

Feast of Tabernacles Basics

The Fundamentals of Why We Are Here

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I like to watch sports. My mother and my wife have been spreading a vicious rumor about me that I will watch any kind of sports, any time, anywhere. And the real truth about it is that I just flip through certain stations like bowling, and tennis, and badminton, and extreme sports and things, because I am trying to get to something else, and maybe I will just watch them for a moment or two.

I usually go a little bit faster through the professional bowling, but it is really an exaggeration that I like to watch just *any* kind of sport. Primarily, I watch auto racing. Did you know that there is one station that runs auto racing all the time? It is called Speed Vision. My wife will not let me get it. But then, they do not have NASCAR on there very often anyway, so why watch it?

I also like professional football, and then occasionally I like to watch basketball, especially around "March madness" times. And well, since the last baseball strike, I really have not watched that very much, but every once in a while, I do check out a game. I have matured a little bit!

One of the things that I enjoy about sports is the almost paradoxical juxtaposition of the simplicity of the games, and the consummate skill required to play them perfectly.

Probably the best sport to see this in is golf. It is a very simple game. You hit this little white "pill" with a club toward a hole, and you try to put it in the hole. You do this over the course of 18 different holes, and you try to do this with as few strokes as possible.

That is it! That is the game of golf in a nutshell. Well, we begin to appreciate the skill that this requires when we try it ourselves.

Yesterday was the perfect example of this. I thought that I was doing pretty well out there on the Railwood Golf Course out here in Jefferson City.

Well, it would have been a lot lower, but hole number eight came around, and if you know hole number eight out at Railwood, it is this long "dog leg" out to the left, uphill with all these little mounds on one side, and with the fairway sloping to the right.

I got there and on that hole I got a 10, and that just ruined my game, and I went downhill from there. Had a 58 on the back nine. Adding my scores together, I shot a 110. I have never broken a hundred, I do not think. But, here I tried this game again. I had a few good shots to keep me coming back, and now I know how hard it is for those guys out there on the course who play this game professionally to put a little white ball in a hole a couple hundred yards away.

It is the same thing with auto racing. Most of you have driver's licenses. You get behind the wheel of a car. You can probably take that car up to 80 miles an hour really easy on a good super highway. No problem.

Well these guys are in a controlled environment. Let us say a mile or mile and a half or two mile course, whatever it may be. In NASCAR they are almost always oval. They have this perfect oval, or tri-oval to go around. I will not explain right now what a tri-oval is, but they have a 500-mile race on a one-mile circuit, so they have 500 laps. 500 laps to go around this oval, and try to hit all their marks, and go around and around, and around 500 times and be the first one to get the checkered flag.

Sounds easy does it not? But it is not.

If these guys do not hit the entry to the turns just right, every time, 500 times, they are in the wall in some tracks, or they will lose say 5 or 10 mph, because they cannot quite make that turn, and they will lose a position or two, or five. These guys are skilled at a very simple thing.

The general truth that comes out of sports is that those who have mastered the sports' fundamental skills the best are the best. They end up being the greats of a game. They are the ones that are the most successful at it, because they can do the simple skills that make up this game the best. And they do it over and over, and over, and over again, and it becomes second nature to them.

You have probably heard stories about Pete Maravich, and all the drills that he would put himself through. When he got in the game, he did not have to think about all those skills, he would just dribble, pass, shoot, and all the other little tricks that he did without even thinking about them.

That is why certain sports have greats that just stand out. I am a NASCAR fan, and Dale Earnhardt is just the best because he mastered the fundamental skills, and he could do them time and time again, and finish the highest in the greatest number of races in a given year. That is why he won seven championships.

Men like Michael Jordan coming back to the game of basketball. He was the best because he did not have to think about the fundamental skills, he just let his athleticism carry him. Those fundamental skills were there all the time.

And for you Canadians, there is Wayne Gretzky. He knew where the puck was going to be. Gretzky was so good, he had studied the game so well, and he mastered it to the point that he was not where the puck was, but where the puck was going to be. And he was there to score. That is how he was.

Willie Mayes—or you could name several other baseball greats—Willie Mayes was probably the best all around player that ever played the game. He could just do everything right—hit, bunt, steal bases, field, throw—he had it all. And he could do all those little things very well.

