

The Feast of Ingathering

The Feast of Ingathering

By Robert G. Theophilus

THIS BOOKLET IS NOT TO BE SOLD. The information provided is for the benefit of former members of the congregations of the Worldwide Church of God (WCG), and of current and prospective members of God's Church.

In the days of the organization called the Worldwide Church of God headed up by Mr. Herbert W Armstrong, no distinction was made between the Feast of Tabernacles (FOT) and the Feast of Ingathering (FOI) but, are they the same thing and if not, which one are New Testament Christians to celebrate?

Preamble

Please Note: All comments in brackets [] or in parentheses () as well as highlighted text (bolded and/or in blue) are from the author of this study. Bible quotations are in maroon.

I think it is essential to clarify the question of the “Holy Spirit” before we begin this study. If we say that who or what is the “Holy Spirit” is the question that needs to be answered, we are starting from the assumption that there exists such a being as the Holy Spirit and that it is a separate and distinct being from God and the Word. The question which should be asked is who are the beings the Bible tell us are holy, whose composition is spirit and who have existed eternally? Either the Bible plainly tells us who are the separate and distinct beings that existed from all eternity who created all things (spirit beings and the material universe) or we have no way of getting an answer to our question.

The Holy Spirits of the God Family

The Bible tells us in Gen 1:1 that:

Gen 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

The Hebrew word translated “God” is “Eloheem” which is the plural form of “Eloah which means “God”. The word “Eloheem” refers to “gods.” It is a uniplural noun like family, group, team, etc. In the beginning, there was therefore more than one God being in existence but how many were there?

Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Joh 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God.

Joh 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

In the beginning when God created the heaven and the earth there was God and there was another being with God who was also God, the Word. How can these two beings both be God; isn't that impossible?

The word God indicates the kind of existence of these 2 beings: their nature is to be God in the same way that all human beings have the same human nature. However, having the same nature does not mean that all human beings constitute a single being; indeed, they are all separate and distinct beings with their own personalities. God and the Word have in common the same nature or, level and type of existence, but they are separate and distinct beings just like all human beings who have the same human nature are separate and distinct beings.

God the Father

We read in the Bible that God became a father when the Word became flesh (Php 2:5-8) by being born of woman after having been conceived in the virgin Mary by the holy spirit being called God (Luke 1:35). God from that point on became God the Father and the Word, who was born as the flesh-and-blood Jesus of Nazareth became God's Son or the Son of God. He was both fully God (his father was God and fully human (his mother was the virgin Mary).

Jesus was God the Father's only begotten son at the time when He was conceived in Mary's womb but He was not to be the only one begotten of the Father. God the Father is the holy spirit being in the Godhead that calls men to salvation.

Joh 6:44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Joh 6:65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

Joh 18:9 That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou [God the Father] gavest me have I lost none.

1Pe 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

God the Word and Spokesman

The Bible term for being called is to be spiritually begotten by God the Father (1Pe 1:3). When we are begotten, we become a spiritual embryo that can be born again as a glorified spirit being with eternal life. Those begotten of the holy spirit God the Father who follow their calling are then able to come to the holy spirit being called the Word and Spokesman (John 6:44; 65; 18:9) who then teaches them. The glorified Jesus-Christ as God the Father's Word and Spokesman is the holy spirit being that works in the minds of God the Father's called and chosen ones.

Joh 7:39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Jesus had to first be glorified for it to be possible for Christians to have access to the holy spirit called the Word and Spokesman because the glorified Christ is the holy spirit being who works in the minds of God's saints (John 14:17) in the same way that Satan is the evil spirit that works in the minds of the children of disobedience (Eph2:2).

Joh 14:17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he [Christ] dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. [On the day of Pentecost, it would be in them and in all true Christians.]

Eph 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, [Satan] the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

The holy spirit God the Father calls men and those who follow their calling are then taught by the holy spirit called the Word and God the Father's Spokesman.

Joh 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

The Holy Ghost

The expression “Holy Ghost” used in the Bible is in error as there are no ghosts in the Godhead but rather 2 beings that are holy (John 17:11; Isa 6:3) and spirit (John 4:24).

Joh 17:11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

Isa 6:3 And one cried unto another, and said, **Holy, holy, holy**, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.

Joh 4:24 **God is a Spirit**: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

These 2 God beings who are holy and spirit are the holy spirit beings of the God family who existed in the beginning at the creation of all things.

Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Joh 1:2 The same was in the beginning with God.

Joh 1:3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

And, the Word who was with God is before all things i.e., *nothing* existed before He created them whether made of spirit or matter.

Col 1:15 **[Christ]** Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature:

Col 1:16 For by him [the Word who became Jesus-Christ] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

Col 1:17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

In the beginning before anything either physical or spiritual was created, there was God and the Word who existed before all things and no other being is mentioned as having existed with them. There is no

biblical evidence that there ever existed a third, separate and distinct personage in the Godhead called the “Holy Spirit” who dwelt in eternity with God and the Word.

God is a Family

Throughout the Bible we can find many verses which clearly indicates the existence of family relations between God and the Word and God’s called, chosen and faithful.

Mat 11:27 All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

Mat 12:50 For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

Joh 20:17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but o to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

God is clearly a family in which many can be ultimately born again by a resurrection from the dead to eternal, glorified spirit life in God’s Kingdom.

Rom 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he [\[God’s Son\]](#) might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Col 1:18 And he [\[the glorified Christ\]](#) is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Christ was the first to be born again by a resurrection from the dead to be followed by many brethren.

Bible Writing Convention

The practice in the Bible has been to simply use the expression “the Holy Spirit” without indicating which God personage in the Godhead the expression represents. Over time, because of this practice, just about everybody has come to believe that the Holy Spirit is a separate and distinct God being in the Godhead but, there is no single verse or group of verses in the Bible that prove the existence of such a third being in the Godhead. The words “holy” and “spirit” are adjectives that describe the nature of

God the Father and of God the Word i.e., they are holy beings made of spirit.

Whenever we encounter the expressions the “Holy Spirit” or simply the “Holy Spirit” in the Bible we must look at the context to determine of which holy spirit being of the Godhead the Bible is talking about: the holy spirit, God the Father or the holy spirit, the Word and Spokesman.

The Word is the holy spirit being in the Godhead who carries out the instructions and wishes of the holy spirit, God. He is the faithful son who seeks to do his father’s will in all things. He is the member of the God family that did the work of creating the heaven and the earth, who ruled over ancient Israel through Moses and his human successors, He is the one who became a man who suffered and died to be God the Father’s perfect sacrifice for sin and make the salvation of mankind possible, etc. and He came to reveal the Father to those who follow the Father’s calling.

Making Things Clearer

In this study, when referring to God’s spirit who, depending on the circumstances can be the holy spirit personage called God the Father or the holy spirit personage called God the Word and Spokesman, I will not capitalize either of the adjectives “holy” and “spirit”. This is in order to not perpetuate the false impression in the minds of readers that there is a 3rd being in the Godhead called the “Holy Spirit.” Instead, I will refer to either of the holy spirits in the God family as being God’s spirit without capitalizing the word “spirit” to make it plain that we are not referring to a third God being in the God family called the “Holy Spirit” but to one of the 2 God beings in the Godhead.

God’s family is presently made up of 2 holy spirit beings to which are to be added thousands and possibly millions of other holy spirit beings when God’s plan of salvation for mankind has reached its end. The saints that endure in the faith until the end of their natural human life, will be resurrected as individual holy spirit beings in God’s Kingdom when it is established.

There are two studies which you can read regarding what is the “Holy Spirit” and decide for yourself in light of the Bible-based evidence offered if such a being exists in the Godhead. These studies are: [What is the Holy Spirit? Cliff Notes Version](#) and [Who or What is the Holy Spirit?](#)

NOTE: All comments in brackets [] or in parentheses () as well as highlighted text (**bolded** and/or in **blue**) are from the author of this study. Bible quotations are in maroon.

It was the practice in the Worldwide Church of God (WCG) when it existed to speak of the FOT and of the FOI without making any significant differences between them. It was considered that both were to be celebrated jointly and that to do so was to prove to God our great desire to obey Him in all things. However, it was agreed that Old Testament (OT) animal sacrifices and other physical rituals carried out by the Levitical priesthood were no longer binding on New Testament (NT) Christians but that otherwise, OT requirements for the annual holy days carried over into the NT celebration of the annual holy days and weekly Sabbaths. Some Christian religious groups are of the opinion that the OT for the greatest part doesn't apply to present day Christians and the Jews only follow the Old Testament but what about the following verse of 2nd Timothy:

2Ti 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

2Ti 3:17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

This would seem to mean that requirements found in OT Scriptures continue to be valid and binding on NT Christians including the way in which the annual holy days were then celebrated. But, as has already been stated, the WCG excluded animal sacrifices and ordinances such as ceremonial washings and various drink and meat offerings used in celebrating the annual and weekly holy days. The reasoning was that

since the Levitical priesthood no longer existed following the destruction of the second temple in Jerusalem there was no more requirement to continue them.

