

YOUTH



LEVEL 9

BIBLE

LESSONS



SPECIAL FEAST
LESSON



Why Do You Keep God's Festivals?

FALL FESTIVAL
EDITION

WHY DO YOU KEEP GOD'S FESTIVALS?

Do you ever stop and ask yourself why you go to the Feast of Tabernacles? Or the Feast of Trumpets? Or why you fast on the Day of Atonement?

"Well, because God commands us to," you might say. Or, "Mom and Dad keep them, so all the family does, too." Right! And those are excellent reasons. But as you grow older, God wants you to understand why *you* keep His festivals.

God has a good reason for everything that He tells you to do. And you will enjoy the feast days much more when you know what they mean. So let's look at God's festivals in a way that will help you to keep them with more understanding. This lesson will focus on the festivals that come around the time of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Keep your Bible handy. You will need it to look up some scriptures. You will also need a pen or pencil for making some notes.

FESTIVALS PICTURE A PLAN

Today, many of you live in big cities and small apartments. You buy your meat and vegetables

from the supermarket. Perhaps you don't get the chance to plant a garden and grow your own food. So the different seasons of the year do not have the same significance to you as they would if you lived on a farm.

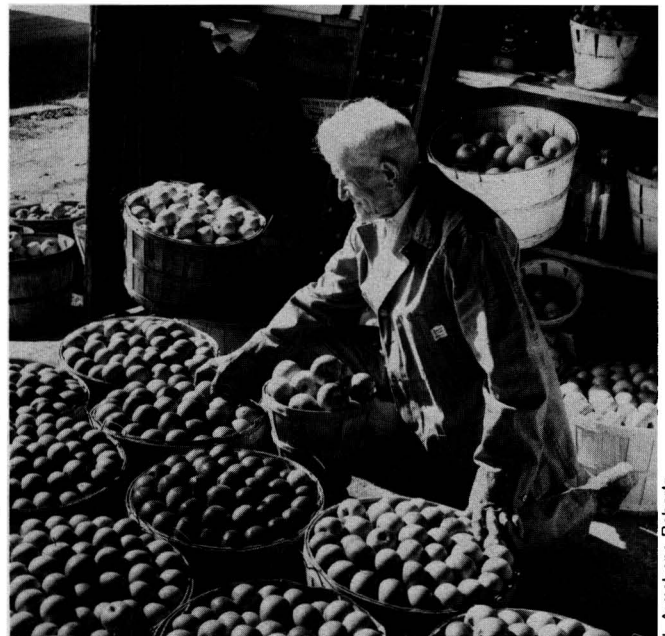
But to a farmer, two seasons of the year are especially significant. They are the times of the harvest — the early, smaller, spring harvest and the later, greater, fall harvest.

God's festivals are also grouped into two seasons of the year — the spring and the fall (or autumn). In early spring are the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in late Spring the Feast of Pentecost is kept. Then, in the fall, there are the Day of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day.

You probably know that the feast days picture the various steps in God's plan of salvation. God wants to give eternal life to everyone who has ever lived (including you!), providing they learn to obey Him. But God is not giving everyone a chance for eternal life *right now*. His plan is like a harvest, a gathering-in of people. At first, He has



NFB — Photo by Gar Lunney



H. Armstrong Roberts

An apartment dweller may have a difficult task feeling the joy of an abundant harvest. God's festivals are built around the spring and fall harvest seasons.

called only a very few — like the smaller, spring harvest, which is especially pictured by the Day of Pentecost. But later, as His plan unfolds, He will call more and more, until the whole world understands. That will be the *great* harvest of people, like the much larger fall harvest.

God's plan covers 7,000 years of which nearly 6,000 have passed. The great harvest will come *after* these first 6,000 years!

Based on what you have learned so far, can you answer the following questions?

1. God's festivals come during what two seasons?
2. What do the feast days picture overall?
3. What do people have to learn before God will give them eternal life?
4. Why is God's plan of salvation like a harvest?

FEAST OF TRUMPETS

Now let's look at the first of the Holy Days that come in the fall of the year. It is the Feast of Trumpets. It falls on a different day each year, usually in late September or the first part of October. But if you were to use the same calendar that ancient Israel used, the Feast would always fall on the first day of the seventh month, the month called Tishri.

