



Deuteronomy 16:13-22
Observe the Feast of Tabernacles
May 2, 2021

¹³ “You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, when you have gathered from your threshing floor and from your winepress. ¹⁴ And you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant and the Levite, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow, who are within your gates. ¹⁵ Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the Lord your God in the place which the Lord chooses, because the Lord your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you surely rejoice.

¹⁶ “Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed. ¹⁷ Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God which He has given you.

¹⁸ “You shall appoint judges and officers in all your gates, which the Lord your God gives you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with just judgment. ¹⁹ You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality, nor take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous. ²⁰ You shall follow what is altogether just, that you may live and inherit the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

²¹ “You shall not plant for yourself any tree, as a wooden image, near the altar which you build for yourself to the Lord your God. ²² You shall not set up a sacred pillar, which the Lord your God hates.

The Passover and the first two *khag*, or pilgrim feasts, have been detailed. In our passage today, Moses turns to the third of these pilgrim feasts, Tabernacles. Of this feast, Charles Ellicott states –

“The Passover is His sacrifice and death. We keep the feast of unleavened bread by serving Him in ‘sincerity and truth.’ The Feast of Tabernacles has not yet been fulfilled by our Lord like the two other great feasts of the Jewish calendar. Unfulfilled prophecies regarding it may be pointed out, as in Zechariah 14.” ~Charles Ellicott

Ellicott is correct concerning the Passover. It anticipates Christ’s sacrifice and death. He is correct concerning the Feast of Unleavened Bread as well, citing Paul as a demonstration of it being worked out in our lives.

But... is it correct that the Feast of Tabernacles has not yet been fulfilled by our Lord? Anyone? For those of you who said, “No, that is a bunch of malarky,” you can give yourself a pat on the back. For those of you who went on to say, “That is actually heresy,” you get bonus points and accolades.

Is there anything else wrong with what he said? Well, yes. Yes, there is. He said, “like the two other great feasts of the Jewish calendar.” In stating it this way, he is implying that these are Jewish feasts. That is incorrect. They are feasts observed by the Jews, but they are feasts of the Lord in His redemptive calendar.

In matters such as this, it is important to be precise. As far as Zechariah 14, what he is referring to there, it forms our text verse –

Text Verse: *“And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. ¹⁷ And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain. ¹⁸ If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. ¹⁹ This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.” Zechariah 14:16-19*

Has the prophecy of Zechariah 14 been fulfilled? We’ll no. It never has. As this is the case, then how can Charles Ellicott be wrong? Anyone? Let’s ask other questions from the Old Testament. Has Ezekiel 38 been fulfilled? How about Isaiah 65:22? How about Amos 9:15? No, no, and no.

And those are just a smattering of the as yet unfulfilled prophecies of the Old Testament, even some found in the law of Moses have yet to find their fulfillment. Unfulfilled prophecy does not equate to an unfulfilled law.

Unfulfilled prophecy means we have more to look forward to in the redemptive narrative. An unfulfilled law means we have nothing to look forward to – at all. Let us remember this and let us stand fast on the truth that the law is fulfilled. And, in its fulfillment, it is now set aside.

Keeping our categorial boxes straight in our theology is exceedingly important. In fact, when they get out of whack, the result can be eternity-changing for those who are so instructed. Let us handle this word with care and let us be sure to be precise in our words when it is called for.

This is what the Lord expects of us. Such truths as this are to be found in His superior word. And so, let us turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. You Shall Rejoice in Your Feast (verses 13-15)

¹³ “You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles

khag ha’sukkoth taaseh lekha – “Feast the sukkot shall do to you.” The words now reintroduce the third of the three pilgrim feasts, here called *ha’sukkoth*, or “the tabernacles.” It was first noted in Exodus 23 where it was called *ha’asiph*, or “the ingathering” –

“Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year: ¹⁵ You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall

appear before Me empty); ¹⁶ and the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field.” Exodus 23:14-16

It was noted again a second time as the Feast of Ingathering in Exodus 34:22. It is these words that set the tone for the three pilgrim feasts and how they anticipate the believer’s life in Christ. Unfortunately, Israel – and many ill-informed Christians – see this Feast of Ingathering as being about the end-times Jews.

