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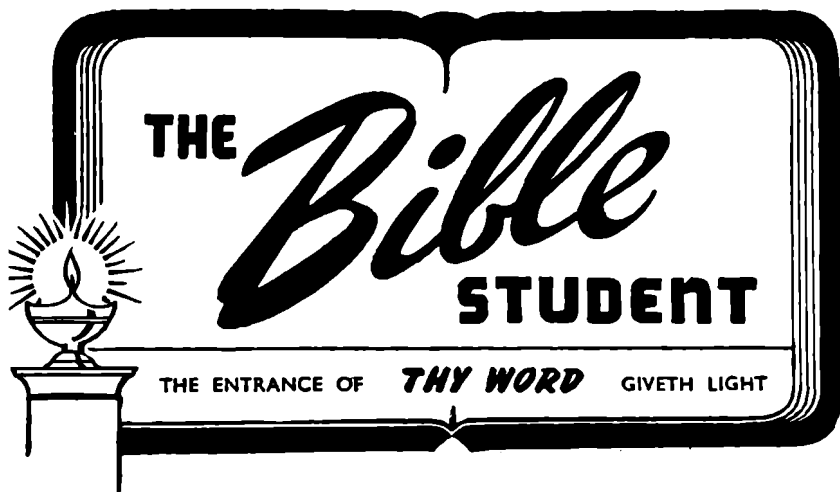
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*Editor:* A. McDONALD REDWOOD

# SEVEN OLD TESTAMENT FEASTS

## A TYPOLOGICAL STUDY OF LEVITICUS 23

A. MCD. REDWOOD

[We must draw attention to the very unfortunate error in the sub-title of the previous article of this series in the April issue, page 91. Instead of 'The Feast of Trumpets', etc., it should have read: 'The Feast of Atonement (cont.)'. It was a *continuation* of the subject commenced in the Jan. issue, pp. 29-31. We trust readers will thus get the right connection: we regret the error on our part.]

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### 7. THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

The religious calendar of Israel closed with 'The Feast,' as it was sometimes called (1 Kings 8:2, etc.). In their later history two or three other Feasts (and certain Fasts—see chapter ix) were added; notably the 'Feast of Dedication' which lasted eight days, commencing on the 25th Kislev (December) in commemoration of the cleansing of the Temple and Dedication of the altar by Judas Maccabaeus (148 B.C.) after their desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes. (Dr James Orr considers that this is the Feast referred to in John 10:22ff.). Also there was the Feast of Purim mentioned in the book of Esther (9:20-22). Both these came later in the religious year.

The Feast of Tabernacles commenced on the fifteenth day of the month and lasted eight days, the first and last days being observed as Sabbath days of holy convocation. It was, therefore, the longest of all the Festivals.

In Leviticus 23: 34 it is called the 'Feast of Tabernacles' (lit. 'booths'; Heb. *sakkah* or *succhoth* from a root meaning 'to interweave'), but it also bears the equally-appropriate title of 'Feast of Ingathering,'<sup>1</sup> because it took place 'in the end of the year, when they had gathered in their labours out of the field.' It was distinctly the harvest festival—the corn and vintage were safely harvested, and thanksgivings abounded.

<sup>1</sup> David Baron appropriately quotes Edersheim regarding the names given to this Feast: 'In reference to the harvest it is called "Feast of Ingathering"; in that to the history of Israel in the past, the "Feast of Tabernacles"; while its symbolic bearing on the future is brought out in its designation as emphatically, "The Feast", and "The Feast of Jehovah".' See Ex. 23:16; Deut. 16:13.

1. *Character.* The distinctive characteristic of this Feast was that of joy, and of rest that accompanies joy. For a people so distinctly agricultural as the Israelites were, the end of the harvest meant, in some real sense, the end of toil and a season for rest and rejoicing.

(a) This joy had a twofold aspect—or shall we say, flowed from two directions. Lev. 23:40-43 gives the reason for the command that at this Feast the people should dwell in booths—it was to remind them of the way God had brought them through the wilderness. It partook, therefore, of a commemorative and *retrospective* character. No time of the year seemed to be so fitting as this—as they contemplated the abundance of corn and wine yielded by the land, in fulfilment of the description given by God Himself of ‘a land flowing with milk and honey,’ they must have been vividly reminded of the contrast with the difficulties and dangers of the journey through the wilderness. At the same time they would have the grateful remembrance of the God of Israel, who sustained them miraculously in the wilderness, and led them by the hand of Moses, Aaron, and Joshua safely into the promised land.

