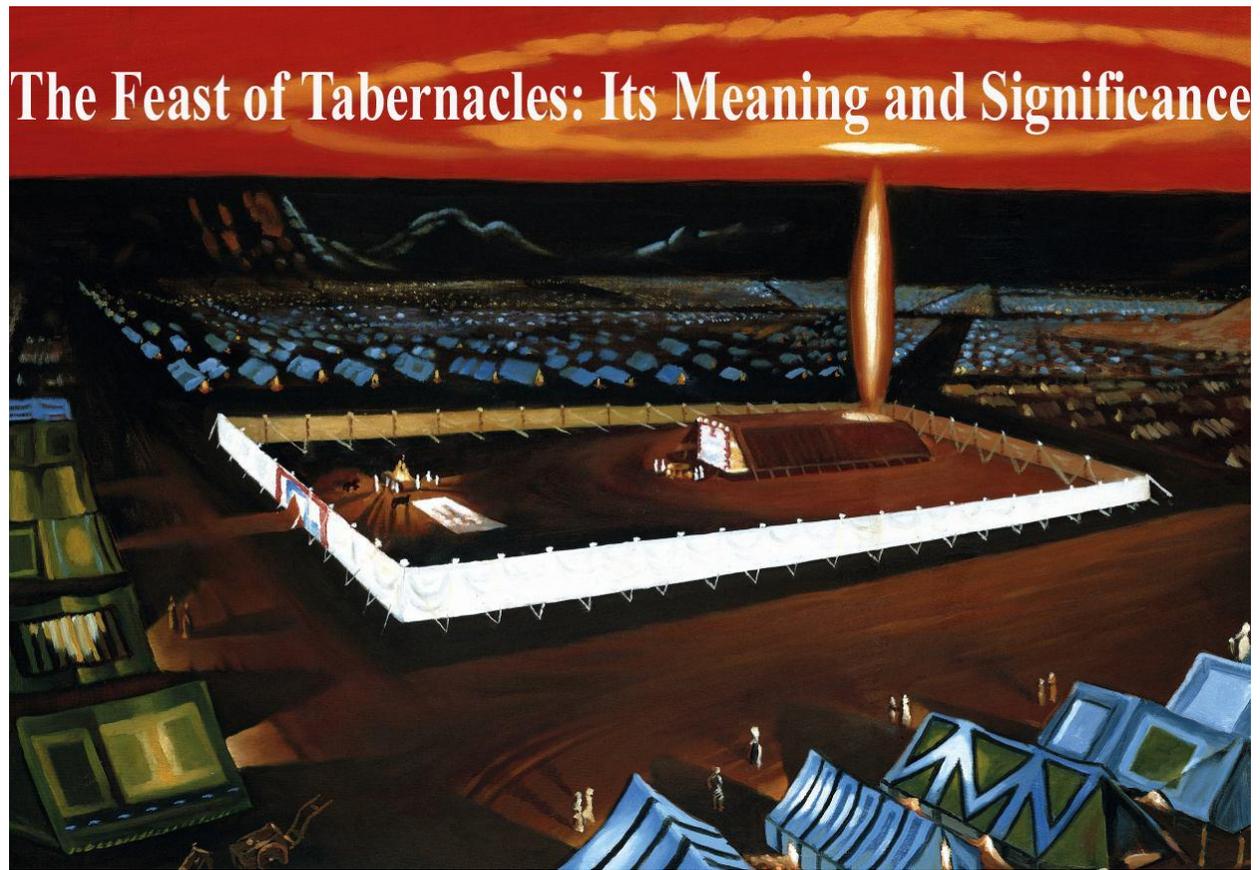


# The Feast of Tabernacles



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***The Feast of Tabernacles is a time of joy and celebration. What is its true meaning and significance to the Christian today?***

### **The Biblical Feasts**

Almighty God in the Old Testament instituted 7 feasts for honoring and worshipping him. All 7 feasts have meaning and actually lay out for us God's program and purpose for mankind. The Biblical Feasts are:

1. Passover
2. The Days of Unleavened Bread
3. The Feast of Weeks or First fruits
4. Pentecost
5. The Feast of Trumpets
6. The Day of Atonement
7. The Feast of Tabernacles

All 7 feasts are all Christ centered, and are New Testament oriented. Jesus Christ is the central figure of all the feasts in the Old Testament!

### **The Feast of Tabernacles**

This article will focus on the Feast of Tabernacles.

The description of this feast is found mainly in Leviticus 23.

The two most common names are “the Feast of Ingathering—*asif*” (Ex 23:16; 34:22) and “the Feast of Booths—*sukkot*” (Deut 16:13, 16; Lev 23:34). The Hebrew *sukkot*, which literally means “booths” or “huts,” is rendered in the Latin Vulgate as *tabernacula*, from which we derive the English designation of the “Feast of Tabernacles.”

The two names of the feast reflect its dual meaning and function. With reference to the harvest, it is called “the Feast of Ingathering” (Ex 23:16; 34:22) because it is a thanksgiving celebration for the blessings of the harvest. With reference to the history of Israel, it is called “the Feast of Booths” (Lev 23:34, 43; Deut 16:13, 16; 31:10; Ezra 3:4) because it commemorated God's protection of the people as they dwelt in booths during their sojourn in the wilderness. Both of these features are preserved in the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles.

### **The Dual Character of the Feast.**

The dual character of the Feast of Booths is evident in Leviticus 23:33-44 where the feast is listed *twice*. The observance of the Feast of Booths at the close of the fall harvest made it possible for the Israelites to have a *double thanksgiving celebration*: thanksgiving for the *blessing of the harvest and for God's protection through the sojourning in the wilderness*. The book of Leviticus says this: “Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month *shall be* the feast of tabernacles *for* seven days unto the LORD.

“On the first day *shall be* an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work *therein*.

“Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, *when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land*, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day *shall be* a sabbath, and on the eighth day *shall be* a sabbath.

“Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths:

“That your generations may know *that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.*” (Lev 23:34-35, 39, 42-43).

The double meaning of the feast is clear from these passages of the ingathering of the harvest, and the children of Israel dwelling in temporary dwelling places in the wilderness until they came to their permanent home in the Promised Land.

### **The Timing of the Feast of Booths**

The Feast of Booths fell in a time of year when the hearts of people would naturally be full of thankfulness and gladness. All the crops had been harvested, all the fruits were gathered, and the land was now waiting for the softening of the “latter rain” to prepare it for a new crop. In his classic study *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services*, Alfred Edersheim keenly observes that “What the seventh day, or Sabbath, was in reference to the week, the seventh month seems to have been in reference to the year. It closed not only the sacred cycle, but also the agricultural or working year. It also marked the change of season, the approach of rain and of the winter equinox, and determined alike the commencement and close of a sabbatical year (Deut 31:10). Coming on the 15th of this seventh month—that is, at full moon, when the ‘sacred’ month had, so to speak, attained its full strength—the Feast of Tabernacles appropriately followed five days after the Day of Atonement, in which the sin of Israel had been removed, and its covenant relation to God restored. Thus a sanctified nation could keep a holy feast of harvest joy unto the Lord, *just as in the truest sense it will be ‘in that day’ (Zech 14:20) when the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles shall be really fulfilled.*” (p.235, emphasis added).

### **Prescriptions for the Feast**

The instructions regarding the observance of the Feast of Booths are found in Leviticus 23:33-36, 39-43, Numbers 29:12-39, and Deuteronomy 16:13-15. To these must be added the particular instructions of Deuteronomy 31:9-13 for the celebration of the feast every seven years. Taking all these texts together, we find the following the main instructions for the celebration of the feast.

