



Booths, Tabernacles, or Ingathering

The authors' thesis is that Jesus will complete or fulfill what is embedded in the feast of Booths at the time of His return, by gathering all of His people, both Jew and Gentile, into

His Sabbath rest. Is this warranted on the basis of the biblical material itself?

The third and last of the Fall Holidays is the Feast of Booths, also called Tabernacles or Ingathering. The literal transliteration from the Hebrew is *hasukot* "the tabernacles," but is most often denoted from the Hebrew as *Succoth*, *Succot*, or *Sukkot*. One booth is a *sukkah*, so multiple booths are *sukkot*. In Leviticus 23:33 and 42 the same word is translated *booths*. When Solomon dedicated the temple he did so on *Sukkoth*, and there it is called "the feast" (see 1 Kings 8:65). In Rabbinic literature it was simply known as "The Feast," *ha chag* in Hebrew, because it was a large celebration, a great time of rejoicing for and at the last harvest of the year.

This feast is also referred to as the "Feast of Ingathering." "You shall keep the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor" (Exodus 23:16). "Ingathering" is a most interesting way to refer to the feast and is a major clue to understanding how Jesus kept this feast.

[Leviticus 23:33–44](#)

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, On the fifteenth day of this seventh month and for seven days is the Feast of Booths to the LORD. On the first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall not do any ordinary work. For seven days you shall present food offerings to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall hold a holy convocation and present a food offering to the LORD. It is a solemn assembly; you shall not do any ordinary work.

"These are the appointed feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim as times of holy convocation, for presenting to the LORD food offerings, burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its proper day, besides the LORD's Sabbaths and besides your gifts and besides all your vow offerings and besides all your freewill offerings, which you give to the LORD.

“On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD seven days. On the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest. And you shall take on the first day the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. You shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It is a statute forever throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that you generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.”

Thus Moses declared to the people of Israel the appointed feasts of the LORD.

Notes on the passage:

- One** The Feast came two weeks after Rosh Hashanah, the Feast of Trumpets and the head of the year, and it fell on the same day of the week. It would have also begun on the seventh full moon of the year—not an insignificant fact.
- Two** Booths were flimsy, non-permanent structures made out of tree limbs and other plant foliage that could be quickly constructed. The Hebrews, during the forty years of wandering in the wilderness (desert) after the exodus from Egypt, of necessity were forced to build temporary and easily transportable shelters.
- Three** Tabernacles is a synonym for booths, and based on Exodus 23:16, Ingathering would be another way of referring to this feast.
- Four** Again, no ordinary work was to be done. This admonition appears twice in the passage. It is also stated that the first and last day of the feast were to be days of solemn rest.
- Five** The feast began and ended on a Sabbath.
- Six** Offerings of varying types were made during the feast days.
- Seven** The booths were to be made in remembrance of the days of the exodus when God providing for them in the wilderness.

Tabernacles was the third of the pilgrimage feasts when Jewish males were expected to be present at the Temple in Jerusalem. But because Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles came so close together, most pilgrims would likely have attended all three of the fall holidays.

A key term

There is a key term found in verse 39 of Leviticus 23, the “gathering of the harvest.” That word gathering is frequently used in Scripture to speak of the end of human history when God will gather his people. It is probable that the prophets meditated and studied to understand what it was going to be like when the Messiah came. For instance, in Zechariah 10:8–10 and 14:2 the key word is “gather,” that God is going to gather all the nations, that

the Messiah is going to stand on the Mount of Olives, and it will split so the people will go from slavery to freedom, just as they did at the Red Sea. When the Messiah arrives all the gathered nations will worship the Lord and celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles year after year—or forever. And the celebration will be in the presence of God with great rejoicing.

The gathering of the nations is the fulfillment of a promise God gave to Abraham. In Genesis 12:3 He said, “In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” The gathering of the nations, that is the Gentiles, was part of the messianic hope. And it is interesting to note, that during the Feast, seventy bulls were offered up as sacrifices during the course of The Feast. In Genesis 10 the “Table of Nations” divides the world into seventy nations (and the Talmud also reflects on this accounting).

Jesus and the Feast

Jesus kept the Feast of Tabernacles just as He kept the other feasts or Jewish holy days. Jesus attended at least three and maybe four Passovers in Jerusalem, based on the Gospel of John, and John’s seventh chapter finds Jesus present in Jerusalem for a Feast of Tabernacles.

