

# SUKKOT

Trumpets; Atonement; Tabernacles

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## Exodus 34:23-24

Three times a year shall all your *memorial offerings* be brought before the Lord, the God of Israel. For I will destroy the nations from before you, and enlarge your borders; neither shall any man covet your land when you shall go up to appear before the Lord your God three times in a year.

## Deuteronomy 16:16-17

Three times in a year shall all your *memorial gifts* be brought before the Lord your God in the place which He shall choose;

1. in the feast of unleavened bread [Pesach-Passover]
2. in the feast of weeks [Shavuot-Pentecost]
3. in the feast of the tabernacles [Sukkot-Tabernacles] and you shall not appear before the Lord empty handed; but every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God which He has given you.

Sukkot is one of the three pilgrimage festivals mandated by God in the Scriptures.

- **Leviticus 23** teaches that along with the weekly Sabbath day, the festival of **Pesach** [Passover as well as the seven days of unleavened bread], **Shavuot** [Pentecost], and **Sukkot** [Yom Teruah-Trumpets; Yom Kippur-Day of Atonement; and Tabernacles, along with the one day festival, Shemini Atzoreth-the Eighth Day] were to be observed every year as Feasts of the Lord--His feasts.

Each of the festivals are centered around an agricultural harvest, and as such, illustrate God's plan of salvation for all mankind.

- In spite of the fact that today, the Jewish people are the most visible people observing these festivals, the festivals are not necessarily Jewish.

- The text shows that these are 'Feasts of the Lord', given to all

twelve tribes of Israel, not just the Jews.

- Because of a person's belief in Jesus, the observance of these festivals is extended to them, since...

- If you are Messiah's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Galatians 3:29

In verse 2 of Leviticus 23, the Hebrew word for 'feast' is 'moed'. In Hebrew thought, a moed is likened unto an **appointment**.

- It's as if God Himself was taking time off from His duties to meet with us!

- It's sort of like a 'date'--a special time between God and His people.

Also in verse 2, we find the word 'convocation' which is translated from the Hebrew word 'mikrah'.

- This Hebrew word implies a reading, presumably of a historical event.

- It comes from another word that can mean 'rehearsal'.

- The Scripture is very clear that the Sabbath is a rehearsal of the Seventh Day of creation--when God rested from His work.

- The festivals are likewise rehearsals of God's 7000 year plan, culminating with the marriage of the Messiah to His Bride.

Leviticus 23:6 uses the word 'feast' for the translation of another Hebrew word 'chag'.

- This word implies an assembly.

- This word is derived from another Hebrew word which means 'to be giddy and to dance'.

- **Thus, God's festivals are to be happy occasions, a time for rejoicing in song, dance, good food, etc!**

Each year more and more 'Christians' are coming to the understanding that there is value in observing the festivals.

- In doing so, they see the Scriptures begin to open up and make greater sense.

- Let's embrace our heritage and share in the joy of observing the Festivals of our God!

**So, just what is Sukkot and how do we celebrate it?**

**Leviticus 23:33** discusses this festival as well as **Deuteronomy 16** and elsewhere.

- This fall festival takes place just after the fall harvest in Jerusalem.

- It was a yearly reminder of how God provided for the Israelites during their forty years in the wilderness--a time when God dwelled in their midst, fed them daily with bread from Heaven, caused their clothes to not wear out, and provided them with righteous judges.

- **This temporary time in the wilderness was a picture of the millennial Kingdom to come!**

In ancient times, the Israelite people would make pilgrimages to Jerusalem three times each year in order to observe the festivals.

- They would bring their offerings from the best of their crops and herds, along with the tithes of their increase.

- These were joyous times, since they reflected the blessings God had bestowed on a people who walked in His ways.

During the festival, the people would build small huts (sukkot) to live in.

- The people would enjoy shopping at the bazaars, visiting the numerous wineries, dining at the various inns, and fellowshiping with family and friends.

- They would also participate in the various activities taking place at the temple--listening to an inspired teacher, watching the priests perform their daily functions, taking part in the daily prayers, and of course offering their sacrifices and offerings.

At night, the official Temple services were finished, and the Temple took on another role.

- Each evening four poles containing four lights each were erected in the Court of Women just east of the Temple proper.

- Each light consisted of a large bowl of oil, and in each bowl were a number of wicks made from swaddling clothes, the worn out garments of the priests.

- When these lights were lit, it is said that they lit up the entire city of Jerusalem, making it, in effect, a 'shining light on a hill'!

- Under these lights, many people would congregate, dancing and rejoicing through the night.

The first and last days of the festival were considered 'Sabbaths'.

- On these days, as well as the weekly Sabbath, the stores and inns were closed.

- These days were spent resting and studying at the synagogue.

- There were specific readings for each of these days and most people could recite them from memory.

- Special events were taking place at the Temple, as additional sacrifices were made on these days.

The prophet Zachariah said that not only God's people, but **all mankind** would be required to come up to Jerusalem each fall and observe the festival of Tabernacles [[Zach. 14:15-19](#)].

- The penalty for not doing so would be that there would be no rain -in other words, famine.

- But, being that Sukkot is such a joyous occasion, why would a people not want to celebrate it?

