

The Family of God

It's hard to believe but another year of God's Holy Days has passed. I know we all look forward to the Feast of Tabernacles probably the most and we begin our countdown usually back in June when we start searching for a feast site. This was our 6th year in meeting as a fellowship and we have seen and learned a great deal in our gatherings. From Weirsdale and Kissimmee, FL to Pigeon Forge, TN and finally to Banner Elk, NC. From the comments I've heard, this year was one of the best. Truly a time of growth, learning and fellowship and in such a beautiful location.

God has commanded and ordained the Feast of tabernacles to be family-oriented, a time of rejoicing and peace and being in fellowship with God's spiritual family (**Lev. 23:33-39**). We are all called and in the process of becoming legally adopted to an intimate and personal relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ our Savior. We can usually count on Satan to show up in our preparations to attend the Feast and the storms he'll send to deter us. But much the like the woman in Matt. 9:20, we press through and we are blessed.

God's plan for mankind is revealed through His Holy Days and we have an understanding because we are being obedient to His Commandments in keeping

them. We have a great deal to rejoice about being in this great spiritual family. How can anything be negative in our lives with so great a gift being given to us? Celebrating a week-long feast with God the Father and Jesus our Savior (and soon to be Elder Brother) and with our spiritual family! It is an inspiring time and a preview of what is yet to come in the Kingdom of God.

We have a relationship with Jesus Christ because we are “in Him” and He is “in us”, we become one with Him: **(John 6:56, Rom. 8:11, 1 Cor. 1:30, Col. 2:6,10)**. We have a new relationship only when we are "in Jesus Christ," accepting and relying on Jesus Christ's sacrifice of paying the sin debt for all mankind. We therefore must be committed to keeping His laws.

We are in the process of being adopted and becoming heirs of Christ and to God's Kingdom. **Romans 8:12-17**- “Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh; Because if you are living according to the flesh, you shall die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you shall live. For as many as are led by the spirit of God, these are the sons of God. Now you have not received a spirit of bondage again unto fear, but you have received the Spirit of sonship, whereby we call out, “Abba, Father.” The spirit itself bears witness conjointly with our own spirit, testifying that we are the children of God. Now if we are children, we are also heirs-truly heirs of God and

joint heirs with Christ-if indeed we suffer together with Him, so that we may also be glorified together with Him.”

We are promised complete legal adoption as sons in the family of God. **Ephesians 2:19**- “So then, you are no longer aliens and foreigners; but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of the household of God.” Household means family; and, in other words, we are children of God. I’m sure that many church going people who worship on Sunday believe they too are children of God but they will have *no* inheritance unless they obey God’s Commandments and keep Sabbaths and His Holy Days. Many people will awake one day to the realization that He never knew them; they are outside and that they do not belong to the family (**Matt. 7:21-23**).

Being a Christian is not merely an entitlement as so many people think. Being in the Family of God isn’t something that comes by saying a “sinner’s prayer” or going to Church on Christmas and Easter, keeping the traditions of men. So much more than that, we must do our part in being obedient to God’s laws and Commandments. This is something we have to look forward to, “And not only that, but even we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, also groan within ourselves, awaiting the sonship-the redemption of our bodies.”- **Rom. 8:23**.

Matthew 5:16 - “In the same way also, you are to let your light so shine before men, so that they may see your good works, and may glorify your Father Who is in heaven.” We have to produce good works if we are children of God. If we are members of the household of God, we have to. There is no question.

We just mentioned in Ephesians 2:19 that we are members of the household of God, but here the term "family" is directly used in association with what God is the Head of. He is the Head of the family, and what is the family name? The family name is the Church of God. It is the assembly, us, that group which belongs to God and is one with Him.

It is impossible to be a Christian without being a child of God. As a member of God’s family, we have certain privileges; God is our Father, we have the right to approach Him (**Heb. 4:16**), we have Jesus as our Savior and Intercessor to the very Throne of God, and we are commanded to uphold the Name of God. We have the great privilege of being even more than Christ's friend. We know He called His disciples friends (**John 15:15**). We have the honor and privilege of being brothers and sisters of Christ—children of the Father, the Almighty God of all Creation. As a reminder, we all have responsibilities. Let me remind you of the responsibilities in joining such a position, keep His Commandments and Holy Days. You cannot “play church” with God, especially if you are baptized. There is no going back.