In other words, it is common to hear people equate the ingathering of the Jews to the land of Israel as a fulfillment of this feast. This is not only incorrect, it is also terrible theology. The feasts have nothing to do with that. The Jews are being brought back to Israel as a fulfillment of the promises found in the law and the prophets. They have seven more years under the law in order to come to Christ.

During those seven years, the large majority of the Jewish people will die. If the Feast of Ingathering were about the Jewish people, it would be a rather sad event, not one to be rejoiced in. Further, if Ingathering were about the Jews, it would mean it was not about the Lord because the Jews have not yet come to the Lord. There is error from every angle in this failed typology.

The eight Feasts of the Lord are fulfilled in, or made possible by, Christ. The three pilgrim feasts anticipate the believer’s life in Christ – whether Jew or Gentile –because of what He has done.

For example, Christ is the Passover that makes our sinless life in Christ possible – the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Christ is the first Sheaf cut down and presented before the Lord alive again. His work anticipates the believer’s life in Christ, sealed with the Holy Spirit as the guarantee that we too will be raised again – the Feast of Harvest. And Christ is the One whose work then allows our works to bear fruit – the Feast of Ingathering.

These three pilgrim feasts of Israel were conducted in the presence of the Lord and they each anticipate us living our lives in the presence of the Lord. Israel was living out an annual series of feasts, based on the Lord’s provision towards them which anticipated believer’s lives in Christ based on what He has provided to us during this dispensation known as the Church Age.

What the Lord provided for Israel is what made their pilgrim feasts before Him possible. What the Lord has done for us is what makes our conduct before God possible.

The greatest detail concerning the feast is found in Leviticus 23. There, instead of Ingathering, it is called Tabernacles. It would be hard to understand the greater part of the workings of the

feast without reading or watching the sermon from that passage. The feast is introduced there in verses 33-36 –

“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ³⁴ “Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the LORD. ³⁵ On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it. ³⁶ For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it.”
Leviticus 23:33-36

The feast is then more fully explained beginning in verses 39-43 –

“Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the LORD for seven days; on the first day there shall be a sabbath-rest, and on the eighth day a sabbath-rest. ⁴⁰ And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. ⁴¹ You shall keep it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month. ⁴² You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, ⁴³ that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.” Leviticus 23:39-43

The Lord gave the name, the Feast of Tabernacles, and then He gave the reason for the name, saying, “I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.” There the Hebrew said, *ki ba’sukkoth hovoshavti eth bene Yisrael b’hotsyi otam meerets mitsrayim* – “for in the sukkoth I made dwell sons of Israel in bringing them out from land Egypt.” That is based on the words of Exodus 12:37 –

“Then the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children.” Exodus 12:37

The location, known as Succoth, was` the first place Israel journeyed to after leaving Egypt. It may have been named Succoth at that time based on the fact that Israel dwelt in tents, or it may have already had that name, but either way, the point is that Israel had left Egypt, and that was based on the work of the Lord at the Passover – the slaying of the Lamb, the sprinkling of the blood, and the passing over of the people.

But one can only slay a lamb if there is a lamb to be slain. Of this feast, Jamieson-Fausset-Brown states –

“Various conjectures have been formed to account for the appointment of this feast at the conclusion of the whole harvest. Some imagine that it was designed to remind the Israelites of the time when they had no cornfields to reap but were daily supplied with manna; others think that it suited the convenience of the people better than any other period of the year for dwelling in booths; others that it was the time of Moses' second descent from the mount; while a fourth class are of opinion that this feast was fixed to the time of the year when the Word was made flesh and dwelt—literally, ‘tabernacled’—among us (Joh 1:14).” Jamieson-Fausset-Brown

Unless one sees Christ as the reason for these feasts, there can only be wild conjecture. And even in knowing that Christ is the reason for them, there is still often wild conjecture. What is correct and why? That will be seen as we continue.

13 (con't) seven days,

Leviticus 23 said, “on the first day *there shall be* a sabbath-rest, and on the eighth day a sabbath-rest.” There is no contradiction here. The words are focusing on the seven-day feast itself because it is that which pictures the believer’s life in Christ, based on what Christ has done to make it possible. The seven days, like the seven days of Unleavened Bread (verse 3) refer to the period observed by the believer based on the work of the Lord. This feast was to be...

