

# The Feasts of the Lord: The Kingdom - Jesus in the feast of Tabernacles

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## Introduction

We come now to the last of the seven feasts - the feast of tabernacles. This festival is filled with joy and celebration and stands in stark contrast to the solemn day of Atonement and the days of Awe that preceded it just days earlier. This is a feast that celebrates the gathering of the fruit harvest which has just taken place and as such, is full of rejoicing in God's blessing and abundance. This yearly feast is of course but a precursor to the ultimate fulfillment that takes place when Jesus Christ sets up His kingdom and begins to rule on planet Earth. The solemn and awe inspiring day of Atonement (which symbolises the return of Jesus Christ) will be replaced with the rejoicing and splendour of the Kingdom age! Isn't it good to know that the last of these seven feasts, which give a prophetic overview of God's plan for the ages, ends with celebration and joy? If we look around the world today we see many crazy and sometimes unbelievably horrific things happening... In such days we can be tempted to think that things are falling apart. And in a human sense they are. Yet in another sense, they are actually falling into place. All of these things play their part leading up to the new day that will dawn with the return and rule of the Messiah. So let's explore this feast in greater detail so that we can begin to grasp more fully this great age that is still to come. Let's begin with the great desire of God... and man!

## God's desire to 'tabernacle' with man



At the heart of this feast is the desire of God to tabernacle with mankind. A quick survey of the Bible shows this truth from the first book to the last. Early in Genesis we read of how God dwelt among His creation as He walked in the garden in the cool of the day (Gen 3:8). After the fall we still see this same desire with the construction of the Tabernacle during the Exodus of Israel from Egypt. This later evolved into

the first and second temples where the presence of God was manifest. The first coming of Jesus was described in this same exact language for we read:

*John 1:14 **The Word became flesh and made his dwelling** (i.e. tent, tabernacle) among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

The great promise by Jesus for this age involves both the Father and the Son dwelling with the one who loves and follows the Son.

*John 14:23 Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and **we will come to him and make our home with him.**"*

The Messianic Kingdom age still to come is again characterised with this thought... The King will be with His people!

*Zechariah 2:10-11 Shout and be glad, O Daughter of Zion. **For I am coming, and I will live among you, declares the LORD.** (11) Many nations will be joined with the LORD in that day and will become my people. I will live among you and you will know that the LORD Almighty has sent me to you.*

And let us not forget the wonderful promise of the eternal age, for it again focuses on this very thought (and gives a wonderful fulfillment in Revelation, the last book of the Bible, to the great desire seen and expressed in the very first book, Genesis.

*Revelation 21:3-4 And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "**Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,** (4) and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."*

With this in mind then, let's examine the detail of this great feast in more detail.

## **The Biblical commands concerning Tabernacles**

*Leviticus 23:33-44 The LORD said to Moses, (34) Say to the Israelites: 'On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the LORD's Feast of Tabernacles begins, and it lasts for seven days. (35) The first day is a sacred assembly; do no regular work. (36) For seven days present offerings made to the LORD by fire, and on the eighth day hold a sacred assembly and present an offering made to the LORD by fire. It is the closing assembly; do no regular work. (37) (" 'These are the LORD's appointed feasts, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies for bringing offerings made to the LORD by fire--the burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings required for each day. (38) These offerings are in addition to those for the LORD's Sabbaths and in addition to your gifts and whatever you have vowed and all the freewill offerings you give to the LORD.) (39) 'So beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to the LORD for seven days; the first day is a day of rest, and the eighth day also is a day of rest. (40) On the first day you are to take choice fruit from the trees, and palm fronds, leafy branches and poplars, and rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. (41) **Celebrate this as a festival to the LORD for seven days each year. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come; celebrate it in the seventh month. (42) Live in booths for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in booths (43) so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.'** " (44) So Moses announced to the Israelites the appointed feasts of the LORD.*

We see from the Biblical commands that this feast started on the 15th of Tishrei, five days after the day of Atonement. Tabernacles was to be a seven day feast and it is marked by celebration

and rejoicing. This aspect probably comes out better in another passage about this feast from the book of Deuteronomy:

*Deuteronomy 16:13-15 Celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days after you have gathered the produce of your threshing floor and your winepress. (14) Be joyful at your Feast--you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levites, the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns. (15) For seven days celebrate the Feast to the LORD your God at the place the LORD will choose. For the LORD your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete.*

Here we see that Israel was to rejoice in this feast as a celebration of the harvest that they had just brought in. They are instructed to 'be joyful' at this feast and that during this time their 'joy will be complete'. We see also from the Leviticus passage that during this time the Israelites were to live in booths (temporary shelters) as they remember their journey out of Egypt and the many years of living in these shelters in the Wilderness before coming into the Promised Land.

