

Feast of Tabernacles: Camping That Makes You Rejoice

The barley & wheat grains would have been harvested in the spring, by the 7th month or Tishri, the harvest cycle would end.

The Bible's harvest cycle program reminds me that God's church also has a harvest cycle. Our "friendship evangelism", various seminars, and personal ministries outreach programs are all designed to prepare us for reaping. When the work is eventually finished – the gospel to the world as a witness - and Christ returns, we will also tabernacle with God.

["It was God's design that at this time the people should reflect on His goodness and mercy. The whole land had been under His guidance, receiving His blessing. Day and night His watchcare had continued. The sun and rain had caused the earth to produce her fruits. From the valleys and plains of Palestine the harvest had been gathered. The olive berries had been picked, and the precious oil stored in bottles. The palm had yielded her store. The purple clusters of the vine had been trodden in the wine press."](#) **DA 447.2**

And it was almost the end of the feasts. For 10 days, from the first shofar blowing to start the Feast of Trumpets, Israel had been soul searching, repenting, and fasting before the Lord. They had been cleansed, judged, and vindicated on that most solemn of all feast days – the Day of Atonement. While any who had refused had been cut off.

Now, 5 days after the Day of Judgment and vindication, it was a time to rejoice – it was the Feast of Tabernacles; also called the Feast of Booths.

Tabernacle: kukkah {sook-kaw'} **Meaning:** thicket, covering, booth – a rude or temporary shelter.

Israel would spend the next 7 days rejoicing and "camping" with God.

It was a harvest Festival that was also called the Feast of Ingathering in **Exodus 23:16** "[the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field.](#)"

This was the last of the 3 feasts the males were required to attend, **Deuteronomy 16:16** "[Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed.](#)

Lets look at **Leviticus 23:33-44** to learn more about this final feast.

How it was celebrated:

Vs 33-36 On the 15th day of the seventh month this Feast began with a ritual sabbath and ended 8 days later with another ritual sabbath. But even though these were ritual sabbaths, God expected them to be treated with the same holiness and reverence as His seventh day Sabbath. While it was a day of spiritual joy, it was not a day to be buying or selling. It was a day to seek God's pleasure, not seeking their own (**Isaiah 58:13**).

Vs 37-38 During the festival, there were various sacrifices, offerings and gifts to the Lord. From far and near the people came, bringing a token of rejoicing in their hands. Old and young, rich and poor, everyone brought a gift as a tribute of thanksgiving to God who had blessed their year with His goodness, providence, mercy, and protection.

During the feast, the priest would take water from the Kidron river, mix it with fresh grape juice and then pour it out at the base of the temple altar where it flowed by a special pipe back to the river and ultimately to the sea. This was to commemorate how God had provided them water when Moses struck the rock.

Water and wine, are a fitting symbol for when Jesus, the true Rock was struck and pierced and water and blood flowed from the wound in His side. Because of His sacrifice, living streams of water would flow to all the world. God's salvation would be carried and witnessed to them by His people.

The book **Desire of Ages (DA)** says that Jesus attended this feast and taught the people, it was on the last day, after the priest had just poured out the water and wine, that Jesus stood up in the temple.

John records it this way in **John 7:37-39**, [“Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” ³⁹ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”](#)

Vs 39-40 They were instructed to take fruit, and palm fronds, tree boughs, and to build “tents” or “booths” (temporary shelters). Imagine seeing all those temporary shelters dotting the countryside. As they camped, they rejoiced as they reflected on God's goodness and mercy to them.

Illus: One outdoor tent camping experience I remember, I was perhaps 5/6 years old (?). It was the 4th of July weekend. My dad had bought me an orange 2-man pup tent, which we set up in the back yard, and I slept in my sleeping bag. Some time during the night, my dad came out to the tent, woke me up, and tossed me something. I was quite sleepy and thought it was a candy-bar. I spent some time trying to open the wrapper up with my teeth, biting off bits and pieces, but finally gave up and went back to sleep. In the morning, I discovered I had been chewing on a pack of firecrackers!

Ancient Israel had something much more enjoyable to “chew on” Every 7th year at the Feast of Booths, they read the Law.

Vs 41-43 tells us **What it meant to Ancient Israel (and it's lessons for us)**

This ancient feast pointed their thoughts forward as well as back, as it should ours. This feast pointed forward to the great day of

final ingathering, when the Lord of the harvest shall send forth His angel reapers to gather the tares (the lost) together in bundles for the fire, and to gather the wheat (the saved) into His garner.

But it also pointed their thoughts back to their history. They built simple booths to commemorate that after God had delivered them from Egyptian bondage they had lived in tents as they wandered in the wilderness.