13 (con't) when you have gathered from your threshing floor and from your winepress.

Some translations say “after” while others say “when.” Saying “after” is incorrect, and “when” can be misleading based on how you interpret it. The Hebrew reads, “in your gathering.” It is true that this occurred towards the end of the harvest season, but not everything was fully harvested at this time.

Olives, for example, will continue on into the next month. Other crops may still not be fully harvested by the time of this feast as well. The idea here is that the feast is observed, like the Feast of Weeks, in the time of the harvesting. It was to be a time of celebration at the bounty provided by the Lord. As it next says...

14 And you shall rejoice in your feast,

As in verse 11 with the Feast of Weeks, it is a positive command. Considering the symbolism of the feast, it is understandable why this is stated. For now, we are to simply read the words as

they are given. The men of Israel, the heads of these agriculturally based households, are told that they are to rejoice. Along with them...

14 (con't) you and your son and your daughter,

As in verse 11, the wife is noticeably missing from the list. It goes straight from the man to the son and to the daughter. Like last week, this is a note by Moses that there is no need to mention the wife separately. The husband and wife are one flesh. As such, when the man goes, the wife was to go as well. Along with them, the children were to be brought along as is fitting. Further...

14 (con't) your male servant and your female servant

During the pilgrim feast, none in the household were to be left behind. Those in the household, but who were not a part of the family, were to go as well. Along with them...

14 (con't) and the Levite, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow, who *are* within your gates.

No person was to be left in the city. All who dwelt there were to go when the people loaded up and headed out. Once they had arrived at the place where the Lord resided, Moses again says...

15 Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the Lord your God

shivat yamim takhog l'Yehovah elohekha – “Seven days you shall keep a feast to Yehovah your God.” The word “sacred” isn’t in the Hebrew and it should be italicized. Like in Exodus 23:14, it simply says, “keep a feast.”

Like during the other pilgrim feasts, it would be at this time that the people would bring their tithes and offerings and eat them in the presence of the Lord. It would be a time of relaxing, vacation, parties, dancing, and getting to see old friends, and meeting new friends. And Moses again notes that it is to be...

15 (con't) in the place which the Lord chooses,

Again, as has been seen numerous times already, the unity of worship is what is being highlighted here. The people were to gather around one common sanctuary where the Lord dwelt. Thus, there is a note of exclusivity here.

If this is where the Lord dwells, and his people are gathered around Him, then those not gathered are not a part of what the Lord is doing. In other words, there are the redeemed of the Lord, and there are all others. For the redeemed, they were to keep the feast...

15 (con't) because the Lord your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands,

Israel was to keep the feast because the Lord would bless them. The point was to remember that the blessings came from the Lord. In turn, they were to bless the Lord in their time of rejoicing before Him. What their hands had produced was only because the Lord provided that it would be so. Of this, Jamieson-Fausset-Brown says the following –

“According to Jewish tradition, no marriages were allowed to be celebrated during these great festivals, that no personal or private rejoicings might be mingled with the demonstrations of public and national gladness.” JFB

If this is so, it is an unfortunate and legalistic addition to the word of the Lord, and it explains much concerning why they have had so much trouble in their history. First, the law never speaks of such a thing, and so it is an unsanctioned addition to the law. Secondly, the most propitious time for someone to get married is when their minds and lives are set on honoring the Lord. Such traditions are harmful, not helpful, to a right relationship with the Lord.

15 (con't) so that you surely rejoice.

v'hayita akh sameakh – “and you will become only rejoicing.” It is a remarkable phrase. Again, and again, Moses has commanded the people to rejoice. Now, his words are less of a command and more of a statement of certainty.

The work throughout the year would be long, hard, and tiring. The people would be closed in at night, up early, and life would be good but maybe – as it often is – a bit boring. But to go out on a pilgrim feast would mean a different perspective, a time without work, a time of sharing in one another, and so on. In this, they would be nothing but rejoicing.

