



"Faith is the first factor in a life devoted to service. Without it, nothing is possible. With it, nothing is impossible."

—Mary McLeod Bethune

**03-Oct-14**

## **The Feast: Vacation or Holy Time?**

Recently, we had a fine sermonette here in Chicago giving a brief overview of the important questions we need to review each year on the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the Feast of Tabernacles. The next day someone told me about an elderly gentleman who had decided he was too old to make the trek to the Feast. He has been a faithful member of the church of [God](#) for many years and is still diligently trying to fulfill his responsibilities before God, including never missing a weekly [Sabbath](#) service. However, because of his advanced years, he had decided the trip to the Feast would require more energy than he had strength to accomplish.

The person who told me about this situation tried to encourage the man to attend the Feast because, in spite of his limited energy, his condition was actually no worse than many who would be joining with those in the Body of Christ at the appointed time and place God had set. He needed to be there just as much as he needed to be at Sabbath services every week!

The sermonette, this conversation, and the inspiring and nearly heroic efforts some people undertake to attend the Feast of Tabernacles where they know God requires them to be at this time of year, gave me pause to reflect on my

own commitment to God and just why we are keeping the Feast of Tabernacles. This applies just as well to any of the days God has consecrated as holy time for our benefit and to His honor and glory.

Just about every year, we hear messages reminding us that the Feast of Tabernacles is not a vacation, and we largely agree with that. It has aspects of a vacation—we are away from home, mostly free from work or school responsibilities, with extra money in our pockets, living at a hotel, eating out, and doing activities we do not normally do—yet its purpose is far more serious and spiritual. But do we really believe and display our conviction by doing what we must to share this holy time with the Father, the Son, and one another in the way and in the place God has determined for us to serve Him and our brethren?

Granted, various factors—such as age, health, and unforeseen, insurmountable difficulties—will make it difficult or impossible for us to attend the Feast in the place God has put His name. However, will we let the physical circumstances of our lives determine this without making every effort to seek God's will diligently so that we do not fail in our duty to appear before Him?

Just as much as the Sabbath is not optional holy time, neither are God's holy days. [Leviticus 23:33-36](#), 39-43 clearly states God's will that we keep the Feast of Tabernacles, as does [Deuteronomy 16:13-15](#):

You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, when you have gathered from your threshing floor and from your winepress. And you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant and the Levite, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow, who are within your gates. Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you surely rejoice.

God blesses those following His financial planning system with such an unusual abundance of physical wealth at this time of year that even the most faithful can fall victim to the deceitful trap of a self-deceptive heart. Such a

heart could very well equate the [joy](#) of a true feast to the Lord with the mere physical pleasure of a vacation. This brings God's solemn and commanded festivals down to the level of an elective, only to be kept if everything in our lives is just right!

Consider this: If we fail to keep His holy days and truly rejoice in the way He intends, for His honor and glory, we may not only be letting God down and disappointing Him, but we may also be letting one another down. Who will fill our places in the choir? Who will do our ushering jobs? The message intended to help us grow we will not hear. The widows, whom God planned for us to serve, will not receive the level of service we could have given them. And what about those whom God intended to train in righteousness by serving us in our difficult circumstances? They will never have the opportunity!

What about what God says in [Malachi 3:16-17](#)?

Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who meditate on His name. "They shall be Mine," says the LORD of hosts, "on the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him."

So we have to ask ourselves, what does it say about us if those God-fearers who were fellowshiping together at God's feast did not include us?

I have seen many dear brethren who have worked so hard to be faithful and honor God. One lady, in pain because of cancer, was transported to the Feast lying in the back of a van. She died two months later, but she was determined to attend as God commanded. God lifted up another dedicated member, also dying, so that, in [faith](#), he could be where God wanted him. One woman traveled halfway around [the world](#), alone, to honor God and to be where she knew God wanted her to be.

To these people, the Feast of Tabernacles was not merely an elective time for physical rejoicing. It is the commanded and holy assembly of God's people, who have been called together for His honor and glory in the continuing process of preparing His jewels for the [Kingdom of God!](#)

Some of God's people absolutely cannot be there because of dire or unforeseen circumstances. That is, sadly, a fact of life in an anti-God world. But we must all examine ourselves and make sure our deceptive hearts have not demoted God's solemn and holy time to a mere elective. When God calls a holy convocation of His people, we should do our utmost to be there!

At this time of year, it should never be far from our minds that the Feast of Tabernacles—and truly, all of God's feast days—are holy times, set apart by Him to be observed as He commands, for the purpose of helping us to become holy as He is holy ([I Peter 1:16](#)).

- Mark Schindler

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## **From the Archives: Featured Sermon**

### **[Fall Feast Lessons](#)**

by John W. Ritenbaugh

The world will learn that God judges- that He has had perpetual hands on contact with His creation, having the ultimate decision over everything. After Satan is bound and confined, God proceeds to bring about seven reconcilements: (1) Judah reconciled with Christ (2) Judah and Israel reconciled (3) Israel, Assyria, and Egypt reconciled (4) all nations reconciled to each other (5) Man and nature reconciled (6) Families reconciled to each other (7) God and man reconciled despite all we have done to trash His property.

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

**[Sharing Our Lives at the Feast](#)**

by Mark Schindler

The Feast of Tabernacles is a wonderful gift God has given us to spend time with each other, really sharing of ourselves. Mark Schindler gives a few examples of how this can be done.

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