



"If we choose a false way of worship we shall, ere long, choose to worship a false god."

—Charles H. Spurgeon

25-Aug-17

Fearing God at the Feast (Part One)

To those who observe it, the Feast of Tabernacles is typically the most anticipated event of the year, the peak of enjoyment for Christians on a physical and a spiritual level. Enjoyment of physical things at the Feast is possible because if a person has tithed faithfully, he or she will have more to spend during this extended week than at any other time of the year. Everyone who attends the Feast should have access to good food, special activities, and plenty of wholesome fellowship.

Spiritual fulfillment is available because, even though not every day of the Feast is a high holy day, we are still commanded to observe it a full seven days ([Deuteronomy 16:13](#)). If we take advantage of the numerous sermons and sermonettes that are given, we will receive an abundance of the year's best spiritual food. The Feast is the spiritual highlight of the year.

Under the Old Covenant, [God](#) told Israel to make more sacrifices during the Feast than on all the other holy days combined. Each day during the Feast, in addition to the requisite [sin offering](#), God expected His people to give a burnt offering, meal offering, and drink offering ([Leviticus 23:36-37](#)). The extra emphasis on sacrifices during this week (see [Numbers 29:13-39](#)) indicates how much God wants us to focus on devotion to Him (burnt offering) and our fellow man (meal offering) and on service to our fellow man, poured out over our entire lifetime (drink offering).

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Besides these instructions, we realize that the Feast of Tabernacles focuses largely on the future, picturing the [peace](#) and prosperity of the Millennium when God's second harvest of mankind takes place. All those who live through the Day of the Lord will have the opportunity to learn the truth and to be ruled and taught by [Jesus Christ](#) and His Bride, the firstfruits of the early harvest.

But is this *why* we go to the Feast? These are all essential elements of the Feast, but in [Deuteronomy 14:23](#), the Bible spells out the fundamental reason God commands us to observe the Feast of Tabernacles:

And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, *that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.* (Emphasis ours throughout.)

This verse gives us a major reason why we attend and observe the Feast of Tabernacles every year: that we may learn to *fear God always*. What we learn and experience at the Feast should keep us in the proper fear of God for the rest of the year. However, it is not immediately obvious how a person learns to fear God at the Feast. We can see that the Feast and the fear of God are linked, but the practical application is not directly evident. However, several clues or elements are included within the instructions for the Feast that illustrate how observing this holy time teaches us to fear God.

First, notice that [Deuteronomy 14:23](#) establishes that God supplies the means for His people to attend the Feast through the tithing system. Tithing requires the tither to fear God. For us to tithe on our income, we must believe God and His promises of blessing more than we believe the reasons why we think it will not work. Tithing requires that we fear God and His commands regarding finances more than we fear missing out on something material.

Verse 26 provides another element that helps to clarify how we learn to fear God at the Feast:

And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and *you shall rejoice*, you and your household.

The rejoicing that God wants us to participate in at the Feast is still within the context of learning to *fear God always*. God wants us to enjoy this time that He has set apart. The word translated as *rejoice* means "to brighten up." We may have experienced a troublesome and wearying year, but this festive week is supposed to brighten our faces, to lift our spirits, and provide us great [joy](#). However, it is not intended to be a week of fun just for the sake of having fun. The rejoicing we do is tied to learning to fear God, a point that will become clearer as these essays continue.

Leviticus 23 contains more commands regarding the Feast:

Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the LORD for seven days; on the first day there shall be a sabbath-rest, and on the eighth day a sabbath-rest. And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and *you shall rejoice* before the LORD your God for seven days. You shall keep it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. ([Leviticus 23:39-43](#))

Verse 40 reiterates that we are commanded to rejoice, but it appears this time in the context of living in temporary dwellings and remembering the pilgrimage of the children of Israel through the wilderness. In Part Two, we will see how this context expands our understanding of how the Feast of Tabernacles teaches us to fear God.

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Rejoice in God's Feast](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

John Ritenbaugh, reflecting on Deuteronomy 28:63, suggests there is a context in which God rejoices in cursing or judgment. God's rejoicing does not always have to be attending to good or positive events, but sometimes in painful judgments. God can take

satisfaction that He is doing the right thing. In the early days of the Radio Church of God, people seemed to exercise extraordinary diligence and resourcefulness in keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days, with virtually none of the perks we have today. A well-planned Feast can be a downer if we do not participate in serving or fellowship. If we do not give of ourselves, we will receive nothing in return. The Feast is not intended to be "one big blast," but a time of spiritual growth, which may take some helpful course correction. Their result, ultimately will be rejoicing. When we keep God's Holy Days just to please our materialistic appetites, we will be keeping the Feast in an unworthy manner, and are flirting with God's harsh judgment. Rejoicing is a choice; we have the power over our attitudes. If we seek God's direction, God will reciprocate by directing our paths. It is our obligation to make sacrifices during the Feast of Tabernacles, an event which requires more sacrifice than any other time of the year. Sacrificing and rejoicing are linked, although today the emphasis should be more on the spiritual rather than the physical aspect. We are expected to bring our harvest of spiritual fruits, also known as good works, bearing one another's burdens, uplifting one another. The Feast of Tabernacles is not expected to be problem- or trouble-free, nor will the Millennium be trouble-free, but it will be the most opportune time to produce the fruits of God's Holy Spirit, a time to rebuild the ruined and desolate places. When we begin to act like God, we will know that He is the Lord. The very fact that He has commanded us to rejoice means that it does not come naturally. Let us give of ourselves in service.

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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