

MINI STUDY Rejoice With Your Spiritual Family at the Feast

The Good News, in conjunction with the Correspondence Course Department, presents brief excursions into the study of the Bible, delving into topics relevant to the development of future members of the God Family. Bible study is one means by which Christians are renewed daily (II Cor. 4: 16), so let's refresh ourselves with more of the precious truths of God's Word!

Instructions; The format of these ministudies is similar to that of the Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course. Look up and read in your Bible the scripture references given in answer to the questions. Comments following the questions elaborate on the scriptures just read. That's all there is to it! (These studies are based on the King James Version of the Bible, unless otherwise stated.)

For tens of thousands of God's people around the world, the Feast of Tabernacles is the happiest time of the entire year! That's because the Feast has been ordained by God to be a family oriented get-together.

Both parents and youths of God's Church look forward to the Feast with great anticipation all year long. For the children, the Feast is full of play and new things to see and experience. For the adults it's a wonderful change of pace and an opportunity to recharge our spiritual batteries, and to have a "family reunion" with our spiritual family - our brothers and sisters in Christ with whom we are going to spend eternity.

Let's review several basic scriptures regarding the Feast to see why God places great emphasis on rejoicing together at this annual, commanded assembly.

1. What is the divinely set theme for the yearly Feast of Tabernacles? Deut. 16:13-15. (Notice the words surely rejoice in verse 15. The Revised Standard Version renders this "be altogether joyful.") Does God intend for everyone - regardless of age, social strata or economic level - to rejoice in this Feast? Verse 14.

2. Does God intend for the husband to take his wife and children with him to rejoice together at the Feast of Tabernacles? Deut. 12:5, 7, 12,

16.14. Are families to live in temporary dwellings at the place designated by God for the observance of this Feast? Lev. 23:42.

Over and over God tells us that the Feast of Tabernacles is to be a happy, wonderful time. For the congregation of ancient Israel - God's physical, Old Testament Church in the wilderness (Acts 7:38) - it was a time of rejoicing because of the abundant winter's store of food that was harvested just before the Feast. But the Feast has far greater significance for God's spiritual Church today.

The Feast of Tabernacles pictures the prosperity, happiness, joy and universal peace that will come about in the Millennium under the righteous rule of Jesus Christ. Obedience to the spiritual principles of God's laws and God's revealed way of life will make the world tomorrow a supremely happy place!

3. Did Jesus Christ, as a young Child, keep the annual festivals with His human family? Luke 2:41-42. Did He continue keeping these days as an adult? John 7:1-2, 8-11, 14.

While on earth, Jesus Christ observed all of God's Holy Days from early childhood. Joseph, His human father, and Mary, His mother, obediently kept all the annual festivals together with Jesus and His younger brothers and sisters. Jesus rejoiced with His human

family at the Feast of Tabernacles just as He - the Lord God of the Old Testament - had commanded ancient Israel to rejoice.

4. But will it sometimes be impossible to take all our family members to the Feast of Tabernacles with us? Matt. 10:36.

Of course it is not always possible for all of God's children to be with their physical sons and daughters or parents at the Feast - especially if these other family members have not yet been called by God and are therefore still unconverted. But those of us in God's Church who have school aged children can take them with us to the Feast and rejoice with them.

5. Are only families to rejoice at the Feast of Tabernacles? What about those who are alone at the Feast for one reason or another? Deut. 16-14

The Feast is not a time to go off away from others and have a private "vacation." God commands all of His spiritual children to come together to be taught, to fellowship and to rejoice, whether or not they are married and have children. Even if we don't have physical relatives with us, we can still share the joy and abundance of this Festival with others of God's spiritual family, especially the widows, orphans and others who are alone among us.

The Feast of Tabernacles is a fun time for young and old alike. It is an opportunity for families to be together for eight days plus traveling time to and from the Feast. It is a time of concentrated teaching by God's ministers, who remind us of God's master plan of salvation.

The Feast is also a time full of opportunities for fellowship with brethren from different parts of the country and even other nations. Christians at the Feast demonstrate now, by the way they live together in harmony, what this entire sin-sick, unhappy world will be like after Christ returns.

Clearly, the Feast is a great opportunity our heavenly Father gives us, in which many can strengthen relationships with their physical families and where we can all develop family ties now with our spiritual brethren. The Feast is a foretaste of sharing eternity together as glorified members in the very Family of God! For God is a Family. And God is in the process of expanding His divine Family.

6. Does God plainly show it is His purpose to increase His divine Family by bringing many spiritual Children into it? II Cor. 6:17-18, Heb. 2:9-10, Rev. 21:7.

7. Is Christ actually the "firstborn" of many Children of God? Rom. 8:29, Col. 1:18.

Jesus Christ is God's firstborn Son and our Elder Brother because we, too, will soon be born into the Family of God at the resurrection.

8. Are true Christians already called the children of God the Father? I John 3:1.2. But even though considered God's children, are they now only "heirs" - ones who shall, in the future, become inheritors? Gal. 4:6-7, Rom. 8:14-17. Why are they only heirs today? I Pet. 1:3-4

Those who have been called by God (John 6:44) to be a part of His spiritual Family are now only Spirit-begotten children, not yet born of God's Spirit (John 3:1-8). It is when they are born of God at the resurrection that they become inheritors of God's Kingdom - divine, eternal members of the Family of God.

9. How does one become "begotten" of God?

Acts 2:38. Does one also then become a true Christian? Rom. 8:9.10.

When God gives you the precious gift of His Holy Spirit, you literally become a begotten son or daughter of God - His very own child, actually begotten of Him by His seed, so to speak - by His Spirit entering your mind, joining with the spirit in man."

God is now your heavenly "Father" (Matt. 6:9). Not figuratively, in the sense that He created all mankind, but in reality! When begotten by the Holy Spirit, we clearly enter a family relationship with our Father in heaven and our Elder Brother, Jesus Christ.

But just as a physical fetus must grow physically large enough to be born of its human mother, so the begotten Christian must grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ (II Pet-3:18) - must overcome and develop spiritual character during this life in order to be born into our heavenly Father's spiritual Family at Christ's return.

10. While we are in the spiritually begotten state, who does the Bible show is our spiritual mother"? Gal. 4:26. How does she feed, nurture, guide and protect the spiritually begotten children of God the Father? Eph. 4:11-13, I Pet. 5:1-2.

God's Church is indeed the "mother of us all." As a mother carries her unborn baby where it is protected and nourished, so also God's Church, through God's called and chosen ministry, instructs, teaches, counsels, advises and protects from spiritual harm the unborn members.

It is through the ministry of God's Church that each Spirit-begotten child of God is fed the spiritual food that helps it to grow spiritually during the "prebirth gestation period" - the pre-spiritual birth state - that is this human life. And it is at the Feast of Tabernacles, as well as at God's other annual Holy Days and weekly Sabbaths, that begotten children of God meet together to receive spiritual nourishment from our spiritual mother."

Soon we are going to be fed spiritual food by God's ministers for eight days at dozens of Feast sites around the world. And we all desperately need this spiritual nourishment from our mother, God's Church, as the time of our fast-approaching birth into the God Family nears.

Let's all rejoice with our spiritual Family at the Feast of Tabernacles - with God our Father, Christ our Elder Brother and with our spiritually begotten brothers and sisters, many of whom we will have the pleasure of meeting for the very first time!

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