*We are here in Your presence, dwelling in temporary tabernacles
And we are rejoicing in all that You have done for us
A fire is inside to warm us as each ember burns and crackles
We are safely secure as we await the Lord Jesus*

*Oh, to dwell in our eternal home; for this we long
May that day be soon, but we will rejoice until then
Hear our praises; hear our joyous song*

Coming forth from the lips of Your redeemed among men

Thank You for our great hope, and the peace it does provide

Thank You for the surety we have in Christ Jesus

In His hope, we now patiently abide

Anticipating all that He has prepared for us

II. Pictures of Christ

We saw earlier that one can only slay a lamb if there is a lamb to be slain. After that, we cited a commentary that gave various views on why the feast is placed at the end of the harvest season.

One view not given, but which is quite commonly taught is reflected in the words of Charles Ellicott that we cited in the opening comments. Meaning, that it is not yet fulfilled. That is not only poor theology; it is heresy. To say that the feast is not fulfilled by Christ is to say that the law is not yet fulfilled by Christ.

As we noted in our opening comments, just because there are prophecies that are yet to be fulfilled from the time of the law, it does not mean that the law itself is unfulfilled. That distinction is both important and it must be clearly articulated. The Feasts of the Lord are just that. They are not Jewish Feasts, and they are not Feasts of Israel.

They are given in the law to reveal the working of God in Christ. In review of these appointed times, only three are actually designated as *khag*, or pilgrim feasts. The order from Leviticus 23 is first the Sabbath. Through faith in Him, He is our Rest, and He is our place of Rest.

*Appointed time fulfilled.

The next is the Passover. He is our Passover Lamb and through Him we are redeemed from the bondage of sin. *Appointed time fulfilled. After that is the first *khag*, or pilgrim feast, the Feast of Unleavened Bread. That is based on Christ's work as the Passover Lamb, and it is what makes the believer's life sinless before God.

As we are so deemed, so we are to conduct ourselves. *Feast being worked out in us because Christ made it possible.

After that was the Feast of Firstfruits. It is a picture of the Resurrection of Christ. *Appointed time fulfilled. From there is the counting of weeks until the fiftieth day. On that day, the Holy Spirit was poured out because of the finished work of Christ.

This is the second *khag*, or pilgrim feast, the Feast of Weeks. As noted in last week's sermon, it is the only feast that does not have a specific timeframe, such as "seven days." It is fulfilled in believers, once and for all time for each believer, as they come to Christ and receive the Holy Spirit of promise. *Feast realized in us because Christ made it possible.

The next is the Day of Acclamation (Yom Teruah). It corresponds to the birth of Christ.

*Appointed time fulfilled. That is followed by the Day of Atonement. It looks to Christ's one-time atoning sacrifice for believers. *Appointed time fulfilled.

The events of the redemptive year finish with the third *khag*, or pilgrim feast, the Feast of Tabernacles. It is emblematic of our life in Christ before we are glorified. The final option suggested by Jamieson-Fausset-Brown is the correct one in the sense that Christ made it possible for us when He came and "tabernacled" among us. As it says in John 1:14 –

"And the Word became flesh, and did tabernacle among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of an only begotten of a father, full of grace and truth." John 1:14 (YLT)

Christ "dwelt" or "tabernacled" among humanity. It is the same word that is used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament when speaking of this feast. In other words, the Lamb that was slain was only slain because He had a body. That body is His tent, His tabernacle.

He came and tabernacled among us in order to make our Exodus possible, just as the slaying of the Passover lamb made the Exodus of Israel from Egypt possible. The first location Israel stopped at after the Exodus, Succoth (meaning Tabernacles), was selected to show that the people had been brought out of Egypt. They tabernacled apart from the land of bondage.

Thus, the name of the feast was given – Tabernacles. Israel's annual Feast of Tabernacles typologically anticipated the lives of believers dwelling in temporary tents, awaiting their final glorification.

The very fact that the Passover lamb is what made the Exodus possible, and that the Exodus resulted in stopping in Succoth, or Tabernacles, demonstrates that the Feast of Tabernacles finds its fulfillment in Christ's work of the past and not at some point in the future. The types were given in the Old Testament to point to what Christ would do in the New.

We are redeemed, and yet we continue to tabernacle in our earthly body. It would make no sense at all for a person to believe and then to be taken immediately to glory. Who would continue to spread the message?

Rather, there is redemption (Passover) and being deemed sinless (Unleavened Bread). There is then the sealing of the Holy Spirit (Weeks). And then there is the tabernacling with the Holy

Spirit residing in us (Tabernacles). These all occur immediately upon belief, but they are logically ordered.

