

## Rejoice And Fear God

Learning to Rejoice and Fear Him

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We are going to begin the service tonight in Deuteronomy 16. Very familiar scriptures for those of us who have been keeping the Feast of Tabernacles for a fairly long period of time. It says in verse 13:

**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 unto 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 works of your hands, so that you surely rejoice.”

“You shall rejoice; you shall surely rejoice!” I think that the great overwhelming majority of us, if my ears were not playing tricks on me this evening, you were rejoicing. You did not sound the least bit restrained. Some of you have not seen one another’s faces before, some of you are aware of somebody's name because you hear it on the telephone transmission and now you are able to put the face together with the name. It sounded to me as if you were here with a purpose and that your purpose was to rejoice and you are very happy about being here.

Now we have to reflect on this because it is very obvious that we have come out of a world that is not filled with rejoicing. We do not have to enumerate the troubles that are going on all around this sick world: the violence in the street, the starvation that is taking place because of warfare or because of famine.

There is an awful lot of pain going on. I would have to say that the world is almost to the point where it is overburdened with troubles. Some of those troubles may be to some people nothing more than a minor irritation, but other troubles are burdening to the place where they are nothing more than painful tragedies that they would very much like to get rid of. Maybe some of you are here are bearing a burden that is in the painful tragedy category, I do not know. Each one of us is going to have to judge that for ourselves. I only say this to try to put in our minds at least a bit of a contrast.

Here we are rejoicing, we are happy, we are smiling. We rejoice in the fact that we are meeting one another, we rejoice in the fact that by and large we all think the same things, we are all doing the same things, and even though there might be some things that we do not know what we believe yet, whether we really want to be a part of this group, by and large we are here at the command of God and we are happy to do it, and we are rejoicing.

So we are commanded to rejoice, but even within this section of Deuteronomy 14:23 (which we are not going to turn to), by way of contrast, it says that we are supposed to, “put the tithe in our pocket and carry it to the place where the Lord God has placed His name and there you shall learn to fear the Lord your God.” So even in terms of the instruction for the Feast of Tabernacles, we have on the one hand a command to rejoice, and on the other hand we are sobered by the fact that we are going to learn to fear Him.

I think that you are aware that word ‘fear’ carries with it connotations all the way from reverential awe to the place where it can be sheer terror, that word is that broad. I think that you know of place in the Bible where men fainted before God and they trembled, they were in fear either before God or even before an angel, wondering what was going to happen to them next. So that word fear encompasses the very sobering aspects of terror all the way to rejoicing because we are worshipping God.

In addition to that, we are here with an understanding of the Feast of Tabernacles and one of the things that it pictures. We understand that it pictures the one thousand year reign of Jesus Christ which is the environment in which the great fall harvest is going to be made. Now the Feast of Tabernacles is a harvest celebration and spiritually it is primarily

dedicated for a remembrance of; a celebration of; a worship of God, because we know what is coming—the great fall harvest is coming, but that includes the Millennium because that is the environment in which the harvest is going to be taking place.

We know that the Millennium is going to be a time of peace, harmony, quietude, integrity, faithfulness among people. There is going to be a great abundance. We are going to read some scriptures on that in just a minute. A great abundance! We will see how great in comparison in just a few minutes.

Now we have to ask this question because it pertains to why we are here keeping the Feast of Tabernacles. That is, what is it going to take to produce this great harvest? It is not going to happen by magic. It is very easy to think in terms of God issuing commands and *boom!* the fields burst forth with an abundant harvest.

God gives a command and mankind is suddenly obedient to Him. Is it really going to happen like that? No, it is not going to happen like that. You know that it is not going to happen like that.

I want us to relate this to the Feast of Tabernacles here in San Antonio, Texas because when we came here we brought with us our problems. We brought with us our memories, our character, and our attitudes, and if we are going to have unity and harmony here, then the same things that are going to be exercised that produce the Millennium are also going to have to be exercised here to produce a wonderful, harmonious, exciting, unified Feast of Tabernacles. And it will not happen unless you make it possible by doing what has to be done.

