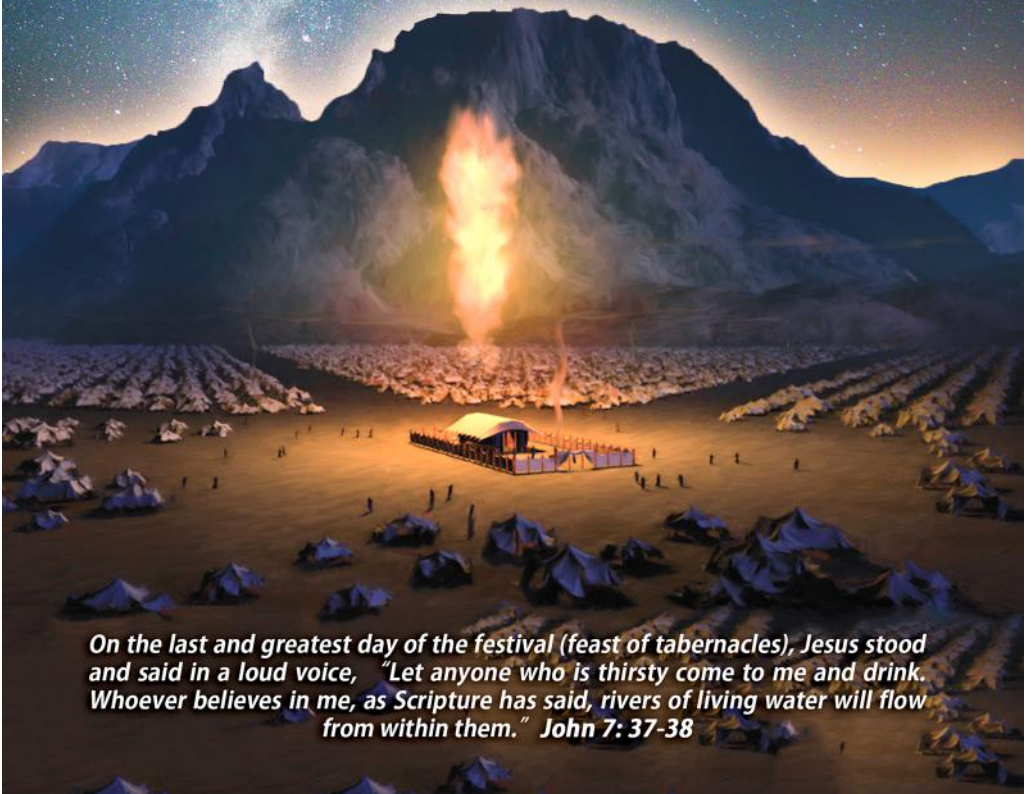




BETHEL AG CHURCH
INTERNATIONAL WORSHIP CENTRE

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES



On the last and greatest day of the festival (feast of tabernacles), Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." John 7: 37-38

The Feast of Tabernacles

What is the Feast of Tabernacles?

The seventh and final feast that the Lord gave to Israel is known as **Sukkot** or "**The Feast of Tabernacles**". This feast is the most joyful and festive of all Israel's feasts. It is celebrated for seven days from the 15th through the 21st of the month of Tishrei (September – October), which is the seventh month of the year according to the Hebrew calendar. It is also the most prominent feast in that, it is mentioned more often in Scriptures than any of the other feasts.

The Feast of Tabernacles has many names of different themes associated with it. It is called "**The Feast of Ingathering**" because it celebrated the 'ingathering' of the last harvest of the year. It is also called the "**The Feast of Dedication**" because it was during the Feast of Tabernacles when the Temple of Solomon was dedicated (**II Chronicles 7**). It is called "**The Festival of Lights**" because of the 'glory' of God that filled the Temple of Solomon.

In **Leviticus 23:41-43**, especially during this feast, God commanded the Israelites to live in booths or huts (Hebrew: Succoth), for seven days after they brought in their final harvest for that season, and to rejoice before Him. This act was an annual reminder of God's provision during the forty-year wilderness sojourn when Israel had lived in similar tents and when God dwelt in the midst of them.

What are the ceremonial highlights of The Feast of Tabernacles?

- The people were to live in booths and rejoice before the Lord with branches. The booths were an annual reminder of God's provision for them during the 40-year wilderness sojourn when they lived in similar shelters. The branches, known today as a lulav, consist of: a palm branch, a willow branch, a myrtle branch, and a piece of citrus fruit known as a citron or etrog. These four branches represent Israel's journey from Egypt to the interior of the Promised Land: Palm leaves represented the Sinai Desert, Willow—the Jordan Valley, Myrtle—the mountains, and the citron—the coastal plain.

- During the feast, the people brought their tithes and offerings to the Temple. They were not to "*appear before the Lord empty-handed*" (**Deuteronomy 16:16**). Each day, one goat, fourteen lambs, two rams, and a number of bullocks (thirteen on the first day, which decreased by one bullock each day) were offered at the Temple. Each of these sacrifices was offered with its appropriate meal offerings and drink offerings.

