

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

Leviticus 23:33-44

INTRODUCTION

- Many of us relish the opportunity to take a break from the everyday routine and to “rough it”, being out in the elements camping
- Under the law, God commanded all the males to leave their houses and camp out in a little booth for a week every year
- We have come to the seventh and final feast of the LORD – the Feast of Tabernacles, also known as the Feast of Booths, and the Feast of Ingathering
- This feast brings us to the conclusion of Christ’s redemptive program
- While the other feasts (except the Day of Atonement) were occasions of great joy for Israel, this feast is by far the most joyous of the seven
- It came at the end of the harvest, when the crops had all been brought in and stored, and was a natural time of joy and thanksgiving
- Along with Passover and Pentecost, all the males were required to attend this feast at Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 16:16)
- The number seven is particularly connected to this feast
 - ✓ It is the seventh feast, to be observed on the seventh month, for seven days
 - ✓ 189 (27 x 7) animal sacrifices

- ✓ 336 (48 x 7) tenths of ephahs of flour for the meal offering
- Seven is the number of perfection and completion, and this feast marks the perfection and conclusion of God's redemptive program
- While the feasts have foremost significance to the children of Israel, they also have prophetic relevance to the church – for instance, in the three great feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles we have pictured *salvation* of the church by Christ, the *strengthening* of the church from Christ, and the *spousals* of the church to Christ

I. THE BOOTHS THAT REMEMBER THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

- A. They were to commemorate Israel's dwelling in booths after their exodus from Egypt (Leviticus 23:43)
 - 1. The Israelites spent their first night after coming out of Egypt at "Succoth" (Exodus 12:37), which "booths, huts, tabernacles", and they spend the next forty years dwelling in these temporary structures
 - 2. God miraculously provided for them and preserved them
 - a. He gave them bread from heaven, angel's food, manna (Psalm 78:25)
 - b. God "furnished a table in the wilderness" (Psalm 78:19)
 - c. He gave them water from the rock (Nehemiah 9:15)
 - d. Even their clothes and shoes were kept from wearing out (Deuteronomy 29:5)
- B. Remember where God brought you from by his grace

1. For the Jews dwelling in permanent houses in the comfort of the Promised Land, the week of dwelling in booths forced them to remember the low place that God had brought them from
2. Prosperity has a propensity to cause forgetfulness (Deuteronomy 6:10-12; 8:10-18)
3. Those who have been saved by grace must constantly remember the bondage from which the Lord redeemed them (Deuteronomy 15:15), and the miry clay from which the Lord brought them up (Psalm 40:1-3)

C. Remember the trials and blessings God has led you through

1. The Jews stipulated that the booths were to be made from fresh branches, with a roof partially open so that the stars could be visible at night, and walls that would allow the wind to pass through
2. Comfort was not the priority, but an identification with the pilgrim experience
3. The types of trees listed in Leviticus 23:40 have been traditionally used by the Jews in ceremonies at this feast
 - a. They take the *etrog* (citrus) in one hand and the *lulav* (a bouquet of palm, myrtle and willow branches) in the other
4. These four types of tree depict the varied experiences of the pilgrim life through which God leads his people
 - a. The citrus fruit is a reminder of the fruit God graciously provides

- b. The palm is a reminder of times of victory and triumph
- c. The myrtle is a reminder of the beautiful experiences
- d. The willow is a reminder of the sorrows of life (Psalm 137:1-2)

II. THE BOUNTIFUL REJOICING IN THE PLENITUDE OF GOD

- A. God desires for his people to have joy
 - 1. The Gospel message is one of “great joy, which shall be to all people” (Luke 2:10)
 - 2. Christ came to bring his people joy (John 15:11; 17:13; 16:24)
 - 3. We are commanded to rejoice in the Lord always (Philippians 4:4)
- B. The joy of Tabernacles follows the mourning of the Day of Atonement
 - 1. The Day of Atonement was marked by affliction of soul and confession of sin, as the blood atoned for the nation’s sins
 - 2. But five days later, the contrast could not be greater
 - 3. Until sin is dealt with, there can be no joy (Psalm 51:12)
 - 4. The Prodigal could have no joy while he remained in the filthy swine pen, but when he returned to the father, confessing his sin, then there was joy (Luke 15:18,23-24)
- C. The joy of the Lord induces a sacrificial response