We can go onto other sports. Tiger Woods, or Jack Nicklaus, whichever one you prefer, whichever era you came up in, they say that they are the two greats that ever played the game of golf. Old timers might say that Arnie (Arnold Palmer) was better than they were in his prime, and before that there were others.

But, they all had this thing in common: they know how to do the fundamentals perfectly almost every time.

And of course, tennis—Pete Sampras, or Jimmy Connors, or whoever you think is the best to

ever play—Billie Jean King, Rod Laver—whoever is the best in tennis . . . they are all this way. They do the fundamentals the best.

But, we are not athletes are we?

Our lifetime endeavor is more vital and far more eternal than a stupid game. What is the glory of a championship? There is some fleeting glory, but our championship is eternal. And it is our responsibility to master those fundamentals.

I have taken a long time on this introduction because I wanted to stress this point. But what I am going to be speaking about today are the fundamentals of the Feast of Tabernacles. A very basic sermon, but I want you to take this introduction and apply it in other areas and in other things. Because, if we want to be championship Christians—the quality that God is going to take as his firstfruits—we need to master these fundamentals. We also need to be able to explain and prove things, not just with our life, but with our words if ever we are asked why we do what we do.

So, I am going to be speaking today about the Feast of Tabernacles, and its most basic principles: Why are we here today? You probably heard that many times from Mr. Armstrong's sermons at the feast. He would say, "WHY ARE WE HERE?" and then he would go on and take his hour and explain the Feast of Tabernacles, or the Last Great Day, whichever day he happened to be in. He always went back to these basic things.

So we got it every year. What are we doing here? What is the meaning of this? And for us, could we do the same if somebody out here in Jefferson City should ask us why we are here? Now, they probably do not want to know the whole thing about that, but somebody might! You never know.

So, let us begin in the first place in the bible where the Feast of Tabernacles is mentioned.

Exodus 23:14-16 "Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year: "You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty); "and the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field.

That is now—The Feast of Tabernacles. Notice he calls it the Feast of Ingathering, and he connects it with the harvest here. The harvest has been harvested. It has been pulled out of the fields. It has been stored away. Some of it is probably going to be used at the Feast. The tithes, at least.

It is a time of gratitude. A time of appreciation for what God has allowed us to reap throughout the year. And there are a lot of things, when we sit and think about it, that God has given us just this past year.

I have one that comes to mind first of all: I had a son. To me, that is a harvest. And I can be thankful that I have another son now, and I can have a lot of fun with that little kid, and I do, and he returns the affection that I give him, and it is just wonderful. And I know that he is the

gift of God.

Now, what about you? What have you harvested this year? What has God given you to enjoy? What has God given you to be thankful for? Everybody is different. Somebody maybe received a raise, or got a new car. Maybe somebody got married. And if we believe that that is a gift of God, and I hope we do if we are still in our first year of marriage, we should be thankful for that at this time.

Let us go to Deuteronomy 16. Here it is mentioned again.

Deuteronomy 16:13 "You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, when you have gathered from your threshing floor and from your winepress.

Here again, it is connected with the harvest.

Deuteronomy 16:14 "And you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant and the Levite, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow, who are within your gates.

Everybody is invited to this Feast. We are all supposed to be very happy, rejoicing in this time, and the rejoicing—the joy—comes as a result of our gratitude, because we are aware of what God has given us.

Deuteronomy 16:15 "Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you surely rejoice.

Now it is commanded that we rejoice, but it is also understood that God is going to bless. And so, he can command us without any fear of us taking it wrongly, because he is going to give the blessings.

Deuteronomy 16:16 "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed.

And the offering, which we heard this morning, is one of those things we bring in gratitude for what we have been given.

Now let us go back a couple books to Leviticus 23: 33-36:

Leviticus 23:33-34 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: `The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the LORD.

That is today, the 15th of the seventh month.

Leviticus 23:35-36 On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. [That is what we are doing right now.] You shall do no customary work on it. ` For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD.

Now if you go back and check out the offerings that were given, I believe that they are in

Numbers, you will see that they gave dozens and dozens of animals—starting with the sheep, they do 13 on the first day of the Feast. And then, each day it goes down by one—12, 11, 10, 9, 8—until you get down to seven.

And then, there is a bullock given also each day. And there are several rams and turtledoves—God throws a lot of animals onto the altar during the Feast of Tabernacles. It gives you the idea that offering and sacrifice has a great deal to do with this Feast of Tabernacles.

