

# The Lesson of Sukkah

## Feast of Tabernacles

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Over the years at the Feast of Tabernacles a very familiar scripture has been read many times. It is found in Leviticus 23. We read over it and I don't think we stop to consider that when it was initially spoken to the Ancient Israelites, my guess is it was very shocking to them. I don't think we necessarily have thought about that or have appreciated that.

The background to Leviticus 23 is that it's been about a month since the Red Sea crossing. Israel is now camped around Mount Sinai and these hundreds of thousands of people are just trying to survive. They're trying to stay in the shade during the day in this desert. They are trying to keep the sand out of their eyes and nose when the wind blows. They are trying to keep warm at night. My wife's sister and brother-in-law, I wonder why sometimes, paid good money to go to the Moroccan desert. They spent three days out in the middle of the Moroccan desert in a tent. When they arrived, the temperature was very close to 115 degrees. The tents were made of canvas. When they walked in, there was dust and sand everywhere. There were blankets very thick on the floor and they wondered why, at 115 degrees, you have blankets on the floor. About two in the morning they found out why, because in a desert climate where you have low humidity, the temperature dropped sixty degrees. When you are used to 110 degrees in the day and all of a sudden it's 50 degrees, you are freezing. Israel had to deal with this. They were out in the middle of the Sinai desert. Due to the low humidity there are temperature swings between day and night that are very, very large.

They were waiting for Moses to come down from Mount Sinai. Eventually he did come down and he relayed to them what God had in store for Israel. He told the Israelites what God would give them. God told them through Moses that they would have houses and cities that they would not need to build. They would have vineyards and olive groves that they did not need to plant and they would have permanent homes to live in. I will provide that, God said. He said, on top of that He would make them His special people. What a blessing. Notice what else God said to Israel at this time. I'm sure this took them by surprise. Let's put ourselves in the shoes of an average, carnal Israelite. Let's go to Leviticus 23:33, from the King James Version.

**Leviticus 23:33.** *And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,  
34) Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, the fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD. (KJV)*

My guess is that they had never heard the words feast of tabernacles before in their life. They probably looked at each other and said, what's he talking about here? We don't understand this.

The Hebrew word for tabernacles is "sukkah" in English. The Baker and Carpenter Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament states "The term is used for temporary shelters."

So, God is saying to Ancient Israel, I want you to keep a feast of temporary shelters. They are thinking, what's going on here?

*40) And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days.*

*42) Ye shall dwell in booths ... (KJV)*

That's sukkah.

*42b) ... seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: (KJV)*

God told them to rejoice in their sukkahs, their temporary dwellings, their booths. The fact is that Israel already had tents. We are going to see in a moment they were likely very, very good tents, as a matter of fact. They had promises to come of cities and homes to dwell in. Regardless, God said, okay I want you to give up your tents. I want you to give up the homes that you will eventually have that I'm going to give you. I want you to give up your tents here now that protect you from the heat and cold and the wind. I want you to build these rickety little shelters and I want you to put some leaves on the roofs that probably will wilt as soon as you cut them due to the heat and I want you to rejoice while you are exposed to the heat and the cold and the potential wind.

We have to ask the question, why on earth did God do that? Why did God ask them to expose themselves to the heat and the cold and the wind for eight days in a temporary shelter? What was He trying to get across to them and what was He trying to get across to us today?

The subject of the sermon today is why did God tie rejoicing to these temporary, rickety old shelters and what is the lesson for us today that He wants us to learn, because of what He told the Ancient Israelites? As I said, I am sure the Israelites were shocked. You want us to leave our tents and go and build these kind of temporary things that frankly aren't very good shelters. I am sure, knowing carnal Israelites and knowing us

before we were converted, some of them probably had a bad attitude about it. Maybe they were starting to grumble. Remember that God had promised them homes. He hadn't given homes to them yet, but they did likely have very good tents. They were confused and some of them were probably grumbling, knowing the Israelites.

