

Ingathering

Each summer, members and descendants of various Scottish and Irish families – or clans, as they're called – get together in groups all over the world to celebrate their Celtic heritage. These get-togethers are called the Gatherings of the Clans.

The Feast of Tabernacles might be considered to be the annual Gathering of the Clans for the Family of God. In fact, the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day are part of what God, in chapters 23 and 34 of the book of Exodus, calls the Feast of Ingathering. This article will discuss the Feast of Ingathering, and will concentrate on the word "gather," and other words derived from it.

There are 434 instances in the King James Version of the scriptures of the words *gather*, *gathers*, *gathered* and *ingathering*. Some of these scriptures are concerned with gatherings of God's people for worship, gatherings of God's enemies against Him and against His people, and the gathering in of grain or fruit crops during a harvest. In fact, the English words "ingathering" and "gathering" are synonymous with the word "harvest."

Perhaps because, by God's design, ancient Israel's annual agricultural crop seasons picture His plan so closely, Jesus included the topic of harvest gathering in so many of His wonderful parables.

Many of the "gathering scriptures" and all of Jesus' "gathering parables" apply to God's plan and to the fulfillment of His holy days. This article concentrates on how they apply specifically to the *fall* holy days.

Gathered into three groups

God has gathered His seven annual feasts into three groups:

Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread:... and the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field. Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord GOD. (Exodus 23:14-17)

Thrice in the year shall all your men children appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel... The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep... and thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end. (Exodus 34:23, 18, 22)

So again, God has gathered His seven feasts into three groups, and those three groups are the seven day Feast of Unleavened Bread with its two holy days, the one-day Feast of Pentecost (also known as the Feast of Harvest, the Feast of Firstfruits, and the Feast of Weeks), and finally the group that includes the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the seven day Feast of Tabernacles, and the Last Great Day.

We call this last annual group of four feasts "the Fall Feasts," but please notice that in verse 16 of chapter 23 and verse 22 of chapter 34, that God calls it collectively "the Feast of Ingathering."

The English word *ingathering* is translated from the Hebrew word *acyph* and, as well as *ingathering*, can also be translated into the English word *harvest*. The Hebrew word *acyph* is derived from the root word *acaph*, which can be translated as: *together, gather, assemble, receive, collect, take away, remove, and perish*.

But why is ingathering relevant to the fall holy days? What ingathering or gathering will take place at the fulfillment of each of the fall holy days?

Let us go through them briefly, one by one:

The Feast of Trumpets

At the fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets, God's great harvest of the first-fruits will be taking place. There will be three groups of God's people in this harvest:

- i. God will resurrect the dead-in-Christ and will gather them from their numerous resting places around the world.**
- ii. Most of God's people who will still be alive at that time will already have been gathered to the Place of Safety – three and a half years before.**
- iii. Those of God's people who are left alive and who do *not* go into the Place of Safety (hopefully, this group will be a minority – Revelation 12:17 calls them a "remnant" of the church's seed) will be changed and will be gathered together from their scattered locations around the world to be united with those who were in the Place of Safety and with their newly resurrected brothers and sisters.**

Where will their gathering place be? Will it be in the Place of Safety? Will it be on the Mount of Olives from where the apostles saw Jesus ascend to heaven, and to which He promised to return? Paul answers:

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them [*gathered, assembled, united with them*] in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

(I Thessalonians 4:16-17)

The three groups will be gathered and united in the clouds, and together we will continue our ascent to meet Jesus Christ.

At the very same time that this wonderful ingathering – this harvest of the firstfruits – is taking place in the clouds of the first heaven, another group – a more ominous group – will be assembling back on earth. The armies who will oppose the returning Christ will be gathering at a place called Armageddon:

And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her

grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. (Revelation 14:18-19)

This second human harvest will – without knowing it – be waiting in preparation for the reaper's sickle. But what are these grapevines that are to be gathered? We turn forward two chapters, for the answer:

...the spirits of devils, working miracles, go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. (Revelation 16:14)

Yes. These grapevines are a human harvest. They are the armies of the kings of the world who, deceived by Satan, will refuse to give up their power to the returning King of kings. They are also mentioned in chapter 19:

And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. (Revelation 19:19)

These armies, of course, will have no chance of success against the great sword of Jesus Christ:

And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; (Verse 17)

So here is yet another gathering! A gathering of carnivorous birds! God will summon these birds to gather for this gruesome supper. Perhaps, as God says "*all* the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven" are to be summoned for this supper, even the non-carnivorous birds will have their natures changed for this one occasion.

