Welcome to the Feast

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Feast of Tabernacles Sermon

Welcome to the Feast of Tabernacles.

How blessed we all are to be here, wherever here might be for you. There is nothing like seeing and hearing the excitement and the joy of God's people as they come together for the Feast. It can almost be overwhelming at times, especially for those who are more introverted like myself. But for all you extroverts out there, I'm very happy for you.

But it's a time of rejoicing before God. Now we've all been through various trials over this last year since the last Feast, and some of us, I'm sure, even just to get here physically today, wherever that is for you. So, be glad and rejoice in the blessings from Almighty God, and welcome, once again, to the Feast.

So, why are we gathered here today for the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles or Feast of Booths? God gave the commandment to Moses in Leviticus 23 (if you'd all turn over there), and we'll be starting in verse 33. Again, that's **Leviticus 23:33—And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the people of Israel, saying, On the fifteenth day of this seventh month, and for seven days, is the Feast of Booths to the Lord. On the first day shall be a holy convocation. You shall not do any ordinary work. For seven days you shall present food offerings to the Lord. On the eighth day you shall hold a holy convocation and present a food offering to the Lord. It is a solemn assembly. You shall do no ordinary work**.

In **verse 37—These are the appointed Feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim as times of holy convocation, for presenting to the Lord food offerings, burnt offerings, and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its proper day, besides the Lord's Sabbaths, and besides your gifts, and besides all your vow offerings, and besides all your freewill offerings, which you give to the Lord**.

On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you've gathered in the produce of the land, you shall celebrate the Feast of the Lord seven days. On the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest.

And **verse 40—And you shall take on the first day the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days. You shall celebrate it as a Feast to the Lord for seven days in the year. It is a statute forever throughout your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All native Israelites shall dwell in booths that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God**.

This is the command from God that we are here today observing, and we are going to look at how this Feast was observed then and how we are to observe it today. Before we do that though, I want to take a

few minutes to remind us all how we got here and the amazing plan for mankind God has that He's revealed through these appointed times.

It's hard for us to comprehend, but we live at a time now with more truth and more understanding of God's plan than ever before, a clearer picture, a puzzle with more and more pieces put into place. It's really an abundance of truth and knowledge that's easy for us to take for granted.

I'm going to quote from Chapters 7 and 8 of the new book, looking at these appointed times and God's plan for mankind that He reveals through them.

Passover—A Test of Belief

The main purpose of this book has been to reveal the truth about God's Son, who is the Passover Lamb of God. Joshua died for the sins of all mankind; however, forgiveness of sin is granted only to those who accept and receive that sacrifice personally.

Passover concerns the true Messiah whom God established as the cornerstone of His entire plan. Christ is that foundation stone, upon which God is building something far greater than physical human life. Without accepting Joshua the Christ as one's Passover, it is impossible to enter into the rest of God's plan or to have that plan fulfilled in one's own life.

Accepting Joshua the Christ is not just a matter of simply saying the words or claiming Him as being their Lord and Savior. It requires **believing** the truth He taught, accepting His words, and striving to live by them. That is what it means to live by faith. It is also an act of obedience to Him as Lord and Teacher. One of the greatest truths He revealed is that He is the Passover Lamb of God. Yet most do not even acknowledge Passover itself, which identifies who He is and what He has accomplished and fulfilled.

[...]

FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

The first annual Holy Day is the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which starts immediately after sunset following Passover on the 14th day of the first month […]. As the passage in Leviticus 23 shows, the seventh day of this Feast is also an annual Holy Day to be observed.

The number seven appears continually throughout God's plan and purpose for mankind. For example, God sanctified the seventh day as the weekly Sabbath. He also established a 7,000-year plan for the development of humanity—a complete period of time for mankind to reproduce human life. Many other examples could be cited, but the point is that the number seven carries the meaning of completeness. It represents the fulfillment or completion of something God is accomplishing.

Once a person has accepted the sacrifice of Joshua the Christ—the Passover Lamb—so that the penalty of their sins is paid, they are then able to move forward into the next part of God's plan. The Feast of Unleavened Bread therefore becomes the next focus.

"On the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread unto the Eternal. You must eat unleavened bread for seven days. In the first day you shall have a holy convocation [a commanded assembly or formal meeting]. *You shall do no customary work* […] *in it [because it is an annual Sabbath day]. But you shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Eternal seven days. In the seventh day is a holy convocation, and you shall do no customary work in it" (Leviticus 23:6-8).*

This entire "appointed time" lasts seven days. During this week, one is commanded to eat unleavened bread—bread products without yeast, baking soda, or other leavening agents—each day. No leavening should be in anyone's home during this period, and all must refrain from eating baked leavened products like breads and cakes containing leavening agents. This only concerns breaded products, not other foods or products that might contain leavening agents like yeast used in preservatives. The focus during these days is strictly on the removal of leavened bread products and the eating of unleavened bread.

