

## Israel's Thanksgiving Celebration

**Text: Leviticus 23:34–44**

### Introduction

Just as Americans have a yearly Thanksgiving celebration, so did Israel in Bible times. During the fall season, after the crops were in, God instituted a thanksgiving festival called “The Feast of Tabernacles.”

Let's look at how God told Israel to commemorate their thanksgiving feast and see what we can learn that will help us better celebrate this Thanksgiving season.

### Message

#### 1. Remember the Sabbath (verses 35,36).

- a. The Jews were to rest from their work on the Sabbath and to worship God at this feast.
- b. On Sundays, holidays, and at other times it is important for us to set aside time to rest (Mark 6:31; Exodus 34:21) and to worship God (Hebrews 10:25; Psalm 84:4).

#### 2. Render sacrifices and offerings to God (verses 37,38).

- a. The Jews were to render sacrifices to God for their redemption (verse 37). By faith we need to accept Christ's sacrifice for our redemption (Ephesians 5:2).
  - (1) Christ declared himself as the sacrifice of this feast day (John 7:37–39). He is the source of water that quenches spiritual thirst (verse 37). Those who drink of this water will also become sources of water that quench the spiritual thirst of others (verse 38).
  - (2) Christ also prophesied of the baptism in the Holy Spirit that would soon be outpoured (verse 39; Acts 2:4).
- b. The Jews were to bring to the temple gifts and freewill offerings (verse 38; Deuteronomy 16:16).
- c. In gratitude for God's goodness, we are to bring our tithes and offerings regularly to God's house (Malachi 3:10; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:7).

#### 3. Rejoice before the Lord (verse 40).

- a. At this most joyous of Old Testament feasts the Jews were to spend each day rejoicing before God for all their bountiful blessings.
- b. We also are to rejoice continually before God at this Thanksgiving season and each day of the year for our blessings (Philippians 4:4).

#### 4. Re-emphasize God's provisions (verse 42,43).

- a. In the past, the Jews at this feast were to dwell in temporary dwelling places as they had for 40 years in the wilderness to emphasize again their redemption from Egypt (verse 43). We need to remember that we once wandered in the wilderness of sin until God saved us (Ephesians 2:1ff).
- b. In the future, this feast was looking forward to the regathering and restoration of Israel (Zechariah 14:16–21). We need to remember we are but strangers and pilgrims on earth (1 Peter 2:11) and are going to a better land where God abides (Revelation 7:9,10).

### Conclusion

Holidays are an important part of our lives. They are a welcome change from the routine of life, a time to fellowship with our extended families, and a time to build memories in the indelible minds of our children. Including these ideas from Israel's thanksgiving feast into our Thanksgiving celebration will give this holiday greater spiritual significance to us and our families.

—Owen Wilkie, Brookline Station, Missouri