

Why Did God Say to “Rejoice” While Living in Temporary Shelters?

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Over the years at the Feast of Tabernacles, we have read a very familiar section of scripture that we are all very familiar with. When you think about it, when that scripture was initially spoken to the Ancient Israelites, I think it would have been a shock to them. That scripture is found in Leviticus 23, so let's set the background for Leviticus 23. It has been over a month since the Red Sea crossing. Israel is now camped around Mt. Sinai and they are just trying to survive. They are out in the desert and they are trying to stay in the shade during the day to stay cool, while trying to keep the sand out of their noses and eyes. At night they are trying to keep warm because in that extreme desert with such very low humidity, once the sun goes down the temperature changes very quickly—there's no humidity in the air to hold the temperature. It's like where I grew up in El Paso, we averaged about five to ten percent humidity all year long. Once the sun goes down, it gets cold. In fact, my wife's sister and brother-in-law traveled to Morocco a couple years ago on a tour and they were taken out into the desert where they stayed in tents. They dropped their bags in the tent and there was a big, thick blanket in the tent. They are from Washington State on the west coast where it's humid and mild—they don't know what temperature swings are like because it's a very moderate climate. They couldn't understand why a big blanket was there on the floor in the tent. They asked the porter and he said, “Just wait until tonight, you'll be glad you have one”.

The Israelites had to deal with the heat in the day and then they had to deal with the cold at night. They were waiting for Moses to come down from the mountain—Mt. Sinai—which he eventually did. He relayed to them what Yehovah had in store for the nation. He told the Israelites that God was going to give them houses to live in, cities to dwell in, that they didn't need to build. That was a promise. They were going to have vineyards and olive groves that they didn't have to plant. In other words, they were going to have a permanent home in the Promised Land. Yehovah would make them His own special people.

Now let's notice what our Father, God Almighty, Yehovah, told Moses to tell Israel. This is what I'm sure took them by surprise.

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)*

This could have been the first time that they had heard this term—*tabernacles*. We don't know for sure, but it could have been. I'm sure they were scratching their heads that they were going to keep a Feast of Tabernacles as it's translated in the King James. The Hebrew for *tabernacle* is *sukkah* in English. Baker and Carpenter in their Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament say this: “*The term is used for temporary shelters*”. Yehovah was telling them: “I want you to keep a Feast of Temporary Shelters.”

I'm sure the average Israelites would cock their heads and scratch their heads and ask, "What's this all about?" Verse 40.

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 [in doing this] before the LORD your God seven days. (KJV)

Verse 42.

42) Ye shall dwell in booths [sukkah] seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: (KJV)

God Almighty told Israel to rejoice in their temporary dwellings, in these sukkahs. We have to realize that the Israelites already had tents. When they left Egypt, they didn't just go off without anything, they already had tents. We are going to see in a moment that very likely, those tents were good—very suitable and very comfortable. They also went out with the promise that later they were going to have homes and cities to dwell in. So, this must have been confusing to the Ancient Israelites. But regardless, God said I want you to give up the homes I'm going to give you in the future—when they kept it in the Promise Land. Now I want you to give up the tents that protect you from the sun, the sand, the heat and the cold and the winds that blow in the desert and instead I want you to build these rickety little shelters and put some leaves on the roofs, which would start wilting, of course, the minute they cut them down. I want you to expose yourselves to the elements day and night and I want you to rejoice over the whole fact. "Okay, Moses what is going on here?"

Why did God tell them to do that? What was the point? What was the purpose? That leads into our title today.

Why Did God Say to Rejoice While Living in Temporary Shelters?

We're going to look at this through four separate points today. As I said, I'm sure the Israelites were shocked and many could, frankly, be in bad attitudes.

"You want us to leave this nice tent that shelters us from the heat, cold, wind and sun and want us to build this thing out of sticks and branches and leaves that are wilting and You want us to go live there for seven days, exposed to all the elements? Didn't You promise us homes to live in? We don't have them yet but we have these wonderful tents and You want us to leave the tents and go over here and live in these things?"

It was probably a confusing time for the Ancient Israelites.