**1. The first point we want to make is we want to look at the tents they had before they were asked to build the sukkah, the temporary shelter.**

You can go to many places to do research on the tents that they had. One is [ancient-hebrew.org](http://ancient-hebrew.org), if you would like to check that out, among others. The tents that they had were most likely constructed of black goat hair. This goat hair was unique in that it was perfectly suited for the desert regions of the near east to provide shelter. The goat hair tents provided shelter against the heat, because obviously, they provided shade from the sun. The walls of the tent could be lifted up to allow a breeze to blow through and keep the occupants cool. During the heat of the day the father, the head of the clan, would often sit at his door and he would watch the family, watch the livestock. He would watch the road for travelers, as we found Abraham doing in Genesis 18. Also, these goat hair tents provided shelter from the cold, because the black goat hair would absorb heat during the day and then radiate that heat to warm the tent at night when the temperature started dropping.

It's similar to the structures you find in the southwest in the United States made of adobe. Adobe bricks are mud bricks. The fact that you can make them out of mud, you can use a form to make the bricks any dimension you wish. The adobe walls of the building are very carefully calculated in thickness to do exactly what these goat hair tents did. In the desert southwest in the cool of the night, remember the temperature drops, there is low humidity, what happens is the adobe is cool. When the sun rises, it begins to heat the exterior walls of the adobe structure. Then that heat works its way through the wall until it gets to the interior of the wall. If you calculate that thickness very carefully, the heat from the day arrives at the interior about one or two in the morning, when the temperature is cold. It warms the interior of the building and provides heat at night. Conversely, the opposite is true because when the building is cool at night, it retains that cold and then during the heat of the day that cold works its way through the thickness of the walls and then the coolness begins to radiate inside the building during the heat of the day. You have a really wonderful air conditioning and heating system just due to the thickness of the walls.

The Israelites could do the same thing by adjusting the thickness of their tents depending on the season for what they wanted to accomplish. Also, a fire was built just inside the entrance to provide warmth. In addition to that the tents provided protection

from the horrible desert wind and the dust storms. If you do the research, they had strong ropes that were secured by pegs to the outside and they supported the poles that supported the goat hair tents. It reminds one of Isaiah 22:23.

**Isaiah 22:23.** *I will drive him like a peg into a firm place; he will be a seat of honor for the house of his father. (NIV)*

That refers to the ropes that anchored the tent down. Also, this goat hair protected from the rain. Now rain wasn't that common, but the last thing you want is a wet tent. You don't want water dripping in from the roof of the tent. Like any kind of cloth fabric, there is a separation between the fibers. With the goat hair tent there is obviously separation between the hair on the fabric. Remember the roof is black. It's goat hair. If you were lying down in the tent during the day and looked up at the ceiling, you could see spaces between the goat hairs. It reminds us of what Isaiah said in Isaiah 40:22.

**Isaiah 40:22.** *... He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in. (NIV)*

If you were inside one of these goat tents, the light sparkling through would look like stars in a night sky. When these hair fibers became wet, they swelled and they provided a water tight seal for the tent. So, this goat hair was an incredible desert survival tool for the Israelites that they most likely had at that time.

**2. In the second point, what we want to do is to compare the tent I just described to what God wanted them to build.**

Think about their possible reaction. We are going to see that a sukkah is not a very effective dessert survival tool at all.

Jonah built a sukkah. As we read the account, let's ask the question, did the sukkah cause Jonah to rejoice? We'll see the answer to that in Jonah 4.

**Jonah 4:5.** *So Jonah went out of the city ... (NKJV)*

It's referring to Nineveh, we know.

**5b)** *... and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter ... (NKJV)*

It was a sukkah.

*5 continued) ... and sat under it in the shade, ... (NKJV)*

So, the sukkah provided some shade.

*5 continued) ... till he might see what would become of the city. (NKJV)*

He was hoping as we know to see the destruction of Nineveh.

