

Place: Lurgan Baptist: 26:2:2008

Reading: Leviticus 23:33-36, 39-44

FOCUS ON THE FEASTS

8. THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

The feast of Tabernacles was the seventh and final feast completing the sacred cycle of the Lord's appointed times. It was a fitting conclusion to the entire series of seven, indeed (23:36) refers to it as " *a solemn assembly,*" or " *the closing assembly.*" In its prophetic foreview and chronological arrangement in God's calendar it brought to completion God's clear purposes and plans in redemption for both the church and the nation. Now as we have seen each of these seven feasts are both commemorative and prophetic. In Israel's history the feast of tabernacles commemorated,

- ***Their LIBERTY:***

It reminded them of their first night as a redeemed people. When they were brought out of Egypt by the blood of the Lamb and the Hand of the Lord, they encamped on the first night at a place called Succoth. (Ex 12:37) The word " *Succoth,*" means " *booths, huts or tabernacles,*" and for forty years they had no permanent shelter.

- ***Their PROSPERITY:***

For it was also known as " *the feast of ingathering.*" (Ex 34:22) Israel were an agricultural and pastoral people, and this feast was kept after the harvest was gathered in. Look if you will at (23:39) It was a thanksgiving week, as the people thanked the Lord for His goodness and faithfulness. It was a time when

- ***Their FELICITY***

Their joy was abounding. " *And ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days.*" (23:40) The agricultural year was finished and the feast was virtually a harvest festival. (Deut 16:13) In later years it became the custom to make presents to members of the family, to spend lavishly on gala dishes, to provide for poor neighbours and so on. It was a time of rejoicing for the blessing of the harvest. It also spoke to them of,

- ***Their TRANQUILITY:***

No work was to be performed during the festival, but offerings were to be brought to God each day. (Num 29:12-40) It was to be a period of rest and peace, a total absence of fear from enemy attack. (Zech 2:1-5) Moreover, this feast was to be an expression of,

- ***Their UNITY:***

For all that were Israelite born were to celebrate the feast by dwelling in booths. (23:42) So as you think about the feast of tabernacles I want you to allow your mind to gather around these truths. Liberty, Prosperity, Felicity,

Tranquillity, and Unity. Of course, as we shall see, this feast is not only commemorative, it is prophetic and it looks forward to an era of peace and prosperity when “*Jesus shall reign in righteousness.*” Now what shall we say about this feast? Well, this feast of tabernacles was,

(1) A TIME TO REFLECT ON THE PAST

It is a good thing to sit down, look back and remember the goodness of the Lord. Over and over again in the book of Deuteronomy the people were told to remember. In effect Moses said, “*Now you remember, you were servants, slaves in bondage, in the land of Egypt and God delivered you with a mighty hand and with great power.*” Time and again Moses said, “*Now, when you move into the land of Canaan, when you live in houses you didn’t build, when you drink from wells you didn’t dig, when you eat from fields and trees, that you didn’t plant or cultivate, remember this, its God who has given this to you.*” Look if you will at (Deut 5:15 6:10-12 15:15 16:12 24:18-22) John Newton never allowed himself or the world to forget the super-abounding and sovereign grace of God that stopped and rescued him on his wild career.

Throughout life, as a constant reminder, he kept a text of Scripture hanging above the mantelpiece in his study, “*Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee.*” (Deut 15:15) When he was an old man he complained to William Jay of Bath that his faculties were failing him. “*My memory,*” he said “*is nearly gone, but I remember two things, that I am a great sinner and that Christ is a*

great Saviour.” My do you ever take time to reflect on the grace of God? To think of what you were, before Christ redeemed you. Many believers go to great lengths to hide their humble origins and sinful past. Sometimes we are deceived into believing that if we hide the true facts about our past, others will think more highly of us, especially if the present is more respectable than the past. Isaiah gives us some great advice when he says, “*Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.*” (Is 51:1) My you think of what you were, and what you are, does God’s grace not stimulate your gratitude? You see, the feast of tabernacles reminded this nation of two things. It reminded them of,

(a) **THE PROVISION OF GOD:**

For a whole week the people were to live in rudely constructed booths or tabernacles made of branches of trees. Why? Well, these tabernacles were to serve as a reminder of the forty years spent by their forefathers in tents in the wilderness. (23:43) This feast was designed to keep fresh before succeeding generations how the Lord provided for His people during the forty years of wandering from Egypt to the promised land. It is still the custom among some Jews to bring branches into the house and to construct these “**Sukkah**,” of branches and to eat and sometimes sleep in these temporary shelters. Tabernacles was intended to keep sharp before their minds how God provided for them during the wilderness wanderings. They had manna for their food, they had water for their drink, and they had God for their company.