So, the first thing we want to do is:

1. Look at the dwellings that Israel had prior to living in booths.

We're going to go back in history and see what tents were like back in those days and look at these dwellings which were the tents they lived in prior to them having to live in temporary dwellings. There are many websites that you can go to—historical websites—and look up facts on the subject. One of them is *ancient-hebrews.org*, among others you can check into. The general consensus was that the tents back then were constructed of black goat hair. A goat hair tent is unique in that it is perfectly suited for the desert regions in the Middle East. It's a perfect material for making tents because it protects from the heat. Obviously, the goat hair tent provided shade from the sun. The tent was designed so that the walls could be retracted, could be rolled up, to allow the breezes to come through. Depending on which direction the wind was coming from, you had four sides to the tent and you could roll up the sides so that the breeze would come right through the tent. It would allow a cooling evening breeze, or morning breeze—whatever you wanted—to pass through.

During the heat of the day, it was quite common for the head of the household—the father—to sit at the opening of the tent watching his livestock, watching his family, watching the road for travelers. We have an example of that in Genesis 18. Remember Abraham was sitting at the tent door when those men approached. So, it protects from the heat but it also protects from the cold—this tent of goat hair. Being black, it absorbs heat during the daylight hours and so the roof of the tent gets hot during the day. Then in the cold of the night, because of the heat during the day, it reflects that heat inside the tent during the evening to even out the temperature. It's a principle similar to the adobe structures in the southwest. When my wife and I got married I took her back to El Paso to meet my parents. Coming from the Northwest, she had never seen an adobe building. She had never eaten a taco either, by the way, or an enchilada—but if you look at the adobe structures, it's basically hard, dried mud which is used for the walls of buildings in the southwest. It's a very scientifically designed process because the width of the thickness of the walls is precisely calculated so that during the day, when the outside wall heats up and that heat gradually—during the day as the day gets warmer—transfers through the thickness of the wall and finally the heat winds up at the inner wall. The thickness is determined so that by the time the heat gets through the wall, it's evening when the desert turns cold. The inner wall is now warm and radiates heat to the inside the adobe structure.

The tents back in the days of the early Israelites were designed in a similar kind of way. Also, a fire was built just inside the opening of the tent to provide warmth, either at the end of the day as it was cooling down, or the beginning of the day. The tent protected against the cold. It also protected against the wind because the tent was held in place by strong ropes, secured with pegs which were driven into the ground. Those ropes supported poles which held up the tent. They were very ruggedly designed and those tent pegs were pretty big and went deep into the soil so the tent could withstand strong winds. If you have ever been in a dust storm—I've herded cattle in west Texas in dust storms and that is not fun—you get sand everywhere, in every orifice of your body you have sand. Out in the desert where they were, with the wind blowing and the sand and heat, that tent provided great protection for them. It also, in the rare cases when it rained, provided protection from that rain. The black goat hair is just like cloth—there are spaces in between just like a woven cloth. It is the same with the black goat hair, there are spaces between the fabric. In fact,

during the day, you could be in these goat hair tents and light would come through the black roof. If you were in the tent during the day, looking up at this black goat hair ceiling, you would see sparkles of light coming through like stars. That reminds me of Isaiah 40:22.

Isaiah 40:22 *It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: (KJV)*

When you were in the tent during the day, it looked like you had a dark ceiling with stars shining through. When these fibers of the goat's hair got wet from the rain, they would expand and would seal off the tent and make it a watertight tent. So, we see that these tents made of goat's hair were an incredible survival tool for the Israelites. They most likely had those kinds of tents when Moses asked them to go out and put sticks and branches and leaves together and make a hut kind of "thing" and go inside and live in there for seven days.

The second point:

2. Let's compare the Israelite tents to the temporary dwellings.

We're going to see that the *sukkah*, the "temporary dwelling", is not an effective survival tool at all. Jonah built a *sukkah*; so, let's ask the question. Let's see how much Jonah rejoiced when he had his temporary dwelling.

Jonah 4:5 *So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter [a sukkah] and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city. (NKJV)*

As we know, he was hoping to watch Nineveh be blasted off the face of the earth because Nineveh was his mortal enemy.

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)

If the *sukkah* was very effective in sheltering from the shade, why would God bring this plant to life to help shelter him from the sun? Obviously, the *sukkah* wasn't a very effective shelter.