You can read in Lev. 23:23-25 where God commanded this day to be kept. Turn there now and read what God says.

Notice that God says this day is a *Sabbath* and that no ordinary work should be done. The people are to have a "holy convocation." *Convocation* is a word not used much these days, but it just means a "meeting" or "assembly."

What else did God say was to be done on this day? Look at verse 24 again. On this day the high priest was to blow a trumpet. Not just an ordinary trumpet, but a special one made out of a large ram's horn. It was called a *shofar*. You could not play a tune on it — all it could do was give out one piercing blast. (The Hebrew word that describes the noise it makes is *turuah*, which is quite a good description by itself. Shout it out a few times — you will sound quite a bit like a *shofar*!)

The *shofar* was used in ancient times to sound the alarm in case of war. The watchman would blow it to alert people if he saw an invading army approaching. But why did God have the *shofar* blown on the Day of Trumpets? Because this day pictures Jesus Christ returning as a conquering King to rule the earth in peace. But, ironically, before Christ can bring peace He will have to make *war*!

Satan the devil has deceived this world for nearly 6,000 years. He has convinced mankind that God's way is wrong and that his way is right. It is hard to believe, but when Christ returns to the earth, most people are going to think of Him as an *enemy*. Satan will have deceived the world into thinking that Christ and His angels are an alien, hostile group coming to destroy them. In desperation they will fight against Him. Christ will have to stop this rebellion against Him as soon as He begins His rule.

The Bible says that Christ will return with the sound of a trumpet. Read it in I Thessalonians 4:16. Isn't it a shame that Satan has so deceived the world that Christ's wonderful reign of peace will have to begin with war?



Y.E.S. Photo

The shofar alerted ancient Israelites to various things such as approaching armies. A mighty trumpet blast will announce Jesus Christ's return.

Notice one other very important event that occurs on the day that Christ returns. Read the last part of I Thessalonians 4:16 again, and also verse 17. It talks about a time of resurrection. The “dead in Christ” are the baptized members of the true Church who have died down through the ages. They had God’s Holy Spirit and obeyed God by living according to His laws.

Many famous men and women will be raised from the dead: Abraham and his wife Sarah, King David, Moses, and Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, to name just a few.

Those members of God’s Church who are still living when Christ returns will be *changed* on that day. Look at I Corinthians 15:51-52. Their human physical bodies will be changed to spirit. These will have been the baptized and converted members of God’s Church. Among them will be people you know well, including your own parents. They will have shown God that they were willing to obey Him in all things during their mortal lives, and now He will give them the gift of eternal life as He had promised.

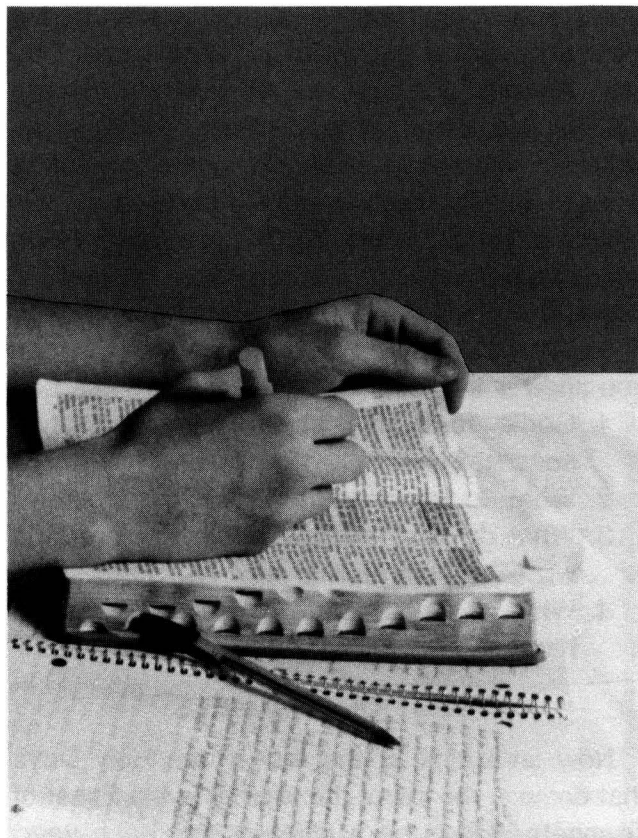
These two events, the return of Jesus Christ to rule and the resurrection of those who have obeyed God (the first harvest), are what the Feast of Trumpets pictures. It looks forward to the beginning of the New World — the world tomorrow!