The other acts of Christ within the Feasts of the Lord are interspersed throughout the redemptive year as they occurred in the actual life events of Christ. As far as the *khag*, or pilgrim feast of Tabernacles, Paul clearly shows that it is being worked out in us, just as the other two are –

“For we know that if our earthly house, this **tent**, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ²For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, ³if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. ⁴For we who are in this **tent** groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. ⁵Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.” 2 Corinthians 5:1-5

There, Paul twice uses the word *skénos*, or tent, when referring to us in this earthly body. This life in Christ *is* our pilgrim feast. That could not be any clearer when reading the last verse cited from Paul: ὁ καὶ δοὺς ἡμῖν τὸν ἀρραβῶνα τοῦ πνεύματος, – “the and having given to us pledge the Spirit.”

The second feast, Weeks, is conditioned upon the first, Unleavened Bread. And that is conditioned on the Passover. Christ redeems from sin and then the Holy Spirit can move in.

The third feast, Tabernacles is an outworking of the second feast, Weeks. The Holy Spirit is given and the person tabernacles with the Holy Spirit because of Christ. The *arrabón*, or earnest deposit is what assures the believer that the final redemption **will** (not maybe) come to pass.

The symbolic point of the feast is that we will stay and continue tabernacling in the harvest, bringing all that are the Lord’s with us. And it is inclusive of all who are the Lord’s. That is evidenced in the words of Paul –

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:26-28

The work by Christ is done. The appointed times are fulfilled, and the Feast of Tabernacles is realized through His work. *Feast being worked out in us because Christ made it possible.

*Dwelling in these tents, we hope for our heavenly home
We await the day when we shall be taken there
But until that day, each place we roam
We do it knowing the Lord tends to us with care*

*He has filled us with His Spirit to carry us along
And with that, we shall remain content
We will praise the Lord in psalm and in song
Until our final day in this tent is spent*

*And then, we shall be taken to glory
A new dwelling – one to last for all eternity
Such is the marvel of the gospel story
Such is the wonder of what Christ has done for you and me*

III. Justice, Justice You Shall Do (verses 16-21)

¹⁶ “Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God

Because of the prominence of these words, the most common, and yet incorrect, comment concerning the pilgrim feasts is that only the males were required to go. Even more oddly, Joseph Benson goes further into the absurd, saying, “That is, from twenty to fifty years of age. The women were not obliged to be present at these solemnities; 1st, Because...”

Nothing like this is even hinted at anywhere in Scripture. There are no age limits at all on the men, all must go. This is simply stated because they represent the household. As has been seen half a dozen times, all people – without exception – were commanded to go up and be before the Lord. That is explicitly stated in Deuteronomy 31 concerning Tabernacles –

“And Moses commanded them, saying: ‘At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, ¹¹when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. ¹²Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, ¹³and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess.’”
Deuteronomy 31:10-13

All Israel was to go at each pilgrim feast year by year. And on the seventh year during Tabernacles, they were to hear the law read. The mandate to come was not just once every seven years, but every feast every year. It was to be...

16 (con't) in the place which He chooses:

It is where the tabernacle was situated, or later where the temple was built. These three times are...

16 (con't) at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Tabernacles;

The three pilgrim feasts. They were the people's responsibility to the Lord for what the Lord had done for the people. Likewise, they anticipate our responsibility to the Lord for what He has done for us. We are to live out our lives in sincerity, we are not to grieve the Holy Spirit, and we are to continue to work out our lives, bearing fruit to God for what He has done for us in Christ.

16 (con't) and they shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed.

The statement was made in Exodus 23:15 and 34:20. The word translated as "empty-handed" is reqam. It gives the sense of something being vain. It was used was in Exodus 3:21 when the Lord promised Israel that they would not come out of Egypt empty-handed –

“So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in its midst; and after that he will let you go. ²¹ And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be, when you go, that you shall not go **empty-handed.**”
Exodus 3:20, 21

The intent here is that “Just as the Lord brought you out of Egypt (as Moses has so often reminded them) with hands that were not empty, so you shall come before Me with hands that are not empty. To do so would be a vain thing.” The Lord provided for Israel; Israel was to acknowledge that...