6 continued) ... So Jonah was very grateful for the plant.

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

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

The Bible doesn't say, but my guess is it blew his *sukkah* completely to "smithereens" as we would say in West Texas—just blew it away.

8 continued) ... 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 that he built. Temporary dwelling, beating sun, wind—not effective at all. It really doesn't sound like Jonah is rejoicing, does it? His temporary shelter wasn't causing him to rejoice. Yet, Israel was commanded to rejoice in their temporary shelters. We're commanded to rejoice in our temporary shelters. Back in the early days in the church, particularly at Big Sandy, people camped out in tents in great numbers because the average church member was not very wealthy back then. That has changed now as the country has prospered. Here we have temporary dwellings which may be not as good as our home or better than our home—it depends—but they are still temporary, they are unfamiliar and in certain ways, in fact in most ways, not as comfortable. The bed is not as comfortable and it's just not as cozy as what we're used to.

That leads to the third point.

3. Let's look at the connection between a sukkah—a temporary dwelling—and the book of Ecclesiastes.

That might seem like an odd point—a connection between a temporary dwelling and the book of Ecclesiastes; what possible connection could there be? We have to understand that there is a critical reason why the book of Ecclesiastes was traditionally read on the Sabbath that falls during the Feast of Tabernacles. That has been a tradition passed down for thousands of years. Before we turn to Ecclesiastes, let's remind ourselves of something about the author. If we understand that the content of the book of Ecclesiastes was read during the Feast of Tabernacles, we might want to look at the author and see where he was coming from. What his life was like when he wrote that book. Of course, the author as we know, is Solomon. In 1 Kings 3:5. Solomon knows he is going to be king because David is old and dying.

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.

7) Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, [notice his attitude] but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. [I don't know how to put one foot in front of the other, I don't know how to come and go, I need some help.]

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 [this is what he's asking for] an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. (NKJV)

What a thing to ask! What a willing spirit and a willing heart and a humble heart, as we're going to see.

9 continued) ... For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" (NKJV)

So, the fact is, at this time, Solomon was not focused on physical stuff. He wasn't focused on "the self". He wasn't focused on gaining things for himself, rather he wanted to know how he could better serve. He wanted God Almighty to equip him so that he could better serve Yehovah's nation and his people.

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)*

What a wonderful thing to ask for.

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)*

As we know, that's exactly what Yehovah did as we see in 1 Kings 4:29. Let's see that coming to fruition—what God Almighty gave him. This is out of the New Living Translation.

1 Kings 4:29 *God gave Solomon very great wisdom and understanding, and knowledge as vast as the sands of the seashore.*

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

Verse 32.

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, small creatures, and fish.*

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

And we know all of Israel was blessed because of him and his righteousness in the early part of his reign. Second only to Christ, Solomon was the wisest man of all time. But sadly, we all know that over time he drifted away from Yehovah for a considerable period of his life. As we turn to the book of Ecclesiastes which was written at the end of his life, it describes what was on his mind as he was older and reaching the end of his life. Let's go to Ecclesiastes 1:1 and the first two verses out of the NIV.

Ecclesiastes 1:1 *The words of the Teacher ... (NIV)*

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The Hebrew word for *teacher* is an interesting Hebrew word; I hadn't looked it up until not too long ago. It means a "collector of sentences"—the teacher. It's an interesting way to describe and look at a teacher.

1 continued) ... son of David, king in Jerusalem:

2) "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless." (NIV)

Wow! When a word is repeated in Hebrew, such as we have here, like *meaningless*, the Hebrew means—when it's repeated two or three times—it's getting across that it means "most utterly", "to the extreme". What Solomon is saying is that it is utterly meaningless. A similar example would be the term, Holy of Holies—so holy used twice. It means the most Holy place of all. What Solomon is saying is, *Life, physical life, is just utterly meaningless*. Verse 3, going back to the King James.

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

He's describing this feeling of meaninglessness and why he is saying this.

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.

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 saying is, "*What is the point of it all?*" The earth was here before I was born, the earth is going to be here long after I die and I'm forgotten and he brings up the wind—it's like the term "chasing the wind". "It's meaningless, it's fruitless, it's pointless" he's saying. Now go to verse 16.

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

Remember this is being read during the Sabbath at the Feast of Tabernacles.