That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. (Verse 18)

This gruesome harvest – the bodies of these once-proud human beings – will quickly be reduced to a vast pile of bones.

The Day of Atonement

After having dealt with Satan's human supporters, God will deal with their prince.

God will assign an angel to remove Satan entirely for the duration of the Millennium. This will be the fulfillment of the Day of Atonement's *Azazel* ritual, which God gave to His Old Testament church thousands of years earlier.

As *acaph* – the Hebrew root word for the English word *ingathering* – may also be translated into the English words *remove* and *take away*, it is interesting to note that one translation of the word *Azazel* is *entire removal*.

But it will not be just Satan himself who will be removed entirely for the duration of the Millennium. His spiritual servants – the demons – will also be gathered and removed with him. This event is described in the book of Jude, and is one of those scriptures like the Lucifer scriptures of Isaiah and Ezekiel, in which there may be dual references to both humans and spirit beings:

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day... trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. (Jude 6, 12-13)

God will not even give these fallen angels the honor of allowing them to be decently reaped with a sharp sickle. He will have the resisting demons plucked up by the roots – violently ripped out of their dwelling-places – and He will gather them and their prince to the bottomless pit and will imprison them there for the duration of the Millennium.

The Feast of Tabernacles

Out of the unconverted human beings who are left alive after the end time carnage, God will regather the scattered, divided tribes of Israel:

He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. (Jeremiah 31:10)

At the beginning of the Millennium, both Israelites and Gentiles who, at the time of Christ's return, were left alive but were not converted will see Him, His glorified brothers and sisters, and His holy angels. They will all quickly get to know Jesus Christ and will learn His way of life. One by one, just like we were, as they are converted, they will be gathered into the community of the saints... the millennial church of God.

Perhaps they will be changed after their physical lifetime expires. Perhaps after a hundred years. Perhaps after the whole thousand years. The scriptures are not totally clear on just when their change from human *begotten* children of God to *spirit-born* children will take place. But, of course, God knows the ideal timing for those occasions.

The children (human children, from converted and unconverted families alike) who are still alive at the beginning of the Millennium will grow up in the personal knowledge of their King – Jesus Christ – who they will actually see on earth, and of His loving Father. More human children will be born as the millennium progresses. They too will grow and learn about Jesus Christ and God the Father. As they grow into adulthood, they too will have the desire to accept God's way for the remainder of their human lives and on into eternity. As they are converted and baptized, God will gather them into His family.

The Last Great Day

At the fulfillment of the Last Great Day, all of those billions of humans who have died without the benefit of the knowledge and truth of God will be resurrected to human life and will be given the precious knowledge that was withheld from them during their first lifetime.

They may have died as elderly people, middle-aged people, young people (many who died in the horror of battle), children, babies... and possibly even those whose lives were cut short by the barbaric method of execution that we call "abortion." These will all be resurrected to human life and will be given an opportunity to learn and to accept God's way of life.

As they accept it, they too will be gathered into God's church as His spirit-*begotten* children. They too, in God's good time, will be changed from human to spirit, and will be gathered into the growing family of spirit-*born* children.

However, there will be one last gathering. An unpleasant one. Perhaps its description should be divided into two parts... two gatherings.

There will have been some – hopefully very few – in all of the ages (from Adam until the return of Jesus Christ, and from the return of Jesus Christ on through the Millennium and into the Great White Throne Judgment period) who have been offered God's way of life and His precious gift of salvation... but will have knowingly rejected them.

Also, at the end of the Millennium, Satan will be loosed out of his prison and will focus all of his pent-up anger and power into tempting a surprisingly large number of human beings and gathering them into an army for one last-ditch battle against Jesus Christ:

And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city; and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. (Revelation 20:7-9)

Because, after all God's explanation, proper logic and reasoning has been laid out before them, they still insist on living Satan's miserable way of selfishness and of failure, they will be gathered together and will be put out of their misery forever. In an instant, they will burnt to ash... like the fruitless fruit-bushes, and the useless chaff and tares of Jesus' parables:

As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. (Matthew 13:40)

**John answered, saying to all, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire."
(Luke 3:16-17)**

But let us not finish on this negative gathering. God's ingathering will then be complete. The completion of a successful harvest is a time for celebration. This will be a time for celebration like never before! Try to imagine Jesus' glorified brothers and sisters, along with the twenty-four elders, the four living creatures, the cherubim, the seraphim, and the millions of angels gathered around God the Father and His Son in true celebration and worship.

What a gathering that will be!

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