

Feast of Tabernacles



In the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath. And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month. Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: Leviticus 23:39-42

Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine: And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates. Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD shall choose: because the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice. Deuteronomy 16:13-15

In the seventh month came the Feast of Tabernacles, or of ingathering. This feast acknowledged God's bounty in the products of the orchard, the olive grove, and the vineyard. It was the crowning festal gathering of the year. The land had yielded its increase, the harvests had been gathered into the granaries, the fruits, the oil, and the wine had been stored, the first fruits had been reserved, and now the people came with their tributes of thanksgiving to God, who had thus richly blessed them.

This feast was to be pre-eminently an occasion of rejoicing. It occurred just after the great Day of Atonement, when the assurance had been given that their iniquity should be remembered no more. At peace with God, they now came before Him to acknowledge His goodness and to praise Him for His mercy. The labors of the harvest being ended, and the toils of the new year not yet begun, the people were free from care, and could give themselves up to the sacred, joyous influences of the hour. Though only the fathers and sons were commanded to appear at the feasts, yet, so far as possible, all the household were to attend them, and to their hospitality the servants, the Levites, the stranger, and the poor were made welcome.

Like the Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles was commemorative. In memory of their pilgrim life in the wilderness the people were now to leave their houses and dwell in booths, or arbors, formed from the green branches "of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook." Leviticus 23:40, 42, 43.

The first day was a holy convocation, and to the seven days of the feast an eighth day was added, which was observed in like manner.

At these yearly assemblies the hearts of old and young would be encouraged in the service of God, while the association of the people from the different quarters of the land would strengthen the ties that bound them to God and to one another. Well would it be for the people of God at the present time to have a Feast of Tabernacles—a joyous commemoration of the blessings of God to them. As the children of Israel celebrated the deliverance that God had wrought for their fathers, and His miraculous preservation of them during their journeyings from Egypt, so should we gratefully call to mind the various ways He has devised for bringing us out from the world, and from the darkness of error, into the precious light of His grace and truth.

The Feast of Tabernacles was not only commemorative but typical. It not only pointed back to the wilderness sojourn, but, as the feast of harvest, it celebrated the ingathering of the fruits of the earth, and pointed forward to the great day of final ingathering, when the Lord of the harvest shall send forth His reapers to gather the tares together in bundles for the fire, and to gather the wheat into His garner. At that time the wicked will all be destroyed. They will become “as though they had not been.” Obadiah 16. And every voice in the whole universe will unite in joyful praise to God. Says the revelator, “Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.” Revelation 5:13.

The people of Israel praised God at the Feast of Tabernacles, as they called to mind His mercy in their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt and His tender care for them during their pilgrim life in the wilderness. They rejoiced also in the consciousness of pardon and acceptance, through the service of the day of atonement, just ended. But when the ransomed of the Lord shall have been safely gathered into the heavenly Canaan, forever delivered from the bondage of the curse, under which “the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Romans 8:22), they will rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Christ’s great work of atonement for men will then have been completed, and their sins will have been forever blotted out.⁴⁹

At the Feast of Tabernacles, the most impressive ceremony, one that called forth greatest rejoicing, was one commemorating an event in the wilderness sojourn. At the first dawn of day the priest, in a most imposing manner, dipped from the flowing waters of the Kedron a flagon of water, and, lifting it on high in the presence of the people, ascended the broad steps of the temple and entered the court of the priests, where he poured the water out before the altar.

In the last year of His ministry Christ witnessed this ceremony commemorating the smiting of the rock in the wilderness. That rock was a symbol of Him who by His death would cause living streams to flow to all who are athirst. There in the presence of the assembled multitude He set Himself apart to be smitten, that the water of life might flow to the world. He declared that He was the living Rock, of whom the rock in the wilderness was a symbol.

Not long since, Christ had pointed a Samaritan to the water of life. “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give Him,” He had said, “shall never thirst.” But now it was not merely one whom He was inviting. The temple courts were crowded as Jesus suddenly lifted up His voice on “that great day of the feast,” and said: “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”

The condition of the people made this appeal very forcible. Many of those who heard Jesus were mourners over disappointed hopes; many were crushed and trembling in spirit; many were seeking to satisfy their restless longing with the things of the world and the praise of men; but when all was gained, they found that they had toiled only to reach a broken cistern, from which they could not quench their thirst.

Christ could read the hearts of those before Him. He knew that notwithstanding the apparent joy of the throng, there had been nothing in the round of ceremonies to meet the want of the soul, nothing to satisfy its thirst for that which perishes not. He knew that many parched souls panted for something more satisfactory. The people were in need of spiritual food and drink.⁵⁰

Which month and day was the Feast of Tabernacles to be celebrated?
Leviticus 23:34

What was this Feast to remind the people of?
Leviticus 23:43

It seems that God wanted His people to think back on their experience of living in temporary dwellings while looking forward to finally settling down in more permanent homes in Canaan. Their ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not have permanent homes. What did they confess about their living situation?
Hebrews 11:13

They considered themselves foreigners and travelers in this life. What did they desire?
Hebrews 11:16

Do you desire the better country that God has prepared for His people? It is good for us to think of our life on this earth as only temporary and certainly not the best. What God has prepared for us in the future is infinitely better than anything we have here.

Who was observing the Feasts before Mount Sinai?
Psalm 81:2-8

The blowing of the trumpets here referred to is probably a reference to the Feast of Trumpets on the New Moon of the seventh month, and the “time appointed” or “solemn feast” refers to the Feast of Tabernacles two weeks later. According to the writer of this Psalm, these were taught by Joseph in the land of Egypt and it was a law of Jacob. Apparently, God had already given these Feasts in the early days of the patriarchs or Joseph could not have known about them in Egypt.