- On the first morning of Sukkot, a procession of priests went down to the pool of Siloam and brought up to the Temple a golden container of water, which was sufficient to last through the seven days of the feast. The water was brought up with great ceremony to be poured on the altar. This was an act of prayer and an expression of dependence upon God to pour out His blessing of rain upon the earth.

- During the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) there was a great ceremony called the "*Illumination of the Temple*" that involved the ritual lighting of four golden lampstands. These lamps were huge menorahs/candelabras (seventy-five feet high); which were lit in the Temple at night to remind the people of the pillar of fire that guided Israel in their wilderness journey. All night long the lights shone their brilliance, it is said, and illuminated the entire city.

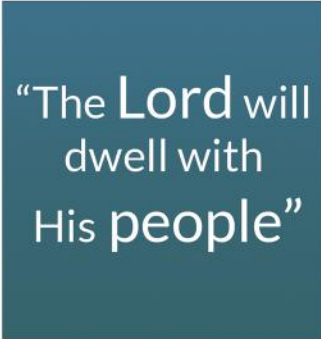
What are the Messianic fulfilments of the Feast of the Tabernacle?

At the heart of this feast is the desire of God to tabernacle with mankind. A quick survey of the Bible shows this truth from the first book to the last. Early in Genesis, we read of how God dwelt among His creation as He walked in the garden in the cool of the day (**Genesis 3:8**). After the fall we still see this same desire of God, in the construction of the Tabernacle, during the Exodus of Israel from Egypt. This later evolved into the first and second temples where the Presence of God was manifest. The first coming of Jesus was described in this same exact language for we read:

John 1:14, *"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling (ie tent, tabernacle) among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."*

The Messianic Kingdom age which is still to come is again characterised with the thought - The King will be with His people!

Zechariah 2:10-11, *"Shout and be glad, O Daughter of Zion. For I am coming, and I will live among you, declares the LORD. Many nations will be joined with the LORD in that day and will become my people. I will live among you and you will know that the LORD Almighty has sent me to you."*



"The Lord will
dwell with
His people"

When God commanded the Israelites to dwell in booths (Sukkot); He emphasized to them and their generations to follow that their dependence was on Him, not on a man-made structure, and God would be in the centre of their tents like the tabernacle in the wilderness.

The Succah (booth) also pointed toward our physical bodies which are temporary dwelling places. Jesus said in **John 14:2-3**, *"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."*

1 Peter 2:11, 12 says that *"we are merely pilgrims and strangers passing through the earth as we journey toward the "promised land" (kingdom of heaven). Our dependence should not be upon our flesh, nor upon anything materialistic, but upon God."*

Both 'light' and 'water' play an important role in the symbolism of this feast.

Jesus becomes our Living water

According to **John 7:37-39**, in the midst of all these festivities, Jesus stood up in the midst of the people on the last and greatest day of the Feast and cried out, *"If anyone is thirsty, let him come unto me, and from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water!", speaking of the Holy Spirit that would be given to all those who believe in Him."*

Jesus becomes the Light of the World

The light from the Feast of Tabernacles lamps illuminated the whole city. Scholars suggest that Jesus referred to this custom when He spoke those well-known words, *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* (**John 8:12**) Also see **John 1:1-9** and **John 9:5**.

What is the prophetic fulfilment of this Feast of Tabernacles?

The Feast of Tabernacles speaks of a future time when men will again be in tabernacle with God, when He will dwell with them and they with Him (**Revelation 21:3**). They speak of a day in which all nations will gather to Jerusalem (**Zechariah 8:22; 14:16**).

Revelation 21:3-4, *"And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."*

The ultimate fulfilment of this feast will be a time of rest, joy, and fellowship with Jesus Christ. During the period of the law this rest came one day a week on the seventh day. During the kingdom, the whole planet will experience rest as the lamb will lie down with the lion and nation will not take up sword against nation any longer. (**Isaiah 11:1-6**)

What is this Millennial Kingdom?

The Millennial Kingdom refers to the thousand-year reign of Christ specifically mentioned in **Revelation 20:1-6**.

This is usually seen as the same Messianic Kingdom anticipated by the Old Testament prophets.

The major events of Millennial Kingdom are:

Jesus Christ will live and reign over the nations of the world.

His faithful disciples will share this work with him.

Satan (or Devil) will be bound throughout this time; so those that might oppose Christ will be bound i.e., they will be punished if they resist. The nations will no longer be deceived by false teaching.

Satan will be loosed from his prison to deceive the nations again i.e., People and nations will be free one last time to choose whether to submit or oppose Christ.

Some of those nations will gather together in battle against Jesus and His helpers, and will be destroyed by God; and finally sin and death will be removed from the earth for ever.