So, how are the verses of 2Tim 3:16-17 to be understood? Could it be that 2Tim 3:16 is talking about how all Scriptures are profitable in that they teach certain lessons about how God dealt with unconverted Israel which gives NT Christians an insight into the mind of God but without there being a continuing requirement for NT Christians to keep practicing OT ordinances?

A critical point to keep in mind is that the physical rituals commanded by God for ancient Israel was a way for an unconverted people to worship Him. Their worship was demonstrating their obedience by faithfully carrying out the rituals given them. However, for them to do so did not ever result in their sinfulness being forgiven which is a crucial point for us to remember when determining how God wants to be worshiped once the holy spirits of the Godhead are made accessible to man.

Heb 10:4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

The works of the law (animal sacrifices, ceremonial washings, burnt offerings, heave offerings, etc.) were instituted as a way for an unconverted Israel to worship God in the letter of the law as it was not possible for them to worship Him according to the spirit of the law. This would have required the presence in their minds of the holy spirits of the God family. In the book of Malachi, we learn that Israel got tired of the works of the law and were not doing the various offerings and sacrifices in the way required by the law. God tells them they should stop doing them if they are not going to do them correctly as they are disobeying Him in their ceremonial worship of Him.

Mal 1:10 Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.

It was not symbolic and ceremonial rituals He really wanted, it was their obedience, and they were continuing to be disobedient. The many and demanding physical and symbolic rituals they had to perform did not lead to their developing an attitude of obedience to Him.

These are 2 very important thoughts to keep in mind as we examine

how the annual holy days are to be kept in NT times generally, and more specifically, whether the Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of Ingathering is to be observed in NT times or both?

Part of the answer to this question can be found in the fundamental differences between the OT physical nation of Israel and God's NT spiritual nation of Israel which we will now begin examining.

Old Covenant Israel

Ancient Israel was and remained an unconverted nation for as in order for conversion to occur, they would have needed the holy spirits of the God family revealing and giving them understanding of God level spiritual truth. The holy spirit God the Father calls men and those who follow their callings then become chosen; after, the holy spirit God the Word and Spokesman becomes responsible for teaching them all things as they study their Bible.

However, the holy spirit God the Word and Spokesman would not become available to mankind until God the Word made flesh, Jesus-Christ had died on the stake, had become the perfect sacrifice for sin and been resurrected to the glory He had before with God the Father.

Joh 7:38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

Joh 7:39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost [spirit] was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

The holy spirits of the God family first came to the disciples on the first NT day of Pentecost and then to the men gathered in Jerusalem who heard their preaching as recorded in the second chapter of the book of Acts. The apostles and the men converted on the first NT day of Pentecost were the beginning of God's NT spiritual nation. Physical Israel as a nation would however have to await the Second Coming of Christ where after having been freed from their end-time captivity among the Gentiles and resettled in the original Promised Land, Christ would spend 3 1/2 years confirming the Covenant with them.

Dan 9:27 And he [the Messiah, Jesus-Christ, the holy spirit God the Word and Spokesman] shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst [middle] of the

week [after 3 1/2 prophetic day which in fulfillment is a year for a day or 3 1/2 years] he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

There is therefore another 3 1/2 years of Christ's ministry to Israel which has to be completed for His ministry to have lasted 7 years.

This time God would make a new covenant with end-time Israel returned from captivity among the Gentiles. They will be the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh, those of the tribes of Benjamin, Judah and Levi, collectively known as the Jews, living in the modern-day nation of Israel and members of the 10 lost tribes of Israel (the Northern Kingdom). Recall that after the death of Solomon, Israel separated into a Southern and a Northern Kingdom. Christ will gather them from the nations where they had been scattered and He will spend 3 1/2 years confirming the covenant with them. It will be the time of restitution of all things to the end-time descendants of the physical nation of Israel.

Act 3:20 And he [God the Father] shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: [Christ at His 2nd Coming is returning to Israel to complete His 7 year ministry. He is not coming back to the nations of the world (Acts 1:9-11) nor to set up the Kingdom of God on this earth. (John 18:36)]

Act 3:21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

The "all things" that are to be restored to Israel are the foundational truths Christ had taught His disciples during the 3 1/2 years He spent with them at His First Coming. These truths will have to be restored to Israel because it has been living as a Gentile nation.