*6) And the LORD God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. ... (NKJV)*

He is in a sukkah, but he is miserable. He is miserable for a whole bunch of reasons, but one of the reasons is the sukkah isn't providing much shelter from the heat of the day and from the sun.

*6b) ... So Jonah was very grateful for the plant. ... (NKJV)*

*7) But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered. (NKJV)*

The plant itself was providing shelter that the sukkah, from what we read here, wasn't providing much.

*8) And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; ... (NKJV)*

My guess is that east wind blew this sukkah to pieces, just scattered it all over the surrounding area.

*8b) ... and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he grew faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, "It is better for me to die than to live." (NKJV)*

This speaks to the fragile nature of the sukkah. Also, there is no record in this account that it provided any real protection for Jonah. It's a temporary shelter, built not to last very long. It doesn't look like he's really rejoicing in his sukkah. This is something to keep in mind as we go forward. He wasn't rejoicing, but God told Israel to build sukkahs and rejoice. We're going to see why in just a minute.

**3. Now we come to the third point. What we're going to do is look at the connection between a sukkah and the book of Ecclesiastes.**

The reason we do that is that there is a critical reason why the book of Ecclesiastes was traditionally read on the Sabbath during the feast of tabernacles. Before we turn to Ecclesiastes let's get some background on the author of Ecclesiastes, who we know to be Solomon. With that in mind let's go to 1 Kings 3 beginning in verse 5. We want to see Solomon's mindset, Solomon's attitude, Solomon's desire and Solomon's approach at this time in his life when he was made king over Israel.

**1 Kings 3:5.** *At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask! What shall I give you?"*

*6) And Solomon said: "You have shown great mercy to Your servant David my father, because he walked before You in truth, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with You; You have continued this great kindness for him, and You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. (NKJV)*

Notice his attitude. He is referring to himself.

*7) Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I am a little child; ... (NKJV)*

I don't know how to put one foot in front of the other.

*7b) ... I do not know how to go out or come in.*

*8) And Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted.*

*9) Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" (NKJV)*

He said, this is what I want to ask. Let's just stop and look at his attitude. His focus was not on himself. His focus was on God's people. He wanted to know and be given the tools and the blessings of how he could better serve God's people and God's nation. That was his desire.

*10) The speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing.*

*11) Then God said to him: "Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, (NKJV)*

This is a good thing, a wonderful thing.

*12) behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you.*

*13) And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days. (NKJV)*

That's exactly what God did. He not only gave him what he asked for. He gave him riches and blessings and honor on top of that.

Now, let's turn to 1 Kings 4:29. I am going to read this out of the New Living Translation. It has exactly the same meaning as the King James Version, but it puts it in a little different language that might be more meaningful.

**1 Kings 4:29.** *God gave Solomon great wisdom and understanding, and knowledge too vast to be measured.*

*30) In fact, his wisdom exceeded that of all the wise men of the East and the wise men of Egypt. (NLT)*

That's interesting.

*32) He composed some 3,000 proverbs and wrote 1,005 songs.*

*33) He could speak with authority about all kinds of plants, from the great cedar of Lebanon to the tiny hyssop that grows from cracks in a wall. He could also speak about animals, birds, reptiles, and fish.*

*34) And kings from every nation sent their ambassadors to listen to the wisdom of Solomon. (NLT)*

As a result of what he asked for, all Israel was blessed due to his wisdom and understanding. Second only to Christ, Solomon was the wisest man of all time.

Let's see what was on his mind. To see we want to turn now to the book of Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes was most likely written at the end of his life and it describes what was on his mind at the end of his life. Let's go to Ecclesiastes 1:1.

**Ecclesiastes 1:1.** *The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem. (KJV)*

Notice what he starts out with.

2) *Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, ... (KJV)*

He repeats it a second time.

2b) *... vanity of vanities;... (KJV)*

We know when God repeats something twice it is for a great purpose, to emphasize to us.