[...]

PENTECOST

Pentecost pictures how that transformation begins to take place in God's people and marks a vital stage in His plan of salvation. Also called the Feast of Firstfruits, this appointed time emphasizes God's calling of a first harvest from among humanity. The word Pentecost in Greek means "count fifty." The date of this appointed time with God can only be known by properly observing the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. God instructs precisely when the counting should begin—at a specific point inside the Feast of Unleavened Bread—so that we can know when to assemble before Him for this third annual Sabbath.

[...]

Pentecost pictures those whom God has called early in His plan to become part of His Family first. Just as the early spring harvest in scripture is called the "firstfruits of the land," these individuals are the firstfruits of God's plan, entering His Family ahead of the vast majority of humanity. The much larger fall harvest pictures the salvation of a far greater number of people, represented by the fall Holy Days.

These firstfruits are symbolized in the ceremony of these two wave loaves. One represents those who lived by faith in the coming Messiah prior to Christ's first appearance—those faithful individuals who lived through roughly 4,000 years leading up to His coming as the promised Messiah and our Passover.

The other loaf represents those who have lived by faith in the acceptance of salvation through our Passover—from the time after Christ's death, when He was received as the Wave Sheaf, until His return (His second coming).

Two lambs were also required along with the loaves to be waved before God, one for each represented period, as each lamb symbolized Christ.

Just as the Wave Sheaf offering picturing Joshua the Christ is waved to be accepted by God during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, so the two wave loaves are waved to be accepted by God on Pentecost. They picture the firstfruits being accepted by God and entering His Family when they are resurrected and given everlasting life.

[...]

THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS

The fourth annual Holy Day is the first appointed time in the autumn season in the Northern Hemisphere. On the Roman Calendar, the Feast of Trumpets generally falls in September or early October.

[...]

The Feast of Trumpets focuses on events that unfold in the world and lead up to and include Christ's coming to establish God's government on Earth. As Israel experienced physical deliverance, this Holy Day pictures a far greater deliverance—the end of 6,000 years of human self-rule and the beginning of the Messiah's reign for 1,000 years.

It marks the time when the world will most desperately need intervention. Humanity will be on the brink of total self-annihilation in a great and final world war. Scripture reveals that unless God intervenes, all life would be destroyed.

Christ is not returning as a Lamb, as He did the first time when He humbled Himself and did not resist being beaten and then killed in order to become the Passover for all. This time He is returning as a great King—the Lion of God—and He will begin His reign by attacking and conquering those who refuse to stop destroying mankind and the life God created to exist on the earth.

This transition from mankind's self-rule to God's rule on Earth is marked by the sounding of trumpets —specifically, the Seven Trumpets described in the Book of Revelation. These prophetic trumpets announce very specific, escalating events among the nations that ultimately erupt, plunging them into a final world war.

It is at the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet (on a Pentecost) that Joshua the Christ returns, accompanied by the 144,000 who will reign with Him.

ATONEMENT

The fifth annual Sabbath is the Day of Atonement.

[...]

The Day of Atonement is about becoming **atoned** to God. But what does that mean? A basic definition is reconciliation—the making or strengthening of a right relationship—between sinful humanity and a holy God. That reconciliation begins with repentance and acknowledgment of sin, and it is made possible by the acceptable payment of sin through the shed blood of Joshua the Christ as the Passover.

Atonement is not a one-time event; it is an ongoing process throughout human life. It involves a humble, continual desire to grow into unity with God—to become "at one" with Him. The word itself captures that meaning: at-one-ment.

This Holy Day pictures the complete atoning process whereby mankind can become fully reconciled to God. The firstfruits, pictured in Pentecost, become **fully** atoned—reconciled to God—in that first resurrection at Christ's coming once they are made spirit in everlasting life. The entire process revealed through Passover, Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Trumpets shows how those firstfruits are brought into God's Family—into His Kingdom.

The Day of Atonement pictures the entire process of reconciliation. Just as with that earlier harvest, all who become part of the greater fall harvest must also come into unity and oneness with God—to become "at one" with Him in order to enter into His Kingdom. All must accept Passover, repent, receive God's spirit, and grow into unity with Him.