## Let's start with some names...

The feast of Tabernacles is known by a few different names which each add to the understanding of this feast.

**The feast of booths:** This emphasises the command to Israel to live in booths (Sukkah in Hebrew) during this festival to remember where they came from and to remember their exodus from Egypt. Symbolically, this speaks to Christians of their current journey through this world where we live in a temporary 'tabernacle' - this body. But just as Israel came into the Promised Land, we too will one day find ourselves clothed in a new body in the eternal New Jerusalem. Both the Paul and Peter spoke of our current 'tabernacle', our body, in these terms:

*2 Corinthians 5:1-4 Now we know that if the earthly tent ('tabernacle' in KJV) we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. (2) Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, (3) because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. (4) For while we are in this tent (tabernacle), we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.*

*2 Peter 1:13-15 I think it is right to refresh your memory **as long as I live in the tent of this body, (14) because I know that I will soon put it aside**, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. (15) And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.*

So as Christians we should always be mindful that our current body is only a temporary dwelling place, this life is not permanent and this world is not our home. Spiritually speaking, we are leaving Egypt and on a journey to the Promised Land.

**The feast of Ingathering:** As mentioned above, Tabernacles celebrates the gathering of the fall harvest (Exod 23:16). Hence its name, the feast of Ingathering. Prophetically this points to the time when the final harvest of souls has been made (which according to Jesus occurs 'at the end of the age' Matt 13:39) and the celebration can now begin in the Messianic Kingdom.

**The feast of Nations:** Because of the reference to all nations coming up to Jerusalem to observe the feast of Tabernacles in Zech 14:16-18, this feast is also called the feast of nations.

This is said to occur when the LORD Almighty is ruling on Earth following the great end-times battle over Jerusalem: *Zechariah 14:16 Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.* With this in mind it is also interesting that 70 bulls were to be sacrificed during the week long festival according to Numbers 29:12-34.<sup>1</sup> According to Jewish thought, this stands for the 70 Gentile nations that are mentioned in Genesis 10. So there has always been a connection between this feast and the Gentiles in Jewish thought and this will be fulfilled when the King reigns and all the nations go up to worship Him in Jerusalem.

**The feast of Dedication:** Because Solomon dedicated the first temple during the feast of Tabernacles (1 Kings 8), this feast also became known as the feast of Dedication. This is a type of the Messianic Temple that the Lord will build (Zech 6:12-13, Ezek 40-48) and will be present during the fulfillment of Tabernacles - the Messianic Kingdom.

## Two great Jewish ceremonies associated with Tabernacles

Each and every year during the feast of Tabernacles, the Jews perform two important ceremonies. The first is to do with water and the second to do with light. Let's look at the actual ceremonies themselves first before discussing how they find their fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ and in His coming Kingdom.

### Pouring out of Water

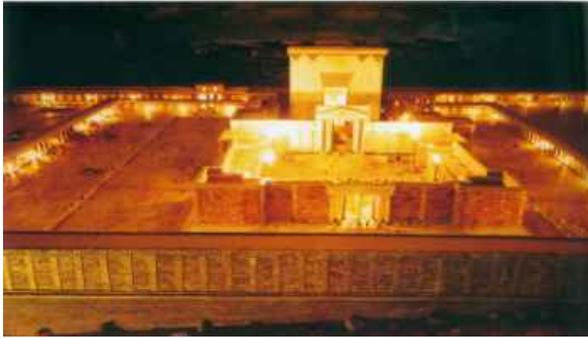


The first ceremony was called the 'pouring out of water' or the 'drawing out of water'.

Arnold Fructenbaum writes concerning this: *'In this ceremony, the priests marched from the Temple Mount down the Kidron valley to the pool of Siloam, where pitchers were filled with water. The priests marched back up the Temple Mount, singing the Psalms of Ascent, Psalms 120-134, as they ascended the fifteen steps into the Temple Compound. The priests then poured out the water into the large Laver in the Temple Compound. This was followed by great rejoicing. The Jewish rabbis said 'He who has not seen the rejoicing at the pouring out of the water has not seen rejoicing in all his life'. The rabbis interpreted the pouring out of the water as a symbol of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the whole nation of Israel in the last days.'*

The Jewish Talmud gives the reason why this was done: "Why is the name of it called the Drawing Out of Water? Because of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, according to what is said: 'With joy shall ye draw out of the wells of salvation' "(Isaiah 12:3).

## Festival of Lights



The second great ceremony was the 'festival of the lights'. Huge golden lampstands were setup in the Temple Compound and each was lit at sundown.