2 continued) *... all is vanity. (KJV)*

When a word is repeated within itself, like “vanity of vanities”, it means most utterly, like we have the holy of holies. The holy of holies is the most holy of all places. When he says “vanity of vanities”, it means the vainest of all vanities and he repeats it twice for emphasis.

3) *What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? (KJV)*

What’s the good of it? What does it do?

4) *One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever.*

5) *The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. (KJV)*

It’s just day after day, after day.

6) *The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. (KJV)*

What he is basically saying is, what’s the point of it all? The earth was here before I was born. The earth is going to be here when I die and I am no longer remembered. It’s like the modern term we use, chasing the wind. You’ll never catch it. It’s just meaningless.

***Ecclesiastes 1:16.*** *I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, ... (KJV)*

We’re going to see how great it was in just a second.



16b) ... and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge.

17) And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit.

18) For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. (KJV)

This does not sound like a very happy man, a very contented man, a man that's at peace with himself or his surroundings despite all that he had.

**Ecclesiastes 2:4.** *I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards:*

5) *I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits:*

6) *I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees:*

7) *I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: (KJV)*

He had everything. He said:

8) *I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. (KJV)*

He didn't have a hi-fi system. He had the actual instruments in his house. How much greater is that?

9) *So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.*

10) *And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; ... (KJV)*

He had it all and despite this he was an unhappy man. He was not a content man. He was not a man at peace either with himself or his environment. The key is that Solomon tried to provide, to find lasting pleasure from the physical and the temporary and he utterly failed. He had a lot of stuff. We are told in 2 Chronicles 1 that he made silver and gold as common as stones in Jerusalem, he had so much. In 2 Chronicles 9 we

are told that he received over 800,000 ounces of gold a year in tribute from the provinces. If you do the math, that's over a billion dollars a year in today's currency annually that he received in tribute. All of his vessels were gold. He had 1,400 chariots. He had ships full of ivory and gold and silver and animals of all kinds that he had shipped into Jerusalem. In addition to that, if that wasn't enough, he had 700 wives. Can you imagine having 700 mothers-in-law? Each one of those 700 mothers-in-law were politicking and vying for his attention to enhance their daughters' chances within the court. As we would say today, he had it all. In fact the queen of Sheba came to see for herself and she was just blown away. Let's go to 1 Kings 10:4. This woman was famous throughout all of the Middle East. She heard rumors about him that were so great that she had to travel to Jerusalem to see for herself.

**1 Kings 10:4.** *And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, ... (KJV)*

Obviously they had spent time together.

*4b) ... and the house that he had built,*

*5) And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD; ... (KJV)*

This means the entry way to the temple and all of the magnificent buildings and the pools and the fountains; all of that that he had built. It says:

*5b) ... there was no more spirit in her. (KJV)*

The Hebrew word for spirit is "ruwach" and it just means *air*. Today we would say it took her breath away. She was so astonished, so impressed.

*6) And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom.*

*7) Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. (KJV)*

She was even more impressed when she got there. Sometimes you look forward to a meal or something and when you actually get there, you are kind of underwhelmed, but she was overwhelmed when she experienced Solomon's wisdom and what God had

blessed him with. If anyone was ever in a position to find satisfaction in the physical, it was Solomon. He had everything anyone could want physically.

With that being said we have to ask the question: Did the physical, did the temporary bring Solomon meaning and contentment and happiness in his life? We could say today, if I buy the right house or if I can get the right car or if I can get the right job, will that make me content and happy for the rest of my life? We could ask the same thing. We'll look at the end result. Let's go to Ecclesiastes 2:17. After all of this, all the accolades, all the possessions, all the wisdom, all the blessings God had given them physically:

***Ecclesiastes 2:17.*** *Therefore I hated life because the work that was done under the sun was distressing to me, for all is vanity and grasping for the wind. (NKJV)*

I hated life. The Hebrew word for "hate" means *unloved, shunned* or *an enemy*. What he was basically saying was his life had become his enemy because of the pursuit of the physical. I tried it. It didn't work and I'm unhappy and I'm not content and I'm hating life, because the life I have lived I have determined is my enemy. Why was this man who had it all so miserable? Look at Ecclesiastes 3:9.

