

The Hidden Prophetic Meaning Behind the Feast of Tabernacles

As a youth, I remember thinking that the Jewish kids in my classes were sure lucky. It seemed that every fall they were excused from school several times for religious holidays.

It was many years later that I began to understand the biblical basis for and the spiritual significance of these fall Jewish holidays of Rosh Hashanah (The Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), which occur in September or October each year.

A third fall holiday, Sukkot (The Feast of Tabernacles or Booths: Lev. 23:33-43), along with the spring holidays of Pesach (Passover) and Shavuot (Pentecost) are the pilgrimage holidays or feast days. They were the three times each year when all males in ancient Israel were to “appear before the Lord your God in the place where He will choose” (Deut. 16:16).

These prescribed observances are based on a lunar calendar and this year (2019) Sukkot (The Feast of Tabernacles) is to be featured by Jews for a full week, from Oct. 14-20. It serves to remind the Jews (and us) of the years Moses led the Exodus from Egypt when they lived in temporary shelters during the 40 years of wanderings.

A Weeklong Party

The weeklong observance of Sukkot is a joyous time of generosity, festival and fellowship. Families build temporary “dwelling places” or shelters (some more authentic or elaborate than others) where their family and friends may review the biblical story, eat a meal together or even sleep

overnight.

These traditions all help the worshippers focus on God's provision for their lives and look forward to a time when God will make all things right in this world, during the Messiah's future, earthly reign.

While we, as Christians, aren't obligated to celebrate the holidays of ancient Israel, they still offer rich insight and meaningful reminders of the wonderful works that God has done throughout history. They also point modern-day believers to the work that Jesus Christ did, is doing and will do in us, for us and through us.

Accordingly, it's worth taking the time during these days of Sukkot to reflect on and thank God for His gracious and wonderful work in our lives.

Other References to the Feast of Tabernacles

John wrote, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, the glory as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

The word John chose to speak of Jesus "dwelling" among us is the word translated as *tabernacle*, which simply means to "dwell in a tent." Acknowledging this religious holiday can remind us of His dwelling among us temporarily at His first coming, but the Feast of Tabernacles may also look forward to His Second Coming, from when we shall dwell with Him forever (1 Thess. 4:17).

During the weeklong, holy celebration in ancient Israel, a ceremonial pouring out of water was offered each morning to the Lord as a visual prayer for rain for the harvest.

A priest carried water from the Pool of Siloam to the temple, then poured the water on the right corner of the altar.

As people watched this significant occurrence of Sukkot, Jesus

said: "On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water'" (John 7:37-38).

This Feast of Tabernacles will also be a required observance by Gentiles during the millennium, when God will require the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem during the final battles before Christ's return to go up to Jerusalem to "worship the king, the Lord of Hosts" (Zech. 14:16-19).

Learning From Jewish Festivals and Traditions

Christians can learn from the Jewish festivals and the traditions that have grown up around them to celebrate the spiritual essences of each one.

For instance, I would like to suggest that as we acknowledge the Feast of Tabernacles or temporary booths this week, these frail dwellings can remind us that neither health, wealth, good investments in the stock market or even gold or real estate are ultimate safeguards. It is God who sustains us, in good times and bad.

Whether we live in mansions or tents, any assets we may possess come to us from God and will only endure as long as it is the Father's "good pleasure" (Luke 12:32-34). We brought nothing into this world, and the only thing we can take out with us is the recognition of souls of those we may have influenced for good and for eternity.

Promises for Believers

In John 14:2-3 Jesus described our future home in heaven as permanent dwelling places, in contrast to the temporary dwellings built when celebrating the godly party of Tabernacles:

“In My Father’s house are many dwelling places. If it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. And ... I will come again to receive you to Myself, that where I am you may be also.”

Later, when John penned the Revelation of Jesus Christ, he described seeing “new heavens and a new earth,” as the prophet Isaiah had centuries before (Isa. 65:17-25).

John exclaimed, “And I heard a loud voice from heaven, saying, ‘Look! The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them. They shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God’” (Rev. 21:3-4).

John, in both his Gospel and Revelation, describes our future home as a real and permanent place uniquely prepared for real people—us! And from that heavenly abode we “shall reign forever and ever” (Rev. 22:5b).

Happy Sukkot! {eoa}

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