Act 3:22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet [Christ] shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, [Christ was an Israelite of the tribe of Judah] like unto me; him [the resurrected Christ] shall ye hear [understand] in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

The first time Christ came among them was not to teach Israel as a whole but only those men that were to become the foundational members of God's NT spiritual nation of Israel. Physical Israel's time of being offered conversion would come at Christ's 2nd Coming which is the time

of restitution of all things (Act 3:21).

Act 3:23 And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, [refuse to follow Christ's teachings] shall be destroyed from among the people.[Will not be part of God's NT spiritual nation of Israel nor of God's heavenly kingdom; they will have lost their salvation from not having followed their calling.]

This will be the time of the calling of Israel spoken of by Paul in Romans 11.

At the end of the 3 1/2 years of the resurrected Christ's ministry to end-time Israel, they will have to decide whether or not to follow their calling, enter into the New Covenant, and become chosen. They then become members of God's spiritual nation of Israel or God's Church. Those who refuse their calling will continue to be part of the physical nation of Israel but they will have lost their salvation. All of Israel will be called but not all will enter into the New Covenant, many of them won't (Mat 22:14; Mat 7:13).

The Old Covenant and God's Righteousness

What was the result of ancient Israel conducting the physical rituals as given them by God? Did doing so ever result in their sins being forgiven?

Heb 10:4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

The offerings commanded by the law as given ancient Israel by God did not result in sin being forgiven but in a symbolic and ceremonial way. Sin was never forgiven by God even if they had perfectly fulfilled the requirements of the physical laws given them. They therefore remained the need for a sacrifice that would really forgive sin.

What God wanted from Israel when He freed them from their Egyptian bondage wasn't sacrifices and offerings but their obedience.

Jer 7:22 For I **spake not** unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, **concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices:**

Heb 10:6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.

Heb 10:8 Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and

burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law;

God here plainly says that He never was pleased by the rituals and sacrifices He had commanded for the physical nation of Israelites. They were only a reminder of sin (Heb 10:3) and of its effect i.e., the death of the sinner unless there was a sacrifice that covered the sin.

Heb 10:3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

The perfect sacrifice that would forgive sin was that of Jesus-Christ who sacrificed Himself once and for all. His sacrifice being effective, there was no need for it to keep on being repeated like the ineffective sacrifices of the Levitical priesthood.

Heb 10:12 But this man, [Christ] after he had offered one sacrifice for sins [Himself] for ever, [His sacrifice didn't have to be repeated] sat down on the right hand of God; [after His resurrection and glorification]

Heb 10:13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

Heb 10:14 For by one offering [of Himself] he hath perfected [made it possible for their sins to be forgiven] for ever [their sins would always be forgiven] them that are sanctified. [Those called and chosen by God the Father and who remain faithful to their calling.]

Heb 10:15 Whereof the Holy Ghost [in this instance, this is the holy spirit God the Word and Spokesman] also is a witness to us: [true Christians] for after that he [the holy spirit God the Word] had said before,

Heb 10:16 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; (Eze 36: 26-28)

Heb 10:17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

Heb 10:18 Now where remission of these [sins and iniquities] is, there is no more offering for sin. (Heb 10:14) [OT animal sacrifices never forgave sin and had to be repeated as they

were only a reminder of sin, but Christ's sacrifice forgave all sin (past, present and future) upon repentance and belief; His sacrifice didn't need to keep being repeated. And, of course, there was no longer any need for the continuation of the sacrificial laws of the Old Testament.]

The works of the law or the physical rituals (food and drink offerings, animal sacrifices) never made the people perfect i.e., it never forgave their sins.

Heb 7:11 If therefore perfection [the forgiveness of sin] were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

Since by the priesthood of Aaron which administered the celebration of God's annual and weekly holy days with physical and symbolic rituals which did not forgive there was therefore a need for another priesthood by which sin could be forgiven. Under this new priesthood, OT physical rituals would cease as a means of celebrating God's holy days. This is the priesthood of Melchisedec who was the holy spirit God the Word and Spokesman made flesh who suffered and died on the stake as the holy spirit God the Father's perfect sacrifice for sin.