The Feast of Tabernacles could not be kept in the wilderness—the people had to be brought first into possession of the land of promise. But the wilderness formed ‘the connecting link between the house of bondage, on the one hand, and the inheritance of life and blessing, on the other. Hence, the annual celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles was like a perpetual renewing of their religious youth; it was keeping in lively recollection the time of their espousals,’ and placing themselves once again amid the scenes and transactions which constituted the most wonderful period of their whole history. Their joy and rejoicing, therefore, flowed from the remembrance of this past history. This is further brought out in the well-known passage where Moses is seen addressing them at the close of the forty years: ‘Thou shalt remember all the way which Jehovah thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness.’<sup>1</sup>

This retrospective and commemorative character is further emphasized by another ordinance. It was most fitting that

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 8:2-5.

the Feast of Tabernacles was the time chosen for the reading of the Law, every seven years, in the hearing of the whole congregation.<sup>1</sup> How forcibly this must have taken them back to Sinai and the covenant made there by God with them! God's requirements were to be as closely observed if they were to continue in the land as in conquering the land.

And it is deeply significant to note how, in spite of every such reminder, ceaselessly enacted, Israel did forget, and the peculiar lessons of this Feast ceased to be regarded. Hosea in a later day, had to record: '*Israel did not know that I gave her corn and wine and oil*'—the very blessings that were prominent in this Festival. And he goes on: 'Therefore will I return and take away My corn in the time thereof, and My wine in the season thereof.'<sup>2</sup>

Why the prophet had to speak in this manner is revealed in Neh. 8:17—the Feast had seemingly never been kept strictly in the manner (nor in the spirit) laid down in the law from the days of Joshua to the Return from captivity in Babylon. In fact, how serious had become the departure from the law is seen in 1 Kings 12:32, 33. Jeroboam, who without doubt recognized the tremendous influence the Feast had upon the thoughts of the people, changed the date from the seventh month to the *eighth*. This meant that ten tribes at least were wholly led away. We are not to suppose, of course, that the tribes would let the Feast be in abeyance, specially in the days of David, but seemingly it was not kept in the right way and probably many never kept it at all.

Such indications of declension reveal the purpose of God in sending them into captivity. As Fairbairn remarks: 'It became needful to send her virtually again through the rough and sifting process of her youth . . . the discipline which characterized the wilderness sojourn must be undergone anew, in order that the spirit of earnest and devoted zeal, in which it had issued, might again become the characteristic of the people of God.'

(b) But the Feast had also a distinctly *anticipative* and prophetic character. Zech. 14 is a chapter vividly describing the day of Israel's full deliverance from her own wayward heart

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 31:10-13.

<sup>2</sup> See Hos. 2:8, 9.

and her age-long enemies. It also describes something of the glories of Messiah's Millennial reign. In verse 16 particular mention is made of this Feast: 'And it shall come to pass that every one that is left of all the nations that come up against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, Jehovah of Hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles'.

Here we have a very clear futurist reference. And as will be shown later, this is in keeping with the prophetic interpretation of the type implied in the Feast. Why this Feast is singled out is doubtless because (in the words of David Baron), 'the spiritual truths set forth by this particular type shall then be realized—for Jerusalem shall then be the metropolis of God's Kingdom on earth, and the joy and blessedness foreshadowed by that Feast will then not only be the portion of saved Israel, but shall also pervade all nations.'<sup>1</sup>

Whilst, therefore, it bade them rejoice in the backward look, it sought to point them onward and to look for a day when 'the Canaanite should no more be in the house of Jehovah of Hosts' but the 'whole earth should be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God.'

2. *Prominent Features.* We shall just briefly enumerate and describe the more important features, leaving the teaching till later.

(a) The Feast of Tabernacles was the only one that had an octave. The usual manner of statement is that it was a seven-day Feast with a special extra day added, really the first day of a new week, bearing a special significance, as we shall see later. The first and last days were both days of 'holy convocation' and rest.

(b) One of the great features was the command to dwell in booths. These booths were temporary structures, made of branches and leaves of trees—various kinds being mentioned in each of the several passages, the most prominent being the olive, the myrtle, the palm, and the willow of the brook. The 'pine' of Neh. 8:15 is probably more correctly rendered by the R.V. as 'wild olive.' No special directions were given as to their location. They were usually erected in the open fields around, in the public squares and open spaces, even in the streets and on

<sup>1</sup> *Visions and Prophecies of Zechariah*, p. 521.

the house tops. The main point was the spirit and atmosphere of festivity that such a temporary removal from the usual household routine would help to foster. The people of the East are peculiarly responsive to such occasions, and enter far more enthusiastically upon a spectacular enterprise of this kind than those living in Western lands.