Leviticus 23:39-43 ` Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the LORD for seven days; on the first day there shall be a sabbath-rest, and on the eighth day a sabbath-rest. And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. You shall keep it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God."

Here we have the Feast of Tabernacles called Tabernacles, not Ingathering. This emphasizes that which we read here at the end, that Israel wandered in the wilderness and they dwelled for those 40 years in tents, a certain kind of dwelling place, whatever kind it was that they had. Probably made of the skins of animals.

And this shows—very symbolic—that we too are temporary and we are on a journey. We are going toward something. We came from someplace and are going to someplace. And because we are on a trip, we are not at home. When we stop, we have to live somewhere, and so, we have booths—temporary dwellings—and here we are in very nice temporary dwellings.

I am very thankful to God for inventing hotels. They are very nice. I am not the camping type. I do not know if I would have survived out there in the wilderness for 40 years. I would have been one of the grumblers. God would have killed me in the first year.

But we are on a pilgrimage to the Promised Land just like they were. It is a warning to us not to become too settled. It says in one place that Israel became settled on their lees. It means they drifted off to the bottom like so much lees (sediment) in wine making the wine bitter. They became bitter, and turned from God.

So, we also are not supposed to become settled. And this Feast of Tabernacles, when we go somewhere other than our home city, and we go live someplace that is not our own home, is a type to us that we are on a pilgrimage. We are not to become settled.

You know it seems like over the past several years, we could have gotten, or become, settled—things did not seem to be happening. But, here September 11th just rolled by and many of us were jolted to our senses.

Now to me, that is very much like what happened in the wilderness. God would be a pillar of cloud by day, and pillar of fire by night and He would set it down, and that is where Moses would have the Tabernacle set up, and have all the Israel tents pitched there. And they would stay

there, and stay there, and they would stay there, and then, whoops! There goes the cloud! And everybody would have to pack all their things, put their tent on their donkey, and move out after the cloud because it was going.

Who knows if September 11th signaled the moving of the cloud—or the pillar of fire might be a better image? We cannot get too settled in because God might say "Hey guys, get up, and get moving!"

The Feast of Tabernacles is supposed to help us remember this once a year. We are on the move, or should be ready to go at any time.

Nehemiah 8:13-17 Now on the second day the heads of the fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and Levites, were gathered to Ezra the scribe, in order to understand the words of the Law. And they found written in the Law, which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month, and that they should announce and proclaim in all their cities and in Jerusalem, saying, "Go out to the mountain, and bring olive branches, branches of oil trees, myrtle branches, palm branches, and branches of leafy trees, to make booths, as it is written." Then the people went out and brought them and made themselves booths, each one on the roof of his house, or in their courtyards or the courts of the house of God, and in the open square of the Water Gate and in the open square of the Gate of Ephraim. So the whole assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and sat under the booths; for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun until that day the children of Israel had not done so.

Wow! That is a long time. Joshua came into the land about 1400 BC, and then, this did not happen again until about 445 BC. That is almost 1000 years—955 years that this command had not been kept. Wow! All that long time that they had not been reminded each year of these important points, that they are strangers and pilgrims on a journey. They had to follow God wherever the cloud moved. Incredible!

Nehemiah 8:17 And there was very great gladness.

I am sure there was! I am sure that God inspired that gladness as well, because they were finally doing what he had told them to do in this Feast. Incredible!

Nehemiah 8:18 Also day by day, from the first day until the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. And they kept the feast seven days;

It must have been a wonderful time.

Well, if we put these two types together, the type of the harvest on one hand, and the type of tabernacles or temporary dwellings on the other—a pilgrimage—the spiritual meaning, then, begins to become clearer because we have to have both. There is a harvest symbolism that is very important, and then there is the journey/pilgrimage symbolism that is also very important. But, they go together.

Now, logically, a people on the move would not be able to sow and reap would they? But they come together in the Feast of Tabernacles because God is trying to teach us something very

important here.

The harvest symbolism looks forward to a time of massive numbers of people coming to the knowledge of the Truth. Go to I Corinthians 15: 22-24. I just want to show you here that this is not all that there is. It says here, Paul writes:

I Corinthians 15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

Now remember, this is the resurrection chapter. But the one thing I am really looking at here is the next sentence.