The observance of the Feast of Booths was to begin on the 15th day of the seventh month, after the harvest had been gathered, and was to last for seven more days (Lev 23:33, 39). The celebration was to begin and end with a special Sabbath day in which the Israelites were to cease working and gather for worship (Lev 23:39; Num 29:12, 35). An eighth day was added to the feast on which people came together for worship and sacrifice (Lev 23:39). This day was set apart from the seven days of festivities; apparently it served to help people make the transition back to normal life.

The three major characteristics of the Feast of Booths were:

1. The dwelling in booths
2. The unusual number of sacrifices
3. The joyous festivities.

Let us look briefly at each of them.

### **Dwelling in Booths**

The first characteristic was the dwelling in booths for the duration of the feast. “And you shall take on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of leafy trees, and willow of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days. . . . *You shall dwell in booths for seven days; all that are native in Israel shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.*” (Lev 23:40, 42-43). Various branches of leafy trees were used to build booths that would house the people for the duration of the feast. The people erected these huts on their roofs, in their courtyards, in the courts of the temple, and in the different squares in Jerusalem (Neh 8:16). Native Israelites were enjoined to live in those temporary booths (*sukkah*) for the duration of the feast. They were to eat, sleep, pray, study, in short, live entirely in the booths.

Living in booths served as a reminder of God’s protection during the forty years of wandering in the desert (Lev 23:42). The temporary booths symbolized the human need to depend upon God for His provision of food, water, and shelter. Keil and Delitzsch emphasize this point, saying: “Their dwelling in booths was by no means intended to bring before the minds of the people the unsettled wandering life of the desert, and remind them of the trouble endured there, for recollection of privation and want can never be an occasion of joy; but it was to place vividly before the eyes of the future generations of Israel a memorial of grace, care, and protection which God afforded to His people in the great and terrible wilderness (Deut 8:15).” (vol.2 p.449). The booth was a reminder that God would shelter His people and give them food as long as they were obedient to Him.

The imagery of the “booths—sukkot” is used in the Bible as the symbol of God’s protection. “The Bible speaks of the Sukkah [singular form of ‘booth’ in Hebrews],” writes Abraham P. Bloch, “as a reminder of God’s protection when He provided Sukkot [booths] for the Jews who had come out of Egypt (Lev 23:43). In times of distress, one prayed to the Almighty to be enveloped in a protective Sukkah [booth] (Ps 27:5; 31:20). The inhabitants of a Sukkah are as secure as a lion in his den. Hence the application of the term Sukkah to a lion’s den (Ps 10:9). A king who enjoys divine protection has his seat in a Sukkah. When he loses that protection, his Sukkah collapses (Amos 9:11). As a symbol of protection, the sukka is also a symbol of peace—*Sukkat Shalom*.” (note2) p.39).

## The Sacrifices

During the seven days, a considerable number of sacrifices were offered in addition to the regular offerings (Lev 23:36; Num 29:12-39). The instructions regarding sacrifices are spelled out in detail in Numbers 29:12-39. On no other occasion were so many sacrifices required of Israel to be offered on a single day. Presumably, the vast numbers of sacrifices were to reflect Israel's depth of thanksgiving for a bountiful harvest.

Each day the sacrifices consisted of two rams and fourteen lambs which were to be offered with their respective grain offerings and a male goat as a sin offering. Bulls were also sacrificed each day, although their numbers decreased from thirteen on the first day (Num 29:13) to seven on the seventh day of the feast (Num 29:32).

A closer look at the endless list of sacrifices reveals a fascinating septenary pattern. Edersheim keenly observes that "the number of the burnt sacrifices, whether taking each kind by itself or all of them together, is always divisible by the sacred number *seven*. We have for the week 70 bullock, 14 rams, and 98 lambs, or altogether 182 sacrifices (26x7), to which must be added 336 (48x7) tenths of ephahs of flour for the meat offering. We will not pursue the tempting subject of this symbolism of numbers further than to point out that, whereas the sacred number 7 appeared at the Feast of Unleavened Bread only in the number of its days, and at Pentecost in the period of its observance (7x7 days after Passover), the Feast of Tabernacles lasted seven days, took place when the seventh month was at its full height, and had the number seven impressed on its characteristic sacrifices." (p.240, note 4).

## A Season to Rejoice

A third characteristic of the Feast of Booths is that it was a season of rejoicing. The emphasis on the joyfulness of the feast is found in the instructions given in Deuteronomy 16:13-14: "You shall keep the feast of booths seven days, when you make your ingathering from your threshing floor and your wine press. *You shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your manservant and your maidservant, the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are within your towns.*"

In contrast to the Feasts of Trumpets and Atonement which were a time of introspection and repentance, the Feast of Booths was a time of rejoicing. The festive atmosphere reflected the Israelites' thankfulness for both material and spiritual blessings. The explicit reason for rejoicing is given in Deuteronomy 16:15: "because the Lord your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that *you will be altogether joyful.*" It is not surprising that the rabbis called the feast "The Season of our Joy" (*Zeman Simhatenu*).

The joyous nature of the feast is derived from the fact that it commemorated both the material and spiritual blessings received. The material blessings were evident in the products of the orchard, the olive grove, and the vineyard which had been gathered into storehouses. The joy that was unleashed by the completion of the harvest and the end of all the hard labor found a perfect outlet in the celebration of the Feast of Ingathering. The celebration, however, was to be not an

occasion for self-indulgence, but an opportunity to share the blessings of the harvest with the less fortunate (Deut 16:13-14).

The spiritual reason for the command to rejoice is the fact that the feast commemorated how providentially the Lord had led the people through the wilderness into the Promised Land. Furthermore, the repentance of the Feast of Trumpets and the cleansing of the Day of Atonement leads to the extraordinary outburst of joy of the Feast of Booths. Forgiveness and reconciliation with God always leads to joy.



<b>Dwelling in Booths</b>	<b>Extra Sacrifices</b>	<b>Joyous occasion</b>
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### Feast of Tabernacles in Prophecy

In the book of Zechariah at the time of the second coming of Christ, the prophet informs us that, “And it shall come to pass, *that every one that is left of all the nations* which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.” (14:16). “All nations” are going to come and worship Jesus every year and keep the Feast of Tabernacles. Interesting how this reminds us of Isaiah’s vision of “all flesh” coming to worship before God “from new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath” (Isaiah 66:23). Surprisingly, while Isaiah 66:23 is commonly used to prove the continuity of the Sabbath, Zechariah 14:16 is seldom cited to support *the continuity of the Feast of Booths*. Yet the two passages are strikingly similar.

Why is this feast singled out? Presumably, because the Feast of Booths, being the Feast of Ingathering, fittingly represents the ingathering of the remnant who are “left” from all the nations of the earth. Another possibility suggested by Keil and Delitzsch, is that the Gentiles who, through the wanderings of this present life, have been brought out of darkness into the blessedness of God’s Kingdom, will celebrate the Feast of Thanksgiving out of their overflowing gratitude to God for His salvation. (C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament. The Pentateuch*, vol. 6, p. 1499.)

Some argue on the basis of the two mentioned passages that following the establishment of the Kingdom on earth... Yahweh’s Feasts will eventually be kept by all nations, including the heathen. One wonders, how the heathen could be present in the future Kingdom of God in the first place? Moreover, what benefit would the heathen derive from observing a feast that is unknown to them?