Do you ever take time to look back and reflect on God's faithfulness to you, God's provision for you, God's blessings upon you. It is easy to forget God's past mercies is it not ? I mean like Israel we moan, groan, and complain, instead of sitting down like David in thanksgiving for God's goodness and faithfulness to us.

(b) THE PRESERVATION OF GOD:

God fed them, God kept them and God led them “ *into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills. A land of wheat and barley, and vines and fig trees, and pomegranates, a land of oil olive and honey, a land wherein thou shalt eat thy bread without scarceness.* ” (Deut 8:7-9) Jewish tradition added two practices to the feast of tabernacles not recorded in Leviticus. For one thing they used to go down to the Pool of Siloam in Jerusalem, draw out some water and pour it out as a reminder that God gave them water in the wilderness. The Lord Jesus made use of this practice when He said, “ *If any man thirst, let him come unto me.* ” (Jn 7:37) Also, they had four huge candlesticks in the Temple Court, and every night during that week, they were lighted. It was a reminder of the pillar of fire that guided Israel in the wilderness. The Lord Jesus also made use of this when He said, “ *I am the light of the world.* ” (Jn 8:12)

So these people could look back and be thankful for the provision and preservation of God. They once lived in booths not they lived in houses. They once had to wander, now they were settled down. They once had to ask for

water, now they had plenty of water. (1) This feast reminding them that everything they had came from the bountiful hand of God. We need to remember this as a nation. Do we not often take for granted the sacrifices that many made that we might enjoy liberty to worship ? We need to remember this as a local church. Sometimes the younger generation in a church takes everything for granted, the church buildings, the ministry, and the testimony. But you should remember that people sacrificed, worked, and gave that the building and ministry might be there. Don't take the pastoral ministry for granted, don't take the practical ministry for granted, don't take the personal ministry for granted. Someone paid a price. Look back and be grateful for God's past mercies. (1)

(2) A TIME TO REJOICE IN THE PRESENT

Look if you will at (23:40) One of the very practical lessons we can learn from this feast is this. God wants His people to have joy. Some people don't believe that. They think that God is somewhat of a “ *celestial spoilsport,* ” and that He sits in heaven trying to figure out ways to make folk miserable. Of course, that simply is not true. God wants His people to have joy. “ *Ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days.* ” (23:40) Now I want to notice,

(a) WHAT THIS JOY FOLLOWS:

You see, joy always follows cleansing. First the Day of Atonement, and then the Feast of Tabernacles. On the Day

of Atonement they expressed affliction of soul. (23:27)
A deep sorrow over their sins. You see, until their sins had been taken care of they could not rejoice. Sin robs of joy but joy follows cleansing. Do you recall that David sinned ? And as a consequence he lost his joy ? David said, “ *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.* ”
(Ps 51:12) ***You see, when God saved you, He did not fix you up where you could not sin anymore, He just fixed you up where you could not sin and enjoy it.*** The most miserable man on earth is not an unsaved man, the most miserable man on earth is a man out of fellowship with God, a man who is a Christian, but who has sin unconfessed and unforgiven. He’s far more miserable than a man without Christ, for he’s lost his joy. Do you know what God’s Word says ? “ *Rejoice in the Lord,* ” do you know what the next word is ? “ *Always.* ” My if the joy of the Lord is not there it’s because there is sin your life and mine. Do you know something ? There’s one thing that can take the joy out of your heart ? Not two, or three, or four, but one. What ?