I Corinthians 15:23a But each one in his own order . . .

This tells us that God has an order of resurrections. Now he is speaking primarily of resurrection here, and a resurrection is also an anti-type of a harvest.

I Corinthians 15:23b Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.

He is speaking to the church so he speaks about the saints being raised when he returns. Then, he skips over a few. Because then he goes directly in verse 24:

I Corinthians 15:24 Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.

Now he skips over the entire Millennium, and the entire Last Great Day period, to finally handing over everything to the Father. But, I wanted you to see there that there is an order to these things, and we will see later where the harvest of the Millennium comes in.

Now for the pilgrimage symbolism.

The pilgrimage symbolism is a type of a journey. But it is not just a journey. It is a journey while under judgment. You see, we are going from one place to another. The destination is the Kingdom of God. For the Israelites, it was the Promised Land.

This journey, if we remember our history of the Israelites, took 40 years. And all through those 40 years, God was making judgments about them. If you go through the book of Numbers, you will see those judgments specifically. The same thing, in type, is what we are going through. Paul says that these things were examples for us.

I want to go, however, to I Peter 1:1 just to see Peter's understanding of this as he applies this to the church:

I Peter 1:1-2 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.

I Peter 2:11 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.

I do not know about you, but when I saw those words, I immediately thought of the Israelites and their wanting meat. And many of them died with the meat still between their teeth. They

had fleshly lusts which they did not overcome. And in the same way, we are being tested to see if we will overcome our fleshly lusts.

I Peter 2:12 Having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

And then, he goes on to say:

I Peter 4:17 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God;

We are on our pilgrimage, our time of judgment.

Remember, I said that the Promised Land is a type of the Kingdom of God. Another clue (I am putting these clues down in no specific order) is that this Feast is seven days long. If you think about it, all the feasts that are one day have to do with events—specific events. Passover: the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and then way back, it was Israel being passed over in Egypt at the killing of the firstborn.

Then what comes up? The days of Unleavened Bread. What is the symbolism there? The symbolism of us coming out of sin—coming out of Egypt—symbolism of us growing. Putting it more negatively, putting out leaven equals putting out sin. Putting it positively, it is growing into the image of Jesus Christ.

But, that is a process that takes a long time. For most of us, an entire lifetime. It is a long time. It is not a single event. It is a series of events over a lifetime.

Then the next one is Pentecost. That was the one specific event there in Acts 2, the giving of the Holy Spirit. There was also an older event. We believe the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai took place on Pentecost.

These are singular events; it foreshadows the firstfruits of the harvest—us, the first resurrection—being changed.

However, the Feast of Trumpets is the actual time that that occurs when Christ returns. That is a singular event. One day Christ will return, on one day, at one specific time.

The Day of Atonement pictures the binding of Satan. That is going to happen one time. It is one event.

And right after that, there is a seven-day feast that pictures a long process of people under judgment.

So, what we have is a pilgrimage feast, a harvest feast, and a time of judgment, a process, a long period of time.

Let us go now, please, to Zechariah 14. I am going to skip through this a little bit. But, even before we leave the Old Testament, we get a hint about the time that the Feast of Tabernacles foreshadows. And as we see here in Zechariah 14, it is the time after Christ returns.

Zechariah 14:1 Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst.

Zechariah 14:3-4a Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east.

That is as far as we need to go there.

Zechariah 14:9 And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be—"The LORD is one," and His name one.

That harkens back to the book of Deuteronomy chapter 6.

Zechariah 14:16 And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the. . .

Day of Atonement? No. The Feast of Unleavened Bread? No. Which Feast is this? Tabernacles! Interesting!

Why is it that these nations go up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles? Interesting!

Zechariah 14:17-18 And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain. If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

Sounds pretty severe for these people not to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

Zechariah 14:19 This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

Why? Why is it so important for the people to keep the Feast of Tabernacles, of all the Feasts that God has?

It is really very simple! The Feast of Tabernacles symbolizes their judgment—their time. And by coming up to the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem to worship the King, they are telling God that they are serious about their judgment. They are telling God that they understand that they are in a time of harvest—under judgment. And they too, even though they live in the Millennium, a time of great peace and prosperity, are strangers and pilgrims on the earth—and they too are on a journey headed toward something big, which is eternal life—Sonship in the Family of God.

