

Read

The Feast of Tabernacles

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16 Then the people went out and brought *them* and made themselves booths, each one on the roof of his house, or in their courtyards or the courts of the house of God, and in the open square of the Water Gate and in the open square of the Gate of Ephraim. 17 So the whole assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and sat under the booths; for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun until that day the children of Israel had not done so. And there was very great gladness. 18 Also day by day, from the first day until the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day *there was* a sacred assembly, according to the *prescribed* manner.

[The New King James Version](#) (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Ne 8:13–18.

Welcome to God's Word For You, a Ministry of Sharon RP Church in the Southeast Iowa. We want to thank you for listening today, and we pray that you'll be blessed by both hearing God's word as well as having it applied to your life and your heart.

Please turn in your Bibles with me now to the Book of Nehemiah chapter eight. Nehemiah chapter eight. It's been a few weeks since we've been in Nehemiah, but we remember in the first part of Nehemiah chapter eight, the people had called to Ezra the scribe, the priest, to come forward and to read from the Book. And the people were saddened when they had first read from the Book and, and the Levites went out and they, they taught people, they gave the sense of what the reading was and their joy, or their mourning was turned to joy. Well, it's in, it's right after that that we pick up. That was on the first day of the seventh month, which was the day of the New Year. And in verse thirteen where we pick up our reading this morning, is the second day of the seventh month. So hear now God's read, or the reading of God's word from the older covenant, Nehemiah chapter eight, beginning at verse thirteen.

13 Now on the second day the heads of the fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and Levites, were gathered to Ezra the scribe, in order to understand the words of the Law. 14 And they found written in the Law, which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month, 15 and that they should announce and proclaim in all their cities and in Jerusalem, saying, "Go out to the mountain, and bring olive branches, branches of oil trees, myrtle branches, palm branches, and branches of leafy trees, to make booths, as it is written." 16 Then the people went out and brought them and made themselves booths, each one on the roof of his house, or in their courtyards or the courts of

the house of God, and in the open square of the Water Gate and in the open square of the Gate of Ephraim. 17 So the whole assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and sat under the booths; for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun until that day the children of Israel had not done so. And there was a very great gladness. 18 Also day by day, from the first day until the last day, he read from the Book of the Law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day there was a sacred assembly, according to the prescribed manner.

Well when I was a young boy being raised in Southern California, if I mentioned a celebration that happened in that area, most of you would scratch your head. And a lot of the families during that, in that area, they celebrate for their daughters what's called a Quinceañera. And I remember as this boy being invited to a party, and that's all they called it. They said hey, do you want to come to our daughter's party? And I said, sure. I remember walking into this party, this festival where there was food and there was dancing and, and people kept calling it a Quinceañera and I don't speak Spanish, I didn't know what a Quinceañera was and I had, and I was just left scratching my head for the three hours I was there. What am I here for? I understand something's being celebrated, but I don't know what's going on. And it wasn't until I got more information later when I asked the family what was going on and why was I there that I found out that the Quinceañera is because the girl had reached her 15th birthday and traditionally that's would be like our Sweet 16. This was her going out into the world, and now she's an adult. But see, I didn't understand what was going on there. And in many ways, this is how the Jews had come to the Feast of Tabernacles for year after year after year. They had come to this feast, they had come to the temple, they had sat underneath the booths, but they had forgotten what all this was about. It wasn't here until Ezra comes on the second day of the seventh month, and they read God's law that they find out the beauty of what God has done both in the past and in their present life. And so we find that out that they are to rejoice in God, and they do so in this celebration of the Tabernacles, starting with the first few verses, thirteen through fifteen, where the heads of the houses of all the people, verse thirteen, with the priest and the Levites were gathered to Ezra the scribe, in order to understand the words of the law. See the heads of the households get together for a Bible study. They go to Ezra and they and they want to read the Book. Ezra has read the Book to them. They have sat under the teaching of the Book, now they want to study the Book. Now they want to know what's the nitty gritty? How are we supposed to do these things? What are we to understand by them? And so the heads of the families come and they study, and they find out that it's not just the festival of trumpets, that was the day before, but there's another festival coming up that they haven't done in a long time. And that was a Festival of Booths. And so as they're studying, they realize this festival, now many of you, unless you're faithful Bible readers and you've studied all the festivals, you at this point might be scratching your head too. Okay, I remember there's a Festival of Tabernacles or a Festival of Booths. Honestly, how many of you guys remember all the details of the Festivals of Booths? Well, most of us wouldn't because we don't celebrate that festival.