17) And I gave my heart to know wisdom [that's good], and [this is not so good] to know madness and folly: (KJV)

I investigated what madness and folly were like, I wanted to know, he says.

17 continued) ... 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 man, this king who had been given riches and wealth and honor—it doesn't sound like he was a very happy man at this point. Now let's go to chapter 2:4 out of the New King James.

Ecclesiastes 2:4 *I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards.*

5) I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.

6) I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove.

7) I acquired male and female servants, and had servants born in my house. Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were in Jerusalem before me.

8) I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, and musical instruments of all kinds.

9) So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. (NKJV)

Notice verse 10.

10) Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure ... (NKJV)

So he investigated it all—some of the pleasures and some of the things he did were not Godly, obviously. So, despite all the wealth and riches, he could do whatever he wanted and, as we would say today, “he had it all”. But despite all that, he was not happy. He was not content. Here's the point—this is the thing that through the book of Ecclesiastes, we need to conclude, we need to see what God Almighty is trying to get through to us. Solomon tried to find lasting pleasure from the physical and from the temporary. He tried it all, he investigated it all and was investigating to see if it would make him happy; if it would give him long term contentment—all these physical things that he had. He had a lot of physical stuff. Let me describe some of the things he had. We're told in 2 Chronicles 1 that he made silver and gold as common as stones in Jerusalem. He had over 800,000 ounces of gold coming into Jerusalem in annual tribute from nations surrounding him. You can find that in 2 Chronicles 9. I did a little research about how much 800,000 ounces of gold would be worth today. It's over \$1 billion coming in every year to Solomon, in tribute. \$1 billion a year. Of course, all his vessels were gold. He had ships full of ivory, gold, silver, he brought in animals of all types, he had his own private zoo—he had over 1400 chariots, the Bible tells us. In addition to that he had 700 wives and 300 concubines. The first thing that comes to my mind—can you imagine having 700 mothers-in-law? Can you imagine? Each one politicking to have her daughter in favor to get Solomon's special treatment and all of that? Can you imagine the politics and the backbiting and the infighting that went on in his court with 700 wives and 300 concubines. As they say, “he had it all”.

Let's notice Queen Sheba's reaction to his wealth and wisdom in 1 Kings 10:4.

1 Kings 10:4 *And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, 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 [the grand entrances and all of that, to the temple]; there was no more spirit in her. (KJV)*

The NIV and the NLT say she was *overwhelmed*. Today we would say, “it took her breath away”, to see all his wealth. The buildings, the gardens, the pools, his home and all of that.

*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)*

If there was anyone who has ever lived, who has ever been in a position of finding satisfaction in the physical—satisfaction in stuff and in things—it was Solomon. He had everything anyone could ever want and he went after it and he experienced it. So with all of that being said, we have to ask the question: Did the physical, did the temporary, bring Solomon meaning in his life and contentment in life? We could ask today—and I’ve thought, I’m sure all of us have thought—well if I could just get this new house or if I could just get this raise. If I could just have another X number of thousand dollars a year or if I just get this new car, all my problems will be solved. Solomon went through that in spades. Look at the end result. Look at Ecclesiastes 2:17. After all of this—all of his wealth, all of the fame, all of the accolades, life was—as we would say—good, in a physical sense.

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

“Chasing the wind” as we would say. The Hebrew word for hate means “unloved, shunned” and it actually can mean “an enemy”. His life had become his enemy because of his pursuit of the physical. Not being content with one wife, he had 700. Not being content with one garden, he had many gardens. Not being content with 1 billion, he had to have many billions. He pursued life through the physical and it wound up where he hated his life. Why was that? Why was a man who had it all, so miserable? Let’s go to Ecclesiastes 3:9.

Ecclesiastes 3:9 *What profit has the worker from that in which he labors?
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. [but notice this last phrase] Also He has put eternity in their hearts, [in mankind hearts] (NKJV)*

The Complete Jewish Bible says, “God has given humanity an awareness of eternity”. God has given humanity an awareness of something beyond the physical, something beyond the temporary. So you see Solomon’s great error was trying to fill

a spiritual void with something physical. It doesn't work. You can't have lasting happiness, lasting joy, out of something physical.