So, if they do not keep the Feast of Tabernacles, it symbolizes that they are also forsaking their salvation—their time of salvation.

There is a day of salvation for each of us. It is different for each of us whenever God calls us. At this time, he will be calling them. And if they do not come up and keep the Feast, they are telling God that they reject His calling. That is why he moves so quickly and so severely to wake them up. They are about to lose it all, so He will do to them just as He does to us. He wants them in His Kingdom. And so He sends them a plague so that they will repent and come up to the Feast, and show Him that they, indeed, want salvation.

Now, let us go to Revelation 20. I know that most of you must be thinking, "when will he get to Revelation 20?" This is when it all becomes very clear. Not until the book of Revelation does He reveal the time element in how these things work. We start in chapter 19 where it talks first about the preparation of the Bride in verses 7 and 8. "Blessed are those who come to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And then, in verse 11 through the end of the chapter it speaks of Christ's return.

These all go in time order that happened in Zechariah 14. Here (in Revelation 20) we have the New Testament version of the same thing. Christ comes back down to earth and He battles the armies that come against Him.

Chapter 20 begins, and immediately what happens? We have Atonement fulfilled! An angel comes down from heaven, he grabs the old dragon, he opens the bottomless pit, he throws him in, he shuts it real fast, and he locks it. Satan is bound for a thousand years.

Revelation 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. . .

Interesting! Here are the saints who were resurrected when Christ returns, and those who were changed at Christ's return. And they were given thrones, and they were allowed to judge. They were given judgment—judgment was committed to them. These are brethren—firstfruits along with Christ—Christ is our judge. And so as His brothers and sisters, we will be doing the same thing—ruling, and judging.

Revelation 20:4b-5 Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.

This fills in the gap there in I Corinthians 15: 22-24. Remember that this is what Paul skipped over. He mentioned that the saints would be resurrected after Christ the Firstfruit, but he did not mention any time period about how long they would live and reign.

And if they live and reign, they must be living and reigning over somebody. It is very logical to think that there would still be humans around to judge and rule, and teach, as we will see here. It does not mention priesthood here, but it does in Revelation 5: 10. They will be kings and priests.

So, here we have the first resurrection and they have a thousand years of living and reigning with Christ.

Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

And then, Satan is released again. God puts that down. Then in verse 11, there is the general resurrection—the Great White Throne Judgment—which we will hear about at the end of the Feast, and then, of course, the end, which we read about there in I Corinthians 15 where Christ

delivers up everything to the Father.

So, here in the book of Revelation, it is revealed to us how all these things work. And as we saw here, there is a very clear progression of the last four holy days.

First, Trumpets in chapter 19, Atonement in the first several verses of chapter 20, then we have the Millennium there starting in verse 4 going all the way down through verse 10, and then from verse 11 on, we have the Last Great Day.

So we see that the Feast of Tabernacles, then, symbolizes 1,000 years of Christ's reign. It all fits in so very neatly.

I mentioned before that these kings and priests and judges are there judging someone. There are humans on the earth during this time. As we saw in Zechariah, it mentions those who are left of those who came up against Christ to fight Him.

So there are some left. Let us go back to Isaiah 2. This may be some of the most basic scriptures on the Millennium in the whole Bible.

Isaiah 2:1-2a The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains. . .

Mr. Armstrong always told us that mountains were symbols of governments, and the Lord's government would be the mountain that is established on top of all the others. He has the overrule during this time.

Isaiah 2:2b And shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it.

Now remember there in Zechariah 14 it said that all these people would come up and worship the king at Jerusalem. This is the same sort of picture.

Isaiah 2:3a Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law. . .

And what do kings and judges do? They deal with law do they not?

Isaiah 2:3b And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Who deals with the Word of the Lord, mostly? I would call them priests for lack of a better term. And who will be sending forth the law and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem? You and me as kings and priests who will be changed at the beginning of the Millennium to serve God.

Isaiah 2:4 He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

So during this time, these thousand years, Christ spends it judging. And we will too, because we are His brothers and sisters. That is going to be our job to judge and to teach, and to send forth the law, and to give everybody who still lives after Christ returns a chance for salvation, and give them the understanding and instruction that they need.

Now, Micah adds a few more words—a few more details. If you will go to Micah 4, he basically says the same thing that Isaiah does, but he adds two more verses.

Micah 4:4-5 But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken. For all people walk each in the name of his god, but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever.