[Colossians 2:16-17](#) tells us that these feasts and celebrations were a shadow of the things to come through Jesus Messiah and even though most Christians may not observe these holidays in the traditional Biblical sense, as we discover the significance of each feast, we will certainly gain a greater knowledge of God's Word, an improved understanding of the Bible, and a deeper relationship with our Lord.

- When the Jews celebrate Sukkot, they remember the 40 year journey of their ancestors in the wilderness and how God took care of them.

- As heirs of Abraham, we Christians, celebrate this joyous holiday remembering Father's protection, provision and faithfulness to us in the past year.

- There are many interesting customs associated with the celebration of Sukkot.

During Sukkot, two important ceremonies took place:

- The people carried torches around the temple, illuminating bright candelabrum along the walls of the temple to demonstrate that

the Messiah would be the light to the Gentiles.

- Also, the priests would draw water from the pool of Siloam and carry it to the temple where it was poured into a silver basin beside the altar.

- The priest would call upon the Lord to provide Heavenly water in the form of rain for their supply.

- During this ceremony, the people looked forward to the pouring out of the Holy Spirit--some records reference the day spoken of by the prophet Joel!

- Jesus attended the Feast of Tabernacles and spoke these amazing words on the last and greatest day of the Feast: 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.' (John 7:37-38)

- The next morning, while the torches were still burning Jesus said, 'I am the Light of the world; whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.' (John 8:12)

God gave the Biblical festivals to teach His people about His character and to help us understand His plan of salvation.

- When Jesus celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles He took the traditional elements of the celebration and applied them to His own life and mission to help the people understand who He is and what He offers. In order to fully understand Jesus' teaching here we need a bit of background. Moses instructed the people that the first day and the eighth day of the festival were to be special days of rest and set apart from the others.

- But the seventh day became known as 'the Great Day' and special observances and traditions were developed by the people.

- The most spectacular was the Water Drawing Ceremony. Imagine a whole parade of worshipers and flutists led by the priest to the pool of Siloam.

- The priest has two golden pitchers. One is for wine. He fills the other with water from the pool.

- As the flutes continue to play, a choir chants **Psalm 118**.

- The whole procession heads back to the Temple through the Water Gate.

- A trumpet sounds as the priest enters the Temple area.
  - He approaches the altar where two silver basins are waiting.
  - He pours wine into one of the basins as a drink offering to the Lord and water from the pool of Siloam into the other.
  - The whole ceremony, with the parade and the flutes and the singing, was such a joyful occasion that one of the ancient rabbis wrote 'Anyone who has not seen the water ceremony has never seen rejoicing in his life!'
  - The ceremony was to thank God for His bounty and to ask Him to provide rain for the crops in the coming year.
- As the rain falls to nourish the crops, so the Holy Spirit falls upon those who have identified with Jesus in His death and resurrection.

- It is that Spirit that refreshes us, and causes us to grow in grace and in faith.
- It is that Spirit that allows us to experience Immanuel, God with us!

Jesus' promise to give living water prompted even greater discussion and debate during the last day of the festival of Sukkot.

- The leaders grew angry because temple guards refused to arrest Jesus.
- Even when one of their own, Nicodemus, came to Jesus' defense, they still dismissed His claims saying, 'A prophet does not come out of Galilee.'

Apparently they forgot about Isaiah 9:1-2: There will be no more gloom for those who were in darkness. In the past He humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future He will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; of those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.

And that brings us to the second Sukkot symbol that Jesus used to point to Himself as the fulfillment of Scripture.

- God had indeed promised that a great light would shine out of Galilee.

- Jesus reminded His critics of that powerful and prophetic claim by using an image that would have been very fresh in the memories of all who heard: Light!

- You see, at the end of the first day of the Feast, the Temple was gloriously illuminated.

- According to the oral tradition of the Rabbis, gigantic candelabras stood within the court of the women

- Each of the four golden candelabras is said to have been 75 feet tall!

- Each candelabra had four branches and at the top of each branch there was a large bowl.

- Four young men bearing 10 gallon pitchers of oil would climb ladders to fill the four golden bowls on each candelabra and then the oil in those bowls were ignited.

Picture 16 beautiful blazes leaping toward the sky from these golden lamps.

- Remember that the Temple was on a hill above the rest of the city so the glorious glow was a sight for the entire city to see.

- In addition to the light, Levitical musicians played their harps, lyres, cymbals and trumpets to make joyful music to the Lord.

- What a glorious celebration!

- The light was to remind the people of how God's Shekinah glory had once filled His Temple.

- And He used that celebration to announce the fact, 'I AM the Light of the world! Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the Light of Life!' (John 8:12)

Many refused to have their own darkness exposed by that Light, but there were those who were drawn to the Light, whose hearts burned with the truth in the words that Jesus spoke.

And His light is still burning today.

- As Jewish people celebrate this festival, let's pray that they will come to know the One of whom all the festivals speak.

- Pray that the living water of Messiah, Jesus~will quench their

thirst and fill them with the very Spirit of the God of Israel.  
And let's celebrate the goodness, the greatness and the faithfulness of  
our God!