Can you answer these questions about the Day of Trumpets?

1. What is the first Holy Day that comes in the fall of the year?
2. What does God say to do on the Feast of Trumpets?
3. What is a *shofar*, and what was it used for?
4. Why will Christ have to make war before He can bring peace?
5. Who are the “dead in Christ”?
6. According to I Thessalonians 4:16-17, what great event will happen on the day that Christ returns?

DAY OF ATONEMENT

Now let’s look at the next Holy Day, the Day of Atonement. It comes 10 days after the Feast of Trumpets, on the 10th of Tishri. There is



On the Day of Atonement, we can eat of God’s spiritual Word instead of physical food.

something very special that we do, or rather *don’t* do, on this day. Turn to Leviticus 23:27-29. You are told that you must *afflict* yourself. What does it mean to afflict yourself?

Find Psalm 35:13. What did King David do in a time of trial when he wanted God to answer his prayers? He humbled himself with *fasting*. The word that is translated “humbled” could just as well be translated “afflicted.”

On the Day of Atonement, you *afflict* yourself by fasting, — not eating or drinking anything for a 24-hour period. Anybody who has ever done that knows that by the time you have gone without food and drink for a day you are truly afflicted. You aren’t starving to death, of course, but you do get *very* hungry and thirsty!

God does not want you to suffer. So why does He tell you to fast on the Day of Atonement? The following paragraphs will help you understand. A better understanding will make keeping the Day of Atonement more meaningful to you.

You have just learned how Satan the devil will inspire men and women to fight against Jesus

Christ when He returns. Satan hates God's plan. He was once given a chance to rule the earth according to God's Laws. He had a chance to serve in God's government forever and "blew it"! He chose not to obey God. Now his attitude is, "If I can't have it *all*, nobody is going to have any *part* of it!" He would rather see all humanity *destroyed* than have born-again sons of God living and ruling with God in His Kingdom.

Satan made a big mistake. God wants to be sure that you do not make the same mistake. What was that mistake?

Long ago, the devil's name was Lucifer which means "light bringer." God created him to be one of the most beautiful and powerful of all the angels. He had everything going for him — power, talent, good looks. God gave him a very important job, that of ruling the earth. But something went terribly wrong. The prophet Isaiah tells us about it.

Turn to Isaiah 14:12-14 and read these verses. Do you see the mistake Satan made — the great sin he committed?

Yes, he became vain. He was not content to do God's will. Instead of working *for* God, he

decided that he wanted to be just as important as God. His vanity got the better of him, and he led one third of all the angels in a rebellion against God.

God won, of course. But the devil's attitude was changed forever. Instead of being the "light bringer," he began to spread spiritual "darkness." He became "Satan," which means "adversary." Since that time, Satan has been the enemy of God, trying to upset and spoil everything that God is doing. He especially wants to turn all mankind away from God, so that everyone will lose out on his or her chance for eternal life.

But Satan's days are numbered. When Christ returns He will replace Satan as world ruler. The Day of Atonement looks forward to that event. After the devil has been removed and can no longer tempt man into rebellion, this world will be at one with God. That is why it is called the Day of At-One-Ment.

But why fast?

Fasting humbles you and brings you closer to God.

Some time after Satan was given power over



Satan's attitude of rebellion and hatred has caused man to pursue the way of war and death.

the earth, he became full of pride and vanity, full of his own importance. His rebellion resulted in a darkened, ruined earth, and chaos throughout the universe. Those who will work with Jesus Christ in ruling and leading in the World Tomorrow must be different. They must be humble and not full of their own importance. They must rely on God for the strength and power to succeed. They must never get into the attitude of thinking they are as good as God, and can manage without Him.

Jesus knew the value of fasting. King David learned it. You can learn it too by keeping the Day of Atonement.

Answer these questions to help you remember the lessons of the Day of Atonement.

1. What Holy Day comes 10 days after the Feast of Trumpets?
2. What are you told *not* to do on the Day of Atonement?
3. Why does Satan hate God's plan?
4. What big mistake did Lucifer make?
5. What event is pictured by the Day of Atonement?
6. What effect should fasting on the Day of Atonement have on you?