So the Millennium is going to be a time of peace and harmony, but it is also going to be a time of monumental problems. Did you know that? There is going to be an awful lot of problems in the Millennium.

Now let us go to Ezekiel 36. In my Bible the chapter is headed, “Blessing on Israel.” It is a millennial chapter.

**Ezekiel 36:4** “Therefore, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God! Thus says the Lord God to the mountains, the hills,

the rivers, the valleys, the desolate wastes, and the cities that have been forsaken, which became plunder and mockery to the rest of the nations all around—

He is speaking to the land. He is speaking to the area now occupied by the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, France, Judah, Switzerland, Australia, the Republic of South Africa—if we can assume we are going to go back to the same lands that we formerly occupied before this time spoken of here in Ezekiel 36. He is talking to the ground; he is talking to the land. He is talking to them as if they had personality, as if they had ears and they can hear. And what he is speaking of here in verse 4, they are desolate; they are not growing anything; they are barren; they are deserts. Nothing is coming out of the ground except maybe scrubby things that nobody can live on.

**Ezekiel 36:6-8** “Therefore prophesy concerning the land of Israel, and say to the mountains, to the hills, the rivers, and the valleys, 'Thus saith the Lord God: “Behold, I have spoken in My jealousy and My fury, because you have borne the shame of the nations.” Therefore thus saith the Lord God: “I have raised My hand in an oath that surely the nations that are around you shall bear their own shame. [The nations that brought the nation of Israel to destruction. He is talking to them and now they are going to bear their shame.] But you, O mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to My people Israel, for they are about to come.”

When we put verse 4 together with verse 8 and when we put that together with what we know about what the United States, let us say, and Canada were like when the first settlers came here—I am not talking about Indians; I am talking primarily about the Anglo-Saxon people—primeval forests. I do not know if you have ever read any books or accounts of something like the Lewis and Clark expedition of the Missouri River valley and on up into Montana. They went all the way to Washington and Oregon. Their journals recorded what they saw on the way. It is awesome! Grass on the prairies so deep that a man on a horse could hide. He could not be seen because the grass was 8, 10, or even 15 feet tall. Herds of buffalo so great that it would take days for the buffalo to pass any given point. It was virgin territory,

virtually. A land practically untouched, and it was growing things. It was stupendous and awesome for these people to behold.

Now in verse 4, it is growing nothing. Do you think that is not going to be a problem to overcome? These people are going to come back into lands that have been devastated by the sins of mankind during our generations; by the plagues of Revelation, the seals, the trumpets, the final seven plagues of God.

So he is talking to the land and he says: “they are about to come: get ready.”

**Ezekiel 36:9-11** “For indeed I am for you, and I will turn to you, and you shall be tilled and sown. I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, all of it; and the cities shall be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt. I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bear young; and I will make you inhabited as in former times, and do better for you than at your beginnings. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.”

If this land was awesome to Lewis and Clark, to Jedidiah Smith, to those men—the mountain men, Jim Bridger and those people—what is it going to be like after converted people are working the land? What I want to help us understand is it is not going to happen magically. This time man is going to be made by God to restore what man destroyed. God is going to help a great deal. He is going to give good weather and He will do His part, but He is going to require man to do his part too. That is kind of the theme of this sermon. People are going to learn by experiencing God in their life. By putting into practice His laws, His principles, and they are going to see it work.

**Ezekiel 36:12** “Yes, I will cause men to walk on you, My people Israel; they shall take possession of you, and you shall be their inheritance; no more shall you bereave them of their children. “

Now the next ten verses basically say that God is not doing this because Israel deserves it, He is doing it because His name has been profaned and now He is going to work to reclaim the glory of His name.

**Ezekiel 36:22** “Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus saith the Lord God: “I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went.””