***Ecclesiastes 3:9.*** *What profit has the worker from that in which he labors? (NKJV)*

Is it lasting? Is it permanent?

*10) I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied.*

*11) He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, ... (NKJV)*

The Complete Jewish Bible says, "God has given humanity an awareness of eternity." God has put something in our minds (some day we will find out how He actually did that), but God has made something in man to yearn for something permanent, something that lasts after we are gone. He has put that desire in us. If we try to fill it with the physical, guess what, it doesn't work.

Here is the lesson with Solomon. Solomon's great error was trying to fill a spiritual void with something physical. It just doesn't work. He is the perfect example of that. Despite everything he had he was an unhappy man. He was not a content man,

because he was trying to fill a spiritual void with something physical. He proved for all of us, right here, right now, that it doesn't work.

#### **4. In the fourth point let's see how Solomon's great error relates to sukkah.**

What is the lesson of the booths, of the temporary shelters, the sukkah, that God wanted Ancient Israel to learn and He wants us to learn today? Why was Israel commanded to leave their tents, which provided shelter from the heat and the cold and the wind, for eight days and expose themselves to the harsh elements of the desert and yet, they were told to rejoice while they were doing so? Here is the point of the sukkah. Let's go to Psalms 90. The heading of this says it is a prayer of Moses. Remember, Moses is the one God gave the instructions to to build the sukkah in the first place. I am referring to this from the New Living Translation. It doesn't change the meaning at all, but it has an interesting couple of phrases here. This is what Moses says.

***Psalms 90:1.** Lord, through all the generations you have been our home! (NLT)*

God is our home. God is everything to us.

*2) Before the mountains were created, before you made the earth and the world, you are God, without beginning or end. (NLT)*

It's hard for us to wrap our minds around the fact that God has always existed. As physical human beings, we sometimes wrestle with the fact that God had no beginning. The reality is that He had no beginning and He will have no end. He has always been.

*3) You turn people back to dust, saying, "Return to dust!" (NLT)*

The King James says:

*3) Thou turnest man to destruction; ... (KJV)*

What this tells us is man is temporary; God is not. Think how many thousands of lives Moses saw die during his lifetime, during the forty years in the wilderness. Remember, everyone twenty years and older died. We are told there were 600,000 men and women. If you divide that by forty years, he witnessed 82 people a day die for 40 years. If that doesn't prove the temporariness of human life, I don't know what does. He has the authority to speak to that, saying hey, we are going to dust. We're going to destruction, because those bodies lay in the desert just turning to dust.

4) *For you, a thousand years are as yesterday! They are like a few hours! (NLT)*

Continuing in verse 12:

12) *Teach us to make the most of our time, ... (NLT)*

In this temporary life, he says, we only have a finite amount of time, so teach us to use it wisely. Teach us to use it efficiently. Help us to make the most out of this temporary time we have on this earth.

12b) *... so that we may grow in wisdom.*

13) *O LORD, come back to us! How long will you delay? ... (NLT)*

Does that sound like something we say today? God come back to us. Christ return. We need you to come and please do it without delay. We're tired of waiting. We want you to be here. Look at this mess in the world today. Just like Moses; come back to us, how long will you delay? We want you here. We want this world changed. We don't want it the way it is.

13b) *... Take pity on your servants! (NLT)*

We pray that, too. Please have mercy on us, God. We stumble and bumble around like in a dark room sometimes. We don't know how to put one foot in front of another, like Solomon said.