This is simply done by God's servant nation called Israel. The Israelites after their restoration to the Promise land and being converted back to Almighty God as Ezekiel says, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

"And I will put my spirit within you, and *cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*

"And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God." (36:26-28). afterwards they will be missionaries once again and teach and convert the heathen, "For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory.

"And I will set a sign among them, *and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles.*" (Isa 66:18-19). Israel will be " 'the remnant' of Jews [Israel all 12 tribes]', that are not among God's enemies, and so 'escape.' These shall be sent (as missionaries) to the distant nations;" (Pulpit Commentary). "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as *are escaped of the house of Jacob*, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth." (Isaiah 10:20).

God called out Israel for a special purpose, to serve the nations, and teach them about the true God of Israel. God's plan for the mission of His chosen people reaches back to His covenant with Abraham. In that covenant, God promised: "I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 12:3). God promised to raise up a people from Abraham's loins who would be *a blessing to all the families of the earth.*

The fulfillment of this promise began when God delivered Abraham's descendants from the Egyptian bondage: "It is because the Lord loves you, and is keeping the oath which he swore to your fathers, that the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt" (Deut 7:8).

God's loving choice of Israel was for *service*. Israel's mission was to bring the knowledge of the true God and of His plan of salvation to all the nations of the world. "All the people of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord" (Deut 28:10). Israel was to become "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex 19:6) that would intercede with a holy God for a sinful world so that ultimately God's Temple "shall be called a house of prayer for all people" (Isa 56:7).

Dire consequences will come upon those nations who will not come to the Feast, "And it shall be, *that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.*

"And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that *have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.*

"This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the *punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.*" (Zech 14:17-19). Does God take the observing of his feasts

seriously? Yes he does! When he comes again, it says he will “rebuke strong nations afar off;” (Micah 4:3). The way God rebuked Egypt in the time of the Exodus, he will rebuke those who will not keep the Feast of Tabernacle-God does *not* change his ways!

### **Feast of Tabernacles in the New Testament**

What of the New Testament. Is there any evidence that Jesus and the Apostles kept this feast? The evidence actually is overwhelming!

First, when was Christ born? There are several indications in the bible that show that Jesus was born no later than September and most likely on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles! To be born on the first of Day of that feast is also highly significant.

Let’s examine the indications in the Bible, the little clues to show when Jesus was actually born. In the Gospel of Luke we read that “shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.” (Luke 2:8). This is a very important Biblical key to understanding when Jesus was actually born.

Many tourists who visit the Middle East during the winter months are usually unprepared for the cold weather they often encounter. Today, as in ancient times, Jerusalem is a cold place during the winter season. Hence Jeremiah the prophet speaks about “the snow of Lebanon” (Jer. 18:14), and Jesus warned His followers in Judea, “But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day.” (Matt. 24:20).

Surely, Christ’s birthday could not be on December 25 or on any day during the month of December whatsoever. One does not have to be a genius to conclude that shepherds, in their right senses, would not be found outside with their flocks on a cold winter night. The truth of the matter is, it has long been a practice among the shepherds of Judea to secure their flocks by removing them from the fields no later than around the end of October. The Bible Itself proves that the winter was a rainy season and that they did not permit the shepherds to abide in the open fields at night, (see Song of Solomon 2:11 and Ezra 10:9, 13).

The Shepherds in the time of the winter season put their flocks in the sheep coat, and not outside. Clarke’s Commentary states: “And as these shepherds had not yet brought home their flocks, it is a presumptive argument that October had not yet commenced, *and that, consequently, our Lord was not born on the 25th of December, when no flocks were out in the fields; nor could he have been born later than September, as the flocks were still in the fields by night. On this very ground the nativity in December should be given up. The feeding of the flocks by night in the fields is a chronological fact, which casts considerable light upon this disputed point. See the quotations from the Talmudists in Lightfoot.*” (Commentary on Luke, emphasis added).

Bullinger’s says that it was “custom then (as now) to withdraw the flocks during the month Marchesvan (Oct-Nov)...for the paramount reason that there would be no pasturage at that time” (Appendix 179, p.199). So by this bit of information we know Jesus was NOT a winter Baby.

Another indication was the tax census by the Roman government at that time. There was no way the Romans were going to go against the habits of the entire nation of the Jews and have a census in the winter time. They would have followed the Jewish tradition and have the census at a time when the Jews made pilgrimages, such as the great Feast days of Leviticus 23. One of those great pilgrimages was the Feast of Tabernacles. Buillinger's explains: "The Roman authorities in imposing such a 'census taking' for the hated and unpopular 'foreign' tax would not have enforced the imperial decree (Luke 2:1) *at the most inconvenient and inclement season of the year, by compelling the people to enroll themselves at their respective 'cities' in December. In such a case they would naturally choose the 'line' of least resistance.*' and select a time of year that would cause least friction, and interference with the habits and pursuits of the Jewish people. *This would be in the autumn, when the agricultural round of the year was complete, and the people generally more or less at liberty to take advantage, as we know many did, of the opportunity of 'going up' to Jerusalem for the 'Feast of Tabernacles' (compare John 7:8-10, etc.), the crowning Feast of the Jewish year...*To take advantage of such a time would be to the Romans the simplest and most natural policy, whereas to attempt to enforce the Edict of Registration for the purposes of Imperial taxation in the depth of winter, - when travelling for such a purpose would have been deeply resented, and perhaps have brought about a revolt,- would never have been attempted by such an astute ruler as Augustus" (pp.199-200, emphasis added).

### **The Course of Abijah**

Another indication in the bible is Zacharias the father of John the Baptist. When he received his message from the Angel Gabriel about his son that was to be born, he was performing his priestly duty of the "course of Abijah" (Luke 1:5). This course just meant the "week" in which his family of Levites had to do their duty in the temple.

King David on God's instructions (1 Chr 28:11-13) had divided the sons of Aaron into 24 groups (1 Chr 24:1-4), to setup a schedule by which the Temple of the Lord could be staffed with priests all year round in an orderly manner. After the 24 groups of priests were established, lots were drawn to determine the sequence in which each group would serve in the Temple. (1 Chr 24: 7-19). That sequence is as follows:

1 Chr 24:19: "These were the orderings of them in their service to come into the house of the LORD, according to their manner, under Aaron their father, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded him." Now each one of the 24 "courses" of priests would begin and end their service in the Temple on the Sabbath, a tour of duty being for one week (2 Chr 23:8, 1 Chr 9:25). On three occasions during the year, all the men of Israel were required to travel to Jerusalem for festivals of the Lord, so on those occasions all the priests would be needed in the Temple to accommodate the crowds. Those three festivals were Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Deut 16:16).

The Jewish calendar begins in the spring, during the month of Nisan, so the first "course" of priests, would be that of the family of Jehoiarib, who would serve for seven days. The second week would then be the responsibility of the family of Jedaiah. The third week would be the feast of Unleavened Bread, and all priests would be present for service. Then the schedule would resume with the third course of priests, the family of Harim. By this plan, when the 24th course

was completed, the general cycle of courses would repeat. This schedule would cover 51 weeks or 357 days, enough for the lunar Jewish calendar (about 354 days). So, in a period of a year, each group of priests would serve in the Temple twice on their scheduled course, in addition to the 3 major festivals, for a total of about five weeks of duty.

### The Conception of John the Baptist.

Now back to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist. It says “And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his *ministration* were accomplished, he departed to his own house.” “And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived ...” (Luke 1:23-24).

