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Feast of Tabernacles

Jesus and His disciples celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of Booths, and there is abundant evidence the early Christian communities also kept the feast.

During the period between Yom Kippur and Tabernacles, the Jews busied themselves preparing the necessities to make booths, readying themselves to live in them and in general preparing for a time of joy.

During the first seven days of the feast, all of Israel lived in booths outside to show that they were pilgrims, that the earth wasn't their home. On the evening of the seventh day the booths were burned. Then they marched around the base of the temple altar with the paradise apple (pomegranate) and smashed the fruit (the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil) at the base of the altar so they could enter the eighth day. The pomegranate is the Paradise Apple that was the instrument of the fall. Originally, the pomegranate had 613 seeds representing the 613 Laws of Moses. With the act of its smashing, we are saying that we are totally helpless in trying to keep the law and instead we must live each moment in dependence only on God.

The first day and the eighth day were Sabbaths (holy convocations) and no work could be done.

The various offerings of bulls, rams and a goat were offered by fire (Number 29:12-40.)

Upon all of these offerings was a pouring out of water mixed with wine upon the altar; this was done at no other time; for the sake of that, there was great joy and singing and dancing such as was not seen any other time but this.

"Who can resist the joy?"

A particular psalm was read during the Drink Offerings when both the water and the wine were poured into the base of the altar. On the eighth day only wine was poured into the altar.

Following is a list of the psalms that were read:

Day 1)	Psalm 105
Day 2)	Psalm 29
Day 3)	Psalm 50
Day 4)	Psalm 94:1-11
Day 5)	Psalm 94:12-13
Day 6)	Psalm 81
Day 7)	Psalm 82 & Psalm 12

At the close of the first day and on each subsequent day, an elaborate ceremony took place in the Temple. A great stage had been prepared in the court of women. Benches were set up along the four sides. The women stood above and the men below. Huge golden cups, each holding in

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excess of 120 logs (38 quarts) of oil, were on the four walls. Ladders were set by each cup, and the four youngest priests went up, having large bottles of oil which they emptied into the cups. They had made wicks from the rags of the garments and girdles of the priests to light these lamps.

"There was not a street throughout all Jerusalem that did not shine with that light." (Succah)

The idea is that the light is so bright that all is exposed---nothing is left hidden; we are naked and unashamed in the spirit. There is nothing left to do. That's what is needed to enter the eighth day.

The religious and devout danced, having lit the torches in their hands, and sang songs and doxologies. The Levites had harps, psalteries, cymbals and "instruments of music without number." They stood upon the first row of the fifteen steps that led up from the court of gentiles to the court of women. They sang a psalm for each step as they proceeded up to the court (Psalms of Ascent 120-134.) The passage up the steps symbolizes our passage from flesh to spirit; from isolated individuals to members of the bride (court of women.)

Two priests also stood in the upper gate that goes down from the court of Israel to the court of women, with two trumpets in their hands. When the priest gave the signal, they blew the trumpets and descended. When they came to the tenth step they counted again. Moving into the court, they sounded and continued across until they reached the east gate. They then faced east and said, "Our fathers, in this place, turned their backs upon the Temple and turned their faces toward the east and worshiped the sun (and other gods), but we (turning west toward the Holy of Holies) turn our faces toward God." Instead of living in the futile hopes for tomorrow we now see that all is finished and look only to God.

Christ's last Tabernacles is chronicled in Luke 9:51-17:10 and John 7:2-10:21. Three of the major parables of Christ were spoken on this eight day or wedding feast (Matthew 21: 33-46; Matthew 22:1-14; Luke 14:15-35.) This feast is the ultimate reason time and space exists. Thirty percent of the gospels are about Christ's activities and sayings on the Feast of Tabernacles.

"Now, about the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and taught." (John 7:14.) Later that day is when Christ cried out in the temple saying, "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (John 7:37, 38.) This could be targumed as follows:

"Have you such wonderful rejoicing at drawing and pouring a little water from the pool at Siloam? He that believes on me, whole rivers of living water shall flow out of his own belly producing joy unspeakable."