FEAST OF TABERNACLES

Where are you while you are doing this lesson? At the Feast perhaps? Or on the way? It's an exciting time, isn't it? For most people in God's Church, the Feast is the best time of the year. It means vacation, travel, the adventure of new experiences, seeing old friends and making new ones.

But that is not all it means. The travel, the fun, the living in temporary homes all are meant to teach you lessons. Remember, God *always* has a purpose for the things He tells you to do. God wants young people to understand what the Feast means.

Look at Deuteronomy 16, verses 13 and 14. Sons and daughters are supposed to rejoice along with the parents and the whole household! These verses also show you *why* the people of Israel were told to rejoice at the Feast. Can you find the reason? Do not read on just yet. Look for the answer in your Bible.

The Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated just after the larger fall harvest. Ancient Israel was a farming society, and the successful harvest was



Y.E.S. Photo

Families are able to spend time together at the Feast of Tabernacles and enjoy the wonders of creation.



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Living in temporary dwellings at the Feast shows us that our physical lives are just temporary.

always a time of great rejoicing. With the corn and the olives and the grapes all gathered in, the family could now depart for their annual journey to Jerusalem to keep the Feast.

Do you know why this festival is called the Feast of Tabernacles? The word *tabernacle* means “temporary shelter or tent.” Sometimes the Feast is called the Feast of Booths. *Booth* is another word meaning “temporary shelter.” In ancient Israel, such shelters were made from the branches of palm trees and the other trees that grew abundantly on the hillsides there.

Why did God command them to live in temporary shelters? Look at Leviticus 23:42-43. It was to remind them that they had once been wanderers in the desert, without a homeland of their own. Today, our “tabernacle” is usually a hotel or motel. But we can still learn some important lessons by living in these modern tabernacles for a few days.

The society you live in now is not really your permanent environment. It is just part of your training ground on this earth. You are now in the process of learning skills and developing character and personality so that you can be a strong leader in the world Tomorrow. You are preparing to leave the world as we know it today behind one day soon. Living in a temporary home at the Feast, with just the clothes and belongings

that will fit into a suitcase, can help you remember this point.

There is another lesson that can be learned from living in a temporary home. It is one of the most important lessons that you can ever learn. Some people go through their whole lives without ever understanding this next point.

Take a couple of minutes to think about yourself. Do you worry about your appearance sometimes? Maybe you think you are too short — or too tall. Or your hair isn't curly enough. Or perhaps too curly. Or maybe it isn't your appearance that bothers you. Perhaps you're just shy and lack confidence, or are not coordinated enough. Or maybe you think you're not smart enough. Some of you may even have to cope with actual physical or mental handicaps. From time to time, you do worry about yourself, don't you?

One of the things that living in temporary dwellings can teach you is — *don't worry!* Just as your Feast home is only temporary, remember that your body in this life is only temporary too. It isn't meant to last forever. It is like a tent that one day can be just folded up and used no more (II Cor. 5:1-2).

The apostle Peter thought of his physical body as just a temporary “tabernacle.” He wrote, thinking that perhaps he did not have long to live,



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Sharing enjoyable activities at the Feast of Tabernacles—a foretaste of universal peace, joy and cooperation in the World Tomorrow.

“knowing that shortly I must put off this my *tabernacle*, even as the Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me” (II Pet. 1:14).

Christ had shown Peter that when he is resurrected, he will have a glorious, powerful spirit body and a quick, intelligent mind to match.

God does not only think of you as you are now. He thinks of you as you *can* be. He wants you to learn to think that way too. You don't really mind if the walls of your hotel room are not exactly your favorite color, do you? Or if you are camping, does it matter if your tent is red, blue or green, as long as it stays up and keeps out the rain?

It should be the same with your temporary body. Do not get all hung up with complexes over things you can do nothing about. Concentrate on the things you can do something about — your character and personality. Seek God's help to build the right character and the proper personality. God will make these things last

forever for those who put forth the effort and give them a body to match! Putting up with some of the inconveniences of living in a temporary home can teach you this valuable lesson.

REJOICE AT THE FEAST

Lastly, let's look at a lesson that most of you already know — the Feast is a time to rejoice! Why? Because it pictures the happy World Tomorrow!