Beginning with the first month, Nisan, in the spring (March-April), the schedule of the priest’s courses would result with Zacharias serving during the 10th week of the year. This is because he was a member of the course of Abia (Abijah), the 8th course, and both the Feast of Unleavened Bread (15-21 Nisan) and Pentecost (6 Sivan) would have occurred before his scheduled duty. This places Zacharias’ administration in the Temple as beginning on the second Sabbath of the third month, Sivan (May-June).

	1st Month	2nd Month	3rd Month
	Abib - Nisan (March - April)	Zif - Iyyar (April - May)	Sivan (May - June)
First Week	Jehoiarib (1)	Seorim (4)	<i>All Priests (Pentecost)</i>
Second Week	Jedaiah (2)	Malchijah (5)	<b>Abijah (8)</b>
Third Week	<i>All Priests (Feast of Unleavened Bread)</i>	Mijamin (6)	Jeshuah (9)
Fourth Week	Harim (3)	Hakkoz (7)	Shecaniah (10)

Having completed his Temple service on the third Sabbath of Sivan, Zacharias returned home and soon conceived his son John. So John the Baptist was probably conceived shortly after the third Sabbath of the month of Sivan.

### The Conception of Jesus Christ.

Now the reason that the information about John is important is because according to Luke, Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the sixth month of Elisabeth’s pregnancy: “And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself *five months*, saying,” “Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men.

“And in the *sixth month* the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,”

“To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary.” (Luke 1:24-27).

Note that verse 26 above refers to the sixth month of Elisabeth’s pregnancy, not Elul, the sixth month of the Hebrew calendar, and this is made plain by the context of verse 24 and again in verse 36: “And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the *sixth month with her*, who was called barren.” The New Testament Commentary on the Whole Bible, p.163 by JFB makes this plain as well.

Now working from the information about John’s conception late in the third month, Sivan, and advancing six months, we arrive late in the 9th month of Kislev (Nov-Dec) for the time frame for the conception of Jesus. It is notable here that the first day of the Jewish festival of Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, is celebrated on the 25th day of Kislev, and Jesus is called the light of the world (John 8:12, 9:5, 12:46). This does not appear to be a mere coincidence. In the book of John, Hanukkah is called the Feast of Dedication (John 10:22). Hanukkah is an eight day festival, celebrating the relighting of the menorah in the rededicated Temple, which according to the story, stayed lit miraculously for eight days on only one day’s supply of oil.

### **The Birth of John the Baptist**

Based on the conception of John shortly after the third Sabbath of the month of Sivan, projecting forward an average term of about 10 lunar months (40 weeks), we arrive in the month of Nisan (March-April). It would appear that John the Baptist may have been born in the middle of the month, which would coincide with Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It is interesting to note, that even today, it is customary for the Jews to set out a special goblet of wine during the Passover Seder meal, in anticipation of the arrival of Elijah that week, which is based on the prophecy of Malachi: “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:” (4:5).

Jesus identified John as the “Elijah” that the Jews had expected: “And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?”

“And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.”

“But I say unto you, *That Elias is come already*, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.”

“Then the disciples understood that he *spake unto them of John the Baptist.*” (Matthew 17:10-13).

The angel that appeared to Zacharias in the temple also indicated that John would be the expected “Elias”: “And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (Luke 1:17).

So then, the Feast of Unleavened Bread begins on the 15th day of the 1st month, Nisan, and this is a likely date for the birth of John the Baptist, the expected “Elijah.”

## The Birth of Jesus Christ

Since Jesus was *conceived six months after* John the Baptist, and we have established a likely date for John's birth, we need only move six months farther down the Jewish calendar to arrive at a likely date for the birth of Jesus. From the 15th day of the 1st month, Nisan, we go to the 15th day of the 7th month, Tishri. And what do we find on that date? It is the festival of Tabernacles! The 15th day of Tishri begins the third and last festival of the year to which all the men of Israel were to gather in Jerusalem for Temple services. (Lev 23:34).

“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14). Immanuel means “God with us.” The Son of God had come to dwell with, or tabernacle on earth with His people.

“And the Word was made 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.” (John 1:14). The word in the Hebrew for “dwelt” is “succah” and the name of the Feast of Tabernacles in Hebrew is Sukkot, a festival of rejoicing and celebration. Bullinger's says: “It thus appears without the *shadow of a doubt* that the day assigned to the Birth of the Lord, videlicet: December 25, was the day on which He was ‘begotten of the Holy Ghost,’ that is to say, by pneuma hagian = divine power (Matthew 1:18, 20 marg.), and His birth took place on the *15th of Ethanim, September 29*, in the year following, thus making beautifully clear the meaning of John 1:14, ‘The Word became flesh’ (Matthew 1:18, 20) on 1st Tebeth or December 25 (5 B.C.), ‘and ***tabernacled (Greek eskenosen)*** with us,’ on 15th of Ethanim or September 29 (4 B.C.)” (p198, emphasis added).

### Solomon's prayer

Solomon, when he gave that prayer on the feast of Tabernacles, said “But will God *indeed dwell on the earth*” (1 Kings 8:27). And on that day they held the feast of Tabernacles. “And all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto king Solomon at the feast in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month...And at that time Solomon held a feast, and all Israel with him, a great congregation” (verses 2, 65). Bullinger's says, “viz Feast of Tabernacles” (p.464). Isn't it interesting that Solomon asked will God “dwell” on the earth, on the first day of that feast, and then the Apostle John writes that God was made flesh and “TABERNACLED” among us! Everything shows that Jesus was born on the first day of that feast!

**8th Day?**- Also of note is the fact that the Feast of Tabernacles is an eight day feast (Lev 23:36, 39). Why eight days? It may be because an infant was dedicated to God by performing circumcision on the eighth day after birth: “And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.” (Luke 2:21). So the infant Jesus would have been circumcised on the eighth and last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, a Sabbath day. The Jews today consider this a separate festival from Tabernacles, and they call it Shemini Atzeret.

**A few more points-** You have heard of the star of Bethlehem. This is very significant to when Jesus was born. The Wise men said they saw his star in the “east” where they lived, and then travelled to see him (Matthew 2:1-2). Samuele Bacchiocchi's book God's Festivals, makes an

interesting statement: “A final interesting sideline supporting the possibility *that Christ was born on the very time of the Feast of Tabernacles*, is the reference to the wise men that came from the east to visit Christ (Matt 2:1). The land the East is most likely Babylon, where many Jews still lived at the time of Christ’s birth.... We are told that the wise men made their journey from the East to Bethlehem because they had seen ‘the star in the East’ (Matt 2:1). *Watching stars was associated especially with the Feast of Tabernacles. In fact, the roof of the booth, as note in chapter 6, was built with leafy branches carefully spaced so that they would screen out the sunlight without blocking the visibility of the stars.* The people watched for the stars at night during the feast because of the prophecy ‘a star shall come out of Jacob’ (Num 24:17). *It is possible during the feast of Tabernacles, the special season of star watching, the wise men saw the Messianic star...*” (pp.244-245, emphasis added).

**Jesus Death-** When Jesus died, it was the Passover, in April. This shows also exactly when Jesus was born. “If as generally agreed, Christ’s ministry began when he was about 30 years of age (Luke 3:23) and lasted three and one half years until his death at the Passover (March/April). Then by back tracking we arrive much closer to the Feast of Tabernacles (Sept/Oct) than to December 25” (ibid, p.243, emphasis added). If Jesus started his ministry at thirty, and died at 33 1/2, then 6 months earlier would have been his birthday which is September! So Jesus was born on the First Day of the Feast of Tabernacles which has a lot more biblical symbolism and significance than does Christmas. We are singing “Born is the King of Israel” at the wrong time of the year!