Let's see how Solomon's great error relates to our temporary dwellings at this time of year that we celebrate. Now we come to the fourth point.

4. What is the lesson of temporary dwellings—of sukkah?

What is the lesson that our Father wants us to learn? Why was Israel commanded to leave their tents, then for a week expose themselves to the harsh elements of the desert and then were commanded to rejoice at the same time? There's a reason for them to be able to rejoice. Here is the point regarding temporary dwellings—for us residing in temporary dwellings at this time. Let's go to Psalm 90; if you have a heading under your Psalms like some of the translations do, the New Living translation says, **A Prayer of Moses, a man of God**. So, this is a prayer of Moses in the Psalms. This is the very man that Yehovah gave instructions to give to Israel on how to live in temporary dwellings. This is a prayer—understand that Moses is praying. I'm going to read this out of the New Living Translation. Notice what it says, it brings things as we say, "home to us".

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

That is an interesting thing that Moses would say.

2) Before the mountains were born, before you gave birth to the earth and the world, from beginning to end, you are God. (NLT)

We know that God Almighty revealed Himself to Moses and revealed His very name to Moses, which means, "*I have always been, I always will be and I am right now*". So, the man—the first human He revealed that name to, is now praying in Psalm 90.

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

The King James translates *dust* as *destruction*. Moses knew that man is temporary and he knew Yehovah is not. Man is temporary, Yehovah is not and he knew that. That was part of the very name Yehovah revealed to Moses. When you think about it, coming out of Egypt—with Moses leading them out of Egypt—going up to the edge of the Promised Land and then having the bad report. People wanting to go back to Egypt and then wandering forty years in the wilderness, think about the hundreds of thousands of lives Moses saw terminated during those forty years wandering around the desert. We know there were roughly 600,000 men, women and children and I just did some quick math and over forty years, that would mean that 82 people would die every day. All those over 20 years old died. In the camp of Israel, every day for all that wandering, 82 Israelites died. Moses knew about it, the people were aware of it, they were buried in the desert. Going on in verse 4.

4) For you, a thousand years are as a passing day, as brief as a few night hours. (NLT)

Verse 12, Moses continues to pray.

12) Teach us to realize the brevity of life, so that we may grow in wisdom.
(NLT)

For most of our time in this temporary life, we have an expiration date. I turned eighty this year so that expiration date is getting closer and closer and for some of you, the expiration date is even closer than that. The point is, Moses is praying,

“Whatever time we have left, please show us how to make the most of that time.”

13) O Lord, come back to us! How long will you delay? Take pity on your servants! (NLT)

Don't we say that today? When are you going to come? When are you going to bring Your Son with You? Please come back to us soon, don't delay. We don't want to live in this miserable life another day with all the “stuff” that's going on in the world. Here Moses was praying the same thing.

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

For however long we have before our time on earth is over. We see that Moses saw the temporary nature of his life, but what was his focus? Unlike Solomon, what was his focus? He focused on a spiritual solution—the return of Yehovah and we know the return of His Son. That was his focus. Today, in our temporary dwellings here—we have it good. We could complain about this or that, but compared to the rest of the world, we have it good. Nobody here is going without hot water for a nice shower or going without a bed to sleep on—we're not on the floor or on the rocks or gravel in the parking lot—we have it pretty good.

Today, our temporary dwellings here remind us of the temporary nature of our lives. These are temporary dwellings just like our bodies are temporary dwellings. This is what we need to be reminded of in these days. We are all going to return to dust at one point or another. Starting with the Feast of Trumpets—the Father and Son returning to earth—we have the Feast of Tabernacles, the millennial rule of the Father and the Son. Then we have the eighth day, which is a time of judgment—what do all these Holy Days ultimately culminate in? Just think about that for a minute. I left out Day of Atonement but the Day of Atonement too. What do all these—in fact all of the Holy Days—culminate in? Think about that. What they culminate in is *permanence*. The end result is something permanent—not temporary. A permanent life or a permanent death and a permanent home for those who have a permanent life. What greater joy can that be? We have a permanent life in a permanent home. The sukkah showed the Ancient Israelites that life was temporary. It was so temporary that if a strong wind came up, it just blew it down—blew it away and they would have to rebuild it.