Heb 5:8 Though he [Christ] were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; [experienced]

Heb 5:9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

Heb 5:10 Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

So, the question here arises as to whether there is any need in NT times to observe the physical rituals commanded by God for ancient Israel when celebrating the annual holy days and the weekly Sabbaths? If observing them did not make ancient Israel perfect, righteous or without sin what would be the purpose for NT Christians to continue observing them? And, are any physical, repetitive rituals required, even if they are not the ones commanded by God for ancient Israel, for NT Christians to worship God and celebrate His holy days?

NT Spiritual Nation of Israel

In order to answer this question, we have to examine what is the nature of the nation God has in NT times. In the following verses of the Book of Romans Paul tells us who are those that now constitutes God's spiritual nation of Israel. In talking to the Jewish converts in the Roman congregations, Paul explained the following to them.

Rom 2:25 For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. [In other words, what matters is not being circumcised but obedience to God's law. The requirement to be part of God's nation is not physical but spiritual.]

Rom 2:26 Therefore if the uncircumcision [the Gentiles i.e., those who are not flesh-born Israelites] keep the righteousness of the law, [if his attitude is to follow the law as best as he can] shall not his uncircumcision [in the flesh] be counted for circumcision? [In the flesh like flesh-born Israelites]

Rom 2:27 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, [not being circumcised in the flesh is the natural way in which one is born] if it fulfil the law, [if that uncircumcised person or Gentile observes God's law] judge thee, [find you to be non-observant of God's law] who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? [Who does not follow the letter of the law though a circumcised Israelite.]

And in the following 2 verses, God through Paul tells us clearly who are those who in NT times are Israelites. Note, the Jews here represent the physical nation of Israel.

Rom 2:28 For he is not a Jew, [an Israelite] which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

Rom 2:29 But he is a Jew, [an Israelite] which is one inwardly; [by his inner attitude of obedience to God] and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, [by having a changed attitude from being hostile to God to wanting to obey Him in all things to the best of one's abilities] and not in the letter; [he applies the spirit of the law] whose praise is not of men, [he is not obeying God because other men will praise him] but of God.

God's nation in NT times is a spiritual nation whose members are from the Gentile nations of the world.

1Pe 2:9 But ye [God's called, chosen and faithful, God's spiritual nation, God's Church] are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

1Pe 2:10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

In time past, before their conversion, they were not a people. They were from all the nations of the world and their coming together did not make them a people. They continued to be part of the individual countries from which they came but now after having become converted, though still being from different countries, they now are God's spiritual nation of Israel or God's Church.

Flesh-born Israelites can become part of God's spiritual nation if they become circumcised in their heart i.e., if they change from wanting to maintain the physical rituals of the law and accept that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah and Son of God whose death on the stake made salvation possible for all those the holy spirit God the Father will call, and who will accept their calling and remain faithful until the end of their natural lives,

Christ, according to the Jews was a false prophet and this is why they had Him put to death by the Roman authorities.

Israel (composed of 13 tribes) and the Gentile nations of the world must become spiritual Jews to become part of God's spiritual nation of Israel.

Let's now look at the significant differences between God's OT physical nation of Israel and God's NT spiritual nation of Israel which will give us more information as to whether NT Christians should keep the FOT or the FOI or both.

OT and NT Israel Differences

The greatest and most noteworthy difference between OT and NT Israel is that the physical nation of Israel was never converted and could not understand God level spiritual truth. OT Israel was a physical nation easily visible to the world's other nations, it occupied a specific territory

and one generally became part of it by being born into it. Its citizens were governed by leaders appointed to positions of authority by Moses.

However, God's NT spiritual nation of Israel is made up of individuals from the nations of the world, it does not occupy a specific geographical area on which it has cities and buildings under the administration of men and its members are generally invisible to the world as their citizenship in God's spiritual nation is a state of mind (a converted mind) that is not readily outwardly visible to others.

In most instances, spiritual Israelites do not know each other even when living in the same cities and neighborhoods. They are not under the authority of other converted men and they have no human spiritual leader such as pastors and teachers from whom they learn the truth. Their head and teacher is the resurrected Christ who is the one who teaches them all things (John 14:26) as they study God's holy Bible. They can read and understand their Bible (Christ in writing) through the holy spirit God the Word and Spokesman dwelling in them.