Do you ever stop and think what life will be like in the World Tomorrow? When you were younger, you probably thought that the most exciting and outstanding thing about the Millennium was that the wild animals will be tame. You could have a lion or even a rhinoceros as a pet. Leopards will no longer be ferocious or snakes poisonous! But as you have grown older, you see that the *real* problems in this world are not caused by wild animals. They are caused by “wild” people!

Wild animals do not make bombs, hijack planes

and cause poverty, overpopulation and starvation. But *people*, under the influence of Satan the devil, do! In the Millennium, after Christ will have returned (Day of Trumpets), and Satan will have been removed from power (Day of Atonement), men everywhere will learn to live at peace. Nations will be cooperating. People will trust one another. Living will really be enjoyable!

Look again at a famous prophecy of how life will be in the Millennium under the rule of the Kingdom of God. It was given to us by God through the prophet Micah. Turn to Micah 4:1-5 and read these verses. Think about them for a moment. Look again at verse 3. Nations will take their weapons of war and turn them into instruments of peace. Do you realize that the world spends billions of dollars each week on war and preparing for war? In the Millennium, all these resources will be spent for peaceful purposes.

Look again at verse 4. Today there are millions of people in this world who are homeless — poor people and refugees. In the Millennium, everyone will have a nice home and some land to call his own. There will be superior education and employment for everyone. No one will have to worry about the future. People will be free of worry and disease. They will have time to be kind and unselfish.

Here is something you and your friends can do during the Feast: Pretend that in the Millennium you have been asked to design a museum, showing what life was like in the 1980s. What would you put in it? Think about what people living then would think of as strange about our world today. Here's a start:

Eye glasses (people will then be healed)

Vitamin supplements (everyone now has a healthful diet)

A draft card (no more need for armies)

A padlock (people are now honest)

See how many more ideas you can think of. It will help make the Kingdom of God more real to you. And it will help you enjoy the Feast more.

THE LAST GREAT DAY

There is one more festival which follows immediately after the Feast of Tabernacles. It is

called the Last Great Day. This is one of the most exciting days of all when you understand what it means!

God wants to give you eternal life. Not only *you* and *your* family, but everyone who has ever lived. And that means *everyone*, even those who died thousands of years ago! The Bible shows that after the Millennium there will be a time when all who have ever lived will be resurrected to physical life. It is the Great White Throne Judgment period (Rev. 20:5, 11-13).

We don't know much about this time yet. But we do know it will be a time when everyone who has ever lived and not known God's truth will be resurrected and learn to live God's way. The Bible indicates that it will last for about 100 years. There will be slaves from ancient Egypt, soldiers who died in the great wars, the kings and presidents of great nations down through the ages — all alive and learning God's way together. There will need to be a lot of preparation and organization to take care of the multiple billions made alive then. But by this time, you will have been ruling and living with Christ for more than 1,000 years. And God will use *you* to help plan this wonderful time!

This all seems so fantastic. Even the most imaginative science fiction writers have never come up with anything like it! But it is not fiction — it is *fact!* And the Last Great Day pictures the time when it all will happen!

YOU CAN HAVE HOPE!

There are more than four billion people on earth at the moment, including more than one billion teenagers. They are becoming more and more worried about the next few years. Will there be jobs? Will there be war? Will there be enough to eat? Will the human race even survive?

But you know the truth. Because you keep and understand God's feast days, you can understand His master plan of salvation, eternal peace and happiness for all mankind! That makes you a very special person to God. He is looking forward to the time when you, too, will become a part of His Family and live and rule with Him forever. He wants you to look forward to it too.

So have a great Feast!

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FEAST HIGHLIGHTS

DAY 1

MORNING:

AFTERNOON:

EVENING:

DAY 2

MORNING:

AFTERNOON:

EVENING:

DAY 5

MORNING:

AFTERNOON:

EVENING:

DAY 6

MORNING:

AFTERNOON:

EVENING:

Keep the memories of this Feast of Tabernacles for years to come.
Describe the activities and experiences that made each day special.

DAY 3

MORNING:

AFTERNOON:

EVENING:

DAY 4

MORNING:

AFTERNOON:

EVENING:

DAY 7

MORNING:

AFTERNOON:

EVENING:

DAY 8

MORNING:

AFTERNOON:

EVENING:

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