



"The physical presence of other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer."

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer

01-Sep-17

## Fearing God at the Feast (Part Two)

As Part One closed, we saw that Leviticus 23 contains another command to rejoice at the Feast:

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 23:40-43](#); emphasis ours)

Verse 40 reiterates that we are commanded to rejoice (see [Deuteronomy 14:26](#)), but this time it appears in the context of living in temporary dwellings and remembering the pilgrimage of the children of Israel through the wilderness.

Now consider four different elements that appear in these verses:

1. the *second tithe* and the fact that the Feast is a harvest festival;
2. *temporary dwellings*, which point back to Israel in the wilderness;
3. *rejoicing* ; and
4. the *fear of God* that seems to undergird all the other elements.

These are certainly not the only elements of the Feast, but they fit together to compose an interesting picture. No verse directly states this, but what we will see is that the unifying factor in all these things is *God's [faithfulness](#)* , which will lead us back to the proper fear of Him.

The first element is tithing and the related harvest environment. The real issue with tithing is not whether God can provide for our needs even with twenty and sometimes even thirty percent removed from our disposable income, but whether we are willing to trust God's Word and His faithfulness. [Psalm 84:11](#) declares, "The LORD will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly." In another place, the psalmist says that in all his life he has never seen a righteous man forsaken, nor his children begging for bread ([Psalm 37:25](#)).

God's providence is something we can depend on, but it is conditional on our righteousness (see [Psalm 119:172](#)), and our faithfulness in tithing plays a large part in God's blessing of us ([Malachi 3:10](#)). If we fear God enough to set aside our tithes all year, we will not only have the means to go to the Feast—enabling us to learn to fear God even more—but we will also witness God's faithfulness in providing for us.

Ancient Israel's economy was based on agriculture, so most of a family's second tithe was derived from crops and livestock. Today, we are insulated from this principle in many ways. A scant few of us earn our livelihood from the earth. Only a tiny fraction of us depend on a good harvest to ensure our provisions throughout the winter. Most full-time employees in the Western world are paid a salary, and when a person has a steady income to rely on, it

is more difficult to be aware of God's faithfulness in providing. We rarely consider the rain and dew as necessities for having enough to eat. Because of this, it can be difficult for us to grasp this element of observing the Feast as well as someone who makes his living off the land.

Despite our economy being substantially different, we should still be able to recognize God's faithfulness in providing for us throughout the year.

However, we should not fall into the snare of thinking His providence is limited to physical wealth. God promises to withhold no good thing from the righteous, so if we find ourselves without some physical thing that we may desire, it is probably because God has determined that it would not be good for us, at least under the present circumstances.

Even above and beyond the physical blessings, consider God's faithfulness in providing things like spiritual food and in pouring out His Spirit on us. This recounting of blessings should reinforce our memory and understanding of God's faithfulness. Of course, realizing the magnitude of God's blessings always gives us reason to rejoice.

The second element is the Feast's temporary dwellings, a reminder of Israel's trek through the wilderness. We can easily see God's faithfulness in this, too. During Israel's forty years in the wilderness, God supplied their food every day in the form of manna. He provided water where none was normally available. He provided a cloud-covering during the day so the Israelites were not scorched by incessant sun. He provided a fire at night for light and warmth during the cold nights. He was so faithful to Israel that even their clothes and shoes lasted the entire decades-long journey ([Deuteronomy 8:4](#)).

In addition, this element emphasizes the lack of permanence in this life. The temporary dwellings illustrate our status as pilgrims, emphasizing that our focus should not be on the temporal or the physical. Though he was exceedingly rich, Abraham, our father in the [faith](#), lived in a tent most of his life. When [Jesus Christ](#) came, He remarked that He had nowhere to lay His head ([Matthew 8:20](#)), meaning He had come for a purpose other than being settled and enjoying the good life.

This is not to say that our lives must be austere or dominated by stoicism, but our lives certainly need to have a larger purpose than mere enjoyment of

physical things. Obviously, it is fine for us to have houses and land, but this aspect of the Feast reminds us that these things are temporary—and our real living is yet future. The temporary dwellings point to God's faithfulness by reminding us of His providence in guiding Israel on their journey. It also points to the fact that we are on a different kind of journey to an even greater Promised Land, and God will be faithful to bring us to the glorious destination in a manner that we cannot do for ourselves.

In Part Three, we will cover the final two elements in the festival instructions that aid us in learning to fear God.

- David C. Grabbe

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

### **[Feast of Tabernacles Basics](#)**

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

In spiritual matters, as in athletics, those who have mastered the fundamental skills are the best. The fundamentals of the Feast of Tabernacles consists of a harvest image, depicting a massive number of people coming to the truth, while the journey or pilgrimage depicts a time of judgment. We are currently undergoing our period of judgment, preparing to reign with Christ as spiritual kings and priests during His millennial rule, bringing salvation and judgment releasing bands of suppression and bondage, bringing healing, and enabling the wastelands and deserts to reach an Edenic standard.

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

### **[God's Way of Give at the Feast of Tabernacles](#)**

by Staff

God commands us to present ourselves at His Feast and give as we are able. This article describes many ways we can give at the Feast—and many of them will not cost us a cent!

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