### **Jesus celebrates the Feast of Tabernacles**

In the Gospel of John, “...the Jews’ feast of tabernacles was at hand.” (John 7:2). Have you ever wondered why, in the Gospel of John especially, we read of the “Jews Passover” and the “Jews Feast of Tabernacles” and the “Jews Preparation Day,” see John 7:2; 11:55; 19:42. Why does John use this language? Many believe that now in the Christian dispensation, these festivals are for the Jews only and not Christians and this is why these are called the “feast of the Jews.” But this is not the case. God calls these festivals “My Feasts.” (Lev 23:1). These are God’s feasts that he gave to Israel to celebrate. The gentiles as well that converted to Yahweh also kept these feasts as well (see Exodus 12:48-49). So why does John use this language?

“John’s concern [was] to inform the reader that he is referring to the Passover of the Jews suggests that, to use Joachim Jeremiah’s words ‘He obviously distinguishes the *Jewish Passover from the Christian*’” (God’s Festivals, Biacchiocchi, p.73, emphasis added). That’s all John was doing. He was *distinguishing between the Jews Passover and Feast of Tabernacles from the Christian Passover and Feast of Tabernacles*. You see Christ was “Our Passover,” Our “First fruits,” our “Atonement,” and he “Tabernacled” among Us, see I Corinth 5:7; 15:20; 1 John 2:2; John 1:14. To the Jews, because *they rejected Christ, He was none of those things*. So John had to *distinguish between the two*. “The keeping of the festivals was taken for granted [in the New Testament]” (ibid, p.72). *These festivals were never up for discussion of being done away*. So this means that there was a “**Christian Preparation Day;**” A “**Christian Passover;**” A “**Christian Feast of Tabernacles**” etc...

**“...the expression ‘Jews’ in the fourth Gospel generally conveys the IDEA OF CONTRAST to the Disciples of Christ (for St. John vii.15)...”** (Alfred Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, p.309, emphasis added).

Now Jesus on the Feast of Tabernacles told his family, “*Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come.*” (v.8). He told his family to go to the feast he was going to meet them there later-so Jesus kept the feast of Tabernacles! “Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.” (v.14). during that week of the feast Jesus taught the word of God to the people of Jerusalem. Jesus stayed right till the end of the feast on the last great day, the eighth day, it says, “*In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.*”

“He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

“(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)” (vv.37-39).

In these passages we find Jesus:

- Keeping the Feast and telling his family to keep it.
- Teaching during the festival during the middle of the feast
- Staying all seven days and on the eighth day teaching the word of God.

## **The Transfiguration**

The accounts of Jesus’ Transfiguration which are given by the three evangelists (Mark 9:2-8; Matt 17:1-8; Luke 9:28-36), contain several explicit allusions to the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles.

The first connection between the Transfiguration and the Feast of Tabernacles is the chronological detail given at the beginning of the narrative. Mark and Matthew tell us that the Transfiguration took place “six days later” (Matt 17:1; Mark 9:2) while Luke says: “About eight days after” (Luke 9:28). “The difference itself indicates,” as Daniélou points out, “that there is a question of a yearly event in which the interval of six to eight days has a special meaning. This would be particularly fitting for the Feast of Tabernacles which lasts for seven days and in which the eighth day has a particular importance.” (Jean Daniélou (note 7), pp. 339-341).

Peter saw in the dazzling appearance of Christ and in the apparition of Moses and Elijah, the inauguration of the Messianic times prefigured by the Feast of Tabernacles. Thus, without hesitation, he exclaimed: “Let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah” (Mark 9:5; Matt 17:4; Luke 9:33). We noted above that a principal feature of the Feast of Tabernacles was the erection of booths with leafy branches under which every Israelite was to live during the seven days (Lev 23:42-43). These booths commemorated the protection God granted the Israelites during their wandering through the wilderness and symbolized the ingathering of the harvest of people in the Messianic kingdom. Thus, Peter’s offer to erect three booths seems a clear allusion to the Feast of Tabernacles. This eschatological significance is still clearer if we admit with Riesenfeld that the exclamation of St. Peter: ‘It is good for us to be here’

is the expression of the rest, of the eschatological *anapausis* [rest]. The Feast of Tabernacles prefigures in this way the rest of the life to come.” (ibid, p.340).

The notion of the righteous dwelling in tabernacles in the future life is found not only in Judaism but also in the New Testament. In Revelation, we are told that God “will shelter them [the redeemed] with his presence” (Rev 7:15; cf. 21:3). The Greek verb used *skenosei*, literally means that God “will build a tabernacle” over the redeemed. Thus, Peter’s offer to build three booths must be seen not as an isolated incident in the life of Christ, but as an expression of Messianic significance. The scene of the Transfiguration represented for Peter the realization of the Messianic times foreshadowed by the Feast of Tabernacles.

Another connection between the Transfiguration and the Feast of Tabernacles can be seen in the metaphors used to describe the brilliance of Jesus’ countenance and the brightness of his clothing: “His face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light” (Matt 17:2). The cloud also that overshadowed the disciples is described as a “*bright* cloud” (Matt 17:5). This appears to be an allusion to the nightly illumination of the Temple during the Feast of Tabernacles to commemorate the blazing pillar that accompanied Israel during their nocturnal flight from Egypt (Ex 13:21).

“When we consider,” David Stanley keenly observes, “that Luke implies (by his remark, ‘Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep’ Luke 9:32) that the event took place at night, we have a further connection with the fiery cloud of the Exodus and the nightly illumination of Tabernacles. The Messianic expectations which this feast aroused in late Judaism, are reflected in the presence of Elijah at the Transfiguration, since he was believed to return as precursor of Christ (cf. Mal 3:1, 3; 4:5-6; Sirach 48:10). The appearance of Moses recalls the feast of the ‘Joy of the Law’ celebrated at the close of the seven-day festival of Tabernacles. It marked the termination of the liturgical reading of the five books of Moses. Thus the evangelists’ accounts of the Transfiguration seem to indicate that, in their eyes and that of the apostolic Church, this mystery was the fulfillment of the liturgical symbolism of the greatest of all Israelites feasts, that of Tabernacles.” (David M. Stanley (note 5), pp. 35-36).

### **Jesus’ Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem**

The episode of Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem also contains also several motifs which are “exported” from the Feast of Tabernacles. The palm branches carried by Jesus’ disciples, the chanting of the Hosanna (Psalm 118 which was sung during the procession of the Feast of Tabernacles) suggest a connection with the liturgy of the feast. The waving of the *lulav* to the singing of the Hosanna from Psalm 118 generally occurred during the procession around the altar on the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles. This ritual served to express the hope of the soon-coming Messianic king.

Although John places Christ’s triumphant entry into Jerusalem during the Passover season, it is clear that the people make use of two significant features of the Feast of Tabernacles to acclaim Jesus as their Messiah. The reason is simple. Since the waving of palm branches and the chanting of the Hosanna in procession were seen as two most effective ways to express their hope in the coming of the Messiah, the people took the liberty of using them, not only at the Feast of

Tabernacles, but whenever occasion called for it. Jesus Himself explained that the true Feast of Tabernacles, in which the people sang Psalm 118, will find its ultimate fulfillment at His coming: “For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’” (Matt 23:39). Here Jesus is referring to the Messianic song of Psalm 118:26 that was sung during the procession of the Feast of Tabernacles.