This is verified by a number of translations.

Let the horn be sounded in the time of the new moon, at the full moon, on our holy feast-day: For this is a rule for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob. He gave it to Joseph as a witness, when he went out over the land of Egypt; then the words of a strange tongue were sounding in my ears. Psalm 81:3-5 (The Bible in Basic English)

Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, at the full moon, on our solemn feast day. For it is a statute for Israel, an ordinance of the God of Jacob. He appointed it in Joseph for testimony, when he went out over the land of Egypt: where I heard a language that I knew not. Psalm 81:3-5 (Revised Version)

In the New Moon blow the trumpet, in our feast of leaf huts, since such is the way in Israel and a law of the God of Jacob; he has given such as a testimony under Joseph, when he went out over the land of Egypt and had heard foreign language, Psalm 81:3-5 (German Luther Bible, literal translation to English)

The Feast of Tabernacles is a symbolic celebration that looks forward to Jesus' second coming when He will take His people to their new, permanent home with Him. We will truly celebrate when our earthly wanderings are over, when we are finished dwelling in these temporary booths of our mortal human bodies.

What does Paul tell us will happen to these bodies and when does it happen?
1 Corinthians 15:51-55

When does this “last trump” sound?
Matthew 24:30, 31

Describe this event in your own words based on these verses.
1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

Don't you want to be caught up to be with our Lord at His second coming and be a part of that great Tabernacle Feast in Heaven? What a celebration that will be!

A fear of making the future inheritance seem too material has led many to spiritualize away the very truths which lead us to look upon it as our home. Christ assured His disciples that He went to prepare mansions for them in the Father's house. Those who accept the teachings of God's word will not be wholly ignorant concerning the heavenly abode. And yet, "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." 1 Corinthians 2:9. Human language is inadequate to describe the reward of the righteous. It will be known only to those who behold it. No finite mind can comprehend the glory of the Paradise of God.

In the Bible the inheritance of the saved is called "a country." Hebrews 11:14-16. There the heavenly Shepherd leads His flock to fountains of living waters. The tree of life yields its fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree are for the service of the nations. There are ever-flowing streams, clear as crystal, and beside them waving trees cast their shadows upon the paths prepared for the ransomed of the Lord. There the wide-spreading plains swell into hills of beauty, and the mountains of God rear their lofty summits. On those peaceful plains, beside those living streams, God's people, so long pilgrims and wanderers, shall find a home.

"My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise." "They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: ... Mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands." Isaiah 32:18; 60:18; Isaiah 65:21, 22.

There, "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose." "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree." "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; ... and a little child shall lead them." "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain," saith the Lord. Isaiah 35:1; 55:13; Isaiah 11:6, 9.

Pain cannot exist in the atmosphere of heaven. There will be no more tears, no funeral trains, no badges of mourning. "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying: ... for the former things are passed away." "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." Revelation 21:4; Isaiah 33:24.

There is the New Jerusalem, the metropolis of the glorified new earth, "a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God." "Her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." "The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it." Saith the Lord: "I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people." "The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." Isaiah 62:3; Revelation 21:11, 24; Isaiah 65:19; Revelation 21:3.

In the City of God "there shall be no night." None will need or desire repose. There will be no weariness in doing the will of God and offering praise to His name. We shall ever feel the freshness of the morning and shall ever be far from its close. "And they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light." Revelation 22:5. The light of the sun will be superseded by a radiance which is not painfully dazzling, yet which immeasurably surpasses the brightness of our noontide. The glory of God and the Lamb floods the Holy City with unfading light. The redeemed walk in the sunless glory of perpetual day.

"I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." Revelation 21:22. The people of God are privileged to hold open communion with the Father and the Son. "Now we see through a glass, darkly." 1 Corinthians 13:12. We behold the image of God reflected, as in a mirror, in the works of nature and in His dealings with men; but then we shall see Him face to face, without a dimming veil between. We shall stand in His presence and behold the glory of His countenance.

There the redeemed shall know, even as also they are known. The loves and sympathies which God Himself has planted in the soul shall there find truest and sweetest exercise. The pure communion with holy beings, the harmonious social life with the blessed angels and with the faithful ones of all ages who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, the sacred ties that bind together “the whole family in heaven and earth” (Ephesians 3:15)—these help to constitute the happiness of the redeemed.

There, immortal minds will contemplate with never-failing delight the wonders of creative power, the mysteries of redeeming love. There will be no cruel, deceiving foe to tempt to forgetfulness of God. Every faculty will be developed, every capacity increased. The acquirement of knowledge will not weary the mind or exhaust the energies. There the grandest enterprises may be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations reached, the highest ambitions realized; and still there will arise new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of mind and soul and body.

All the treasures of the universe will be open to the study of God’s redeemed. Unfettered by mortality, they wing their tireless flight to worlds afar—worlds that thrilled with sorrow at the spectacle of human woe and rang with songs of gladness at the tidings of a ransomed soul. With unutterable delight the children of earth enter into the joy and the wisdom of unfallen beings. They share the treasures of knowledge and understanding gained through ages upon ages in contemplation of God’s handiwork. With undimmed vision they gaze upon the glory of creation—suns and stars and systems, all in their appointed order circling the throne of Deity. Upon all things, from the least to the greatest, the Creator’s name is written, and in all are the riches of His power displayed.

And the years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character. As Jesus opens before them the riches of redemption and the amazing achievements in the great controversy with Satan, the hearts of the ransomed thrill with more fervent devotion, and with more rapturous joy they sweep the harps of gold; and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of voices unite to swell the mighty chorus of praise.

“And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” Revelation 5:13.

The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.⁵¹