So I want to give you just a little bit of background from Leviticus 23 and Deuteronomy 16, where God tells us what the Festival of Booths was supposed to be. See the Festival of Booths was on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, which is right about now in our time. It's at the end of harvest. Now, just, just the other day of one of the farmers in the community had literally just finished his harvest and he was cleaning up his equipment. He still had work to do, but there was joy to be had because there was grain in the bins. This is a joyous time. We've actually

gotten the crops out of the fields and it's time to celebrate. That's what the Festival of Booths was. They were to come at the end of the harvest and for eight days, the first day is a sacred assembly, no one's to do any work. And then for a subsequent six days, people are to, to build houses, tabernacles, tents, booths, that they're to all, everybody in the community is to come to Jerusalem and everybody lives in Jerusalem. Even if you had a house in Jerusalem, you'd go on your roof and you would make a tent. Or if you couldn't make it on your roof, you could go into your courtyard and you would make a booth, a tabernacle, a tent that you would live under for this festival. And then on the eighth day, there was a second sacred Great Assembly. And on the first day and on the eighth day, there was a sacrifice to God on those two days when no work was to be had. But all the people were gathered together to celebrate what God had done; to take great joy in what God had done. But what were they celebrating? They're celebrating the exodus. See, the temple of booths and Leviticus 23 was given while they were still wandering in the desert; while they were still in their booths. While they were still living without homes. They only had two things to cling on to — God himself who had blessed them with His presence and the promises that He had given them that one day they would enter into the land of milk and honey and there they would dwell in houses and have fields they did not plant, and reap harvests that they did not sow. All they had was God and His presence and the promises of the grace to come. But once they got into Jerusalem, lest they forgot that it was God who brought them out of Egypt with his mighty right hand and had given them this land to live in and all of His blessings and that He had made them a people, every year at the end of harvest they were to get together and they were there to live in these booths, live in these tabernacles live in these tents together to remember it was their God who brought them out of Egypt. It was their God who had given them everything that they enjoyed. And it was God Himself who they were to take joy in. That's what they were to celebrate. That's what they were to remember.

Man we should long for that in our day. We should long for the day when fathers, heads of families would go back to the scriptures, and look at everything good that God had done and gathered their children around them, gathered their grandchildren around them and said, hold on, hold on, we need to remember who God is and the things He has done for us. What a day that would be in our communities again if, if families came back together to not celebrate football games and not celebrate the things in this world but instead celebrate everything that God has done for them. Oh for that day; for that day when all the farmers in our community would not just celebrate that the harvest is done and that the hard work is over, but that God has blessed them with everything they need. We should long for that day again, even in our own society.

But the text goes on even more in versus 16 and 17 that see, the fathers of the families sent out word into the communities that they needed to bring together the branches; they needed to live out this commandment. They needed to actually rejoice in the Lord. And what do the people do in versus 16 and 18? It's remarkable. "Then the people went out and brought them and made themselves booths, each one on the roof of his house, or in their courtyards or the courts of the house of God, and in the open squares of the Water Gate and in the open squares of the Gate of Ephraim. So the whole assembly of those who had returned from captivity made booths and sat under the booths for since the days of Joshua, the son of Nun until that day the children of Israel had not done so. And there was very great gladness." The heads of the family send out the word, and what do the people do? What does the whole congregation who had been brought back in the second exodus of the return of the exiles do? They respond to the call of God. They

actually respond; they hear that God has called us at the end of this great time of harvest to come and to worship him for eight days. Come and worship God. And what do the people do? They obey. The whole assembly, everyone who had come out of captivity, came to Jerusalem.

Now this is a pretty good feast, right. I mean, there's, there's a sacrifice on the first day. There's a sacrifice on the eighth day. There's normal sacrifices going in between. Everyone is together. Everyone is to be having joy. But let's face it, just this past week, I was sleeping out in the desert of Texas and it got cold at night and we even had a heater in our little pop up camper. And it's still got cold at night. And these people are living under palm branches. They're living in the arid region where when the cold wind blows, I promise you no myrtle branches are going to stop all the cold that's going to come through.

They have a greater joy than their own comfort, don't they? They want to rejoice in what God has done. God has called them together, and they're willing to say, I'll put away my comforts, because it's God who gave me all those comforts, and they come and they worship him. They come and they keep that sacrifice. They come even in the face of what might not have been a good harvest. Remember in Nehemiah chapter five, one of the cries of the poor was that there was a famine. It wasn't that good. It's possible that the harvest that year wasn't as good as what they were hoping for. And yet they still come. They still come. And it says that they rejoice with a very great joy, or as the New King James, with was, and there was very great gladness. How can they have gladness in the face of poverty? Remember Jerusalem is not the grand Jerusalem that it had been just 100 years prior. The temple is not the grand temple of Solomon, but just a small remnant of what's a rebuilt temple. How can they have any gladness when they're facing poverty? When they're living in half built ruins? How do they have gladness and joy?