They are governed in their everyday lives by God's law which is written in their hearts or minds (Jer 31:33) to which they have knowingly and self-willingly submitted themselves after having chosen to follow their calling by the holy spirit God the Father. Their mediator between them and God is not any man or organization of men but Christ. Each member of God's spiritual nation has a direct relationship with God through Christ and there can be no man or group of men mediating between them, Christ and God.

1Ti 2:5 For there is one God, and **one mediator** between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

Although they are physically scattered all over the world and unknown to each other, individually and collectively, they are God's spiritual nation of Israel or God's Church i.e., they are that group of people who have chosen to obey God after He called them (1Pe 2:10).

Since the OT nation of Israel remained unconverted and could not understand God-level spiritual truth the only form of worship they could do was physical, God gave them repetitive, symbolic and laborious physical rituals to do because it was not possible for them to worship Him in spirit and in truth as is the requirement for the members of God's NT spiritual nation of Israel.

In Spirit and in Truth

The OT physical rituals of the law are no longer necessary nor used by God's NT spiritual nation of Israel. God makes it clear that those who worship Him, those He has called and chosen, **must** worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

Joh 4:23 But the hour cometh, [it came on the day of Pentecost] and now is, when the **true** worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for **the Father seeketh such to worship him**.

Joh 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him **must** worship him in spirit and in truth.

OT Israel's worship of God through physical rituals did not result in their sins being forgiven rather, they were a continuing reminder of the result of disobeying God i.e., the sinner would die if there was no atoning sacrifice to cover his sins. An animal died instead of the sinner but this process never actually ever forgave sin.

God's spiritual nation has had its sins forgiven by Christ's death. Christ is the author and finisher of their salvation. He is their great high priest according to the order of Melchisedec. He is the one and only mediator between God's saints and God. He is God the Father's Spokesman who teaches all things to God the Father's called and chosen ones as they study God's holy Bible.

The resurrected and glorified Christ is the high priest of God's spiritual nation, its mediator, teacher, author and finisher of their salvation. God's spiritual nation exists by the power of the holy spirits of the God family. It is not by the doing of any man or organization of men. What makes those called and chosen by God a nation is not that they are living together in a given city or country as a group physically visible to the world or that they are part of organizations of men calling themselves churches of God.

They are a nation because of their calling and commitment to obey God which is not something physical or material, wherever they may be in the world, by themselves or in little groups. They worship God by obeying Him as best as they can; maintaining their attitude of obedience to Him in all things; growing their knowledge and understanding of His spiritual truth by studying His holy Bible and maintaining spiritual fellowship with other truly converted Christians when some are known.

The worship of God in NT times is not by participating in physical rituals

conducted by organizations of men calling themselves churches. God's spiritual nation is God's doing, has existed since the day of Pentecost and will exist until the time of the Great White Throne Judgment and is not any way dependent on men who have no ability to call men to salvation or to give them understanding of the Scriptures which is only possible by revelation from God. God's plan of salvation does not depend on men.

This brings us to the focal point of this study and that is determining what annual feast truly converted Christians are to celebrate. The ones of interest to us in this study are the Feast of Tabernacles and the Feast of Ingathering. The differences between the other annual feasts and how they are to be observed by NT Christians can be found in the following study: [OT and NT Feast Celebration Differences](#).

The FOT or the FOI?

Let's begin by examining Leviticus 23 where we learn about the FOT and the FOI.

Lev 23:33 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

Lev 23:34 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be [the feast of tabernacles](#) for seven days unto the LORD.

Lev 23:39 Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath. [\[This is the Feast of Ingathering which is celebrated at the same time as the Feast of Tabernacles. Dwelling in booths in the desert and ingathering are 2 different things. One is a reminder of sin while the other looks forward to God's ingathering of His saints.\]](#)

Lev 23:40 And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. [\[This relates to the FOT; not the FOI\]](#)

OT Israel before entering the Promised Land dwelt in booths (tents) in the desert for 40 years but after having returned to Jerusalem from their captivity under the Persians, they built booths on the rooftops of their homes and in their courtyards and did not leave their homes to go anywhere when celebrating the FOT.

Neh 8:16 So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim.

Neh 8:17 And all the congregation of them that **were come again out of the captivity** made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness.

Now continuing with Lev 23.

Lev 23:41 And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your **[physical Israel's]** generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month.