14) *Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, so we may sing for joy to the end of our lives. (NLT)*

We know that we will all die. Moses is making an appeal, because he saw the temporary nature of this life. Notice what was his focus in these verses we just read? It wasn't on building houses and servants and all of this kind of stuff like Solomon's was. It was on a spiritual solution when he said, how long will you delay in returning, because he knew of the return of Jesus Christ. He knew there was something more than this physical life.

So, the sukkah reminds us of the temporary nature of this life. It is unsatisfactory. The sukkah didn't provide all that much shelter from the heat or from the cold or certainly not from the wind or the dust. It reminds us that this physical life was never designed to be the end result. This physical life was never designed to provide us with ultimate satisfaction, as Solomon found out very painfully.

Starting with the Feast of Trumpets, the return of Jesus Christ, the Feast of Tabernacles we are beginning here today, the Millennium and the Last Great Day, of billions of people being resurrected, what do all of these last three holy days have in common? What is the common theme of all three? What do they all culminate in? It's in one word, permanence. Permanence is what Moses sought. The fact that Solomon didn't have permanence and everything was going to turn to dust and the sun kept going around and coming up and the wind was blowing here and there. It was just all confusion to him, because there was no permanence. He knew he was going to die; couldn't take it with him, as we say today. All of the holy days culminate in permanence and the sukkah, the booth, the temporary dwelling, showed the Israelites that life is temporary. It is ultimately not very satisfactory in the long term. A strong wind would blow it away. We have no strength against nature, as we see today with the wild fires and the floods and the tornados and the earthquakes and all of that. A single human being has no strength against any of that. We have no strength against the governments of the world, the militaries, the powers of this world without God's protection. The sukkah shows us that.

The message is our minds should be focused on the permanent, on the spiritual, not on stuff, not on the temporary, not on the physical. Rather, our minds should be focused on the things that last forever. Let's go to 1 John 2:15. This is where our focus should be. Solomon's focus for a period of time in his life was on anything but this. It was on buildings and plants and animals and gold and silver, stuff. John makes it so plain. He says,

**1 John 2:15.** *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. ... (KJV)*

Solomon tried loving the things in the world. It didn't work.

*15b)... If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.  
16) For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. (KJV)*

Solomon succumbed to the lust of the flesh, and the pride in his possessions and his wisdom and his power and the nation of Israel and the buildings that he built and all the edifices that he put together. He had pride in all of that. With 700 wives you can't tell me that he didn't lust some either.

*17) And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. (KJV)*

There are things that are permanent and there are things that are not and that will blow away. What we are told is we need to focus on the things that are permanent, the things that are above, not the things that are below. We need to remember the words of Paul when he said, if in this life only we have hope in Christ, referring to the resurrection, we are of all men most pitiable, 1 Corinthians 15:19. Paul was saying, if there is no resurrection, hey, just eat, drink, be merry. We'll be just like Solomon. We'll be unhappy. Yet, what we are being told is we have to focus on the things that are above, as Paul said, the things that are permanent.

Let's go to John 6:27. Notice Christ's words. He is giving us a warning. He is saying, don't do this, because it's not going to bring lasting satisfaction or pleasure or contentment or peace. He says,

***John 6:27. Do not labor for the food which perishes, ... (NKJV)***

He is obviously not talking about physical food, because all physical food perishes.

*27b) ... but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him. (NKJV)*

Continuing in verse 63,

***63) It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. ... (NKJV)***

The flesh means the physical. Solomon found that out very painfully.

***63b) ... The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. (NKJV)***

What an impetus to study the Bible rather than reading a novel or watching television or something like that, because the words in the Bible are spirit and they lead to life. You see, our calling is to focus on what's above, not what is below. Here's the key for all of us. If you look at the update that goes out, it seems like, certainly as we get closer to the fall holy days and the spring holy days, the list gets longer and longer about people that are suffering and people who are going through trials and all of that. If we allow our trials, our difficulties, our disappointments to be our focus, we're going to wind up like Solomon. If we focus on what's unsatisfactory or what isn't working out the way we really think it should work out, if we focus on something that disappointed us or we

laser-like focus on the trial that we are going through and it just consumes us, if that is our focus rather than what's above, we will wind up just as unhappy, just as unsatisfied as Solomon. You see, a relationship with the Father, a relationship with the Son, through the holy spirit leads to life. Let's go to Isaiah 55:1. I am going to read it out of the King James Version, but the New King James version has a heading on it which says, "An Invitation To Abundant Life."

