

Feast of Tabernacle---Sukkot

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Last week David shared the message on the Feast of Tabernacle, and how it relates to the Old Testament and to our lives. As mentioned last week, Sukkot 2023 begins at sunset on September 29, 2023, and ends at nightfall on October 6, 2023.

Today I would like to share what the Tabernacle represents to Judeo-Christian and to Jewish Christians.

【Leviticus 23:34】 ³⁴“Say to the Israelites: ‘On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the Lord’s Festival of Tabernacles begins, and it lasts for seven days.

The Hebrew word *sukkah* is roughly translated into English as “tabernacle” or “booth.” Neither of those terms fully conveys what a sukkah is. A sukkah is simply a temporary structure. It is not a permanent building but is made only to serve a specific purpose. So what is the Feast of Sukkot? By the way, sukkot is simply the plural form of the word sukkah.

Let us see what Sukkah represents and what the feast means.

The Sukkah Represents God Dwelling With Mankind

The sukkah is a picture of God’s desire for a relationship with mankind.

【Exodus 13:21】 ²¹ By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light so that they could travel by day or night.

God’s desire is, and has always been, to be close to His children. As the nation of Israel travelled through the wilderness, God was making the journey along with them.

【Exodus 25:8-9】 ⁸“Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. ⁹ Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.

Eventually, God instructed the people to build a tabernacle for Him, and He would let His presence rest there. The sukkah reminds us of this tabernacle in the wilderness.

【Revelation 21:3】 ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

Likewise, when the time comes for the new heaven and the new earth, God will be our eternal home and He will build His tabernacle among His people once again.

The Sukkah Represents Our Dependence Upon God

【Leviticus 23:42-43】 ⁴² Live in temporary shelters for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in such shelters ⁴³so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in temporary shelters when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.”

As God led Israel through the wilderness, He provided manna to eat, and water to drink, and had them dwell in tabernacles for shelter. To serve as a reminder of this great provision, He instructed the people to build the sukkah for future generations.

【Deuteronomy 29:5】 ⁵ Yet the Lord says, “During the forty years that I led you through the wilderness, your clothes did not wear out, nor did the sandals on your feet.

When the people of Israel wandered for 40 years through the wilderness, their journey was difficult. Whenever God directed them to move, they moved, and there was no long-term plans. I doubt there were plantations, like vegetable gardens or fruit trees. Their survival depended solely on God.

【Deuteronomy 2:7】 ⁷ The Lord your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He has watched over your journey through this vast wilderness. These forty years the Lord your God has been with you, and you have not lacked anything.

So great was His provision that even after forty years of wandering in the Wilderness, the clothes on their backs and sandals on their feet did not show signs of wear.

While we are on earth, let us depend on Him, He will provide all our needs, He will take care of us.

In Israel today, families of Jews and Christians are coming together to honour this feast. They are building three-sided structures (sukkahs/booths) to eat and sleep in for the prescribed seven days. These structures have open roofs except for a few leafy branches over the beams. The reason for the openness is to highlight the fact that God, rather than any man-made covering, was their protector for those forty years, and that He still is.

The sukkah is a reminder of God’s provision in our lives, not only in the physical sense but spiritually as well.

【Luke 12:22-23】 ²² Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. ²³ For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes.

【John 6:35】 ³⁵ Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

He has given us the true manna, which is His Son. Through Jesus, we will never be spiritually thirsty. And we can always count on God to be our shelter (Psalm 91:2).

The Sukkah Represents: A Wedding Canopy (Chuppah)

In a traditional Jewish wedding ceremony, the bride and groom are married underneath a canopy, called a chuppah. After the wedding, the bride and groom spend a seven-day honeymoon inside the

wedding chamber, which was a special room built by the groom. After this time, the bride and groom come out and celebrate with their guests with an extravagant marriage supper.

The sukkah reminds us that we are the bride of Jesus.

【John 14:3】 ³ **And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.**

He has left to prepare a place for us like preparing a wedding chamber. While He is away, we, as His bride, are to be preparing ourselves for His imminent return.