**Ezekiel 36:24-26** “For I will take you [now he is talking to the people, not the mountains, not the rivers, not the hills or valleys, or the plains. He is talking to the people now, the ones who are going to come back and inhabit the land and grow the crops on it. This time they are going to do it he right way.] from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you [Now we understand he is talking about His Spirit.], and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness [He is talking about spiritual things and of course all of the wrong physical, material practices. All the excesses that mankind has used to rape the land.] and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

I want you to connect the last part of this chapter with the first part. He begins by describing a desolate land, then he prophesies that the desolate land is going to be beautiful and produce more than it ever produced before, then he tells why He is going to do it. That is, because His name has been profaned and now He is talking to the people and He is telling them that the only thing that will make this possible is because their heart is changed.

If He brought them back into the land with the same heart that they left with, they would do the same things all over again and the land would be raped. So in order for the land to produce what it is capable of, in order for the land to produce what God prophesies is going to happen, the people have to change. In order for the fruits of the Spirit to be produced, the people have to change. In order for there to be unity, harmony here; in order for us to leave with a solid, clear purpose; a vision of where we are going, we are going to have to do something about changing our hearts.

God makes it available, has He not? Has He given us His Spirit? Certainly He has. So the equipment, the tool is there and what we have to do is yield to

it. If this is going to be a successful Feast of Tabernacles, it is because we have made the right use of the tools that God has given us: His Word, His Spirit, a clean heart. Let us go on:

**Ezekiel 36:27-30** “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God. I will deliver you from all your uncleanness. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations.”

Do you see the direct connection between the changed heart and the production of fruit? Now let us go to James 3.

**James 3:17** But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

Look at these characteristics. These are characteristics of God's Spirit. These are things that we have to emulate, they have to be part of our character. They are in us because the Spirit is in us, but they will not remain in us unless they are put to use by us.

**James 3:18** Now the fruit of righteousness. . .

Think about the fruit back in Ezekiel 36. Did not God tie the production of the land, the fruits that would be produced, with the character and the attitudes of the people? It is a wonderfully clear lesson.

**James 3:18** . . . is sown in peace [the Millennium, the one thousand years of peace] by those that make peace.

What he is saying in effect is that in order for the right fruits, that is, the fruits of righteousness which would be the fruits of God's Spirit, to be produced, there has to be peace. That does not mean that we cannot produce

those fruits in this time, but there has to be peace first of all between us and God or those fruits of righteousness will never be produced. The more peace there is in our life, the more of the fruit of God's Spirit that are going to be produced. So if there is peace with other people, then one can concentrate on producing the fruits of righteousness

If your life is filled with war, with anger, with bitterness, with resentment, with ill feelings toward other people, with offense, if you feel put upon, if you are fighting with your mate, what, pray tell, are you going to concentrate on? You are going to concentrate on the war, not producing fruit of peace, not producing fruit of righteousness. That is why Peter said in I Peter 3:7: you better be on good terms with your wife, men, otherwise your prayers will be hindered.

**Ezekiel 36:31-36** “Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations. Not for your sake do I do this, says the Lord God, “let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel!” Thus saith the Lord God: “On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities I will also enable you to dwell in the cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt. The desolate land shall be tilled instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass by. So they will say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities are now fortified and are inhabited. Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, the Lord, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted what was desolate. I, the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it.”

God gets right to the heart of the problem and the first thing that He has to do is to bring people to repentance, change their attitudes about themselves, change their attitudes about other people, change their attitudes about God Himself. Once that begins to straighten out, then they can begin to pay attention to other things and they will be in the kind of heart, of mind, of attitude where they will malleable and willing to yield to His way.

Willing to yield, yes, but the problems of the heart and character that was engrained before will still be there. So it will not be something that will be overcome overnight, because you know in Isaiah 30 there is that little indication where somebody is about to sin and the voice from behind says “this is the way; walk you in it.” That would not even have to be mentioned if people were not free to sin. They will be, but they will learn very quickly.