The commanded fast on this day reflects humility before God. Fasting is a physical expression of dependence. It acknowledges that human strength is insufficient. Repentance requires humility—the willingness to choose God's ways over one's own. Year by year, one must continue striving and fighting against sin while seeking agreement with God in all things—"at one" with God.

[...]

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

As with all of God's annual Holy Days, each one connects to the other in an orderly, deliberate sequence. From the first observance to the last, they unfold with structure and precision. Just as a blueprint provides a plan that guides construction toward a finished result, God's appointed times function as a carefully designed framework that reveals His unified plan for the salvation of mankind.

Each Holy Day builds upon the one before it, revealing step-by-step how God works with mankind. None stands alone. Together, they form a progressive revelation of God's purpose—a complete design rather than isolated rituals.

Each stage reveals how God brings mankind from bondage to salvation. The Feast of Tabernacles represents one of the final and climactic phases of that plan.

The Feast of Tabernacles and God's Holy Day Cycle

In Leviticus 23, the final two annual Holy Days are described as the concluding observances of the year. Together they span eight days. The first seven days are called the Feast of Tabernacles, with the first day designated as an annual Sabbath. The eighth day is also an annual Holy Day and is referred to simply as the Last Great Day.

These two observances portray the final phases of God's work with mankind. The Feast of Tabernacles pictures a defined era in God's plan, while the Last Great Day reveals what follows immediately afterward.

So, what an incredible plan God has revealed to His people, and how truly blessed we are to have such truth. And what an incredible thing to rejoice about, a plan that gives such hope and excitement and peace. I find myself getting emotional thinking about it when I think of the spirit of mankind and the evil and oppression that has been on this earth for the last 6,000 years, and immense suffering caused by it, and knowing that it's all going to come to an end.

And we are to rejoice at this Feast as we both look back and forward into the future of God's plan.

Let us look back to physical Israel and how they kept this Feast. If you would please turn over to **Deuteronomy 16:13—You shall keep the Feast of Booths seven days, when you have gathered in the produce from your threshing floor and your winepress. You shall rejoice in your Feast, you and your son, and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are within your towns.**

For seven days you shall keep the Feast to the Lord your God at the place that the Lord will choose because the Lord your God will bless you in all your produce and all the work of your hands so that you will be altogether joyful.

So, for seven days after the fall harvest, all the people were to rejoice before the Lord and for them to reflect on the physical blessings God had given them from leading them out of Egypt and eventually into the promised land after forty years in the desert. And at this point in time, having that physical harvest that they just completed that year.

So, it was a time to stop the daily and weekly grind of human existence and self-centered human nature and try to reflect on what God had blessed them with. And we can all get very wrapped up in the day-to-day, even Sabbath by Sabbath, not fully reflecting on what God has blessed us with.

So, let's turn over to **Nehemiah 8:13—On the second day the heads of the father's houses of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, came together to Ezra the scribe in order to study the words of the law. And they found it written in the law that the Lord had commanded by Moses that the people of Israel should dwell in booths during the Feast of the seventh month, and that they should proclaim it and publish it in all their towns and in Jerusalem**.

Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths as it is written. So the people went out and made booths for themselves, each on his roof and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God and in the square at the Water Gate and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim.

And all the assembly of those who had returned from captivity made booths and lived in the booths. For from the days of Jeshua the son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so. And there was a very great rejoicing.

And **verse 18—And day by day, from the first day to the last day he read from the book of the law of God. They kept the Feast seven days, and on the eighth day there was a solemn assembly according to the law**.

So, here we see a little more description of how this Feast was observed. And I want to look a little closer at the booths that they were to make and why. We see that they were to be made with branches of the trees of what they had available to them around their towns and around their houses.

And this kind of reminds me of, like, the little structure you'll see, you know, children especially like to make little forts and different things and go gather around what they can find and build, you know, a little something that to kind of have that a little a little private space for them to play in.

But it's a simple structure that was only going to be there for the Feast, and for them it was to provide shade and a measure of protection to be able to spend time in. They did not live in these booths for seven days but dwelt in them for part of each day. We also see that they were constructed just about anywhere and everywhere, depending on each person's situation.

As like today, in their time, you know, you had people living in town, you had people living out in the country, and everywhere in between. So, if you didn't have enough space right around your house, you'd be in one of the gates or one of the courtyards and find a spot to have your booth, to have your area to be able to go to and dwell in and reflect during these days.