On the afternoon of the seventh day of the feast, the people read Ecclesiastes. This gives us another hint of what is necessary to enter the eighth day, i.e., the knowledge that all is vanity including all human effort (especially our own) all dreams, ambitions and accomplishment are all empty, futile and nothing but dust.

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Everyone is invited to the parties during the seven nights---the lame, the poor, even the Levites. On the eighth day, however, the door is closed, and it is only the Bride that is invited to the dinner party. The seven days represent linear time. The eighth day is resurrection.

This is like a parable from the Talmud:

"This is like a King, who made a feast for seven days and invited all the men in the province, for these seven days of the feast. But when those seven days were past, he saith to his friend, 'We have done what is needful to be done toward these men; let thee and me return to enjoy together whatever comes to hand, be it one pound of flesh or fish or herbs.' So the holy blessed God saith to Israel, 'The eighth day shall be our feast day.'"

In addition to the other readings noted in this memo, each person should study what the ancients believed happened on the Feast of Tabernacles:

ACCORDING TO TRADITION

- 1) The pillar of cloud by day and fire by night first appeared to Israel on the 15th of Tishri--the first day of the feast (Numbers 9:15-23.)
- 2) Moses announced the tabernacle of God was among (in) them (Exodus 13:17-22.)
- 3) The dedication of Solomon's Temple and the descent of the Shechinah Glory (I Kings 8; II Chronicles 7.)
- 4) Revelation scene (Rev. 7:9-17.)
- 5) The law was placed in the ark of the Tabernacle on the feast (Deut. 31:1-30; see especially verses 24-27.)
- 6) Christ changed the water into wine at Cana (John 2:1-12) during the first year of his ministry.
- 7) He was transfigured (Luke 9:28-36; Matthew 17:1-13.)
- 8) He spoke about "rivers of living water" (John 7:37-39.)

READINGS

Leviticus 23:33-44	II Chronicles 5, 6, 7	Hosea 9	Luke 9:51-17:10
Numbers 29:12-40	Psalms 113-118	Zech. 14:16-21	Luke 14:15-35
Deuteronomy 31	Psalms 120-134	Matt. 22:1-14	John 2:1-12
I Kings 8	Ecclesiastes	Matt. 25:1-13	John 7:2-10:21
			Rev. 19

THEME

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him; for the marriage of the lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready." (Revelation 19:7)

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TABERNACLES SCHEDULE SATURDAY

5:30 PM **Backyard of Rutledge house**

Smashing the Paradise Apples

This ceremony represents our willingness to spew out our own judgments of what is good or evil and instead live in that moment of dependence, as a small child, trusting our Father in heaven for everything. We willingly smash our ideas of the way we think things should be. We abandon our ideas of tomorrow. We destroy the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Booths

At the time of Christ the booths were the regular dwelling for all of Israel for seven days. They had to eat, sleep, study, i.e., live in them. The experience of living in the booths is to experientially teach us that:

- 1) We are strangers and pilgrims here on earth.
- 2) Our true covering is nothing that is made by man.
- 3) Any part of the booth that has been touched by tools must be buried in the earth.
- 4) The size, i.e., at least 10 handbreadths high but not more than 30 feet, was to insure that the "protective chreubim" will fit inside.
- 5) Each leaf on the booth represents one of your dreams or ambitions, and you watch them die.
- 6) All flesh is as grass and the glory as the flower of the grass.
- 7) Our outer man is perishing while the inner man is renewed day by day.

NOTE

During the week preceding the Feast, representatives of each seder group will sleep in the booth.

Burning the Booth

Each of us will participate in the burning of the booth branches. By this act we are declaring to God that we are ready for the baptism of fire; we are ready to leave this world; we are ready for the marriage supper because we see that all is finished.

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Preparation:

- 1) Everyone should be dressed in white (at least a white top).
- 2) All differences among the brethren should have been resolved.
- 3) Each must have on the wedding garment (only the righteousness of Christ.) See Matthew 22:1-14

Cup of Sanctification

Drink the cup of sanctification after the processional and symbolic closing of the gate.

Festive Meal

Participate in the joy of the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Psalms of Ascent and the Hallel

Sing the Psalms of Ascent, Psalm 120-134, and the Hallel, Psalms 113-118

*On the chance that time still exists, there will be no Seder meetings on Sunday.