

# Truth for Today

*The Bible teaching radio programme*

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## The Seven Feasts of the LORD: The Feast of Tabernacles

At least three houses had stood upon that debris before World War II. All that remained of them in 1957 were their cellars. The whole area was strewn with loose stones and rusting sheets of corrugated iron. It was overgrown with grass and shrubs. It was a paradise for children's play. Explorers, Pirates, Cowboys and Indians and Tin-can Alley were just four of the regular joys of youngsters who clambered over its walls. However, one of the most exciting activities was the building of dens. Using the materials at hand, many structures of various shapes and sizes were formed by young children and what a great feeling of achievement accompanied the finished product!

This feeling must be matched in Jewish people at the time of Sukkot (their name for the Feast of Tabernacles). Their God had commanded that they should make booths following the harvest of corn and wine (see Deuteronomy 16:13-15). These booths were kinds of dens or tents in which they had to live for the seven days of the feast. It was, and is still, a time of great celebration and joy.

We find the following in Leviticus 23:41-43: "And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month. 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."

The main reason given for dwelling in booths was that every generation of the children of Israel would remember that God made their ancestors dwell in them when He delivered them from the land of Egypt so many years before. For a short period of time, they could experience just what it must have felt like to live that way in a desert scene for forty years.

The journey that Israel made from Egypt to the Promised Land was a journey that should have lasted only a few days. However, the LORD had His reasons for making it last for forty years. We read in Deuteronomy 8:2: "And thou shalt remember 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."

It is from this verse that we can see why the number "forty" represents a time of probation in the scriptures. The LORD desired His people to be humble and obedient. The wilderness was the place that He appointed to test them in these matters. His chosen people proved to be the opposite. They were proud and disobedient. Nevertheless, the LORD Himself was faithful throughout. The words of Jeremiah in Lamentations 3:22-23 are a witness to this: "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." Furthermore, the psalmist, Asaph, tells us that the LORD fed them according to the integrity of His heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of His hands (Psalm 78:72).

Fellow Christian, if the LORD tested the faithfulness of His people of old in this way, then there is no reason why He should not test us in a similar way. As we have been born again to be the children of God, then our God and Father expects us to be obedient. Since we are here representing Him, then we ought to be humble. If our lives are marked by pride and disobedience, then we can expect to be disciplined by the Father of spirits. In Hebrews 12:5-6 we read: "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

In Hebrews 12:5-6, we see that the same Father who loves us, disciplines us. In fact, He may use the equivalent of a scourge upon us if we continue in sin. The very fact that we are disciplined shows that we are His sons. The purpose for the chastening of a Christian is so that he might be a partaker of God's holiness. That is to say, to develop the purity of God within him so that practical fellowship with God is enhanced.

There is a word for society in these verses. First, if parents love their children they will discipline them. An undisciplined child is a spoiled child. Second, if we truly care for the children in our schools, then firm forms of discipline must be allowed. My own experience in schools shows that an increasing number of children from nursery age upwards have a total lack of respect for the adults who have charge over them. In my judgment, the reason for

this is that the so-called “deterrents” are ineffectual, time-consuming, bureaucratic and, often, result in members of staff being humiliated. Third, this belittling of authority spills out onto the streets. It also seeps into the courts where penal sentences do not always match the seriousness of the crimes committed. Thank the Lord, the day that the Feast of Tabernacles pictures is not far away. It is a day in which righteousness will reign and a time when justice will be executed perfectly.

In the previous feasts of the LORD we have seen the prophetic meanings brought out according to the scriptures. They run as follows:

- Passover (Leviticus 23:4) - The Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.
- Days of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:5-8) - the practical sanctification of the lives of believers so that they live lives marked by sincerity and truth (1 Corinthians 5:7-8)
- Pentecost (Leviticus 23:15-22) - the coming of God’s Holy Spirit into this world to indwell Christians and form the church. (Acts 2:1-4; John 14:17).
- The Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:23-25) - The call for Israel to return back to their land in preparation for the coming Messiah.
- The Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:26-28) - the time when Israel weeps for the One they wounded when He returns as King of kings and Lord of lords.
- The Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:33-35) - the 1,000 years reign of Christ when the Kingdom of God is seen on earth.
- The eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:35) speaks of the eternal scene. The day when there is a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness will dwell.

This Feast of Tabernacles took place after the corn and wine harvests. We know from the words of Jesus Himself that the harvest occurs at the end of the age (Matthew 13:39). In prophecy, the corn harvest refers to the gathering in of real believers (Matthew 13:30 and Revelation 14:14-20). This is the equivalent of all gathered in as part of the “First Resurrection”. This resurrection is characterised by life! (John 5:29). We read in Revelation 20:6: “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

On the other hand, the harvest of the grapes for wine speaks of the gathering of unbelievers for judgment (Revelation 14:17-20 and Revelation 19:15). This resurrection is characterised by damnation!

When the church, along with Old Testament believers, goes to be with Christ, the Lord’s prophetic clock for Israel starts again. Firstly, it will mark a time of relative peace (three and a half years) during which a special treaty is made with Israel; but this is soon broken. This, and the gross idolatry that follows, leads to the wrath of God being poured out upon this world for a further period of about the same length. Secondly, towards the end of that time of great tribulation, the Lord Jesus returns to take up the cause of Israel at the battle known as Armageddon (Revelation 16:16).