So why spend time in a booth? Although they didn't have the constant distractions of modern technology like we have today, they would have had the distractions of their day. And most of them would have been living in larger households, multi-generational households. It's not typically what we have in Western society today.

So, how do you find quiet time to reflect on all God has blessed you? God knows we wouldn't, with our selfish nature, unless He commanded it to happen. The simple booth gives that space to have some private uninterrupted space to look to God. And remember, it's not by our hand, but His that we have what we do.

The booth also represents more than just a space to reflect and focus on God. They serve as a reminder of the temporary physical life of mankind. We can really see the ego of mankind when it comes to life itself, and especially early in middle life when so much is taken for granted and with all the air of self-importance. It seems more so now than ever with technology and the convenience of the developed world today giving an expectation of life, a right to life, as opposed to the incredible gift and blessing from God that it is.

Just as the Israelites built temporary booths to dwell in, God has given us a temporary physical body to dwell in. Many today are so far removed from any kind of death or even just the process of life. I mean, just ask people where the food in the grocery store comes from, and you'll be shocked by some of the lack of basic understanding.

And even more so when it comes to human life. So few people deal with it, besides those typically in the medical field, to really understand and see that death on a more regular basis. So, it's very easy to take this life for granted and to lose track of the fact that it's an amazing blessing to even have life from God.

And God's plan for mankind, revealed through His appointed times that we reviewed earlier, shows us the purpose of this temporary physical life that we live. It shows us what we are to do with it and how it leads to something much greater that we only have a glimpse of and cannot fully comprehend. These temporary dwellings that we are in today are only the beginning if we choose God and His way of life.

And we are to spend time during this Feast to reflect on all these things. We are to spend time in our booth reflecting on all these. And during the Feast, we should spend more time thinking about these things and in fellowship with God through prayer, as it's the spiritual blessings that we are to rejoice in: the knowledge of God's plan for a Family, and a small glimpse of what that will be in as He's revealed more and more through time.

It is hard for us to grasp the knowledge of blessings we have from God, not because of how great we are or what we've done in obeying Him, but because of His plan for progressive revelation and the time we are blessed to live in. That time is in our very name: *Preparing for the Kingdom of God*.

And let's turn once again to the commandment to keep this Feast. It's back in **Leviticus 23:39—On the fifteenth day of the seventh month when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall celebrate the Feast to the Lord for seven days; on the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest. And you shall take on the first day the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days. You shall celebrate it as a Feast to the Lord for seven days in the year. It is a statute forever throughout your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month.**

So, we are commanded to rejoice before God for seven days. Similar to dwelling in booths and the dual physical and spiritual means, so does it when it comes to this commandment of rejoicing before God. The first thing to note is that it's not a suggestion or an option; it's a command. We are commanded to rejoice, and that should tell you something right there. It's more than a feeling you might have in happy moments of life, but it's something that you can choose to do. You can choose to rejoice before God during this Feast or not. Choices, choices, choices, as we've heard many times.

And if we are commanded to rejoice, then the question is, how do you rejoice before God? As God has blessed the Church to grow in balance, we all enjoy those brief moments we are in the center of the road as we go from one spiritual ditch to the other.

And we also have been doing the same thing in the physical aspects of keeping God's way of life in this physical world. Earlier this year, I found myself watching quite a bit of the World Cup as teams and their fans from around the world had descended here on the United States and Canada and Mexico. And for those of you who watched and saw some of the various videos of fans celebrating with their teams, you witnessed mankind's version of rejoicing.

In the U.S., I don't think a fan base made a bigger impact than the fans from Scotland. In the typical fashion of many sporting events that can start as a fun atmosphere of camaraderie and competition, this turns into an excuse for excessive drinking and all the poor judgments that come with that. And we've all been to weddings and other gatherings where we've witnessed the same thing. Mankind's rejoicing often leads one down a path further from God and from His way of life.

So is that what God wants when He commands us to rejoice before Him? Obviously, the answer is no. That's not what God wants or would find pleasing in any way. So, let's look at a few scriptures to see what rejoicing before God should look like and how we're to obey that commandment.

And I'm going to turn through a few scriptures or read a few scriptures here in the book of Psalms, and you don't have to turn there. They're all just a couple of verses here and there. But I'm going to start in **Psalm 32:11—Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart**.

And **Psalm 95:1-2—O come, let us sing to the Lord. Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come in His presence with thanksgiving. Let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise**.

And **Psalm 100:1-2—Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness. Come into His presence with singing**.