Just another little insight into this fact that things are not going to go smoothly and God is not going to do everything.

**Zechariah 14:16-19** And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, on them there will be no rain. [You see, they have the choice. They can stay away and sin if they want to.] If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the Lord strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

It is just a little window to let you and me know there is a high probability that there are going to be whole nations who are going to have to be convinced *against their will* to be obedient to God. Even though Satan is bound, even though he is not around anymore to deceive the nations, there is still going to be within mankind, especially in that first generation or two, those who survived through the tribulation and go into the Millennium and into the land, it is going to take a while for them to be converted.

They are going to have to make choices, they are going to have to learn, to exercise control over their will and to exercise the knowledge of God that they have been given. So God will not be standing over them, beating them on the head. They will be free to make those choices. That is the only way that the character that God is building in a person can be achieved.

We have to be free to make mistakes, and they will be too. If they are not free to make mistakes, if they are not free to sin, then they will be nothing more than an animal operating according to instinct, according to what they have been programmed to do. God wants sons who have had revealed to them what God is doing, have had revealed to them the greatness of God, His purpose, His character, what He is like, and they want it and are willing to do what is necessary to please Him.

Do you get the point? It will be no different here. You are *free* to sin; you are *free* to get angry; you are *free* to become resentful; you are *free* to become bitter; you are *free* to cause offense. Now which are you going to choose to do? The kind of Feast that we have is in your hands.

We have been commanded to rejoice. Now because we have been commanded to rejoice, it first of all shows that it is not something that happens automatically. It is commanded that we rejoice just as surely as it is commanded that we keep the Sabbath. In keeping the Sabbath, you have the choice of whether you keep it or not keep it. Now you have the choice of rejoicing or not rejoicing.

We know what will produce rejoicing: it is choosing to do the things of God's Spirit—that wisdom that is from above—or we can choose to let human nature dominate and you know the rest of the story. It is up to us. So the future of this Feast, of your Feast, of the kind of experience you have here, is pretty much up to you.

Deuteronomy 12 is instructions in regard to how God was to be worshipped. Remember Deuteronomy was written in the last month or so by Moses before the Israelites went into the Land. So it is kind of a summary, but in the summary that is given here are also instructions regarding changes that were going to have to be made in their governance, some of the regulations or ordinances, if you want to call them that, that were going to pertain to a settled people rather than a people that were pilgrims and on the move.

One of these was that eventually God was going to establish a definite place of worship. It is not revealed what it would be here, but eventually it became Jerusalem and when it became Jerusalem then Solomon built the Temple

there. But until Solomon built the Temple, the place of worship was wherever the Tabernacle happened to be. So at first it was at Shiloh. It was in two or three places before finally the place of worship, the place where God placed His name, finally settled in Jerusalem.

That is what is being covered here. Now what I want you to notice is the context here has to do with keeping the feasts. Not just the Feast of Tabernacles, but also, Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Trumpets, and Atonement as well.

**Deuteronomy 12:11-12** “Then there will be the place where the Lord your God chooses to make His name abide. There you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes [meaning the second tithe primarily in this context], and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice offerings which you vow to the Lord: [These were the types, but in reality this is what we are doing. We have come to the place where God has placed His name for the Church of the Great God—San Antonio, Texas. Did you bring your sacrifices? I bet you brought your tithes. Did you bring your choice offerings? ] And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your sons, and your daughters, your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion nor inheritance with you.

**Deuteronomy 12:17-18** “You may not eat within your gates the tithe [this is the second tithe] of your grain, or your new wine, or your oil, of the firstlings of your herd or your flock, of any of your offerings which you vow, of your freewill offerings, or heave offering of your hand. But you must eat them before the Lord your God in the place which the Lord your God chooses, you and your son and your daughter, your manservant, your maidservant, and the Levite who is within your gates; and you shall rejoice before the Lord thy God in all to which you put your hands.