17 Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God which He has given you.

ish kematenat yado kebirkat Yehovah elohekha asher nathan lak – “Man according to gift his hand according to blessing Yehovah your God which He has given you.” This is surely speaking of the tithes and offerings that have been specified in the previous chapters.

The people were to bring these things. But tithes, firstborn, and so on are based upon what one has received. It is these things that are given. This, as you already know, means that they are to be sanctified to the Lord as holy and then eaten before the Lord. In the third year, they were to be handled according to the law of the third-year tithe.

With these words, a major section of Deuteronomy, that of the unity of worship, comes to an end. Now, without any fanfare at all, Moses immediately turns to a new section, that which Charles Ellicott calls, “the seat of the Kingdom of Jehovah.”

However, the seemingly abrupt change of direction is not really so. Rather, in order to ensure unity of worship before the Lord, there must be a unity of judgment among the people. Without this, there would be no remembrance of the law of the Lord that required the unity of their worship. With this understood, Moses continues...

18 “You shall appoint judges and officers in all your gates,

This takes the reader back to Deuteronomy 1. There he spoke of not being able to bear the burden alone. And so, he instructed “Choose wise, understanding, and knowledgeable men from among your tribes, and I will make them heads over you” (1:13).

He now notes that this practice is to continue in Canaan. He says that all cities (in all your gates) were to give 1) *shophtim*, meaning judges, and 2) *shoterim*, or officers. This second word comes from a root probably meaning “to write.” Thus, they are scribes.

The term “in all your gates” means “in all your cities.” The gate stands as representative of the city. But it is also a literal place for these people to work. Legal matters were brought to the gates where these men sat in order to have them decided upon. That is seen throughout Scripture.

18 (con’t) which the Lord your God gives you,

As Moses has consistently done, he reminds the people why they are to do these things by noting that what they have has been given to them. As this is so, they are to act in accord with the word of the Lord who gives and who can, thus, take away. They were to give (*natan*) judges and officers in the cities that the Lord gave (*natan*) to them. And this was to be...

18 (con’t) according to your tribes,

lishbatekha – “to your tribes” The word *shevet*, or tribe, signifies more of a political than a genealogical arrangement. Each tribe was to individually ensure the political system was maintained within the tribe, but under the parameters of the law given to Israel...

18 (con't) and they shall judge the people with just judgment.

The words of this verse were probably what are being referred to by the Lord through Zechariah –

“These are the things you shall do:
Speak each man the truth to his neighbor;
Give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace.” Zechariah 8:16

19 You shall not pervert justice;

The word is *natah*, it signifies “to stretch out,” “extend,” and so on. In other words. One can think of what is just being extended to what becomes unjust. Just think of any democrat-appointed judge and you will get the picture.

19 (con't) you shall not show partiality,

lo takir panim – “no recognize faces.” In other words, justice is to be blind. One is not to favor the rich or take advantage of the poor. If it is a high official, a national superstar, or a son, there should be no more favoritism than if it is an arch enemy. There was to be one standard for all.

19 (con't) nor take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous.

The words are extremely similar to those of Exodus 23:8. The only difference is that there it says a bribe blinds the eyes of the “discerning.” Here it says, “of the wise.” Rather than allowing such morally corrupt things to occur, Moses says...

20 You shall follow what is altogether just,

tsedeq tsedeq tirdoph – “Justice, justice, you shall pursue.” The repetition of the word is its own stress. It signifies justice or righteousness. This was to be followed after as if in hot pursuit, as if hunting, as the verb indicates. It is the call Amos made to Israel, though they would not heed –

“But let justice run down like water,
And righteousness like a mighty stream.” Amos 5:24

When water runs downward, it pursues its path. Any obstacle to it is circumvented and the water continues on. This is what Moses is calling for now. This is so...

²⁰ (con't) **that you may live and inherit the land which the Lord your God is giving you.**

Moses, as he so often does, uses the term *l'maan* – “to end purpose.” The law is spoken, and the goal is given. The implication here is like that of verse 18. That which is given can be taken away. But more, that which is alive can be terminated, and that which is inherited can be disinherited. The words call out for right reason, proper conduct, and obedience to the word.