To understand what happened in Jerusalem on that feast day when Jesus was there, it is necessary to recall what took place when Israel was in the desert and without water. God, through Moses, provided Israel with water that sprang from a rock. (see Exodus 17:1–7). Now on the great last day of The Feast, when the high priest poured out water from the Pool of Siloam from a golden flask into a basin near the great altar at the Temple, Jesus cried out: “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water’” (John 7:37–38). Jesus quoted from Isaiah 12:3.

The whole of Isaiah chapter 12 seems like a hymn of praise for God’s provision of salvation. Its messianic overtones are quite unmistakable. Isaiah 12 is the conclusion of what is called the “Book of Immanuel” that begins with chapter 7. Chapter 11 of Isaiah is focused on the Spirit-filled Messiah from the tribe of Judah whose ministry includes the Gentile nations:

You will say in that day: “I will give thanks to you, O LORD, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away, that you might comfort me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation.” With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And you will say in that day: “Give thanks to the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the peoples, proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously; let this be made known in all the earth. Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.”

These are words of praise and great joy, just the kind of words that were shouted out on the last day of The Feast. That last day was known as *Hoshana Rabba* in Hebrew, or the great *Hoshana*. It meant that the people offered a great shout of joy for God's salvation.

The prophet Haggai and *Hoshana Rabba*

Hoshana Rabba came on the seventh day of Tabernacles, the twenty-first of the month. Remarkably, Haggai means "my feasts," and in chapter two we find that a word of the LORD comes to Haggai on the very day of the *Hoshana Rabba*. The prophet Haggai receives a vision of the nations coming into the glory of the temple, here the second temple, the very same temple, though enlarged by Herod the Great, where Jesus taught during the days of His earthly ministry. Haggai 2:9 reads: "The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts." The word "glory" is a way of saying that God is present and thus Haggai points to a future time when God will be present in the Temple in a way never experienced before. In addition, "peace" may well refer to the restored fellowship of God and His creation, as in the days of the Garden of Eden or Paradise.

In other words, on the day of *Hoshana Rabba*, Haggai received a vision that the Messiah, since Messiah is God's presence among His people, is going to make the second temple more glorious than the first, and all because Messiah will be there. And in John 7, on the very day that Haggai envisioned, Jesus announced to the people that He was the Messiah. Jesus' words might not be plain to us now, especially if we are Gentiles and not familiar with the words of the *Tanakh*, but the people who heard Him that day would have understood.

Jesus' parables about wedding feasts

There are several parables that Jesus told that contain the idea of a wedding feast or a bridegroom coming for a bride. Among them are: Matthew 9:14-17; 22:1-14; 25:1-13; and John 3:29. The wedding feasts have an end of history sense to them, a gathering proclaimed by and prepared for by the King of the kingdom. Matthew 22:1-10 will serve as the best example of this material:

And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.' But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the main roads and

invited to the wedding feast as many as you find.' And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all who they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests."

The wedding feast was a gathering of vastly different kinds of people, even some considered to be "bad." Some of those who should have come to the feast refused, perhaps pointing to many of the religious authorities who were in the process of rejecting Jesus. Some servants of the king were badly treated, even murdered. It is thought that Jesus was either referring to earlier prophets who had been shamefully treated by those leaders of Israel who should have welcomed them, or that Jesus was thinking of how both He and His apostles would be treated in the very near future. Maybe it is both.

The essential point is that Jesus used the idea of a wedding feast to speak of a future ingathering.

The Church as a Bride in Revelation chapter 19

Then in Revelation the Church is referred to as a Bride:

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

Revelation 19:6–9

The revelation John receives from Jesus Christ (see Revelation 1:1) moves toward a grand finale—a joyous and worshipful marriage celebration. The bridegroom, here referred to as the "Lamb," which is plainly Jesus, the Passover Lamb sacrificed for us and our sin, is the resurrected Lamb now come for His Bride, who is the Church, which has been watching and waiting for His arrival. Now commences the marriage feast that lasts forever and forever.

Marriage is at the heart of God's creation. In Genesis God prepares Eve for Adam and they live in fellowship with Him, that glorious presence, which is at once the original and ultimate intention of the Creator. A sinful rebellion and provisions for a remedy intervened.