The seventh vial of Revelation 16:17-21 leads up to this personal intervention of Christ. It speaks of the most terrible topographical upheaval and the result is all that is great and stable will fall. The present “Credit Crunch” would be gauged as minor in comparison.

Details of the Battle of Armageddon are given in Revelation 19:11-21. The section begins with the words: “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True ...” (Revelation 19:11). The rest of the verses in the chapter go on to show how the enemies of Israel are destroyed.

Shortly after putting down these enemies, the Lord Jesus Christ binds Satan and sets up the millennial kingdom (Revelation 20:2-3). Following this judgment of the enemies of Israel, some time is spent in cleansing the land of human carcasses and weapons. As Satan is bound and the kingdom is being set up, another enemy of Israel, we believe to be Russia, makes a move. The latter had been backing the animosity of the “King of the North” against Israel; but now that king was one of those who had been defeated, Russia openly moves against Israel. Ezekiel 38 reveals how the Russian armies are destroyed. Ezekiel 38:22-23 state: “... I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD.” God simply destroys them using weapons from Nature itself.

The main focus of the millennial period is the relationship between Christ and Israel. During their return to the land, the nation once more will have been refined by persecution. Those who enter into the Kingdom of Christ do so under the New Covenant blessings. In Jeremiah 31:33, the LORD says, “But this shall be the covenant that I will make with

the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

Furthermore, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the “LORD of hosts”, shall reign gloriously. Isaiah 24:23 puts it this way: “Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the LORD of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.” It is then that the well known prophecy of Isaiah 9 is fully fulfilled: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isaiah 9:6-7).

The book of Isaiah is full of prophecies relating to this time. For example, Isaiah 49:13 speaks of the consolation that Israel receives from the LORD: “Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.”

Isaiah 54:8 shows how God had afflicted Israel, but with a view to their blessing. We read: “In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer.” The affliction is minute compared to the blessing that follows!

In Isaiah 56:7 we see the source of Israel’s joy: “Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.”

Again, in Isaiah, we read of the condition of Zion in that day: “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels” (Isaiah 61:10).

The Scriptures tell us a good deal about the conditions on the earth during the reign of Christ. Let’s take a look at twelve of them.

1. **Idolatry vanishes.** We read: “In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats” (Isaiah 2:20).
2. **The true God is known and worshipped.** Isaiah 11:9 reads: “... The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.” Later on in the same book, we find: “And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD” (Isaiah 66:23).
3. **The world will enjoy peace.** Isaiah 2:4 states: “And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”
4. **The fear of man and wild beast will be dispelled.** Ezekiel 34:25 reads: “And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.”
5. **Many nations are blessed along with Israel fulfilling God’s promise to Abraham that in him all the nations of the earth would be blessed (see Genesis 22:18).** Zechariah 2:10-11 reads: “Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD. And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee ...”
6. **True justice will be administered where necessary.** Isaiah 32:1 reminds us: “Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment.” This is supported by Hebrews 1:8: “But unto the Son God saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.”
7. **Animal behaviour is changed completely.** In Isaiah 11:6-7 we find: “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.”
8. **The curse on creation is lifted and the world will blossom.** In Amos 9:13 we find: “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed...”

9. **City streets will be calmed.** The LORD states in Zechariah 8:4-5: "There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof."
10. **There will be a general return to an agricultural way of life.** Micah 4:4 tells us: "But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it."
11. **Joy and rejoicing will fill this world.** In Psalm 97:1 we read: "The LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof."
12. **The average life span shall rise dramatically.** Someone one hundred years old will still be called a "child" (Isaiah 65:20).

In addition to these things, we can find the dominion and character of Christ's rule in many of the psalms. Psalm 72 is a prime example. During His reign, the righteous will flourish, oppression will cease and the poor and needy shall be filled. Kings will bow before Him and bring Him gifts. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. In fact, the land of Israel will initially stretch from the river of Egypt to the River Jordan and slightly beyond. But, as His reign develops, it will extend right across to the River Euphrates (Genesis 15:18).

In that day, Zion (representing all the faithful of Israel) shall be His earthly bride. We read in Jeremiah 23:6: "In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Yet, as a husband, He will share His name with Zion because, in Jeremiah 33:16, she also is called, "The LORD our Righteousness".

You might do well to ask, where does the church come into this. After all, she is the heavenly bride of Christ? We find the church represented as the holy city, Jerusalem, in Revelation 21:9-10: "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God..." A city always speaks of administration. The church will reign with Christ. Just as Adam was given a helpmeet in Eve, so the Lord Jesus will have a perfected helpmeet in the church. She will be seen in her wifely capacity.

The eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles brings in a new beginning. At the end of the thousand years' reign of Christ, the devil is loosed for a little while (Revelation 20:3). He stirs up kings and nations that have been subdued by the righteous sceptre of Christ to rebel against the LORD and His anointed in fulfilment of Psalm 2. They are all wiped out by fire from heaven (Revelation 20:10). The Son then hands the world back to God so that God may be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28).

It is at that point, we enter an eternal scene. Revelation 20:11 tells of the judgment of the wicked dead: "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." Also, there is no place in the new creation for the wicked. Sadly, Hell is their portion. However, there are places for the faithful. Peter tells us: "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13).

The Son of God Himself shall fold up the heavens that we know and God will form a new heavens and a new earth. It is then that the words of Revelation 21:3 will be fulfilled: "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." Praise the Lord! All believers, whether on the new earth or in heaven, will be "wholly joyful". Let it be so. Amen.

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