***Isa 55:1. Ho, ... (KJV)***

Stop, listen.

*1b) ... every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; ... (KJV)*

How can you buy and eat without money? He'll tell us.

*1 continued) ... yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.  
2) Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? ... (KJV)*

Like Solomon did. Why do you spend all of this energy and all of this money on things that ultimately don't last, that ultimately don't satisfy, that ultimately don't bring happiness?

*2b) ... hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. (KJV)*

It is that which lasts, that which is permanent. Every year the Israelites were instructed to leave their nice tents that were as good a portable shelter as you could get. Why did He ask them to leave the comfort of these tents and later their houses after they settled in the Promised Land and live in something that provided little to no shelter in temporary dwellings? The reason He did so was to remind them that this physical life is temporary and ultimately unsatisfying in terms of eternity. They were reminded that there is something permanent down the road that can be had by having a relationship with God and being obedient to God and surrendering to God. For the Israelites it was the permanent home. It was the Promised Land. If they would only surrender, if they would only obey, if they would only follow God, He says I will give you this Promised Land that will be yours forever. You will have homes that you don't have to build, vineyards that you don't have to plant, fields that you don't have to clear to bare land. It's all ready for you if you will just submit to Me, be obedient to Me, follow Me. That was permanent in a



physical sense to them. They were reminded that, yes, they could have a permanent home in a physical sense.

For us there is something so much greater. Let's go to Hebrews 11 and see what that is; so much greater than the physical Promised Land for Ancient Israel. This is talking about Abraham. Abraham knew that there was something more than this physical life and it is brought out here.

**Hebrews 11:8.** *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.*

*9) By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:*

*10) For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. (KJV)*

Now, a temporary structure, a sukkah or a booth, does not have a foundation. This is not referring to that. They just went out and built sukkahs on the bare land, but you see a permanent structure had foundations. Abraham sought such permanence, not the physical, the spiritual.

David understood, too. Let's go to Psalms 27:4. These men, Abraham, David and Moses, as we are going to see, sought something permanent.

**Psalms 27:4.** *One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; ... (KJV)*

What is that?

*4b) ... that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, ... (KJV)*

He is obviously referring not just to his physical life, but to a spiritual life of all eternity.

*4 continued) ... to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple. (KJV)*

David sought permanence. Moses sought permanence. Abraham sought permanence. Solomon got derailed. He jumped the tracks and he sought the physical. Look at his life as a result. You see, God doesn't totally reveal the fate of Solomon. We know Ecclesiastes was most likely written during the end of his life and we hope that he

realized the error of his ways and repented. There are indications that that is the case. Let's go to Ecclesiastes 12:13. After he chased the wind, after he focused on the physical, after he had accumulated all of this stuff, what was the end result? What was the end of the day?

***Ecclesiastes 12:13.*** *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: ... (KJV)*

What's the bottom line, we would say, or the whole deal?

*13b) ... Fear God, ... (KJV)*

That means to reverence and respect God.

*13 continued) ... and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. (KJV)*

The word duty is in italics. It was added. The Complete Jewish Bible says, "this is what being human is all about."

We are reading between the lines to a certain degree. We are speculating to a certain degree, but it appears that Solomon finally realized the meaning of life. I am sure at the end of his life he was looking back on the beginning of his life. He looked at his relationship with God at the beginning of his life, when he first became king, when he wasn't focusing on stuff. He wasn't focusing on the physical. He said, give me wisdom. Give me understanding so I can rule your people correctly. I believe he was focusing back at the end of his life on those days. He was focusing back before his riches and his wives leading him astray and focusing on the physical and got his head turned around.