So the context is in the keeping of God's feasts and I wonder if you notice how sacrificing and rejoicing are linked together right in the same context. Now the days of sacrifice are not over, they have just changed from the

killing of animals; spilling of blood; and the burning of offerings on an altar, to spiritual ones.

Those burnt offerings were merely symbols of what you are to do yourself in making choices about what you are going to do with your life. That is what those sacrifices represent to you personally. They represent other things of course, but in this context in keeping the Feast, you are confronted with choices about what you are going to do with your time, your energies, and with your mind here.

We are here to worship God. That is why we have come. Worshipping God can be defined as imitating God to the degree that we are able. That is a true worship of God. We tend to confine worship as something we do at a service where we sing, where we pray, where we are instructed, but practical worship of God is what we do at home, in relation to our mate, in relation to our children, our neighbors, relatives. It is what we do on the job in relation to our employer, in our relation to our employees, it is what we do out on the street when we are doing business, it is what we do while we drive out automobiles. It is what we do in every circumstance.

What we have been called to do is imitate God to the greatest degree that we can possibly can and that is the true worship, when we are imitating Him, aping Him, following in His footsteps, becoming like Christ. See, that is true worship.

The essential attribute of God is an out going concern, we might say love, giving, sharing, serving, sacrificing. The very essence of love is sacrifice. "God so loved the world, that He sacrificed His Son." Just change one word. The essence of love is sacrifice and you are going to find when you begin to analyze love and that it is as an action, you are going to find that when you exercise love, you are almost always going to be required to give something up in order to exercise it. You may have to give up time; you may have to give up pride; you may have to give up position; you may have to give up place, power; you may have to show that you are indebted to someone. If you offer the sacrifice of thanks to someone you are telling that person, "I am indebted to you," you are giving place to them.

The very essence of love is sacrifice and it is sacrifice that produces all these good things because if we exercise human nature we are not sacrificing, because that comes naturally. If we exercise the fruits and attributes of God's Spirit, most of the time we are going to find a bit of human nature feeding us and trying to raise its ugly head and keep us from doing the act of love.

A resolution then: give of yourself in time. Pray that God will keep Satan from here. Pray about the sermons. When you pray about the ministry and their messages, do not forget about the congregation. Pray that we get the point and see how it applies to us, because sometimes we can evaluate a sermon very well and distill from it the very essence of the teaching, but we miss entirely how it applies to number one, how it applies in a practical way. Pray about those things.

Pray about the choir. I do not know if those of you who do not sing in the choir realize it, but there is probably no one here that makes as great a sacrifice then those who sing in the choir, it is really time consuming and tiring. They are making quite a sacrifice to make your Feast a little bit better then it otherwise would.

Offer yourself in service and sing with all your heart. We have made a wonderful beginning, but keep it up! That is the sacrifice of praise. It is even called that in the Bible. Singing praises to God is a sacrifice!

Another way you can sacrifice is to make as little work for others as you possibly can. That means you have to think. So when you get up tonight, you clean up around you. It is just a little thing, it takes about fifteen seconds to do, but it might save five men some work looking all over the hall for scraps of paper and so forth you and your children might have left. You have shown just a little bit of love in a little area and it goes unnoticed, but it adds to the overall sense of peace and unity here.

That is what is going to make the Millennium, brethren. Where everyone is going to be thinking, "How can I make it better for somebody else?" And in making it better for someone else, they are going to make it better for

themselves. It is that simple, and it all comes about because God gives people His Spirit to enable them to think that way, instead of having that heart of stone that is always making work for somebody else.

It is so simple and that is what is going to produce all that beauty. So instead of people mining the hills and leaving them scarred messes, maybe they will mine the hills, but they will not leave it a scarred mess, and when they are done there it will look as beautiful as when they started, maybe even more beautiful.

Why? Because they love God. God gave them beauty and they are going to give beauty back to Him. That is a fair exchange, is it not? Because I think something like this is something that we need to be reminded about. If we make the effort to make peace, you are going to have a wonderful Feast of Tabernacles.