Verse 4 pictures a time of universal peace, and of prosperity too, when we all have time, and leisure to sit under our vine, and our fig tree. The vine and fig tree in the Bible symbolizes wealth, and being settled, but they will not be too settled, because as I mentioned in a feast sermon a year or two ago, that our work in the Millennium will be great.

We are going to be preparing for that White Throne Judgment when 50 billion (or so) people will suddenly appear on the scene. But, how are you going to house, clothe, and feed all those people? We will be spending a lot of time in getting people to build cities—a fabulous number of cities—and whatever else it is going to take to give these people a life in which they can learn the way of God.

But, people are going to have it quite well during this time, a time of peace and prosperity. We will see a bit more of that a little later.

It also seems to imply agrarian conditions rather than the urban settings of today. It does not mention sitting on the roof of your house in the city, but rather mentions sitting under your vine and fig tree, which implies land ownership, not being in a city necessarily. I expect that our cities will be much smaller in terms of land use and population. There will be more people on the land using it properly, and producing what it can, and it will. It will produce dramatically during the time of the Millennium.

Verse 5 hints at something that we preachers in the church of God have mentioned many times. Maybe it will be new to you, but it is very interesting. I looked this up in many commentaries, and they cannot figure verse 5 out. It is beyond them.

They change the tense of the verb, actually, and say, "as all people walk, each in the name of his god," meaning presently, "we will walk [future] in the name of the Lord our God." But, it does not say that in the Hebrew. Both the verbs in that clause there are future.

So, it should read, "for all people will walk, each in the name of his God, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God."

It shows a hierarchical form of government. Sorry to some of you. What it means is, as we see in the New Testament in some of the parables, God says that He gives His saints—those who do well—some, 10 cities, some 5 cities. We will be rulers over the nations. And we will be Gods! And those people who are under us at the time, will call us God, and will walk in our name. Amazing to think of that!

They will have the same relationship to us, as we have now with our God, Jesus Christ, and our Father. Amazing! It is just incredible to think of that. That is the sort of thing we going to be prepared to do in just a few years.

Are you ready? I am not! I have trouble with people calling me "Mr. Ritenbaugh." It is an amazing thing to think that here in Micah we have a prophesy of people like you and me becoming God, and having other people, who we were once like, walking in our name. I have a hard time grasping that!

Isaiah 11:11-12 It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people who are left, from Assyria and Egypt, from Pathros and Cush, from Elam and Shinar, from Hamath and the islands of the sea. He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

Isaiah 27:12-13 And it shall come to pass in that day that the LORD will thresh, from the channel of the River to the Brook of Egypt; and you will be gathered one by one, O you children of Israel. So it shall be in that day: The great trumpet will be blown; [That is usually referring to the return of Christ, and this is as well.] they will come, who are about to perish in the land of Assyria, and they who are outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

Now a couple of chapters over:

Isaiah 30:19-23 For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; you shall weep no more. He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you. And though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left. You will also defile the covering of your graven images of silver, and the ornament of your molded images of gold. You will throw them away as an unclean thing; you will say to them, "Get away!" Then He will give the rain for your seed with which you sow the ground, and bread of the increase of the earth; it will be fat and plentiful. In that day your cattle will feed in large pastures.

I wanted to show you the relationship between the teachers and the people when they finally repent and come back into the land. And this will cause them to further put away their idolatry, and to become the people that he meant them to become.

Isaiah 44:1-2 "Yet hear now, O Jacob My servant, And Israel whom I have chosen. Thus says the LORD who made you And formed you from the womb, who will help you: Fear not, O Jacob My servant; And you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.

This (Jeshurun) harkens back to Deuteronomy, and this is the about the only other one of the places where it is used.

Isaiah 44:3-5 For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, and My blessing on your offspring; they will spring up among the grass like willows by the watercourses.' One will say, 'I am the LORD's'; another will call himself by the name of Jacob; another will write with his hand,

‘ The LORD’s,’ and name himself by the name of Israel.

So, when they come back to the land, they will be converted. Israel will finally, finally, finally get it. But, now they will have the blessing of being watered, which is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. And God does not say he will give water just to those who are thirsty; he said he will give floods on the dry ground. It is just a tremendous outpouring of His Spirit. And there is no Satan around to mess things up. And they will listen, and they will repent; they will turn, and they will be proud to be God’s. They will call themselves "The Lord’s People."