### **The Apostles & God’s Feasts**

But did Paul ever keep the Feast of Tabernacles? He certainly did.

Paul, in about A.D. 50, traveled from Asia into Europe and began preaching the Gospel at Philippi “on the day of weeks” - Pentecost, according to the inspired Greek text (Acts 16:13).

After spending a few weeks at Philippi (verse 12), Thessalonica (Acts 17:1), Berea (verse 10) and Athens (verse 15), Paul came to Corinth in the late summer of A.D. 50 (Acts 18: 1). He spent several Sabbaths teaching in the synagogue (verse 4), and continued holding meetings in the house of Justus (verse 7) for “a year and six months” (verse 11). This brings us to sometime during the spring of A.D. 52.

After a riot in Corinth had been quelled, Paul “tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria” (verse 18). By now it was well into the summer of A.D. 52, which means that the feasts of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost were both past. The major autumn Feast of Tabernacles was fast approaching. “And he [Paul] came to Ephesus... When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not; But bade them farewell, saying, *I must by all means keep this feast* [of Tabernacles] that cometh in Jerusalem” (verses 19-21). This has to mean the Feast of Tabernacles for the simple fact that, “The Feast of Booths was the last of the three pilgrimage festivals and it attracted the largest number of pilgrims. The Jewish people were not required *to go up to Jerusalem* for the Feast of Trumpets or the Day of Atonement, but they *were required to do so for the Feast of Booths.*” (God’s Festivals in Scripture and History, p.226, emphasis added). Notice that Paul felt impelled to “keep” the Feast of Booths in Jerusalem.

### **The Meaning of “Tabernacle” in the New Testament**

The meaning of the tabernacle goes far beyond just a booth made with branches symbolizing the sojourn in the wilderness. Its meaning also goes *deeper* than just the kingdom of God.

A tabernacle, a booth or a tent is a temporary shelter. The name “Feast of Tabernacles” or “Feast of Booths” means the Feast of Temporary Dwellings. It doesn’t matter what the booths or dwellings are made out of. Back then they were made of branches. Today they may be canvas tents, aluminum trailers, brick motels, hotels or condominiums. The important point is that they be places *of temporary residence*. When the church of God celebrates this feast we go away and dwell in temporary homes for seven days be it a hotel, or a tent like camping, but the idea is a temporary dwelling place.

But why was Israel to spend the Feast in temporary abodes?

The answer is given in Lev 23 verse 43, “That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.”

After the tribes of Israel came out of Egypt they had to wander in the wilderness for 40 years before going in and possessing the Promised Land.

While in the wilderness they had no permanent dwellings. They wandered from place to place, setting up their tents, staying awhile, then pulling their tents down and moving on.

The Israelites were heirs to the land God had promised to them. But they were not yet inheritors. They were merely heirs waiting to become inheritors of the land of Canaan.

That is why they lived in temporary dwellings. They were sojourners, pilgrims. They lived in the world of the wilderness, but they were not of it. Their inheritance was elsewhere.

Abraham had been a pilgrim too, as were Isaac and Jacob.

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed . . . By faith he sojourned [*a temporary stay*] in the land of promise, as in a strange country [because he hadn’t yet received it for his inheritance], dwelling in tabernacles [*tents, temporary dwellings*] with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs [not yet inheritors] with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations [*permanence*], whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:8-10).

Yes, Abraham in faith looked for the New Jerusalem and the glorious Kingdom of God. He and other saints “died in faith, not having received the promises [the inheritance], but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were *strangers and pilgrims on the earth*” (verse 13).

What a beautiful picture for us!

Christians are “strangers and pilgrims” (1Pet. 2:11) in this life. We are in the wilderness of this world, but we are not of it (John 17:11, 14). We are separate from the world (Rev. 18:4) - heirs, but not yet inheritors, of our permanent dwelling place, the promised Kingdom of God.

God included himself as well because his kingdom was not set up on the earth as of yet and told Israel, “for the land *is* mine; *for ye are strangers and sojourners with me*” (Lev 25:23). The Tabernacle in the Wilderness was God’s dwelling place (Ex 25:8), a temporary home in which he would dwell permanently in the land in the Kingdom of God, “Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God.” (Rev 21:3).

The meaning of Tabernacles goes even deeper than this.

We are mortal beings, made of the dust of the ground. The human existence is truly fleeting - here today, gone tomorrow. “For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (James 4:14).

All mortals are destined to die. We have a temporary existence! Only by receiving the germ of eternal life from God’s Spirit can a person hope to live forever. As Christians we have that eternal life abiding in us (1 John 5:11) by the spirit of God as a down payment (Romans 8:15-17). These physical bodies of ours - with all of their imperfections, their selfish desires, their weaknesses, yes, their aches and pains- are only meant to last long enough for us to qualify for eternal life.

The apostle Peter expressed this thought. Getting along in years and realizing that the hour of his martyrdom was approaching as Jesus had foretold (John 21: 18-19), he wrote, “Yea, I think it meet, *as long as I am in this tabernacle*, to stir you up by putting *you* in remembrance; “Knowing that *shortly I must put off this my tabernacle*, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.” (2 Peter 1:13-14).

Is that how you think of your physical body? Too many people do not. They miss the point entirely. They don’t know what this life is all about because they don’t understand that we are merely pilgrims preparing for an eternal inheritance. Your tent or tabernacle was not designed to last forever. It was only meant to last long enough to get you to your eternal inheritance. Then God will give you an eternal house.

The Apostle Paul wrote the same thing, “For we know *that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. [Permanent home]*

“For in this we groan, earnestly *desiring to be clothed upon with our house* which is from heaven:

“If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

“For *we that are in this tabernacle [physical bodies] do groan*, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

“Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.*

“Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are *at home in the body*, we are absent from the Lord:

“(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

“We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be *absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.* ” (2 Corinth 5:1-6).

That is what we need! “For . . . this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Cor. 15:53). If we overcome and endure to the end, we will be made immortal. *Our permanent home in our immortal bodies by a resurrection from the dead putting off these temporary bodies.* The Apostle Paul comprehended our incredible human potential. He wrote, “. . .we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall *change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body*” (Phil. 3:20-21).

## The Mind of Man

Where do you dwell? Job said, “But *there is* a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.” (32:8). This is the human spirit, which, while it has no separate consciousness or intelligence apart from the brain, it is nevertheless spiritual.

Paul wrote, “The spirit itself [God's Holy Spirit] beareth witness with OUR SPIRIT that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:16). All of us are endowed with the human spirit. This entire eighth chapter of the book of Romans says a great deal about how God’s Holy Spirit is to dwell inside our mortal bodies.

Jesus said we are not to fear man, who after he has *destroyed the body*, cannot destroy the “soul.” The traditional concept of the “immortality of the soul” misses the mark by a wide margin. There is no separate, intelligent, feeling, living “soul” which departs the body at death. *For complete proof, and for many of the usages of the various Hebrew and Greek words for “soul” in both the Old and the New Testament, please download our free booklet “Is there Life After death?” for details.*

There is something which is spiritual in connection with the human brain which man cannot destroy is obvious from Christ’s words. Christ said, “...fear not them which kill the body [Greek: soma] but are not able to kill the soul [Greek: psuche]: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna” (Matthew 10:28). Notwithstanding the fact that the traditional concept of the “immortal soul” is erroneous, it is clear from Jesus’ words that there IS something spiritual in connection with the human brain which man simply cannot destroy.