And finally, **Psalm 149:2—Let Israel be glad in his maker. Let the children of Zion rejoice in their King**. David, no doubt, had a musical talent that I, unfortunately, do not possess. But there's much more stated here than, you know, singing songs before the Lord.

“A joyful noise” is mentioned multiple times. “Make a joyful noise to the Lord.” And I have no doubt that if you were at one of the organized Feast locations, that, before this split sermon started, there was indeed a joyful noise being made. The Church is definitely not known for being a quiet group. But that fellowship, that joyful noise happening as God's people get the chance to gather and enjoy fellowship, is what is pleasing to God.

He also knows we need it. We need this time to have that fellowship and be strengthened by it. And that is why we are commanded to rejoice beforehand. And that rejoicing will take many different forms throughout the Feast, depending on your age and your family situation, but it's more than doing physical activities.

It's about using those activities to enhance our fellowship with one another. And that might be with your family or others in the Church, but the purpose of second tithe was to be able to come together and rejoice before God. It's not a family vacation or a getaway from work as it's been treated in the past. It's a commanded assembly for God's people to serve a purpose in God's plan.

And one last thing on the physical rejoicing before God is we are to be practicing God's way of life and following the guidelines given by His ministry as we strive for balance and the soundness of mind. And that should be reflected in how we treat those in the world that we interact with during the Feast – you know, the hotel staff, the restaurant staff, you know, taxi drivers, and anyone else you're going to come into contact with.

And this should be true every day of our lives, but as we step away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life in this world, it should be reflected even more so during this Feast.

And as great and exciting as the physical rejoicing can be, the spiritual is far beyond that. When you take time to reflect on the spiritual blessings you've received, a gift from God Almighty, it truly is hard to comprehend. None of us are owed any of it and have done nothing to deserve such a gift. But because of His plan to create a Family for everlasting time, we have the gift and the opportunity to choose His way of life.

We have reviewed that plan today and are to reflect on it and the blessings of the truth to see and understand it while at this Feast. We are to rejoice in the fellowship with God during these seven days as we reflect on the spiritual fruit in our lives, looking back into the past, as all of you have been through a lot in your past to get here and into the future.

So, what is to come? I'm looking forward to Christ's return and the beginning of what these days represent, Christ and the firstfruits ruling over mankind on this earth for a thousand years, and an end to the mass confusion and evil that's upon this world. If that isn't something to rejoice about, I don't know what is.

And we should be crying out to God to stir us up in that rejoicing before Him, to be reminded of your calling and all you've been given, all the truth you've been given, and what that should make you feel and think about towards your Creator. To rejoice is a choice. We have to choose to do it, and we should ask God to help stir us up to rejoice.

It's easy to let the struggles and the pains of life weigh us down, but God has called us here today, wherever here is for you, and commands you to rejoice. And there is no greater rejoicing than in the spirit before God, to spend time in your booth this Feast and rejoice before the Almighty Creator. When we take the moment to stop and reflect and think about all we have been given and what God has provided us with, it is not a hard thing to be able to rejoice about.

We live in temporary dwellings, these human bodies, with the opportunity to be born into the God Family. We are to reflect on these things during this Feast. This is an amazing time in human history to be alive, to see what so much of the Bible was written about come to pass, and this transitional era from mankind's rule to God's son's return in establishing His rule over the earth and the beginning of that 1,000-year reign.

That transition will not be easy, as God has revealed to us what the world will have to go through to get there, what we will be experiencing along with the world as we bear witness to what this world has become and what God has to do to humble it and stop the destruction of all the earth and usher in the return of His son as King of Kings. There is a lot of work ahead in that new era, a lot of exciting work, and the next major step in God's plan being fulfilled with the firstfruits returning with Christ and the establishment of His Kingdom.

And that should give us all plenty to rejoice about when we look at what these days picture in the near future and where we are in time.

If you would turn back with me to **Leviticus 23:33—And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the people of Israel, saying, On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, and for seven days is the Feast of Booths to the Lord. On the first day shall be a holy convocation. You shall not do any ordinary work. For seven days you shall present food offerings to the Lord**.

And dropping on down to **verse 39—On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall celebrate the Feast of the Lord seven days. On the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest. And you shall take on the first day the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days. You shall celebrate it as a Feast to the Lord for seven days in the year. It is a statute forever throughout your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall dwell in booths for seven days**.

As we dwell in these temporary booths, brethren, rejoice in the truth we have been given, rejoice in the fellowship we are able to partake in, and most importantly, rejoice before your Creator and for His plan that He has provided the opportunity for us to be part of.

Have an amazing Feast of Tabernacles!