【Revelation 19:7】 ⁷ **Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.**

As Jesus's Bride, we will someday enjoy a jubilant marriage supper with the Lamb of God. The Feast of Tabernacles is the feast that God commanded Israel to rejoice. It is also the only feast mentioned specifically that everyone will be required to attend forever (Zechariah 14:6)

Many of Jesus' parables are about how we are to be preparing for His return and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

【Revelation 19:9】 **Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" And he added, "These are the true words of God."**

The sukkah should cause us to consider whether we are ready for His second coming.

The Sukkah Represents Our Relationship With the World

The sukkah is, by definition, a temporary structure. As the people of Israel travelled through the Wilderness, their homes needed to be able to be taken down and moved as God led them. Likewise, the sukkah is to be taken down after the Feast of Tabernacles was over each year, ready to be set up again the next year.

【2 Corinthians 4:17-18】 ¹⁷ **For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.** ¹⁸ **So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.**

The Bible tells us that our bodies and the world around us are not going to last. The sukkah reminds us that we should live our lives as those who were in the Bible.

The Sukkah Represents Being Joyful

The Feast of Tabernacles holds a special place among the Appointed Times.

【Deuteronomy 16:14】 ¹⁴ **Be joyful at your festival—you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levites, the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns.**

Everyone in the community is commanded to rejoice during this time, something which is not done for any of the other feasts. The sukkah represents this joy that should fill our hearts during this time.

【Philippians 4:4-7】 ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Scripture shows that God's desire for us is to have a joyful heart in all circumstances. Even though life is often difficult and painful, we can have joy because of the hope we have in Jesus (1 Peter 4:13). Real joy comes from God, knowing that we can bring our needs before the Lord and that He is in control, regardless of the circumstances.

The Sukkah Represents Jesus' Body

【John 1:14a】 ¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

In this verse, the word "dwelling" this word in Greek means "tabernacled." This interpretation brings a fuller understanding of Jesus' incarnation. The word "dwell" shows a picture of simply residing or living among us. But when the word "tabernacled" is used, it serves to remind us of the tabernacle in which God's presence dwells among us.

While it stood in the wilderness, the Tabernacle was the physical representation of God to the people of Israel, and their entire lives revolved around the worship that it required. Likewise, when Jesus was born into a human body, He was the physical representation of God to the whole world, and our lives now revolve around Him and our service to Him. God had the Tabernacle set up so that He could be close to His people and live among them. In the same way, God sent His Son in the tabernacle of a human body so that He could dwell within us through the Holy Spirit and so that we can dwell with Him for all of eternity.

The Sukkah Represents The Ingathering of the Harvest

This time of year in the land of Israel marks the end of the harvest time. Signifying this, we see another name for the Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast of Ingathering.

【Exodus 23:16】 ¹⁶ "Celebrate the Festival of Harvest with the first fruits of the crops you sow in your field.

"Celebrate the Festival of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather your crops from the field.

The term "ingathering" simply means that it is the time when all the produce has been harvested and "gathered in" to be processed into usable materials, such as flour from grain. Often harvesters would build temporary huts, sukkahs, out in their fields so they could make the most of their short window of time before the autumn rains began.

【Matthew 9:38】 ³⁸ Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

The sukkah is a reminder of our duty to be a harvester of souls while we still have the opportunity.

【Matthew 24:30-31】 ³⁰ "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.

³¹ And He will send His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

While we have been faithful in sharing the gospel and harvesting souls for God, in the end, there will be the great gathering, we ourselves will be harvested or gathered to God.

【Deuteronomy 8:2-5】 ² Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. ³ He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. ⁴ Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. ⁵ Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.

You may not know the reason for your hardship, you may not even know until you meet Jesus face-to-face but in God’s eyes, there are purposes for those hardships. Whatever pain and hardship you are going through, God can use that to make your life more like His bride, ready for that day.

【Revelation 21:1-4】 Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’”

This is God’s heart desire, to be with us. Right from the book of Genesis when Adam and Eve sinned against God, causing a rift between God and man. So inhabited in the Tabernacle, in the temple made by man and now through Holy Spirit He is in us. But this physical body will one day deteriorate, it is when after the trumpet sound, all the dead Christians rise from the dead. Those who are alive will have a new body in a twinkling of an eye, and we will live with Him forever.