Sin. Furthermore, only one kind of sin. Would you like to know what kind ? Yours. David said, “ *make me to hear joy and gladness.* ” (Ps 51:8) Do you remember when the prodigal returned home, confessed his sin, and the father forgave and welcomed. Do you know what we read ? “ *And they began to be merry.* ” (Lk 15:24) You see, God wants you to have joy and joy follows cleansing. (a)

(b) WHAT THIS JOY FOSTERS:

Joy follows cleansing and joy fosters sacrifice. Do you

know something ? During the Feast of Tabernacles, 199 different animals were sacrificed. The Book of Numbers (Ch 29) gives you the details of this. Seventy bullocks would be sacrificed, and 14 rams and 98 lambs and seven goats. And then on the eighth day there would be one bullock and one ram and one goat and seven lambs. This is a total of 199 animals. You see, when you are joyfully thankful to the Lord sacrifice is no problem. The Lord says, “ *I have been good to you, now you must share.* ” “ *Honour the Lord with thy substance.* ” (Prov 3:9) My when we are happy in the Lord, rejoicing in His goodness, it is no problem at all to share what God gives to us. (2 Cor 8:9) I wonder “ *Why did the Lord stop with 199 animals ? Why not an even 200 sacrifices ?* ” Do you know something ? You and I are supposed to be sacrifice number 200. Paul says, “ *I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service.* ” (Rom 12:1) And when our all is given to Him its no problem to sacrifice for others.
(1) (2)

(3) A TIME TO RELATE TO THE FUTURE

For this Feast of Tabernacles looks forward to an era of peace and prosperity when the Lord Jesus shall reign in His millennial kingdom. (Zech 14:19) Do you know something ? The greatest joy is yet to come. Now I have stressed and underlined the fact that the seven feasts of the Lord present God’s prophetic programme. God’s calendar begins with the Passover: the death of Christ. Then the Feast of Unleavened Bread: the cleansing of our lives. The

Feast of Firstfruits pictures the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Pentecost speaks of the Coming of the Holy Spirit. Now what lies in the future ? The Feast of Trumpets, the gathering together of God's earthly people Israel, and God's heavenly people, the church. Then the Day of Atonement when Israel shall be cleansed of her sins and look upon Him whom they have pierced. Then shall come the glorious Feast of Tabernacles when Israel shall enter into her kingdom. Now I want you to notice **the Timing** of the Feast of Tabernacles. Look if you will at (Deut 16:13) Now the key word here is “ **after.**” Israel's harvest consisted of two parts, the corn and the wine. When our Lord was here on earth He said, “ *Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.* ” (Jn 12:24) Christ was that corn or grain of wheat. He did die, and then He rose victorious from among the dead. In the end of God's dealings with man Christ will have gathered His own to Himself (Rev 20:4-5)

But the wine, the vintage of the earth (Rev 14:18-19) and the treading of the wine press of God's wrath refers to the gathering of Christ's enemies for judgement. One day the Lord Jesus will return in power and in great glory step into the arena of Armageddon and trample down the beast and those gathered to his standards. *Now after these things have taken place, then the Millennial Reign of Christ will begin.* You see, the superworld can never materialise until the advent of God's superman. (Rev 19:11) The kingdom cannot be founded in the absence of the king. King Edward the Seventh once graced with his presence for the first time, a session of the Society of British Artists. He

asked the President, “ *What is the history of this society ?* ” Without a moments hesitation the President replied, “ *It begins today when your Majesty condescends to visit us.* ” So of this coming superworld we may say “ *It will commence with the Coming of the King.* ” Now let's consider this era of peace, this kingdom, this superworld that will come on planet earth. Consider,

(a) **THE NAME OF IT:**

The doctrine of the millennium has been assailed in some quarters because of the absence of the actual word “ *millennium,* ” in our Bibles. Of course the same objection might be raised against the doctrine of the Trinity because the word “ *trinity,* ” is not to be found in all the Scriptures. Yet all believers are agreed that the doctrine of the trinity is in the Bible all the same. The word “ *millennium,* ” comes from the Latin “ *mille,* ” a thousand and “ *annus,* ” a year and this is the official theological term for the 1000 year earthly reign of Jesus Christ. We read in (Rev Ch 20) of those who live and reign with Christ a thousand years. The Old Testament is full of references to the millennium under the idea of a kingdom, in fact a good part of Old Testament Scripture is taken up with the glorious future Messianic Kingdom when Christ will be King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

