war, freedom from ill-health and disease, economic stability, abundant resources, and pure religion. The Devil's influence will be temporarily removed and mankind will be universally reconciled to God - for which the annual Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) is a type.
- The annual Festival of Tabernacles sums up human frailty. It has many layers of significance: thankfulness for God's provision in the harvests, a commemoration of Israel's wilderness sojourn (when they lived forty

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years in 'tabernacles' - temporary dwellings), the human body (it is temporary and wears out), the millennium, the general resurrection. Overall it spans the whole time of sinful human existence in the flesh.

- The final day of the seven-day Festival of Tabernacles - termed '*the Great Day of the Feast*' (John 7:37) - represents the general resurrection to judgment of '*the rest of the dead.*' (Revelation 20:5) All those from all ages of man hitherto excluded from the true faith will be resurrected in the flesh and have opportunity to embrace the Gospel - the '*good news*' of salvation: *i.e.* becoming a part of the Kingdom (Family) of God.
- But there will come an end to this present era and '*...the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*' (II Peter 3:10 ASV) This is '*the second death,*' (Revelation 20:13-15) known as Ge'henna, '*Hell.*' The symbolism of the Festival of Tabernacles - mankind in sinful flesh - will then be fulfilled, completed.
- All who then remain will be spirit - truly children of God. It is Eternity - the culmination of God's grand design. Appropriately, it merits a special festival, the seventh holy day of the festival year, and immediately follows Tabernacles. It completes the festival year and marks a new beginning - to spirit life. The purpose of God in creation will be complete and mankind will truly be 'in the image and likeness of God'.

(All Scripture references are LITV unless otherwise noted.)

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