The vision of the New Heaven and the New Earth in Revelation chapter 21

The vision of Revelation 21 is of a new heaven and a new earth, and at the center of the renewed creation is the holy city, new Jerusalem. It is a story of a recovery of all that was lost in the great rebellion of Genesis chapter 3 that culminated in the exclusion from the

Garden of Eden. As in Revelation 19:6–9 and the marriage supper of the Lamb, the vision is that of a grand ingathering:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

Revelation 21:1–4

John sees God dwelling with His people. The word translated “dwell” could just as easily have been translated “tabernacle.” In the Greek version of the *Tanakh*, called the Septuagint (abbreviated LXX meaning seventy), in Leviticus 23:34 the word translated “booths” is the same root word as that in Revelation 21:3 translated “dwell.” The writer John, and of course the Revelator, Jesus the Messiah, look all the way back to the Garden of Genesis where God dwelt with man. The thread that began in the first chapters of the first Bible book stretches all the way to the last chapters of the last Bible book. And that thread ran right through the Feast of Booths.

The vision of the River in the Garden in Revelation chapter 22

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

Revelation 22:1–5

This is the fullest expression of fellowship with God found in Scripture. As in the Garden of Genesis, all needs are met. There is no sin or threat of sin or rebellion. God, the Creator, the Father, is present as is the Lamb, the Son of God, Jesus the Messiah. Even the face of God will be seen—the most dramatic means by which a person of Jewish understanding could speak of being in the presence of God. There is also a belonging, the strongest possible bonding portrayed in the phrase “his name will be on their foreheads.”

What was lost in Genesis is found in Revelation—the permanent Ingathering, no longer or ever again in flimsy booths or tents, but in the City of God, the New Jerusalem, the new heaven and new earth, a house not made with hands.

A house not made with hands

Paul the apostle also understood the intent of God. He wrote: “For we know that if the tent, which is our earthly home, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5:1). Again, “tent” in this text could also be translated “tabernacle.”

Garden, house, tent, booth, tabernacle, city of God, new Jerusalem, new heaven and new earth, assembly, synagogue, church, temple—all are metaphors or pictures used to speak of God being with His people.

In Jesus the feasts of Israel are fulfilled

John, writer of Revelation, who had the great vision of the ultimate fulfillment of God’s intent, also recorded words of comfort and hope given by Jesus to His disciples shortly before His betrayal, trial, and execution. Jesus said:

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”

John 14:1–3

“Where I am you may be also” is the goal of creation and is the completion of the will of God. Why this should be so will never be answered in a satisfying manner, since we are aware that we are rebels against God and have broken His laws constantly. Yet, the purpose of God will not be thwarted by sin or Satan.

God’s people, His elect and chosen, will be gathered up at the end point of history and will enjoy Him forever.

Is there a biblical warrant?

Is it possible to state that Jesus completed, satisfied, and fulfilled, in His death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and sending of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost something that God had laid the foundation for in the Jewish holidays and which mark the roadmap of world history?

The prophet Zechariah connects the Feast of Booths with the end of world history. The relevant passage is Zechariah 14:16: “Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths.” There will be toward the end of human history a mighty battle waged against God’s Chosen People by the nations or Gentiles, and out of the

Gentiles God will rescue some and these will join with the elect of the Jewish People to worship together at the time of the Feast of Booths. The point is this: the prophet points toward the future and sees the world's ending point culminating in the Feast of Booths.

Daniel Fuchs' book, *Israel's Holy Days: In Type and Prophecy* (Lizeaux Brothers, 1985, page 79) contains this succinct and beautiful summary of Jesus' fulfilling the fundamental intent behind the canonical writers' composition of the material on the feasts found in Scripture:

Christ our Passover became Christ the Firstfruits from the dead. At Pentecost, the firstfruits of Israel's ripened harvest were presented to the Lord. The first sheaves were reaped from Israel. But Israel did not keep the harvest to herself. The gospel, which was to the Jew first, has been proclaimed to the uttermost parts of the earth. It has been a long time since Pentecost, and we longingly listen for the sound of the trumpet, the return of our Lord. Then after that we look for Israel's Day of Atonement and the nations of our Lord keeping the Feast of Tabernacles.

This is the last feast—the ingathering—God's ultimate intention, paradise restored, back to the garden, is complete. **It is the Jubilee.**

Colossians 2:16–17:

Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. **These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.**