“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.” **Patriarchs and Prophets (PP) 540.4**

But they hadn't wandered alone. God was with them in the cloud by day and fire by night. He provided water and manna. Their clothes and sandals never wore out (**Deuteronomy 29:5; 8:4**).

Illus: Its hard to imagine someone who doesn't like camping... well, except for some of my sisters.....

There is so much fun: the fellowship, the food, even the “trials of the moment” become memories to rejoice over.

One of my church school teachers took some of us 7th grade boys camping near his home. It was late fall, and it poured as soon as we started setting up camp. It was a cold soaking rain. We ended up running in the dark the mile or two back to his house and “camped” in his basement, his wife cooked us a hot breakfast and cocoa and dried our clothes.

The next summer, he took us on an overnight canoe trip down the Muskegon river. We were going to sleep under the stars so we didn't take tents, but it started raining while we slept, so we slept on the ground under a tarp. Those are great memories!

There were actually some campouts without rain... it doesn't (normally) rain in winter, and snow is normally dry ☺

My wife and I spent our first vacation tent camping in the UP.

And who doesn't enjoy the fun to be had at Adventurer Family Campout!

How this final feast is fulfilled in Christ, and what it means for us today?

We have spent some time looking at each of the feasts, what they meant, how they meet their fulfillment in Christ.

I'm so glad the feasts are fulfilled in Christ, and that they were nailed to the cross along with all the ritual law. But we've also learned that all the feasts still have lessons and meaning for us today.

Jesus is our Passover, if we accept Him we are safe because we are covered by His blood.

Jesus is our Unleavened Bread. Like Jesus, we need to make sure we enter God's seventh day Sabbath rest as well as entering His

salvation rest by seeking His pleasure not our own, and keeping the day holy. We enter His Salvation rest when we rely on His works, not ours, and follow His will, not our own.

Jesus is our wavesheaf, our firstfruits. In Him we have hope in resurrection morning, that live or die we will eventually be among the harvest presented to the Father.

Jesus still wants to pour out the Holy Spirit upon His people – the latter rain, to finish the work. We have hope in the success of the gospel commission - our mission that began with the trumpet blast of the Millerites and continued with the early Advent believers, a full gospel message that includes the news that Jesus is coming again soon.

Its time to prepare by humbling our hearts, and repenting of sin, letting the Spirit sanctify us with new hearts and minds, because we love Jesus and we are living in that final time period of atonement when we are being judged. And if, with a contrite, humble, and repentant heart, we allow Jesus to forgive and cleanse us, we will also be vindicated.

Jesus can and does dwell, abide, in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. If we accept Christ, we will eventually dwell (tabernacle) with Him for eternity. He will dwell with us literally when He returns to take us to heaven.

Here is a lovely thought about that last ancient feast from the book **Patriarchs and Prophets (PP) 540.6**, [“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 author was not saying to keep the literal ritual feast including its sacrifices, rather, that we should gather for special times to celebrate God and His goodness and mercy to us. That sounds like it could include camp meeting doesn't it? And even Prayer Meeting and the praise and testimony time of the Sabbath worship service.

[“We sustain a loss when we neglect the privilege of associating together to strengthen and encourage one another in the service of God.” PP 541.1](#)

We can and should rejoice that the kingdom of God begins in our hearts, when we abide with Christ. But there is something better still to come. You can talk to someone you love over the phone, you can email, fb, twitter, face-time or skype. But nothing is ever as good as being with them in person.

The Feast of Tabernacles is the only one of the seven ancient ritual feasts yet to meet its antitypical fulfillment; It will soon.

Revelation 8:1 [“When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.”](#)

½ hour of prophetic time = about 1 literal week.

Jesus is coming soon, after the harvest is finished, and the saved will spend seven days, “camping”, dwelling, with God as we travel through the universe to our homes, our mansions, in heaven ([John 14:1-3](#)). And then we get to dwell with Him for eternity!

At the end of every seven years, during that seventh year, there was no sowing, there was no harvest, there was time spent in spiritual fellowship and renewal, reading, contemplating, understanding God’s law.

In heaven, we shall forever be studying the grand theme of salvation, and rejoicing, because we will tabernacle with Jesus, the Bread of Life, the Water of Life, the Lamb of God, our Advocate, our Judge, our Creator and Redeemer!

Deuteronomy 31:10-13 [“At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, ¹¹ when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. ¹² Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the Lord your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, ¹³ and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess.”](#)

Hebrews 3:13-15 [“exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴ For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, ¹⁵ while it is said: “Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”](#)

Dear friend, will you make the decisions that will allow God to dwell in your heart and orchestrate your life so that you will dwell with Him throughout eternity to come!