God will dwell with man in the new Heavens and the new Earth.

Revelation 20:1-6.

¹Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

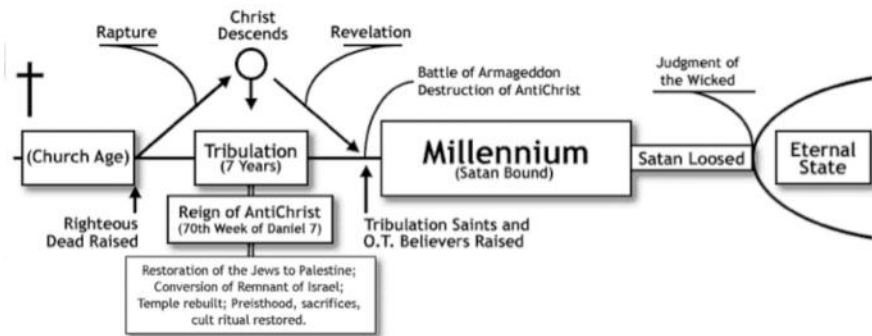
*²He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a **thousand years**;*

³and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

⁴And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a **thousand years**.

⁵But the rest of the dead did not live again until the **thousand years** were finished. This is the first resurrection.

⁶Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a **thousand years**.



What is the purpose of this Millennial Kingdom?

The main purpose of Jesus' 1,000-year reign is to fulfil the prophecies given by God called as covenants to Israel and the promises made to Jesus, the nations, and the whole Earth. (**Psalms 100, Daniel 7:11-14, Romans 8:18-23**)

The Bible tells us that when Christ returns to the earth He will establish Himself as King in Jerusalem, sitting on the throne of David (**Luke 1:32-33**). The Davidic Covenant promised Israel a king from David's line who would rule forever—giving the nation rest from all their enemies (**2 Samuel 7:10-13**).

At the second coming, the covenant will be fulfilled as Israel is re-gathered from the nations (**Matthew 24:31**), converted (**Zechariah 12:10-14**), and restored to the land under the rule of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Who will occupy the Millennial Kingdom?

There will be two distinct groups who will occupy the Earth during the millennial kingdom—those with glorified bodies, and those with earthly bodies who lived through the tribulation.

Those with glorified bodies consist of the Church, receiving glorified bodies at the rapture (**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:21-23, 51-53**), and those who are resurrected after tribulation when Christ physically returns to Earth (**Revelation 20:4-6**). Those who have earthly bodies can be subdivided into two groups: believing Gentiles and believing Jews (Israel) who put their faith in Jesus. So, believing Gentiles, Israel, and resurrected/raptured believers will occupy the Earth.

What will life be like during the Millennium?

It will be like the Garden of Eden again; paradise will be regained. This renovated Earth will become the place where Jesus rules. He will sit on the throne of David in the city of Jerusalem, that great city, from which He will rule the world. He will be truly the God of that age; and the whole world in all of its economics, all of its labour, all of its social life, all of its morality, all of its understanding and learning, opinions, thoughts, ideas, and concepts, will reflect the mind of Christ.

It will be the opposite of a world like ours today, which has as the god of this age – Satan - where everything in it reflects him.

This will be a time of both political and spiritual rule. Politically, it will be unveiled (**Daniel 2:35**) authoritative (**Isaiah 11:4**) and characterized by righteousness and justice, with assurances for the poor (**Isaiah 11:3-5**) and admonition and judgment for the violators of Christ's rule (**Psalms 2:10-12**).

The literal earthly reign of Christ will also have spiritual characteristics. First and foremost, it will be a reign of righteousness, in which Christ will be the King and He will reign in absolute righteousness (**Isaiah 32:1**).

It will also be a time when the fullness of Christ and the Holiness of God will be manifested (**Isaiah 11:2-5, Zechariah 14:20-21**).

Everything from work to worship will be holy. Sin will be punished (**Psalms 72:1-4, Zechariah 14:16-21**) in an open, just way.

Everything from work to worship
will be holy during the Millennium

Life Applications:

1. The Feast of Tabernacles reminds a child of God that God is our true eternal shelter; it shows the fragility of human life and how utterly we are dependent upon the living God.

2. The Feast of Tabernacles portrays our progress from faithlessness to believing, from joyless to being joy-filled, from spiritual instability to spiritual strength, confidence, and security. It is symbolic of putting on the New Man in Christ, and putting off the Old Man with lusts and sins of the flesh!

3. We must learn to use all our resources to worship and serve God.

4. We must enter into God's rest not through our abilities but through faith and complete obedience to His Word.

Hebrews 4:9-11, *"There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience."*

5. We must pray for His Kingdom and His will in our lives.

Matthew 6:10; 12, *"Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven ... For yours is the kingdom, power and glory forever!"*

If you have any further questions, please email us at info@bethelag.in or walk into the church office for any counselling regarding this issue.