1. The sacrifices of the Feast of Tabernacles outnumber the sacrifices of all the other feasts put together (Numbers 29:13-38)
 - a. 189 over the seven days, then 10 on the eighth day
2. We are rich only because Christ, for our sakes, became poor (2 Corinthians 8:9)
3. The response of the redeemed is, "What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?" (Psalm 116:12)

III. THE BLESSED REST THAT IS PROMISED BY GOD

- A. The tabernacle/booth is a temporary dwelling, in contrast with the permanent
 1. The Jews in the wilderness had no permanent dwelling, but looked for their final destination in Canaan
 2. The believer is a stranger and pilgrim in this world, looking for a "better country" (Hebrews 11:13-16; 1 Peter 2:11)
 3. This "earthly house of this tabernacle" will soon be dissolved, and replaced with an eternal building (2 Corinthians 5:1)
- B. The Feast of Tabernacles will find its prophetic fulfillment in the Millennial Kingdom
 1. The unparalleled joy of the Feast of Tabernacles held by the post-exilic Jews (Nehemiah 8:13-18) foreshadows the future and permanent establishment in the Promised Land and their rejoicing in that day

2. Peter alluded to this time when he requested to make three tabernacles on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:4)
3. The Lord Jesus promised that he would drink the fruit of the vine with them in his Father's kingdom (Matthew 26:29)
4. At Christ's glorious return, he will fulfill all his promises to his covenant people, as he reigns over them as their King, and Israel becomes the chief of the nations, enjoying the promised blessings in the land (Hosea 5:15-6:3; Amos 9:13-15)

C. The Feast of Tabernacles encompasses both Jew and Gentile

1. The *promise* to Abraham was blessing upon "all families/nations of the earth" (Genesis 12:3)
2. The *invitation* extends to "all the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 45:22)
3. The *fulfilment* will encompass redeemed souls "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Revelation 5:9)
4. Many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day (Zechariah 2:10-11)
5. During the Millennium, all nations in Christ's kingdom will be required to go up to Jerusalem annually to keep the Feast of Tabernacles (Zechariah 14:16-19)

D. The overarching theme of redemption from beginning to end is fulfilled in the Feast of Tabernacles – God in full and perfect communion with man

1. In the beginning, God and man enjoyed fellowship together
 2. Sin severed that fellowship
 3. Christ came to restore that fellowship
 - a. The word was made flesh, and dwelt (*tabernacled*) among us (John 1:14)
 - b. “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:23)
 4. In the kingdom, God will dwell with men
 5. The eighth day points to the eternal state when “the tabernacle of God is with men” (Revelation 21:3)
- D. Jesus Christ showed that he is the fulfillment of Tabernacles, and the only way that man can be reconciled to God and dwell with him eternally
1. At the “water pouring ceremony” of the Feast of Tabernacles, he cried, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (John 7:37-39)
 2. At the “festival of lights” of the feast, he said, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12)

CONCLUSION

1. At the end of the world, there will be a final harvest of souls where Christ will “gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Matthew 3:12; 13:24-30,37-43)

2. On that day, unbelievers will be trodden down in the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God (Revelation 19:15; Isaiah 63:3; Jeremiah 8:20)
3. Have you come to Christ for mercy and forgiveness, that you may escape his judgment, and be received into his harvest and kingdom? (1 Corinthians 15:58)
4. The day will soon come when all the toils are passed, and “they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Revelation 14:13)
5. If you are a Christian, then you are a pilgrim in a foreign and hostile country, therefore keep shallow roots in this world, and do not become entangled with the affairs of this life (2 Timothy 2:4)