Let me tell you a secret of life. If you are trying to find joy or gladness in the circumstances of this world, you will always be found wanting. I'll say that again. If you are trying to find joy or gladness in any circumstances or things of this world, you will be sorely disappointed. It is not in the things of this world, but it is in the God who created this world that they found great gladness. That is exactly what Leviticus chapter 23 verse 40 said. I'm going to turn there, Leviticus 23:40 and I'm going to read the words to you that God commanded. Leviticus 23:40 when he instituted this feast. "And you shall take on for yourselves on the first day of the fruit of beautiful trees, branches, palm trees, the boughs of leafy branches, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days". Who were they rejoicing before? It was they had joy because they were rejoicing before God. We don't live in a day and age where we go to a temple and we say that's where God's presence is. And so we go there into His presence and we worship and take joy before Him there. That's what they did in Nehemiah chapter eight. Some of them made there, made their booths in the courtyards of God. And before the presence of God, they rejoiced. It was because they were in the presence of God that they rejoiced. But brothers and sisters, I want to point you to something that Jesus told us in John chapter seven. That's, that's directly applicable to today. Please turn over with me to John chapter seven. John chapter seven. Jesus in John chapter seven is teaching during this festival in the courtyard of God at the temple to the Jews. The Messiah, the prophet the Christ is teaching God's people. The new Ezra is teaching out of the book of the law. And I want to direct you narrowly to his words and verses 37 through 39. On the last day, that's the eighth day of this

great feast, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood up and cried out, saying, if anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of the heart will flow rivers of living water. Jesus as the new Ezra before the people at the last great day of the feast tells God's people, if you have believed the words of Moses, if you believe in me, as the Scriptures teach, there is rejoicing to be had, because from me there will come rivers of living water.

This is what he had promised that Samaritan woman at the well, that he would give her living water. And she said, where am I going to find that living water? It's in Jesus Christ that she would find that living water. But remember, we're talking about God's presence here. And look at what Jesus was talking about when he talks about those rivers of living water - verse 39. But He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. See the people of Israel once a year on the temple, on the tabernacles, they went to the temple to go before the presence of God that they might have joy, and they had to only go there once a year. And when they got there once a year, they could rejoice before the Lord. Christian, there is something far greater for you. You do not need to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to go pray at the old temple because you are the temple. You are the ones in whom the Holy Spirit dwells. You are the living stones of God. It is the Holy Spirit who dwells in you and you are united to Jesus Christ if you believe in Him.

Let me tell you, Christian, if you are seeking joy, seek it in the Lord who is nearer to you than your very breath. It is the Lord who lives in you. It is the Lord who cares for you. It is a Lord who is in-dwelt in you. You are in Him and He is in you. And there is no ripping you away from Him. Every day for the Christian is a temple of booths. Every day for a Christian is a day where we can come to the Lord and we can rejoice in Him. For that person who struggles with depression, and they're wrestling with the deep and hard things of this life and they don't know how to stop staring into that black hole that keeps wanting to suck them back in, they need to remember that that dark pit is a lie because the light of Jesus Christ is in them. And if they draw near to Him, He was already near to them. For that person who is struggling with poverty and, and hears the words of Paul when he says rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice. And they can actually live out the words because that joy is in them. Rivers of living water that come from the Holy Spirit. This is what Jesus, our high priest and our prophet teaches us. Our teacher tells us at the temple of booths that if we believe in Him, the Holy Spirit will flow and we will never be thirsty again. We come to the Lord and we find joy. We come to the Lord and we find satisfaction. When the man or woman who is underemployed struggles with how am I going to feed my family, how I'm going to make ends meet, his joy or her joy will never be satisfied in a better job. It will never be satisfied in a bigger paycheck, but they'll find contentment, joy and gladness in the Lord. The person who finds their body failing them as aging takes their mind; as they wake up every day, and there's a new pain that wracks their body, they might wish Lord, I wish I had a better day. I wish I had just one day without pain. Brothers and sisters, I'm telling you, I have met saints who live every day in a pain that I cannot imagine and yet have far more joy than the most rich and young person I've ever met in my entire life, because their joy was in the Lord. This is what the people find in Nehemiah chapter eight when they come and they celebrate the feast of booths, they know what this feast represents. That they are God's people. And that they tabernacle in the very presence of God. It is God who has brought them out of Egypt, as God has brought them out of exile, is God who's called them

together as his people given them his promises. And you likewise can cling to His promises and bask in His presence. May we take those things to heart. And as we come to the Lord's table and as we as we look to Him, we know that He is truly present with us, may we do so in faith.

Let us pray.

Lord we do thank You that You have been glorified, that You are risen. Lord but that you did not leave us when you ascended to Your throne and seated upon it in heaven. But Lord that You have poured out Your Holy Spirit into our hearts that we might cry out to You Abba Father. Father, fill us with Your joy. Comfort us and make our hearts glad that it's You who has called us into Your presence. It's You who has taken away all of our sin. And it's You who will eternally satisfy our souls. In Jesus name. Amen.

Thank you for listening to God's Word For You, a ministry of Sharon RP Church in Morning Sun, Iowa. We pray that you would be blessed as you grow in your love for God, your love for His word, as well as your love for His people. Until next week, God Bless You.