That is why the Bible speaks of a complete *conversion* by the receiving of God’s Holy Spirit.

Paul put it this way, “...put off concerning the former conversation [conduct] *the old man*, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be *renewed in the spirit of your mind*: and that ye put on *the new man*, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24).

Few have understood that God is begetting *children*, that a *new spiritual life* is engendered within each human being who repents and receives God's Spirit. Plainly, it is “created.” Conversion-receiving the begetting of the Holy Spirit-is not merely a change in attitude or outlook; not turning over a new leaf, or making minor adjustments in life style. It is the creation of a *new creature* in Christ!

He wrote to the Colossians, “Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the *old man* with his deeds;

“And have put on the *new man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him...” (Colossians 3:9, 10).

Paul also wrote, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a *new creature*: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). The word for “creature” is used for “creation” in many instances.

In order to fully comprehend this marvelous truth, please download our free booklet *What is the Purpose of Human Life?* which explains the truth from your Bible about the “new creature in Christ” which is begotten by God's Holy Spirit in every human mind once one has repented, been baptized, and received from God’s ministers the laying on of hands.

What has this to do with the Feast of Tabernacles? *Everything!*

As Christ showed, though man can destroy this mortal, temporary *body*, he cannot destroy the *real you!*

Notice how the apostle Paul expounded this beautiful concept: “...we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

“But we have this treasure [and it is real *treasure*, the priceless truth of eternal life] in *earthen vessels* [our physical bodies], that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (2 Corinthians 4:6, 7).

Paul went on to explain, “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish [the aging process, and the ultimate fate awaiting every human being, death] yet the inward man [the new “creature in Christ”] is renewed day by day.

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

“While we look not of the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; [like a temporary domicile, or “booth” made of branches, leaves and other materials, which will soon perish] but the things which are not seen are eternal.” (2 Corinth 4:16-18).

Can anything be plainer?

The apostle Paul plainly wrote, “There are also celestial [heavenly] bodies, and bodies terrestrial [earthly, of the flesh]: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another ...so also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power

“It is sown a *natural body*; it is raised a *spiritual body*. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body ...as is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.

“And as we have borne the image of the *earthy*, we shall also *bear the image* of the heavenly” (1 Corinthians 15:40-49).

This human, physical body in which *we dwell* is only a temporary “tabernacle.”

While it is a little bizarre to contemplate, what of someone who has lost a limb? That individual, with all his or her character traits, personality, knowledge and intelligence is *still there!* As

horrifying as it is to contemplate, there are those who have lost *all four limbs*. Yet, they are still *there*; the person is still here, though missing limbs.

You see, your personality, your innermost being, where your decision making powers reside, where your deepest and innermost thoughts dwell, where your moral *character* lies, is in your *mind*!

God's Holy Spirit *does not* come into our elbow, or our big toe, or our femur or clavicle. God's Holy Spirit comes into, and unites with the human spirit that dwells in our *minds*! *This is the begettal process and this is where the real you dwells united with the Holy Spirit developing righteous character in your temporary home to eventually dwell in your permanent home in the Kingdom of God with your new body!* Almighty God placed His life-giving Spirit within a human mind, uniting it with the "human spirit" to become a "new creature in Christ," He reproduces His "children" after HIS, God's, *kind*!

Look how plainly Paul puts this beautiful truth: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption [Lit. sonship!], whereby we cry, 'Abba,' Father.

*"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:*

*"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ..." (Romans 8:14-16).*

This is the true meaning and purpose of the whole feast of Tabernacles. Here is a summary of the analogy:

The ancient physical nation of Israel was to dwell in booths during the Feast of Booths to commemorate the fact that they were once pilgrims living in tents while waiting to inherit the physical Promised Land.

As Christians having the Holy Spirit, we see the spiritual analogy: We humans are temporary beings waiting to inherit the Kingdom of God. We are merely pilgrims in this present life. Human existence is just a time of preparation for eternity. Living in a temporary booth or dwelling during the Feast depicts the God's people dwelling in this life with the understanding and knowledge of this life by the Holy Spirit inside of us. The Feast is a time to rejoice that this life is not all there is and that in the Millennium everyone will realize this truth.

Israel dwelt in tabernacles in the wilderness. It was a time of trial and Testing, "And thou shalt remember [a command!] all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, *and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.*" (Deut 8:2-3) That is what God wants to find out. That is why we are mortal now. God is going to find out where we stand before we inherit eternal life. "And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; *that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.*" (v.3). what a lesson to learn while we are in our earthly tabernacles! The Christian is here for this

very reason to dwell in this spiritual wilderness for trial and testing, *and to live by the word of God!*

In a pillar of fire at night and a cloud by day God led them. They had to be always ready at a moment's notice – night or day - to pack up their temporary shelters and follow the cloud when it moved. “And ... whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed” (Num. 9:21).

Israel had to keep their eyes on that cloud and fire. “Or whether it were two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried . . . the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not: but when it [the cloud] was taken up, they journeyed” (verse 22). The Christian must keep their eyes on Jesus during this wilderness trek to prepare to forsake any and every earthly tie that would hinder us from obeying God. Are we ready to move on and forsake the things that make us sin? Staying in temporary dwellings portrays Israel's pilgrimage in the wilderness, our own pilgrimage as Christians in the present evil world.

### **The Harvest of God**

The Feast of Tabernacles is also called the Feast of the Ingathering of the harvest. Jesus told his disciples when he was about to send them on their missionary journey, “After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.

“Therefore said he unto them, *The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.*” (Luke 10:1-2).

He said again spiritually, “Say not ye, There are yet four months, and *then* cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; *for they are white already to harvest.*” (John 4:35). Clearly Jesus meant the harvest of people. God's chosen people are called the “harvest.” “The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom;” (Matthew 13:38). Jesus said he would “but gather the wheat into my barn” (Matthew 13:30).

As noted above the harvest during the time of the Feast of Tabernacles is, “the feast of ingathering, *which is* in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field. . . Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye *have gathered in the fruit of the land*, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days:” (Ex 23:16; Lev 23:39).

The Feast of Tabernacles depicts the time when Jesus will gather his saints, the harvest of God by a resurrection and “we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess 4:17). We will dwell in the kingdom of God. The book of Revelation reveals, “And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud *one* sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

“And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: *for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.*”

“And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.” (14:14-16). Then verses 17 through 19 depicts the harvest of the wicked that shall go through the wrath of God as Jesus said in his parable would happen.

### The Last Great Day of the Feast

The Bible mentions the “eighth” day of the Feast. There is not a lot said about this eighth day but what we can glean from the Bible shows something that is highly significant.

In Leviticus 23 it says this, “Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD *seven days*: on the *first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath.*” (v.39). Notice the first day there is a “Sabbath” and then “*the eighth day shall be a Sabbath.*” Again Numbers 29:12, 35, “And on the fifteenth day of the seventh month ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work, and ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days... *On the eighth day ye shall have a solemn assembly: ye shall do no servile work therein.*” Clearly there is an eighth and separate day *after* the Feast of Tabernacles, Edersheim correctly observes that “the Eighth Day, though *closely connected with the Feast of Tabernacles, formed no part of that feast*, as clearly shown by the differences in the sacrifices and the ritual, and by the circumstances that the people no longer lived in ‘booths.’” (Alfred Edersheim (note 4), p. 234).

In the New Testament this last day is mentioned in the Gospel of John, “*In the last day, that great day of the feast*, Jesus stood and cried, saying, *If any man thirst*, let him come unto me, and drink.

