

# THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

Text: Leviticus 23:33-44

## Introduction:

1. The feasts commanded by God were physical observances that had mental and emotional benefits.
2. Of course, they also taught important spiritual lessons.
3. The Spring Feasts included Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Firstfruits, and the Feast of Pentecost.
4. Though not actual feasts, the Sabbath Year and the Year of Jubilee were also important events in the history of God's people.
5. The Autumn Feasts began with the Feast of Trumpets – Rosh Hashana – celebrating the New Year, followed 10 days later by the Day of Atonement.
6. Five days later, the week-long Feast of Tabernacles began...

## I. Instruction for the Feast (Leviticus 23:33-44)

- A. The Feast of Tabernacles began on the fifteenth day of the seventh month and lasted for one week.
- B. There was to be a holy gathering on the first day (15<sup>th</sup>) and on the eighth day (22<sup>nd</sup>) in which no work was to be done.
- C. During this week, the children of Israel were to dwell in booths or tabernacles (*sukkah*).
  1. Generally, these were made as a three-sided structure covered by branches of trees (usually lemon, myrtle, willow, and palm) [cf. Nehemiah 8:14-17].
  2. They would eat their meals in the tents during the day and sleep in them at night.
  3. This required a journey to and a stay at Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 16:16-17).
- D. Because of this, the feast was sometimes known as Sukkot or Sukkoth.
- E. It was designed to remind the Israelites of their ancestors' journey in the wilderness when they dwelt in tents.
- F. This feast was also a celebration of the autumn harvest, including provision for the poor and strangers (Deuteronomy 16:13-15).
  1. It was also known as the Feast of Ingathering (Exodus 23:16).
  2. Sometimes it was called the Feast of Booths.
  3. Because it was the most joyous of the feasts the Talmud refers to it simply as "The Feast."

## II. Procedure of the Feast (Numbers 29:12-40)

- A. Each day of the feast, bullocks, rams, lambs, and a goat were to be offered as a sacrifice to God.

## Bible Feasts

1. The number of rams was two each day.
  2. The number of lambs was fourteen each day.
  3. The number of goats was one each day.
  4. The number of bullocks was thirteen on the first day, diminishing by one each day until seven were offered on the seventh day.
  5. On the eighth day, an additional offering was made of one bull-ock, one ram, one goat, and seven lambs.
  6. In total, 199 animals were sacrificed during the Feast of Taber-nacles.
- B. Traditionally, when the booths were built, the branches would be ar-ranged in such a way that the stars were visible at night.
1. This was a reminder of the journey in the wilderness.
  2. This was a reminder of God's power and provision.
- C. The daily reading of Scripture was an important part of this feast (Ne-hemiah 8:18).
- D. In light of this celebration of harvest, consider Jonah's building a booth outside of Nineveh (Jonah 4:5).
- E. This feast is used symbolically to represent worship and gratitude to God for atonement from sin in the Christian Age (Zechariah 14:16-19).
- F. Later traditions also developed surrounding this feast in anticipation of the coming Messiah.
1. The people would march around the Temple carrying torches that were then placed along its walls.
  2. This symbolized the Messiah bringing light to the Gentiles (Isai-ah 49:6).
  3. A priest would carry water from the Pool of Siloam to the Tem-ple, symbolizing the Messiah being known "as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9).
  4. Jesus celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2-8, 14).
  5. On this occasion He announced: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37-39).
  6. The next morning, He declared: "I am the light of the world" (John 8:2, 12).
  7. Jesus was openly declaring Himself to be the Messiah!
- III. The Message of the Feast
- A. God is sufficient. He is powerful enough to protect and provide (Deu-teronomy 8:2-4; Nehemiah 9:18-21).
- B. God is faithful. He keeps His promises of harvest, both physically and spiritually.
- C. God is joyful. He allows man to celebrate his blessings, even among dif-ficulties.