He finally came to the conclusion that, hey, this is what life's all about. Fear God. Honor, respect, put God first in your life. Keep His commandments. We know today that means loving God with all our heart and loving our neighbor as ourselves. We know that means changing from the old person to the new person, as Paul talks about. The old person and his deeds are gone. We put them away. The new person, who is created in the image of Him who created him, the new person, the image of Jesus Christ, because we realize that, if we want to be at the marriage supper, we have to change to be like Jesus Christ. What person physically is going to marry someone who they can't recognize, unless it's some Russian mail order bride or something like that. Those all end in disasters anyway. The fact is that who is going to marry somebody, even in this physical life, that they don't know, that they don't recognize, that's not

compatible? You would be a fool to do that and we know that. What about Jesus Christ? Is Christ going to marry somebody He doesn't know? Remember the ten virgins. Five of them were pounding on the outside. They wanted to be let in and Christ said I never knew you. I can't recognize you. I don't know who you are. Why would I marry you? You are not like me. We don't have the same values, the same goals.

You see, our job is to look to what's above, to change our life from the old person that focused, like Solomon did on stuff, to the new person who focused on things above, who has the mind of Christ. In Philippians 2 it tells us that we become like Christ and then Christ says, hey, come into me. Come to the marriage supper. I will marry you. Perhaps before he died Solomon realized that and he realized the futility of trying to fill a spiritual void with something physical; absolutely futile. Hopefully, at the end of his life he sought something more permanent, as he wrote here in Ecclesiastes 12; a relationship with God, obedience, surrender, becoming like God and Christ. This is the lesson, not only of the book of Ecclesiastes, but it's the great lesson of sukkah, of booths, of temporary shelters; exactly the same lesson. This is why Ecclesiastes was read on the Sabbath during the Feast of Tabernacles, to show them in those days, but for us today there is something so much more than the physical. These temporary dwellings are just like our bodies. They are temporary dwellings. There is something so much more that we've been offered.

Let's conclude by asking a question: Here at the Feast what should our focus be? I think the answer is obvious. Let's see the answer in Revelation 21. Let's see the ultimate fulfillment of the lesson of sukkah. What a day this is going to be, but notice, this is not physical. This is not temporary. This is permanent.

***Revelation 21:1. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: ... (KJV)***

This new heaven and new earth come into his vision in this whole vision.

***1b) ... for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; ... (KJV)***

Here we see the physical is going away forever, not to exist, and now a spiritual earth is coming on the scene, a permanent earth.

***1 continued) ... and there was no more sea.***

***2) And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (KJV)***

You can't help but think of the marriage supper and us being the bride adorned for her husband.

*3) And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle ... (KJV)*

Now, in the Hebrew that was sukkah. Here, in the Greek it just means a habitation, the dwelling place, the tabernacle.

*3b) ... 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. (KJV)*

God is now dwelling with men as a family. The family of God is permanent at this point in time. The family of God exists right here, right now among all of those who have God's spirit. We hope and we strive and we pray to be married to Jesus Christ, our husband. The point here in Revelation, you see, is the new heavens, the new earth, the new Jerusalem are permanent. They will last forever.

So, when you go back tonight and you are lying in your bed and you go down to sleep, look up. Hopefully, you don't see cracks or water stains on the ceiling. Look up and pretend you are in a sukkah and there are leaves over your head, probably wilting, a little withered by now, just as they've been cut and sticks holding up a temporary shelter, but there is enough gap in there allowing you to see the stars. Remind yourself of the lesson of sukkah, that this life is like this temporary dwelling. It's going to go away sometime. We are temporary. The physical life is temporary. The key is, no matter what trials, what disappointments we face, let's remember, it's all temporary. It will go away. It will be wiped clean. It will be replaced by something permanent. Let's realize that there is a permanent inheritance waiting for us as the sons and daughters of God in His family forever.