“He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

“(But this *spake he of the Spirit*, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)” (7:37-39). Jesus Christ gave us a shadowy type of the meaning of this Last Great Day from His inspiring invitation to repentance made on that very day during His earthly ministry.

Notice how Jesus made it clear that “*any man*” was being invited to come to Christ! Surely, this open invitation to all, including *Gentiles* presaged the meaning of this Last Great Day. When does this happen when all peoples that have come and gone and never knew Jesus, and the truth of God? At the Great white throne Judgment!

The Feast of Tabernacles is seven days, this pictures the Millennial reign of Jesus. The Eighth day of the feast as noted above is a separate feast, *after* the feast of Tabernacles. In the Great White Throne Judgment this takes place, “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection.” (Rev 20:5).

Jesus plainly said there is a resurrection unto *life* and a resurrection unto “judgment.” (John 5:25-29). “Damnation” should read “Judgment.” (See Vincent Word Studies).

But judgment is not *sentencing*! The “rest of the dead” includes the entirety of the human race who are *not* among the “dead in Christ.”

And who does this include? It includes the vast majority of all human beings who have ever lived and died from Adam until the present! It includes the hundreds of millions of China, India, many other Asian nations such as Japan, Bangladesh, Korea, Taiwan, etc. It includes the vast multitudes of the world where paganism, animism, heathenism and idolatry—yes, and “professing” Christianity has been living in deception! (Revelation 12:9).

This last, great resurrection brings perhaps more than six billion people out of their graves!

It is a staggering, stupendous event!

All of these virtually countless human beings of so many races and nations will be resurrected at the end of the millennial reign of Christ, and will be given a glorious opportunity for salvation, at last! They will be given the Holy Spirit and understand and given the knowledge of Salvation just like the Christian today, “If any man [all people that never knew Jesus] thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.”

This is what is pictured by the “Last Great Day.” It logically follows immediately after the Feast of Tabernacles, which foreshadows, in many ways, the Kingdom of God.

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life*: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.” (Rev 20:11-12). These “books” which are opened mean nothing more than *biblos*, the Greek word for “book,” or “books.” It is only when the word “holy” is placed with the word “book” that it connotes the Bible. These “books” which are open, out of which these billions of human beings are to be judged, are nothing more than the *books of the Bible*, the same books which are judging the Church of God today. God’s Word plainly states that the church is being judged now (1 Peter 4:17).

This time of Judgment is a time of correction not of sentencing, “*Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction.*” (Habakkuk 1:12). The Time when God corrects the ways of men and shows them to walk in his ways.

Since God is consistent, and says He “changes not,” and the Bible says Jesus Christ is “the same, yesterday, today and forever,” we know that God’s master plan for salvation will not *change*.

This vast multitude from all of the human family will receive a one hundred year lifespan (Isaiah 65:20-25), during which they will experience the incredible blessings and benefits of living on a

Perfect earth which has been under God’s own divine rulership for *one thousand years!*

It is *then*, in that climate and at that time, that these countless millions of Asians, Africans, and so many more will finally be given a *thorough* education in God’s marvelous truth, and will be required to *choose* whether to obey God, repent of their sins and receive God’s Holy Spirit, or to

rebel and force Almighty God to destroy them. (*Read our booklets on the Resurrections and Life after death for more details*)

### **Feast of Tabernacles in the Book of Revelation**

The vision of the Feast of Tabernacles in Revelation 7 fulfills an important function. The countless multitude of the redeemed standing before the throne with palm branches and celebrating how the Lord led them out of “great tribulation” (Rev 7:14) provided Christians with the needed reassurance that God would see them through their tribulation to a glorious destiny.

John and his Christian readers experienced the tension of living in tribulation while at the same time rejoicing for the eschatological salvation which had already been won. The booths, which once symbolized how the Lord providentially protected the Israelites through their wandering into the Promised Land, now served to portray how the Lord was leading His followers to the Eternal Promised Land where God would shelter them eternally with His glorious presence.

None of the titles of the Feasts appear in the book of Revelation. But the Feasts are portrayed in this book and is evident. The reason why they are not mention is that the focus in Revelation is not on how the feast should be observed in the churches, but *on what the feast represents for Christians* who, like the Israelites of old, are journeying to the heavenly Canaan.

Early Christians *understood* the setting of Revelation 7:1-17 to be the Feast of Tabernacles. Support for this conclusion is provided by the use of the Greek noun *skene* (English “tent”) and verb *skenoo* (English “to live in a tent,” and by extension “to dwell”) in Revelation (7:15; 12:12; 13:6; 15:5; 21:2-3). In the heavenly vision of the redeemed standing before the throne of God, we read that “The One seated upon the throne *will erect a booth over them— skenosei*” (Rev 7:15). This personal translation, while slightly wooden, reflects the meaning of the Greek *skenoo* “to pitch a tent,” or “to erect a temporary shelter.” (See Wilhel Michaelis, “Skene,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI, 1971), vol 7, p. 368).

These terms are used in Revelation to indicate that Christians are only “sojourners” upon the earth, in contrast to the “inhabitants of the earth” (Rev 8:13; 11:10; 13:14; 17:2, 8) who have made this earth their home. As the booth became the symbol for Israel of the protection God accorded to their forefathers during their journeying through the wilderness, so the booth that God erects in the vision over the redeemed is now for Christians a symbol of His present and future protection.

The vision in Revelation 7 of the countless multitudes standing before the throne of God has been called “the Heavenly Feast of Tabernacles” by many scholars as the reason is that the vision contains several significant themes of the feast.

The great multitude standing before God’s throne is described as “clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands” (Rev 7:9). The palm branches of this vision are usually interpreted as being symbols of victory. In support of this view, reference is made to the fact that in classical antiquity the palm branch was a symbol of victory. Since Revelation draws heavily upon Old

Testament and Jewish background, it makes more sense to identify the palm branches with the Feast of Tabernacles.

The vision of God's people celebrating in the Feast of Tabernacles in Revelation 7:9-17 is strikingly similar to the vision of the New Jerusalem of Revelation 21:1 to 22:5. In both places we find references to the tabernacle of God over His people (Rev 7:15 cf. 21:3), the wiping away of every tear (Rev 7:17 cf. 21:4), and the spring or river of living water (Rev 7:17 cf. 21:6; 22:1-2, 17). In a sense, Revelation 21:1 to 22:5 represents the ultimate fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles when God will tabernacle over His people with His presence (Rev 21:3).

The foregoing analysis of Revelation 7:9-17 and 21:1 to 22:5, shows that the major themes of the Feast of Tabernacles are effectively used by John to portray the final ingathering of God's people in their harvest home. The redeemed are described as bearing palm branches which is a feature of Tabernacles (Rev 7:9). Their song "Salvation belongs to our God" (Rev 7:10) recalls the cry of *hosanna* of Psalm 118:25 which was used at the feast. The reference to God erecting a booth over His people with His presence (Rev 7:15) is a clear allusion to God's protection over Israel in the wilderness. The promise of "springs of living water" (Rev 7:17; 22:1) and of the continuous light of God's glory (Rev 21:23), are allusions to the two central ceremonies of the feast, water-pouring and the night illumination, both of which from the time of Zechariah had assumed a Messianic significance.

So the Feast of Tabernacles reveals the program and plan of God for his people, and to the entire earth and its salvation of all peoples. All the themes are Christ centered and New Testament oriented. Why the majority of Churches do not recognize it as a Christian holy day? I don't know, but eventually all Will.