Lev 23:42 Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; **all that are Israel-ites born shall dwell in booths:**

Lev 23:43 That your generations **[of the physical nation of Israel]** may know that **I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths**, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

Who is to keep the FOT and dwell in booths? All that are Israelite born (Lev 23:42). The Gentiles are not Israelites born and NT spiritual Israel is made up for the greatest part of converts from the nations of the Gentiles. As such, there is no requirement whatsoever for them to keep the FOT whose observance is as a reminder to the generations of physical Israelites that God made Israel dwell in booths when he brought them out of Egypt. (Lev 23:43)

The FOT is not a step in the administration of God's plan of salvation for mankind. It is merely a reminder to the physical nation of Israel through their generations of the punishment that came upon them for refusing to enter the Promised Land.

In NT times, God's nation is no longer physical but spiritual which consists of men called and chosen from the Gentile nations of the world. OT physical Israel and their descendants are not God's spiritual nation of Israel though upon conversion they can become part of it. Physical Israel's opportunity for conversion will come at the time of Christ's 2nd Coming when He will spend 3 1/2 years confirming the covenant with them. At

that time, those who accept their calling and are chosen will become part of God's spiritual nation.

At the same time as the FOT is the celebration of the FOI or Feast of Ingathering.

Lev 23:39 Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath.

This is not the same feast as the FOT; it is an entirely different feast even though it is celebrated on the same date as the FOT. It is a happy time when after the year's harvest has been reaped and stored, the people rejoiced and thanked God for the abundance of food they had received and which would ensure their survival until the time of the next harvest which was several months in the future. The FOI was cause for celebration unlike the FOT which was a reminder of the great punishment that came upon the generation of Israel who refused to enter the Promised Land; they died in the desert. It was not something which when remembered would make them happy and cause them to rejoice.

Why is the FOI the feast that NT Christians should observe?

God Will Gather His People

A major step in God's plan of salvation for mankind will be taken at Christ's 2nd Coming. First God will gather the remnant of the modern-day nations constituting Israel in the end time, the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh, the lost 10 tribes of Israel and the tribes of Benjamin, Levi and Judah living in the Middle East and also found here and there all over the world. They will have gone off into captivity because of their sins of idol worshiping and Sabbath breaking as their forefathers had done.

Eze 20:23 I lifted up mine hand unto them also in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries;

Eze 20:24 Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols.

The following Scriptures make it clear that end time Israel is going back into captivity and that Christ at His 2nd Coming will gather them from the countries where they had been scattered.

Jer 32:37 Behold, **I will gather them** out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely:

Eze 20:41 I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and **gather you** out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen.

Eze 34:13 And I will bring them out from the people, and **gather them** from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.

Mic 2:12 I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; **I will surely gather the remnant of Israel**; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men.

Zep 3:19 Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and **gather her** that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame.

Zep 3:20 At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that **I gather you**: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, **when I turn back your captivity** before your eyes, saith the LORD.

Joh 11:52 And not for that nation only, but that also **he should gather together in one** the children of God that were scattered abroad.

There will be an ingathering of the remnant of end-time physical Israel from the countries where they had been scattered in captivity and once resettled in the original Promised Land, Christ will confirm the covenant with them for 3 1/2 years (Dan 9:27). Those who choose to enter into the New Covenant at the end of Christ's ministry become members of God's spiritual nation of Israel or God's Church.

The ingathering of physical Israel **and** the making of the New Covenant with them at the very beginning of the Millennium is but the first step which marks the beginning of a great ingathering that will be ongoing throughout the Millennium and the Last Great Day leading to the com-

pletion of God's plan of salvation. It will be the time of the fulfillment of Joel 2:28:

Joe 2:28 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:

This is the time when the holy spirit God the Father's calling will be extended not only to a select few but to all of mankind who has ever lived. Firstly, to the nations living during the Millennium and secondly, during the Last Great Day, to all those who since Adam and Eve died without ever having been called. They will be in the 2nd resurrection which occurs at the beginning of the Last Great Day so they can also have an opportunity for salvation.

This great ingathering is what the OT FOI anticipated in a physical way i.e., OT physical Israel's ingathering of the fruit of their labor in the field in the Fall and their rejoicing was a type of the great ingathering of God's faithfuls that is to occur during the Millennium and the Last Great Day and of the very great rejoicing that will occur at the time of the Great White Throne Judgment at the end of the Last Great Day when God gathers the wheat into his garner.

Luk 3:17 Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable. [\[The wicked dying in the Lake of Fire which is the second death.\]](#)

The parable of the tares is a physical illustration of how God will proceed when He gathers His faithful elect who in the parable are likened to wheat and the wicked, the ones who don't follow their calling are likened to tares. God does not separate them from each other until the time of the Great White Throne Judgment when the great ingathering is completed.