Chumney gives the following details concerning this: *'Four enormous golden candlesticks were set up on the court (50 cubits high) with four golden bowls placed upon them and four ladders resting against each candlestick. Four youths of priestly descent stood at the top of the ladders holding jars containing about 7.5 gallons of pure oil, which they poured for each bowl (Mishnah, Sukkah 5:2). The priests and Levites used their own worn-out liturgical clothing for wicks. The light emanating from the four candelabras was so bright that the Mishnah says in Sukkah 5:3 that there was no courtyard in Jerusalem [Yerushalayim] that was not lit up with the light of the libation water-well ceremony (Beit Hashoevah).'*

Because Jerusalem is upon a hill, and the whole city was lit up through the light of the great lamps, Jerusalem would literally shine out against the backdrop of a darkened night sky. This light, according to the Jewish rabbis, was symbolic of the God's Shekinah glory that was promised to return to Israel with the coming of the Messiah.

## The fulfillment of the two great Jewish ceremonies

So the two Jewish ceremonies associated with the feast of Tabernacles involve water and light. Water and light... Light and water... Ring any bells? With this background and Jewish custom before us it is interesting to see what Jesus said during the feast of Tabernacles. John chapter 7 through to 10:22 gives us the actions and words of Jesus during this feast. Now as a bit of further background you need to remember that God had commanded that all males were to go to Jerusalem on the feast of Tabernacles, along with Passover and Pentecost (Deut 16:16). So it is into this packed Jerusalem environment that Jesus begins to speak...

*John 7:37-39 On the last and greatest day of the Feast (Tabernacles), Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. (38) Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." (39) By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.*

Jesus could not have been clearer! With the backdrop of the pouring out of water ceremony fresh in the minds of Jerusalem's masses, Jesus spoke of the true fulfillment that is found in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit whom He would give to those who were thirsty. This was the real life giving water, and not just a symbolic ceremony. Of course such talk then, like now, caused great debate and division amongst the people. Could He be the Messiah? What was this living

water? No one had ever talked like this before. But Jesus wasn't finished yet for He again spoke out on this last day of the great feast.



*John 8:12 Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

Again, this makes more sense now does it not given the Jewish ceremony of the lights that took place during this time? Jesus was telling them that He is the fulfillment of this ceremony as well. He is the light... and not just of Jerusalem but of the whole world! This also caused great controversy with the Pharisees and some Jews who decided that Jesus must be demon possessed!<sup>2</sup> But the actual fact was that the One who is the fulfillment of all these feasts was right in their midst... but most, like today, didn't have eyes to see. This becomes even sadder when you realise what song the Jews would sing during this time. In the feast of Tabernacles, especially as they poured out the water, they would sing from Isaiah 12:

*Isaiah 12:2-3 Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation." (3) With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.*

The Hebrew for 'salvation' is 'Yeshua' - yes, that's right, the name of Jesus in Hebrew! So during this feast they would be singing 'The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and song, he has become my Yeshua. With joy you will draw water from the wells of Yeshua'. As they sung this, no wonder the Lord Jesus would stand and declare 'if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink!' At the time they couldn't see or understand what they were saying and singing... but the day is coming when their song, and this scripture, will be fulfilled. With joy they will draw water (Spirit) from the wells of Jesus, Yeshua the Messiah. They will see that the LORD has become my Jesus!

## **Water and light... Spirit and glory... the coming fulfillment**

As mentioned earlier, the Jewish Rabbis believed that the pouring out of the water was symbolic of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon Israel in the last days<sup>3</sup>. But what about light? Light is symbolic of truth, knowledge and understanding of God's ways and character. Even more than that, it is symbolic of the shekinah glory - the outward manifestation of the goodness, radiance and glory that is our God! All of these things give us a further glimpse into what the coming Kingdom age will be like. The Holy Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh (Joel 2:28, Ezek 39:29) which will come like the Autumn rains. The whole earth will be transformed in that day. Think again on the following scriptures that give us a glimpse of the good things to come when Jesus reigns:

*Zechariah 14:8-11 And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter. (9) And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one... People will live in it, and there will no longer be a curse, for Jerusalem will dwell in security.*

*Isaiah 11:9-10 They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea. (10) Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious.*

*Isaiah 60:18-20 No longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin or destruction within your borders, but you will call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise. (19) The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. (20) Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end.*

## The 8th day of a 7 day feast???

It is interesting that this feast also makes mention of an '8th' day. This is slightly odd for a 7 day feast wouldn't you say? Here is the passage:

*Leviticus 23:39 'So beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to the LORD for seven days; the first day is a day of rest, and the eighth day also is a day of rest.*