During the American Civil War a delegation from the deep south called on President Lincoln and spread out before him on the table a map of the United States of America, across which a line had been drawn. “ *South of that line,* ” the spokesman told him, “ *it will right for people to have*

slaves, north of that line it will be illegal.” Abraham Lincoln had a huge hand. Disregarding the arbitrary line, he laid his hand broadly on the map covering it completely. He said, “*I claim it all in the name of freedom.*” In the Millennium the nail pierced hand of the true Messiah will be placed on this planet. Christ will claim the whole world in the name of freedom up to now unknown. For one thousand years our blessed Lord will reign on this earth, which once rejected Him. (a)

(b) THE NEED OF IT:

You know everything nowadays is said to be super. We have “*superstars,*” “*supermarkets,*” “*supertrains,*” “*supersonic,*” super this and super that. But the one thing we have not got is a “*superworld.*” Is such a world possible? The Bible says “**yes.**” Dr. John Walvoord suggests “*that the millennium will be God’s answer to the longing for perfect government, righteousness, equity, economic prosperity, and deliverance from insecurity and fears which plague the modern world.*” I am suggesting to you that the millennium is necessary,

• **TO ANSWER THE PEOPLE OF GOD:**

What has been the prayer on the lips of God’s people down through the years? “*Thy kingdom come,*” (Matt 6:10) Now we when we think of a kingdom, our minds go “*The Magic Kingdom of Disneyland,*” or something like that. The word “*kingdom,*” conjures up thoughts of large estates, pomp and ceremony. But if we replace the word “*kingdom,*” with the word “*reign,*” we

make the petition clearer. To pray “*Thy kingdom come,*” is to pray for Christ to reign. Now I want you to notice that the request “*thy kingdom come,*” is interpreted as to its nature and location by this phrase. “*Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.*” Some years ago in Jamaica two believers one white, one black were discussing Amillennialism. This is a view that teaches there will be no literal thousand year reign and that the New Testament Church inherits all the promises and prophecies of Old Testament Israel. Well, the white man was defending Amillennialism while the black man was opposing it. As the debate continued reference was made to this petition. “*Do you really mean to tell me,*” said the black brother “*that conditions being what they presently are in this island, that God’s will is being done here as it is in heaven.*” The white man made no response. But bless God, there is coming a day when His will be done perfectly on earth as it is in heaven. Some day Christ will return to answer the untold millions of times these three little words have wafted their way to heaven. “*Thy kingdom come.*” (a)

• **TO REDEEM THE CREATION OF GOD:**

Human sin brought a curse on creation. From that point on man’s paradise became a wilderness. The roses suddenly contained thorns. The Lord said to Adam, “*Cursed is the ground for thy sake. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee.*” (Gen 3:17-18) But the millennium will see the removal of that curse. Creation will be delivered from the bondage of corruption. (Rom 8:21) And “*instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and*

instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree.”
(Is 55:12-13) My creation will be beautified when Christ’s master hand holds the sceptre.

- **TO FULFIL THE WORD OF GOD**

Without a millennium the Covenants that God made with Israel will fail to find fulfilment which is the same as saying that God would break His word to His people.

1. There is the Abrahamic Covenant:

When God promised Abraham that his seed Israel would become a mighty nation (Gen 12:1-3 22:17-18) and that his seed Israel would some day own Palestine forever.
(Gen 12:7 13:14-17 17:8)

2. There is the Davidic Covenant:

That from David would come an everlasting throne, an everlasting kingdom, and an everlasting king.
(2 Chron 13:5 2 Sam 7:12)

3. There is the New Covenant:

(Jer 31:31-34 Is 42:6 Heb 8:7-12) Do you know something ? There must be a literal kingdom on earth if God is going to fulfil these Old Testament covenants.

- **TO HONOUR THE SON OF GOD**

You see, all Bible prophecy concerning the Lord Jesus is

summarised in on tiny verse by the apostle Peter when he speaks of “ *the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.* ” (1 Pet 1:11) Here Peter connects Christ first coming (the sufferings) with His second coming (the glory) Here is the suffering, glory story of the Saviour. And when a sinner repents and becomes part of the body of Christ he also shares in this destiny of glory. Paul says “ *If we suffer we shall also reign with Him.* ” (Rom 8:18 2 Tim 2:12) Walter Scott says, “ *The millennium will be necessary to witness God’s publicly expressed delight in Christ. God’s answer to the 33 years of suffering and reproach borne by the blessed One.* ” Think of it, only a few hundred yards from where He wore the crown of thorns He will wear the crown of glory.