²¹ **“You shall not plant for yourself any tree, as a wooden image, near the altar which you build for yourself to the Lord your God.**

The word is *asherah*. It signifies a wooden image used as a symbol of fertility. These were entirely forbidden in the land. They were to be cut down and destroyed. But here, Moses specifically says “near the altar.” This doesn’t mean they are ok in other locations. That has already been noted earlier in Deuteronomy –

“But thus you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire.” Deu 7:5

Rather, the reason for including these words is because this is what those of the other nations did. Not only did they erect fertility symbols, but they specifically put them near to the altars where they sacrificed.

Everything about the rites and rituals of Israel was set and nothing could be added to it, or taken from it, without violating the typology of what it anticipated in the Person of Jesus.

Unfortunately, setting up such *asherim* near the altar is just what Israel eventually did. After this, a good king would come along and tear them all down, and then, along would come another king and erect them once again. The hopeless state of corruption in Israel permeates the sacred writings. Now, the chapter ends with...

^{*22} (fin) **You shall not set up a *sacred* pillar, which the Lord your God hates.**

The *matstsevah* is mentioned again as it was in verse 7:5 –

“But thus you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire.” Deuteronomy 7:5

Not only were they to destroy such pillars that were formed by the inhabitants, but they were forbidden from setting any up for themselves. Here it says, “which the Lord your God hates.” And yet the same word is used to describe pillars set up by Jacob.

Because of this, it can't be the pillar itself that is an abomination, but what it represents. For Israel, they had been given the necessary instructions, structures, and implements for proper worship that typologically anticipated Christ. This is the entire reason for the minute and exacting care.

As Israel was a people given in anticipation of Messiah, and as the law was given as a tutor to lead them to Him, then anything not sanctioned in the law would interfere with that set and uncompromising goal. Therefore, the Lord said he hated such things.

The perfect thought of what is being conveyed here is that of Hebrews 12:2 – “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus.” In looking at what the Lord mandated in the law, the people were looking unto Jesus in type. When they looked to any other rite, idol, or practice, their eyes were being diverted from Jesus.

And, today, the same should be true with us – not in the shadow, but in the Substance. We should set our eyes, our minds, and our hearts on the Lord. As He is just, we are to be just. As He is impartial in His judgment, we are to judge likewise. As He is the embodiment of the law, we are to follow Him into the New Covenant, clinging to what He has done and cherishing it as if it is our highest joy.

Let us cling to the cross, boast in the cross, and revel in what the cross signifies – the riches of God in Christ poured out upon poor sinners like us, sinners that have failed to make the grade, and so the grade was imputed to us by Another. Thank God for Jesus Christ.

Closing Verse: *“And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.’” Revelation 21:3, 4*

Next Week: Deuteronomy 17:1-13 *Until you get it, it's rather awkwardly said...* (Shall Be Put to Death the Dead) (52nd Deuteronomy Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. But He also has expectations of you as He prepares you for entrance into His Land of Promise. So, follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Observe the Feast of Tabernacles

“You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days
So to you I address
When you have gathered from your threshing floor
And from your winepress

And you shall rejoice in your feast
You and your son and your daughter, your male servant
-----and your female servant and the Levite
The stranger and the fatherless and the widow
Who are within your gates, as is good and right

Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the Lord your God
In the place which the Lord chooses, so bring your singing voice
Because the Lord your God will bless you in all your produce
And in all the work of your hands, so that you surely rejoice

“Three times a year all your males shall appear
Before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses
-----and as I have commanded
At the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks
-----and at the Feast of Tabernacles
And they shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed

Every man shall give as he is able, so he shall do
According to the blessing of the Lord your God
-----which He has given you

“You shall appoint judges and officers in all your gates
Which the Lord your God gives you; to where you are sent
According to your tribes
And they shall judge the people with just judgment

You shall not pervert justice
You shall not show partiality, nor take a bribe
For a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise

And twists the words of the righteous as I now describe

You shall follow what is altogether just, so you shall do
That you may live and inherit the land
-----which the Lord your God is giving you

“You shall not plant for yourself any tree, as a wooden image
Near the altar which you build for yourself to the Lord your God
You shall not set up a sacred pillar
Which the Lord your God hates in this land upon which you tread

Lord God, turn our hearts to be obedient to Your word
Give us wisdom to be ever faithful to You
May we carefully heed each thing we have heard
Yes, Lord God may our hearts be faithful and true

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...