Scattered and battered Israel will be regathered to Palestine to be God’s people once again, and the general term for this is the Second Exodus. And the Second Exodus is going to be far greater than the first ever was. It will also have much better success.

Jeremiah 30:8-9 ‘ For it shall come to pass in that day,’ Says the LORD of hosts, ‘ that I will break his yoke from your neck, and will burst your bonds; foreigners shall no more enslave them. But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.

I just wanted this one point: When they return and begin serving God, they will have David as their king. A very clear statement here that God is going to resurrect David to be their king. I do not know how much more plain it could be. I do not understand how the Jews in Acts 2 could not understand that David was still in his sepulcher. It just boggles my mind. Also, there people in the world today who think that these people are up in heaven. It is just so clear here. They are still in their graves and will be raised when Christ returns.

But, these people will have a glorified King David to rule over them. And under his management and motivation, Israel is going to be something! Because, if he infuses his spirit—in that limited sense—his energy into those people like he did to the people of Israel while he was a human king, things are going to happen. He took a rag-tag, disunited Israel and turned them into the greatest empire of its time. They were not even converted. He was about the only one. Probably him and Nathan. Maybe Zadok too, who knows? But, what he will be able to do as God! To turn Israel into the world’s only superpower!

Now just one chapter over:

Jeremiah 31:31-34 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—"not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘ Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Now let us jump to Ezekiel 11:

Ezekiel 11:17-20 "Therefore say, ` Thus says the Lord God: I will gather you from the peoples, assemble you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. And they will go there, and they will take away all its detestable things and all its abominations from there. Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.' "

Finally they will be doing the things that they were supposed to do the first time. God finds it necessary to make with them a New Covenant, one that He has already made with us. They will join in that covenant and they will begin to do the things that we are doing now. They will put away their idols, and all those detestable things that they have, all their abominations, and they will grow just like you and I have been doing these years, and are continuing to do.

So, we have a foretaste of the work that we will be doing with them. Very similar with what we are doing now: becoming converted. But, finally, as I mentioned before, they will have God's Spirit, and truly be able to keep the law, and to be God's people in the way that he wants them to be.

Ezekiel 36 is very similar, but it has a couple more "wrinkles" to it:

Ezekiel 36:22-28 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, ` Thus says the Lord God: "I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD," says the Lord God, "when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God."

One of the things I wanted to pull out of there was the first part where it says, "You have profaned my name among the nations." God says, "But now, for my great name's sake, I'm going to make you do it right! So that you will hallow my name among the nations." This brings in what Israel's main function is, other than their conversion, and building up of the waste places for the White Throne Judgment.

Their main job will be to be God's witnesses. They will be the example nation. Out of all the nations of the world after Christ comes. Finally Gentiles from around the world will be able to look to Jerusalem and see it being done right! And there are many places where it talks about them coming and seeing it, and wanting part of it for themselves.

Let us go back to Isaiah 60: 9-12 to see one of these examples. As we saw in Isaiah 2, and Micah 4, these nations are going to flow into or under God's government.

Isaiah 60:9 Surely the coastlands shall wait for Me [Wait for me means "trust in Me."] and the ships of Tarshish will come first, [Tarshish as far as we know, on the coast of Spain, was and is a Gentile land.] to bring your sons from afar. . .

They will be transporting the Israelites back to the land of Israel. They will come back because they also will have heard of what has been going in Jerusalem.

Isaiah 60:9 Their silver and their gold with them, to the name of the LORD your God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because He has glorified you.

They see what He has done with Israel. And they start coming to Jerusalem. And they bring their sustenance; they bring their gold and silver to give to God and God's people.

Isaiah 60:10-12 "The sons of foreigners shall build up your walls, [They will come back and they will work!] and their kings shall minister to you. [Their kings will serve the Israelites!] For in My wrath I struck you, but in My favor I have had mercy on you. Therefore your gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day or night, that men may bring to you the wealth of the Gentiles, and their kings in procession. For the nation and kingdom which will not serve you shall perish, and those nations shall be utterly ruined.

Wow! That example that they will be giving will have some iron behind it! A rod of iron like we saw in Zechariah 14. Because the example will be there, Israel will turn. Israel will be the model nation. And there are bad things that will happen if these other nations having seen it do not change. But, I feel, personally, that is not going to happen more than once or twice. They are not dumb. They will see and they will learn. It may take a little while, but most nations will turn to God eventually.