(c) **THE NATURE OF IT:**

What will the 1000 year reign of Christ be like ?

- **IT WILL BE A LITERAL REIGN:**

There is to be a literal millennium. Look if you will at (Dan 2:44) Now this chapter records the mysterious dream that Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon had. He saw a panoramic view of Gentile world power from the days of the Babylonian Empire until the final days of Gentile power and to the time when the Lord Jesus will establish His kingdom on earth. Now look at this metallic image. The head of gold represented Babylon. The chest and arms of silver equals Medo-Persia. The stomach, and thighs of brass equals Greece. The legs, feet of iron and clay equals Rome.

Question. *Were these kingdoms literal* ? Then Christ's kingdom is literal. Jerusalem will become the worship centre of the world. " *For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.* " The city will be named " *Jehovah-Shammah,* " meaning " *The Lord is there.* " (Is 2:1-4 Ez 48:35)

- **IT WILL BE A UNIVERSAL REIGN:**

Zechariah says, " *The Lord shall be king over all the earth.* " (14:9) The Psalmist says, " *He shall have dominion from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth ... Yea all kings shall fall down before Him, all nations shall serve Him.* " (Ps 72:8-11) My

**Jesus shall reign where're the sun
Doth His successive journeys run
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore
Till moons shall wax and and no more**

- **IT WILL BE A MORAL REIGN**

Think back with me to the Feast of Tabernacles, for this feast cannot be dissociated from the earthly reign of Christ. Look if you will at (Zech 14:4, 9 16-19) Do you recall what the major theme of the Book of Leviticus is ? Holiness. The word " *holy,* " appears no less than 91 times. Now look at (Zech 14:20-21) Do you know what will be popular then, that's not popular now ? Holiness.

- **IT WILL BE AN EXCEPTIONAL REIGN**

There will be wonders in the millennium. There will be a wonder in the **National World** as war ceases and peace prevails " *nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn any more.* " (Is 2:4) There will be a wonder in the **Animal World** as " *the wolf shall dwell with the lamb.* " (Is 11:6) There will be a wonder in the **Physical World.** (is 65:20) There will be a wonder in the **Horticultural World,** indeed even already in Israel the desert is blossoming as the rose. (Is 35:1-2)

- **IT WILL BE A GOVERNMENTAL REIGN**

Do you know something ? When we reach the millennium this planet will have had three world rulers. The one who now controls its affairs is " *the god of this world.* " (2 Cor 2:4) The next ruler will claim to be God. " *He (Antichrist) sitteth in the temple showing himself that he is god.* " (2 Thes 2:4) The third world ruler really will be God. John says, " *And I saw heaven opened and behold a white horse and He that sat upon him was called the Word of God.* " (Rev 19:11) The Psalmist says, " *Yet have I set My King upon my holy hill of Zion.* " (2:6) Did you know that in the course of human history this world has been ordered and controlled by almost every conceivable system of government.

Autocratic: government by a dictator

Aristocratic: government by the best people

Bureaucratic: government by civil servants

Plutocratic: government by wealth

Democratic: which Abraham Lincoln described as

" *government of the people, by the people and for the*

people.” Now all of these administrative systems have been tried and not one of them has produced a superworld. Only kind of government will do that. Christocratic: that is government by Jesus Christ. My *the greatest joy is yet to come. Christ will reign and this final feast shall be celebrated.* Don't fix your heart on the joys of this world because they will not last. Don't get discouraged because you are passing some through difficulty, it will not last either. *“ Weeping may endure for a night but joy cometh in the morning.”* (Ps 30:5) The best is yet to come. Our Lord Jesus is going to come. One day He shall establish His kingdom and we shall reign with Him. Did you know that the little word **“ must,” is** associated with four great events of human history. *“ Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.”* (Jn 3:14) *“ For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.”* (Jn 20:9) *“ Whom the heaven must receive.”* (Acts 3:21) *“ For He must reign.”* (1 Cor 15:25) ***Then the Majesty on high will become the Majesty most nigh.***

*Oh, the joy to see Thee reigning
Thee my own beloved Lord
Every tongue Thy name confessing
Worship, honour, glory blessing
Brought to thee with glad accord
Thee, my Master and my Friend
Vindicated and enthroned
Unto earth's remotest end
Glorified adored and owned*

“ For He must reign.”