The reason for this special feature we have already alluded to. It was to bring to mind the wilderness journey and to call forth praise for their deliverance from the attendant hardships.

(c) Another prominent feature was the unusual number of daily sacrifices, the burnt-offerings being specially conspicuous for the large number of victims. These burnt-offerings were in *addition* to the usual daily morning and evening sacrifices. Instead of one ram and seven lambs, there were two rams and fourteen lambs; and instead of one bullock, it began with *thirteen* on the first day, twelve on the second, eleven on the third, and so diminishing by one daily to seven on the seventh day. On the eighth day the usual number was once more resumed.

There was also the daily sin-offering of one goat. The meaning of this feature will be dealt with later. The total number of victims must have been very great, and it would involve much extra time and work on the part of the priests and Levites.

(d) There remains only to call attention to two other interesting features attaching to this Feast which were added at some later date, though not belonging to the Mosaic institution.

The first is known usually by the title 'The Joy of the Drawing the Water' (*Simchat-bet-ha-Sho'ebhah*). 'Every morning of the Feast, a joyous procession, accompanied by music and headed by a priest bearing a golden pitcher, measuring just a little over two pints made its way from the Temple courts to the Pool of Siloam. At the same time another procession went to the place in the Kedron Valley called Moza, or Colonia, whence they brought willow branches which they bound on either side of the altar of burnt offering, 'bending them over towards it so as to form a kind of leafy canopy' (Baron). Amidst great demonstrations of joy and excitement 'this water was poured into a silver basin or tube on the altar, simultaneously with the prescribed libation of wine, which was poured into another tube.'

The seventh day was the climax. 'The joyous crowds of worshippers on that day seen from one of the flat roofs of Jerusalem overlooking the Temple area, would resemble a forest in motion for all carried palm branches in their hands.' The Levites sang the Hallel (the specially prescribed 'Praise' for the great festivals, consisting of Ps. 113-118). Seven times the whole crowd led by the priests moved in procession round the altar. The joy accompanying these and many other ceremonials 'was so great that it became a proverb: "He that hath not seen the joy of drawing (and the pouring) of the water, hath not seen joy in this life"' (Baron).

David Baron describes the significance of this ceremonial, as stated in the Talmud, to have reference to the 'pouring out of the Holy Spirit.' And it is suggestive to compare this with the allusion found in John 7:37-39. It is of special interest to note that the best renderings of verse 38 make the words 'out of him shall flow rivers of living water' to refer to *Christ* and not to the believer.

The last feature is the wonderful illumination of the Temple area that took place at the end of the first day. This was produced from four huge golden candelabras filled with oil and many wicks, which produced such a brilliant light that it was said 'there was not a court in Jerusalem that was not lit up by it.' As in the former so in this feature, there may be seen a two-fold significance—commemorative of the water from the rock and the pillar of cloud that followed the Israelites in the wilderness, and anticipative of the Millennial glories to come.

3. *Prophetical and Typical Teaching.* In our consideration of the two previous Feasts we have possibly emphasized the teaching connected with the church rather than that relating to Israel. But in this Feast it would appear that that emphasis must be largely reversed. Yet as a matter of actual fact, in all three Feasts the strict interpretation of the prophetic element in all probability centres more in the *earthly* aspect than the heavenly. Two points at least are clear: There is an *increasing* emphasis upon the earthly aspect as we pass from the fifth to the seventh Feast; and, in this seventh Feast the earthly aspect seems to dominate



the heavenly—not obliterating it, but overshadowing it. It is only when we come to the consideration of the teaching of the eighth day that we feel once more we are in the heavenly sphere.

(a) We have in this Feast then, the foreshadowing of that period known as the Millennium. Two or three considerations lead us to this conclusion, which we shall now examine. But we do not necessarily wish to limit the typology to the Millennium. Quite possibly it looks much further into the limitless horizon of that Eternal Dispensation that lies at the other end of the Thousand years—as we shall see.

First it takes place after the harvest of earth has been gathered in. It is meant to indicate a *closing* scene of joy and gladness. And read in connection with the teaching of the previous Feast (Atonement), there is more than a suggestion that the harvest represents the gathering in of the Nation of Israel which inaugurates the Millennial reign of Messiah-King. The church, as we have seen, will already be present by the side of her Lord. But not only are the saints (earthly and heavenly) to be gathered in prior to the Millennium but the *nations* are to be judged also. God's righteous punishment against evil is to be poured out upon the earth (cf. Joel 3:11-14, etc.).

