

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

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This is a simple study of prophetic (new covenant) applications of the Feast of Tabernacles. This feast is the last of the seven holy convocations in the Jewish calendar and the third of the three one-week gatherings each year. It is held five days after Yom Kippur for seven days. Instructions for the Feast of Tabernacles were given to God's people in Leviticus 23, Numbers 29, and Deuteronomy 15 and 16. We see it observed in II Chronicles 5-7, at the dedication of the temple; in Ezra 3, at the rebuilding of the altar; and in Nehemiah 8, at the completion of the rebuilding of the wall. Jesus was in Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles and stood up on the last day, that great day of the Feast, and cried out saying, "If anyone thirsts let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." (John 7:37,38) Perhaps one of the most compelling reasons to "practice" observing the Feast is stated in 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. 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 will be no rain. 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. 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.

Let us begin here:

I. The Promise of Water

- A. In the new millennium rain will be withheld due to failure to come and worship. Zechariah 14:16-19
- B. Jesus promised rivers of living water (the Holy Spirit) to those who come to Him, thirsty, believing. John 7:37-39
- C. "I will pour water on him who is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground." Isaiah 44:3

II. Covenant of Sacrifice

- A. "For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to Lord. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord. It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it." Leviticus 23:36
- B. "Gather My saints together to Me, thou who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." Psalm 50:5
- C. "Sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name." Hebrews 13:15

III. Praise with Banners

- A. "And you shall take for yourselves on the first day of 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." Leviticus 23:40
- B. 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, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" Revelation 7:9,10
- C. The Feast of Tabernacles included dwelling in booths so that each generation would know that God caused Israel to dwell in booths (tents) when He brought them out of the land of Egypt. (Leviticus 23:42,43). But it also appears that branches, like our flags, were waved in rejoicing before the Lord. If this is the case, could this have been part of the palm branch reception (what we now refer to as "Palm Sunday") which Jesus received in Jerusalem when the crowd quoted Psalm 118:25-26?
- D. Psalm 113 through 118 are read and/or sung during the Feast.

IV. Release of Debts

A. A year of release of all debts – forgiveness.

- 1) *“At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release of debts. And this is the form of the release: Every creditor who has lent anything to his neighbor shall release it; he shall not require it of his neighbor or his brother, because it is call the Lord’s release”.* Deuteronomy 15:1,2
- 2) *And Moses commanded them, saying: “At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles,”* Deuteronomy 31:10

V. The Promise of the Word

A. During the Feast, the Word of God was read and gave understanding to the people.

- 1) *And Moses commanded them, saying “At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, 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. Gather the people together, me 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 works of this law, 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.”* Deuteronomy 31:10-13
- 2) *Also day by day, from the first day until the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day there was a sacred assembly, according to the prescribed manner.* Nehemiah 8:17,18

B. Faith was given and joy came through the delivery of the Word.

- 1) *So the Levities quieted all the people, saying, “Be still, for the day is holy; do not grieved.” And all the people went their way to eat and drink, to send portions and rejoice greatly, because they understood the words that were declared to them.* Nehemiah 8:11,12

VI. A Time of Great Gladness

A. *...and there was very great gladness.* Nehemiah 8:17

B. *...he [Solomon] sent the people away to their tents, joyful and glad of heart for the goodness that the Lord had done...* II Chronicles 7:10

VII. A Time of Giving

A. *“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 the Weeks, and at the Feast of the Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the lord empty-handed”.* Deuteronomy 16:16,17:

B. *Then he said to them, “Go your way, eat, the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”* Nehemiah 8:10-12

Summary:

As we come together *“to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles”* (Zechariah 14:16b), there is prophetic promise of Holy Spirit rain, and rivers of living water. We are to bring the sacrifice of praise, and give, as we are able according to the blessing of the Lord. There will be times of rejoicing and gladness, and waving our banners (palm branches), as we declare, *“Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”* (Matthew 21:9); as well as time to practice our song found in Revelation 7:10, *“Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”*. We are to also release debts so that forgiveness can flow freely and listen to His Word that faith may come.

We do not know God’s plan in our gatherings and it would be presumptuous to think we do. Scripture gives us pictures of what has happened before and can happen again, and Zechariah 14 says the day will come when all who are will participate. So, let this simple study serve as our invitation *“to come and worship the King”*.

For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendents, and My blessing on your offspring. Isaiah 44:3