Mat 13:30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, [Gather](#) ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

In Matthew 25, we see all nations having been gathered before God in the Great White Throne Judgment. In this instance, the elect being likened to sheep and the wicked to goats.

[Mat 25:31](#) When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all

the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: [The Great White Throne Judgment]

Mat 25:32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

Mat 25:33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Mat 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

With the Great White Throne Judgment comes the end of God's great ingathering which started at the beginning of the Millennium and the completion of God's master plan of salvation for mankind.

Conclusion

The OT Feast of Ingathering represents and is a type of one of the great phases of God's plan of salvation. OT Israel greatly rejoiced after having harvested their crops in the abundance of food they had stored for the coming winter months which would ensure their survival until the next harvest. This great and abundant physical harvest represents the great spiritual harvest of men that will occur when the holy spirit God the Father begins the finalization of His plan of salvation by calling all men during the Millennium and those that will be resurrected at the beginning of the Last Great Day.

The parable of the wheat and of the tares gives us the spiritual meaning of the FOI. In this parable the saved and the wicked are compared to wheat and tares in a farmer's field. The ingathering of God's faithfuls is represented as a harvest and the Great White Throne Judgment is represented by the wheat (the faithfuls) being stored in the barn and the wicked (the tares) being burned. That would be in the Lake of Fire. And, as is the situation since the creation of mankind, the wheat and the tares, God's saints and the wicked are to continue to exist side-by-side until the time of the Great White Throne Judgment.

Mat 13:24 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

Mat 13:25 But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed

tares among the wheat, and went his way.

Mat 13:26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

Mat 13:27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

Mat 13:28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

Mat 13:29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

Mat 13:30 Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

The FOT was a reminder to physical Israel of God's punishment for their disobedience (this was not a happy time nor is this event a step in God's plan of salvation for mankind) but since the NT day of Pentecost, God has a spiritual nation whose members are not flesh-born Israelites; they are from the Gentile nations of the world. They have no common heritage with the ancient physical nation of Israel and their ancestors were never made to spend 40 years wandering aimlessly in the desert. There is no requirement for God's spiritual nation of Israel to be reminded every year of the punishment that came upon physical Israel because they were never part of that nation.

NT Christians are part of God's spiritual nation of Israel whose members are from the nations of the world and they celebrate the FOI which looks forward to the great ingathering of God's servants that will occur during the Millennium and the Last Great Day which will complete God's great ingathering of His faithful.

The FOI represents one of the major steps in God's plan of salvation for mankind while the FOT is a reminder to the physical nation of Israel and their descendants of the severe punishment given them for their sin of having refused to enter into the Promised Land. The purpose of the FOT is given us in the following verses:

Lev 23:42 Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are **Israel-ites born** shall dwell in booths:

Lev 23:43 That your generations [their physical descendants] may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

The FOT is not a step in God's plan of salvation for mankind and its message is specifically for flesh-born Israelites not God's spiritual nation of Israel.

Lev 23:42 Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; **all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths:**

OT Israel's rejoicing over their abundant harvests is a type of the great harvest of God's faithfuls which started at the beginning of the Millennium and which will continue through the Millennium and until the end of the Last Great Day.

Mat 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

That's why NT Christians who are God's spiritual nation of Israel celebrate the Feast of Ingathering and not the Feast of Tabernacles.

It is a very happy time of celebration for God's NT spiritual nation of Israel as they spend time every year reviewing and talking to each other about how God will call all human beings that have ever lived and give them all an opportunity for salvation and as they review the events that will follow the end of this great ingathering..

Rev 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

The new Jerusalem will be like a bride who has made herself as beautiful as she can as she goes to meet her husband-to-be.

Rev 21:3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with **men**, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

Please note that at the time when the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven, there will be no flesh-and-blood human beings left alive. The Great White Throne Judgment will have happened; the wicked will have been burnt up, God's faithful servants will have become glorified spirit

beings, and a new heaven and a new earth will have been created. The men spoken of in Rev 21:3 are God's glorified saints.

Rev 21:4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes;
and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying,
neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are
passed away.

The great ingathering celebrated yearly by God's spiritual nation of Israel who worship Him in spirit and truth and not through the physical rituals of the law commanded for the OT physical nation of Israel will be complete.