It is at least significant, therefore, to note the mention of both the corn harvest and the vintage for, read in connection with such passages as Joel (above) and Rev. 14:14-20, it would seem quite permissible to think of the vintage as referring to the gathering together of the nation for judgment (cf. Zech. 14). As an interpretation this is worthy of the closest study. When dealing with the application, we are able, of course, to take a broader view and to consider the harvest as symbolical of labour and toil of earth brought to an end, and the Feast itself as speaking of eternal joy and felicity.

Then the number 7, shown previously, denotes completion, joy and rest, a perfect cycle of time. And the addition of an eighth day makes it all the more striking. For the Millennium is to last only the thousand years—after which there is the dawn of that Eternal Dispensation which is to crown and close all. The seven days, therefore, very appropriately complete the earthly

scene, whilst the eighth introduces us to the new day of Eternal glory, when the earth as we know it now, gives place to a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness for evermore.

If 7 denotes completion, 8 denotes resurrection—and this 'last great day of the Feast' (John 7:37) undoubtedly represents the consummation of all the manifold purposes of God, when all the gracious promises of our covenant-keeping Jehovah shall have their glorious fulfilment. 'Behold the Tabernacle of God is with men and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people' (Rev. 21:1-8).

(b) Regarding the typical teaching of the sacrifices which accompanied the Feast, only a few remarks must suffice. Commentators generally are at a manifest loss to account for the unique series presented on this occasion. And in view of the difficulties we can only offer what must after all be merely suggestions—but there is all the more reason for more study and meditation upon the subject.

The passage in Leviticus leaves out all reference to the offerings except to what would seem to be the special *burnt-offerings*. It is only when we turn to Numbers that we find mention of the sin-offering. This is in keeping with the character of Leviticus passage, which keeps steadily in view the prophetic fulfilment of God's purposes. The mention of the sin-offering in Numbers, however, reminds us that sin is not yet entirely eliminated. Satan being bound, sin is in *abeyance*—inactive perhaps; but not finally put away. But Rev. 20:7-9 indicates that after the thousand years are over there will be a season of intensified Satanic activity once again experienced upon earth, the duration of which it is impossible to say. It is only after this fresh outbreak has been dealt with by Divine judgment, and the final Assize for the living and dead whose names do not appear in the Book of Life has been held that the 'new heaven and new earth' are ushered in.

As regards the burnt-offerings, the different animals sacrificed bear the same typical teaching as all through Scripture. The lamb stands for the 'constant presentation of the value of Christ', the true Lamb of God; the ram speaks of whole-hearted consecra-

tion to God; and the bullock the measure of devotedness in testimony and service for God. All these were used in the unique burnt-offerings of this Feast. Their distinguishing mark lies, however, not in the kinds of animals used, but in their great number.

The two rams seem to bear testimony to the measure of consecration to God on the part of Jew and Gentile alike, the Nation and the *nations* outwardly united now. It may not refer so much to the individual as to the collective bodies of Jew and Gentile, according as they bear respectively a two-fold witness to this consecration outwardly. The fourteen ( $2 \times 7$ ) lambs declare with reiterated emphasis the absolute efficacy and full value of the work of Christ—again for the Nation *and* the nations, manifested upon earth (though understood by faith).

When we come to the consideration of the bullocks, they would seem to suggest *personal* devotedness to God—but just short of real perfection (thirteen instead of fourteen). As one writer puts it: 'The Millennium will bring upon earth a joy of worship and thanksgiving, which will be externally at least, *almost* perfect.' There is, however, a gradual diminution of this devotedness towards God. 'It does not cease from being complete, it is true; but its *abundance* gradually ceases to manifest itself as it did at the beginning.'

This suggestion of decline is in further keeping with the passage in Rev. 20:7-9 already alluded to above.

Nevertheless, though such devotedness may decline, we are reminded of the perfection of God's ways as revealed in the seven bullocks, the two rams, and the fourteen lambs, offered on the seventh day—in the earthly aspect of the Feast, the *last* day.

The eighth day dawns cloudless upon the glories of a renewed universe, sin-freed, filled with righteousness and peace. We hear from the throne the assuring voice 'as of many waters', 'Behold, I make all things new', 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God.'

'He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly.'

'AMEN. EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS.'