Today, our minds should be focused on permanence—on what is permanent. Not stuff, not physical things because they are temporary. They are going to go away. What our minds need to be focused on is what will last forever and that has to be

spirit—it can't be physical. With that in mind let's go to 1 John 2:15 and see what the Apostle John has to say about this subject.

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

Solomon pursued that with all of his might.

15 continued) ... 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.

17) And the world passeth away [it is physical, it is temporary], and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. (KJV)

Abides forever. We also need to remember Paul's words—we won't turn there, no need to—but remember what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15.

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are all most miserable?

He also said in Colossians 3,

Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth,

You put these scriptures together at this time of year and our focus should not be on the physical, on the temporary, it should be on things that are permanent. *Things above*, as Paul says, because they are indeed permanent. Let's go to John 6:27 and see what Christ has to say about the matter. Christ says the same thing in different words with a little more detail perhaps.

John 6:27 *Do not labor for the food which perishes, 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.* [Upon the Son of Man] (NKJV)

Now to verse 63; here is the key.

63) It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. (NKJV)

Christ is saying,

“My Father called you; He gave you to Me and I am telling you, focus on what's above, focus on the spiritual and not on the physical. Not on what is below on this earth.”

If we allow our trials—and there have been many this year—and on our difficulties—and there have been many this year—and our disappointments—again there have been many—if we allow that to be our focus, we are going to be as unhappy as Solomon. We will be just as unhappy as he was towards the end of his life. We have to understand what these days teach us. What Christ is trying to teach us, what Paul is trying to teach us, what Moses is trying to teach us—that a relationship with our

Father and His Son through the Holy Spirit is what gives *permanence*. It's what gives us life—permanent life. And as has been discussed already, a permanent home in our Father's house, which is a spiritual house.

With that in mind let's go to Isaiah 55:1; we have already read this before but let's read it in the context of the "physical" versus the "spiritual", the "temporary" versus the "permanent". The New King James heading says, **An Invitation to Abundant Life**.

Isaiah 55:1 *Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price.*

2) *Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? [Just like Solomon did] Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good [the implication is, eat what lasts, partake of what lasts], And let your soul delight itself in abundance. (NKJV)*

We know that Isaiah is speaking metaphorically, he's speaking symbolically about taking in things of the Spirit and growing in the Spirit. Every year, when the Israelites were out wandering in the desert, they were instructed to leave the comforts of their tents. Later, when they were in the Promised Land, they were instructed to leave the comforts of whatever houses they had built, to come and leave them and live in something that provided frankly, little or no shelter from the elements. They were temporary—and by the end of the Feast the leaves were withering and would have to be replenished or the wind might have blown a part of it over or something like that. It was a reminder to them of the temporary nature of their dwellings and hence the temporary nature of their physical lives. It reminded them that this physical life is indeed temporary.

The Israelites were also reminded annually that there was something permanent that they could have, if they had a relationship with their God. In Israel's case they could have a permanent home—the Promised Land. God said, if you will just obey Me, if you will put away your idols and you will put Me first and worship Me, you will have a permanent home. You don't have to worry about disease, you don't have to worry about animals, about predatory nations coming in and invading you—you don't have to worry about any of that. If you will just obey Me and follow Me and put Me first and love your neighbor as yourself, you can have a permanent, physical home in the Promised Land. For us, under the New Covenant as Firstfruits, we have been promised something far, far greater. Let's go to Hebrews 11:8. The promises to us are so great and so fabulous. It makes anything physical pale into nothingness.

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: (KJV)*

And what was that promise? It was something permanent.

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

James covered that very eloquently, very poignantly—painted a picture of that very thing. A city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. Not temporary structures like a *sukkah* with no foundation at all. You just poke them in the ground or stick them on a stone—no foundations at all. But a permanent structure has foundations and Abraham sought permanence as we should seek today. David also sought permanence in Psalm 27:4.

Psalm 27:4 *One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple. (KJV)*

David was seeking a permanent home to be at the feet of God Almighty, in His temple and to have some permanence, beyond the physical life. David sought that. What about Solomon? How did he end up? The Bible doesn't reveal the fate of Solomon but we know Ecclesiastes was most likely written at the end of his life. So let's see what his focus was toward the end of Ecclesiastes, toward the end of his days. In Ecclesiastes 12:7 Solomon is saying what happens when we die:

Ecclesiastes 12:7 *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. (KJV)*

That's what happens when we die.

