

Tabernacles

Introduction

Psalm 91:1-2

He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

²I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my
fortress;

My God, in Him I will trust."

These verses capture the essence of Sukkot or the
Feast of Tabernacles.

Tabernacles

Tabernacles was the last in the series of God ordained festivals given to Israel in
Leviticus 23:33-43

Leviticus 23:29-43

“Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the Lord *for* seven days; on the first day *there shall be* a sabbath-rest, and on the eighth day a sabbath-rest. ⁴⁰ And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days. ⁴¹ You shall keep it as a feast to the Lord for seven days in the year. *It shall be* a statute forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month. ⁴² You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, ⁴³ that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I *am* the Lord your God.”

Tabernacles

Tabernacles was a joyful holiday filled with celebration. It was the feast of ingathering because it was at the end of the harvest season when God’s goodness and provision were clearly seen. It was also **commemorative** as it looked back to the time when the children of Israel dwelt in temporary shelters or booths as God led them through the wilderness and provided for their every need.

The festival also has a **prophetic** aspect. One day, during the reign of Messiah, the glory of God representing the presence of God will again dwell with Israel as it once did in the wilderness.

Tabernacles

Tabernacles was observed at the dedication of the Temple in the days of Solomon (1 Kings 8). Jeroboam set up a counterfeit Feast of Tabernacles (1 Kings 12). Ezra celebrated Tabernacles in the first year of the return from Babylon (Ezra 3:4). It was also celebrated by Nehemiah which was the first time they celebrated the feast by living in booths since the days of Joshua (Nehemiah 8:13-18). Jesus also celebrated Tabernacles.

Tabernacles

Numbers 29:12-39 outlines the number of animals to be offered as sacrifices during the seven days of Tabernacles. Work was prohibited on certain days as they were Sabbaths. The people were to build temporary shelters or booths using four species of foliage, citrus, myrtle, willow, and palm. The feast was to be marked by spending the days of rejoicing.

Tabernacles

Later two man-made customs were added.

The first, which is no longer observed was the rite of water libation. It was a key element in the days of Jesus. Every day the priest would walk up the ramp leading to the bronze altar with jug full of water from the pool of Siloam. The pouring out of this water represent the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which was to take place during the days of Messiah, the descendent of King David.

The second was the waving of palm branches which is still performed. They would cry out "Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord."

Tabernacles

Living in booths, was a time of looking back and forward to God's glory overshadowing Israel. God glory was referred to as the Shekinah or clouds of glory. It was a picture of the pillar of smoke and fire that led Israel through the wilderness. It was a continual reminder of God's presence. That glory left the temple during the days of Ezekiel. In celebrating Tabernacles, the people looked forward to the return of God's presence and glory.

Tabernacles and Jesus

You can understand the disciples reaction on the Mount of Transfiguration when Jesus allowed His glory to shine. Peter, James, and John immediately thought of Tabernacles when God's glory would return. This is why they desired to make booths (Luke 9:27-36). John would later write:

John 1:14

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Tabernacles and Jesus

Jesus fulfilled the Law and went to Jerusalem to celebrate Tabernacles.

John 7:37-38

On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

Tabernacles and Jesus

Remember that the waters represented God's Spirit. The priest would pour the water on the Altar and the people would look forward to the time God would pour out His Spirit on the people. Jesus was making a public claim that He was the Messiah. If people would believe in Him, He would give them the Spirit, not in part, but like a mighty river.

The people understood what He was saying.

John 7:39-41

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. ⁴⁰ Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, "Truly this is the Prophet." ⁴¹ Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Will the Christ come out of Galilee?"

Tabernacles and Jesus

Another incident was during Jesus' Triumphal Entry. This highlights the messianic foundation of the Feast of Tabernacles. As Jesus approached Jerusalem, the crowds responded to Jesus as if it were Tabernacles. The people were looking forward to the Kingdom blessings that would be brought by Messiah and were exemplified by Tabernacles.

The people longed for Messiah, the Son of David to deliver them and restore Israel to a place of prominence. The people cried out, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the Highest!" The word Hosanna means, "God save us." Calling Him the Son of David was a recognition that Jesus was the Messiah.

Tabernacles in the Future

Images of Tabernacles are described in Revelation.

Revelation 7:9-17

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with **palm branches in their hands**, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation *belongs* to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" ¹¹ All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, *Be* to our God forever and ever. Amen."

¹³ Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?"

¹⁴ And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. ¹⁶ **They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat;** ¹⁷ **for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.**"

Tabernacles in the Future

Tabernacles will be celebrated during the millennial reign of Messiah:

Zechariah 14:16-19

And it shall come to pass *that* everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. ¹⁷ And it shall be *that* whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, on them there will be no rain. ¹⁸ If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they *shall have* no *rain*; they shall receive the plague with which the Lord strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. ¹⁹ This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

So What ...

Tabernacles looks forward to dwelling in God's presence and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Do you long for these things?

Jesus is coming again! Are you ready?