So why an 8th day in a 7 day feast? For the Jews this 8th day is celebrated as a separate festival called 'Shemini Atzeret' (the eighth day of assembly). Prophetically speaking we need to quickly look at the numbers used. 7 is God's perfect number. It is His seal. The 7 day feast of Tabernacles, as discussed, will be fulfilled in the 1000 year reign of Jesus Christ which will fulfill the 7000 year plan of God. But there is an 8th day! 8 in the Bible speaks of resurrection or new life. So even in this feast there is a clue that there is something AFTER the Messianic Kingdom. Even after this wonderful time there is still a new start... a new beginning. We don't have to speculate what this is for scripture clearly tells us. It begins with a declaration of God:

*Revelation 21:5-6 And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He \*said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." (6) Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.*

So even after the Messianic Kingdom there is a new beginning... There is a new heaven and a new earth created by our God:

*Revelation 21:1-3 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. (2) And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. (3) And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,*

## The Personal Significance

Before we close, let me just add a few words on the personal significance of this feast for today. As discussed, the ultimate fulfillment of this feast is found on the kingdom age when

Jesus rules and reigns on this earth from Jerusalem. It will be a time of rest, joy and fellowship with Jesus Christ. On a personal level, the feast of Tabernacles reminds us of these same things that ours in Christ today. There is a rest today. There is a joy in Christ today. There is fellowship with God through Jesus today! Take the issue of the rest. During the period of the law this rest came one day a week on the seventh day. During the kingdom the whole planet will experience rest as the lamb will lie down with the lion and nation will not take up sword against nation any longer. But what about today? Never forget that there is rest today! In fact God specifically tells us to be careful that we enter this rest, 'Today'.

*Hebrews 4:7-11 Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." (8) For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. (9) There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; (10) for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. (11) **Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.***

The same can be said of joy and fellowship. Christians should have tremendous hope for the future but don't fall short on that which can be ours today as well. Concerning joy and fellowship the following scriptures are useful to remember:

*Romans 14:17 The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

*Philippians 2:1-2 Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, (2) make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.*

## Conclusion

The feast of Tabernacles is about joy and specifically rejoicing at the great harvest that had come in. And oh what a day it will be when the ultimate fulfillment of this feast begins! It will be joy unlimited amongst the full body of believers! As we have seen, it is a feast that fulfills the desire and promises of God to tabernacle with His people that is seen from the first book of the Bible to the last. It is a feast that will see the fulfillment of 'light' and 'water' as the Holy Spirit is poured out in abundance and the glory of God is manifest throughout the earth.

Let me close with a scripture from the Prophet Isaiah that speaks about this coming day. The veil of spiritual blindness that covers the nations will be removed. The tears that characterise this age for many will be replaced with joy... and best of all, the One we have been waiting for will be seen!

*Isaiah 25:6-9 The LORD of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on this mountain; A banquet of aged wine, choice pieces with marrow, And refined, aged wine. (7) And on this mountain (Zion) He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples, Even the veil which is stretched over all nations. (8) He will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord GOD will wipe tears away from all faces, And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken. (9) And it will be said in that day, "Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation."*

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1. Chumney writes: 'Another fascinating thing about the sacrifices during Sukkot (Tabernacles) is that when the offerings are grouped or counted, their number always remains divisible by seven. During the week, there are 182 sacrifices (70 bullocks, 14 rams, and 98 lambs; 7 divides into 182 exactly 26 times). Add to this the meal offerings, 336 tenths of ephahs of flour (48 x 7) (Numbers [Bamidbar ] 29:12-40). It is no coincidence that this seven-day holiday, which takes place at the height of the seventh month, had the perfect number, seven, imprinted on its sacrifices.' ↵
2. It is interesting when you follow the whole story through in John chapters 7-10. There is controversy on each statement made by Jesus - especially to do with being the light of the world and being the One who can give the living water. So what does Jesus do? He proves it! In John chapter 9 He declares again that He is the light of the world (John 9:5) and proves it by healing a man born blind! And how does He heal this man? He gets the man to wash in the pool of Siloam, the very place that the Jews went to get the water for their ceremony. Thus Jesus showed, through this miracle, that He truly is the One who gives light to the blind through the living water! And it is interesting to note that all this occurred during the feast of Tabernacles because it is a glimpse into the future, during His kingdom reign, when the blind will see and the Spirit will be poured out for the blessing of all. ↵
3. Which is fair enough as the Bible does consistently contrast water with the Holy Spirit. The reason being is that as mankind cannot live physically without water, so we cannot live spiritually without the Holy Spirit. Some examples are: Isaiah 44:3, John 4:14, John 7:37-39, 1 Cor 12:13 ↵