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

“After all my life, experimenting with this and that and every pleasure and having anything a man could want, what's the conclusion to the whole matter?”]

13 continued) *... Fear God and keep His commandments for this is the whole of man. (KJV)*

That makes a physical man whole—having a relationship with God Almighty and His Son. The Complete Jewish Bible says: *This is what being human is all about.* Keeping His commandments, fearing God. It appears—we don't know for sure—that Solomon finally realized that the only true meaning in life was to have a relationship with God Almighty. He had that relationship when he started. But because of wealth and because of other distractions and everything else that he was trying to do, we know he drifted for a long period of time. What he is saying is:

“Maybe I need to go back and have the relationship I had and develop the relationship I had with Yehovah when I first started and when I first asked for wisdom.”

This was his attitude before his riches and his wives led him to focus on things that were temporary and not permanent. Perhaps before he died, Solomon realized the utter futility of trying to fill a spiritual void in his life with physical things, because it doesn't work. You can try all you want to fill a spiritual need, a spiritual void and if

you try to fill with physical things, you will be frustrated, to the point where Solomon says, that he hated life and life was meaningless. By focusing on the temporary, focusing on the physical, he found misery. There's a lesson for us there. Hopefully, instead he found something permanent before he died, which would be a deeper relationship with God Almighty.

Now that's the lessons of the book of Ecclesiastes. It's also a great lesson for us because we are living in temporary dwellings—sukkah today—here at this Feast of Tabernacles. Living in these temporary dwellings is a constant reminder that we are indeed temporary. The only permanence comes through a deep relationship with our Father and His Son. We look forward to a permanent home, a permanent body, a permanent life with a Being who has always existed and His Son who has always existed.

Let's conclude now by asking a question. Here at the Feast, what should our focus be upon? Let's see an answer in Micah 4. Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah and Isaiah has been covered a lot during the first four days of the Feast. He prophesied in the 700's B.C. This is out of the New Living Translation.

Micah 4:1 *In the last days, the mountain of the Lord's house will be the highest of all—the most important place on earth. [Showing God Almighty will come to this earth and dwell with His people] It will be raised above the other hills, and people from all over the world will stream there to worship.*
2) *People from many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of Jacob's God. (NLT)*

We've said so many times before, "Who is the God of Jacob?" Acts 3:13 tell us: "*The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His Son.*" So, the house of Jacob's God is God Almighty's house.

2 continued) ... There he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths. For the Lord's teaching will go out from Zion; his word will go out from Jerusalem. (NLT)

Then in these days that we are celebrating right now. Verse 3 back to the King James.

3) And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. (KJV)

Verse 7.

7) And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, [here's the key] even forever. (KJV)

That's permanence and that's what we seek today. Let's also see an additional answer from Revelation 21 to this question. We're going to see the ultimate fulfillment of the lesson of a sukkah; the lesson of temporary dwellings.

Revelation 21:3 *And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle [here the Greek word means "the habitation, where God lives"] 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)*

This is permanence; it will last forever and the fact is, right now, as we sit here and celebrate these days, our lives can be "permanent" with our Father, as permanent as our Father is permanent. We've had a beginning, but we need not have an end and we have that opportunity now. These days remind us of the temporariness of our bodies, of our dwellings, of the world around us, when we live in temporary dwellings.

Let me pose something. When you lay down to sleep at night in your room and you look up to the ceiling, hopefully you don't see cracks or water stains, but you might pretend that you are in a sukkah tonight as you drift off to sleep. The leaves are over your heads, the sticks are holding up this temporary shelter but you can see through the leaves and see the stars. Just remind yourself of the lesson of temporary dwellings. That like the sukkah, we are temporary and we seek something more. This physical life is temporary and the trials and struggles of this life are temporary. The aches and pains we have as we get older, the diseases and the maladies we have are all temporary. We're here to recognize the fact, that by living in temporary dwellings we are seeing that this world is temporary. But, at the same time, we are also seeing that our Father is offering permanence and that there is a permanent inheritance waiting for us as sons and daughters in the family of God Almighty.