

outreach

Rejoice in God's Festivals

The Newsletter of the Churches of God, UK

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Matthew 28:19-20

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Many Christians will shortly be observing a 'festival for the future'. Millions are expecting the return of the Messiah - but do you know what one of his first world-embracing actions will be?

We humans thrive on festivals of every shape and size. Whether secular or religious we see them as a welcome break from the inevitable routines of life. There are local festivals that cluster round a village event. Flower festivals with their colourful artistic 'floats'. Religious festivals in all the major faiths celebrating an aspect of the divine revelation. For the faithful these are reminders of important events.

For the Christian religion, of course, there are festivals designed to highlight the life of Jesus the Messiah: Christmas to focus on his birth. Easter centres on his death and resurrection. A host of 'saints days' recall the lives of prominent Christians down the ages. Indeed failure to take part in the major festivals is generally viewed as a rejection of the faith.

You may be surprised to learn that many Christians will this year - as for many years past - observe a festival in Jerusalem in the autumn. It is called the '*Feast of Tabernacles*'. And not only in Jerusalem but also in numerous locations worldwide.

Feasts of the LORD

But hold on. Anyone with more than a smattering of Bible knowledge 'knows' this festival is 'Jewish'. So why are Christians getting involved?

Isn't that something 'done away' and 'nailed to the cross'?

Another surprise. The first Christians - *both Jew and Gentile* - observed *Tabernacles*, along with several other festivals usually branded as 'Jewish'. It was several centuries before the practice was all but submerged by a deluge of observances never enjoined by the LORD. Indeed condemned by Him.

As the Christian centuries rolled by the 'holy convocations' appointed by God were replaced by observances such as Christmas, Easter and Sunday. While such retained some of the significance of historical events yet they obscured the divine plan, having been commandeered by the apostate church to attract and accommodate unbelievers.

The festivals - observed annually - are inspired as 'markers' to illustrate God's plan. In spring there is the seven-day *Unleavened Bread* festival followed in early summer by *Pentecost* - a term familiar to most believers (we have discussed these elsewhere).

Let's look at *now* - autumn. Another round of festivals here.

The Autumn Festivals

The first day of the Hebrew seventh month (our late September/October) is the *Feast of Trumpets* - celebrated with exposition of the Word, and with festive fare (Nehemiah 8:1-12). It was a time to rejoice:

And Nehemiah the governor, and Ezra the priest, the scribe, and the Levites who taught the people, said to all the people, This day is holy to Jehovah

**These are the set feasts of Jehovah, even holy convocations, which you shall proclaim in their appointed season
Leviticus 23:4**

And Nehemiah the governor, and Ezra the priest, the scribe, and the Levites who taught the people, said to all the people, This day is holy to Jehovah your God. Do not mourn or weep, For all the people wept when they heard the Words of the Law. Then he said to them, Go eat the fat, and drink of the sweet, and send portions to him for whom nothing is prepared. For this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of Jehovah is your fortress. And the Levites were silencing all the people, saying, Be quiet, for today is holy, and do not be grieved. And all the people went to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the Words which were made known to them

And who doesn't want to rejoice - and in a way established and approved by the very hand of God Himself!

For Christians there is even greater cause to rejoice. For this first of the autumn festivals has reference to the months preceding the return of our Saviour, and culminating in his taking over from incompetent mankind the reins of government. It is the time, too, of the resurrection to eternal life of all the people of God to serve with their Saviour.

The World Reconciled

Human incompetence has ever been aided and abetted by man's deadliest enemy, Satan. The next annual festival - ten days later - includes a celebration of the evil one's removal from his freedom to undermine the divine plan. It is the *Day of Atonement*. It is a day of fasting, but the underlying theme is surely cause to rejoice. It represents, too, the reconciliation of mankind with God.

Mankind longs for the fulfilment of a Utopian dream - a time of universal peace and prosperity. And that's the theme of the next festival - *Tabernacles*. It lasts seven days. It is a multi-layered festival embracing the life and death of all mankind and of every in-

dividual who has ever drawn breath - and died. *Tabernacles* portrays human frailty. It portrays the sum total of all human activity since creation until the end of time. And it portrays the fulfilment of that Utopian dream.

Every nation, every religion, every individual will at that time be obliged to observe it: *'every one that is left of all the nations that came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, Jehovah of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles'* (Zechariah 14:16).

Following the return of Jesus and the reconciliation of humanity with the Creator there follows a millennium of peace. The divine laws will govern every nation. Man's in-built desire to worship (too often suppressed through ignorance) will be expressed through a single world religion - God's. The divine Spirit will be freely available without hindrance for all mankind.

After this thousand-year reign of the King of kings, Jesus, all those who have never had a close encounter with Jesus will be resurrected in the flesh to have the opportunity - for the first

time - to *'choose life'*. Those who refuse, who *'choose death'*, will get their wish. All opposition to the divine plan will be eliminated in a final conflagration that will consume all except the Family of God and the angelic hosts.

Note Paul's words: *'Then after Christ has destroyed all [human and spiritual opposing] powers and forces, the end will come, and he will give the kingdom to God the Father'* (I Corinthians 15: 24). That sums up the final festival day. It is the *'closing day'*, the fullness of God's purpose - eternity, when the Father will be *'all in all'* (v.28).

In the inspired festival plan - a plan that has been in place for six millennia - is revealed the whole purpose of the Father. [Ω](#)

Autumn Festivals 2006

Trumpets....September 23

Atonement...October 2

Tabernacles.. October 7-13

Closing Day.. October 14

**Read, no charge, the article:
A Framework for Prophecy**

These festivals will be observed in many locations worldwide. If you would like to visit ask us for possible locations