We must realize that we didn't receive this honor by chance. We were chosen before birth. **Ephesians 1:5**- "Having predestined us to sonship to Himself through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of His will." Predestination is a type of assurance, a type of guarantee. **Romans 8:28-30**- " And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Because those whom He did foreknow, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His own Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Now whom He predestinated, these He also called, and whom He called, these He justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." While God may have set us aside at birth, but we may not wake up to the calling until we are well on in years. Better late than never! We also need to keep in mind while predestination may be a type of a guarantee, this guarantee can be cancelled!

So as His children, raised by God Himself and having access to His mind through His Spirit, we are guided to produce good fruit, because we want to be like Him. We desire to walk with Him, and we want to think like Him. God's people are to be faithful and loyal in their dutiful response to God. We are to live by His every Word (**Deut. 8:3, Matt. 4:4, Luke 4:4**). Gods' loyalty to His covenant and His promises, *demand*s a response of loyalty from His people. God is faithful; and therefore, His people are required to respond with faithfulness to His commands. All He wants us to do is to love Him first, be obedient and to trust Him.

The Apostle Paul makes this point about the Israelites and Gentiles who have become Christians (in Eph. 2:19), and he says, “You are members of the household of God.” All other divisions you remember have gone, they have all been set aside, and they have all been abolished. This is a new thing God has brought into being amongst Israelites and Gentiles. Jesus died for all mankind. The further great fact is that we are in the position of children. Again, we are in the process of legal adoption. It is important that we understand this in the doctrine that Paul teaches, in Ephesians 2. We can all become one in the family of God.

John 1:12-13- “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name. Who were not begotten by bloodlines, nor the will of the flesh, not by the will of man, but by the will of God.”

Deuteronomy 7:6-9 “For you are a holy people to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a special people to Himself above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love upon you nor choose you because you were more in number than any people, for you were the fewest of all people. But because the Lord loved you and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you out of the house of bondage from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Therefore, know that the LORD your God, He is God, the

faithful God Who keeps covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments, to a thousand generations.”

That is why Paul says in I Corinthians 1:27-28 that God has chosen the weak and the poor and the foolish of the earth to confound those so-called intellectuals with the understanding and discerning minds. In our calling we have been given knowledge and understanding of such an incredible value that its worth is impossible to calculate. So few have been given this gift it is overwhelming to think of being chosen from all the billions of people on the earth!

While the Feast of Tabernacles focuses on the Millennium, we must not lose sight of the Kingdom of God and our roles within it. The thousand-year reign of Christ will be a wonderful time but it is only the beginning of eternity. It's hard to imagine what it will be like and what our new positions will be as kings and priests. Paul also points out to Timothy in **2 Timothy 2:12**- “If we endure, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He will also deny us.”

Galatians 4:6-7- “And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba Father. So then, you are no longer a servant, but a son. And if a son, you are also an heir of God through Christ.”

Without our keeping of God's Sabbaths and Holy Days, we would otherwise be clueless to the Plan of God. Through the gift of God's Holy Spirit, we are given understanding. Understanding is totally different from knowledge. Some people with ample knowledge are incredibly stupid when discerning the plan of God. We know we can't fix stupid. Without God's Spirit the Bible makes no sense whatsoever. Discarding the Old Testament because it is "Jewish" or it has "been done away with" sets up the failure for all who subscribe to this thinking. The mystery of God's plan can only be discerned through special revelation through God's Holy Spirit. God did the choosing (choosing the weak and base of the world); we did not. God is totally in control. Our lives must be in total submission to His will, completely devoted in our preparation for what God has in store for our lives as a member of His Family. Understanding God's Word and His way of life can only be achieved through our belief, faith, obedience and commitment to it. We will be led by God's Holy spirit and follow the example set by our Savior and Elder Brother Jesus Christ.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."- **Matt. 5:5**. As a member in God's family, we will have our place in a new earth and His Kingdom. "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God"- **Matt. 5:8**. We have a duty and responsibility in being a part of God's family and to be present with Him when these events come to pass. We must produce good fruit, the Fruits of the Spirit, the

fruit of righteousness. We have to do the works and have the faith, that we may grow in the image of His Son. We may then proclaim the family to which we belong. Never forget, we are no longer strangers or foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

Well, the Holy Days are complete for this year. Passover is in 195 days (16,848,000 seconds or 4680 hours) and the Feast of Tabernacles is only 373 days away. The time to prepare is now. We should always be ready for the last trumpet anyway!

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