Here is another thing that will happen.

Romans 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

He is talking about when Christ returns, and we will be changed. But, other things are waiting.

Romans 8:19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

All creation is expecting that to happen! Anytime! At least, that is the way Paul puts it. Because, the creation desires its Creator. And the creation desires the work of the Creator's hand to be glorified. Why?

Romans 8:20a For the creation was subjected to futility. . .

Meaning uselessness almost, worthlessness, frustration; God subjected it, as well as because we are in sin.

Romans 8:20b-22 . . .not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; [There was a purpose—a reason.] because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

The land—the earth—and all that is in it, is waiting for us to be revealed in our Glory, because that is when it can begin to produce. It has been like great bands have been placed upon creation. It cannot do what all it has been created to do.

Let us go to Isaiah 35 and we will see this. These are classic scriptures that we hear every year.

Isaiah 35:1-7 The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the excellency of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, "Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and save you." Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; in the habitation of jackals, where each lay, there shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

So the earth is just waiting to blossom and produce the Eden-like abundance that it has been restrained from producing because of sin! And that corruption will be removed—those bands of suppression. And "we ain't seen nothin' yet!" We think that certain parts of the earth are gorgeous, and they are, but just wait until that time when the deserts just look like golf courses, or something.

But it also mentions here that the lame will leap, the eyes of the blind will be opened; the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. It speaks of healing, and health; vitality will be in people. Part of that has to do with the land again. It will produce for us nutritious food. People will get the exercise they need. People will be healthy because of what they eat, and the general atmosphere's pollutants will be reduced considerably. And they will flourish. A lot of these health problems will go away; not to mention miraculous healings that we will be able to do at that time, getting everything started with a bang.

Amos has an interesting way of talking about this time in the 9th chapter verse 11; he mentions again the house of David will again be ruling:

Amos 9:11-15 "On that day I will raise up The tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name," says the LORD who does this thing. "Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, [You get the idea here of one crop going in before the last one is finished.] and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; they shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. I will plant them in their land, and no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them," says the LORD your God.

This kind of encapsulates many of the things I have talked about today.

One more thing for the kids—they like to hear this.

Isaiah 11:6-9 "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

So Isaiah paints a very beautiful picture of wild beasts becoming docile, and living with domesticated animals side by side. It talks about bears eating straw just like the oxen do. It seems to me that the natures of these wild beasts will be returned to the Edenic standard—peaceful cohabitation. This is just another illustration of how the creation will really begin to produce and to be as it was intended from the beginning.

It says here in verse 9 that this happens as a direct result of the truth of God being widespread and followed by everyone. And of course, we cannot forget that Satan's nature and influence will be gone as well. And all those things coming together will give us a very tremendous and wonderful and exciting thousand years. That time has not yet come. That is still a few years away from beginning.

We—those of us here—still need to go through the pain and destruction and the confusion of the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. I am not saying we will go through it personally, but I mean we will be around to see it. Maybe experience some part of it. I do not know what God has in store for each one of us as individuals for this time.

We do not live in this idealized setting. It has not happened yet. We still have to deal with bad attitudes. And all kinds of things—violence, crime, famines, and diseases, and other things of the end time to look forward to, so to speak. It is not all fun, and peace, and prosperity. It is not going to get any better as far as any of us can see.

Thankfully, though, we have the promise of Christ's return to keep us going. We have the promise of our glorification just ahead. We have the promise of being worshipped as God. I still cannot quite grasp that yet because it is beyond our mortal minds to really comprehend that God would give us such a wonderful reward.

And we eagerly await this; notwithstanding what we must go through between that time and now.

So, what can we do in the meantime?

Well, the Psalms are always helpful in this regard. Let us go to Psalm 96, and we will close right here, hopefully on an encouraging note.

Psalm 96: 1-4, 9-13 Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! Sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, bless His name; proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples. For the LORD

is great and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods. . . Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness! Tremble before Him, all the earth. Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns; the world also is firmly established, it shall not be moved; He shall judge the peoples righteously." Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; Let the sea roar, and all its fullness; let the field be joyful, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the woods will rejoice before the LORD. For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with His truth.

Hope you have a wonderful Feast everyone!