



# The Feasts of Israel

## 10. Feast of Tabernacles – Sukkoth



The *Feast of Tabernacles* is the final feast of the seven established by the Lord for Israel in Leviticus. The feast is the most joyful of the seven feasts, this feast commemorates Israel's fellowship with God in the wilderness. This feast celebrates Israel's rest with the Redeemer, the Lord God, who rescued the nation from Egyptian bondage. Tabernacles also foreshadow a future day of God's redemption of humanity, when the world will be at rest, following God's judgment on the nations, foreshadowed in the Feast of Atonement.

Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits were the feasts foreshadowing the First Coming of the Messiah. Trumpets, Atonement and Tabernacles foreshadow the Second Coming. Following the period of

Atonement on the earth, known as the Tribulation period, Jesus Christ returns with the Glory and Power of Heaven to establish the Messianic Kingdom. In the Messianic Kingdom, the Lord Fellowships with humanity, ruling the nations from Jerusalem, surrounded by the tribes of Israel. This the picture presented in Exodus, as the tribes of Israel surrounded the Tabernacle of Meeting in the wilderness of Sinai. God's presence was visible as a pillar of fire by night and cloud by day as He fellowshiped with His people.

<sup>7</sup> Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the "tent of meeting." Anyone inquiring of the LORD would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp. <sup>8</sup> And whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose and stood at the entrances to their tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent. <sup>9</sup> As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the LORD spoke with Moses. <sup>10</sup> Whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshiped, each at the entrance to their tent. <sup>11</sup> The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent. **Exodus 33:7-11**

### Biblical Observance

#### *The Meaning of Tabernacles*

The Hebrew name for Tabernacles is *Sukkot* meaning "booth" or "hut" made of leaves. The English word is derived from the Latin *tabernaculum* meaning booth or hut. God told the nation of Israel to live in huts made of branches and leaves for seven-days in the month of Tishri, to remember the time they were in the wilderness and had to live in tents for 40-years. This feast was also known as "The Feast of Ingathering" (Ex. 23;16)

<sup>16</sup> "Celebrate the Festival of Harvest with the firstfruits of the crops you sow in your field. "Celebrate the Festival of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in your crops from the field. **Exodus 23:16**

<sup>22</sup> "Celebrate the Festival of Weeks with the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, and the Festival of Ingathering at the turn of the year. **Exodus 34:22**

This feast was joyous celebration of God's provisions throughout the year and for the year to come. This feast was foreshadowing of things to come.

### *The Time of Tabernacles*

Tabernacles is the final feast falling on the 15th of Tishri, five days after Yom Kippur (Atonement). This feast was to last seven days. The first and the eighth days were “Sabbaths”, no work was to be done, and Israel was to rest.

### *The Record of Tabernacles*

The instructions of how to celebrate Tabernacles are in three areas in the scripture. In Leviticus 23:33-43 the people are instructed to live in booths and rejoice with tree branches before the Lord. In Numbers 29:12-39, the priesthood is instructed on the Temple offerings. On the seventh year (sabbatical year) the Law was to be completely read in the presence of the people Deuteronomy 31:10-13.

<sup>33</sup> The LORD said to Moses, <sup>34</sup> “Say to the Israelites: ‘On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the LORD’s Festival of Tabernacles begins, and it lasts for seven days. <sup>35</sup> The first day is a sacred assembly; do no regular work. <sup>36</sup> For seven days present food offerings to the LORD, and on the eighth day hold a sacred assembly and present a food offering to the LORD. It is the closing special assembly; do no regular work. <sup>37</sup> (“These are the LORD’s appointed festivals, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies for bringing food offerings to the LORD—the burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings required for each day. <sup>38</sup> These offerings are in addition to those for the LORD’s Sabbaths and <sup>39</sup> in addition to your gifts and whatever you have vowed and all the freewill offerings you give to the LORD.) <sup>39</sup> “So beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to the LORD for seven days; the first day is a day of sabbath rest, and the eighth day also is a day of sabbath rest. <sup>40</sup> On the first day you are to take branches from luxuriant trees—from palms, willows and other leafy trees—and rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. <sup>41</sup> Celebrate this as a festival to the LORD for seven days each year. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come; celebrate it in the seventh month. <sup>42</sup> Live in temporary shelters for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in such shelters <sup>43</sup> so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in temporary shelters when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.” <sup>44</sup> So Moses announced to the Israelites the appointed festivals of the LORD. **Leviticus 23:33-44**

### *The Importance of Tabernacles*

The ceremony of Tabernacles was prominent in the Bible because it was a joyous time following the mourning and repenting of Atonement (Yom Kippur). The Rabbis of old referred to it as “the holiday”. It was one of the three holidays that all Jewish males were required to go to Jerusalem and appear before the Temple of God. During Tabernacles people brought their tithes and offerings to the Temple, because you were not to appear empty-handed (Deuteronomy 16:16).

The Temple sacrifice for Tabernacles during the seven-day period was huge. On the first day, 13 bulls were to be offered, fourteen lambs, two rams and one goat, along with meal and drink offerings. On the second day the number of bulls would be twelve and decrease by one each day of the feast, with the other sacrifices being the same each day. All twenty-four divisions of the priests shared in the sacrifices during this period.

On this feast the Shekinah glory filled the Solomon’s newly built Temple at its dedication in I Kings 8, 2 Chronicles 7:1-10.

### *The Prayer of Tabernacles*

Israel was an agricultural community; they depended on the fruit of the ground for their survival. The nation depended on rainfall for the coming harvest. The rainfall in Israel and Jerusalem in particular is 20-inches per year, the majority of this rain falls between November and March, following the feast of Tabernacles. Without the proper amount of rainfall, the land and its crops will be horrendous. For this reason the prayer for rain in the months following Tabernacles became a part of the Temple service.

### *The Service of Tabernacles*

Jewish men were required to appear in Jerusalem for this holiday, therefore streams of people would come from surrounding cities and foreign countries to celebrate. The goal was to arrive by the afternoon

of Tishri 14, allowing enough time to build a booth to celebrate the feast. The location of the booth would be within a half mile of Temple, a Sabbath's day journey.

Following building the booth in Jerusalem, the next seven days were filled with joy and celebration. Three ceremonies marked this time, the *Water Libation*, *Temple Lighting* and the *Hoshana-Rabbah* Ceremony.



### The Water Libation Ceremony

Pouring out water from the pool of Siloam each morning of the feast demonstrated the intense need for water in the coming months. This was the water libation ceremony (sacrificial pouring out of a liquid) the high priest would officiate during each morning of the feast.

The high priest would take a golden pitcher and exit the water-gate and make his way to the Pool of Siloam fill up the pitcher. He would be accompanied by a procession of music and worshipers.

He would return via the Water-gate to the Court of Priest, where the Altar was located. As he entered three blasts of the silver trumpets sounded from the Temple. The priest would

then say "Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Isa. 12:3).

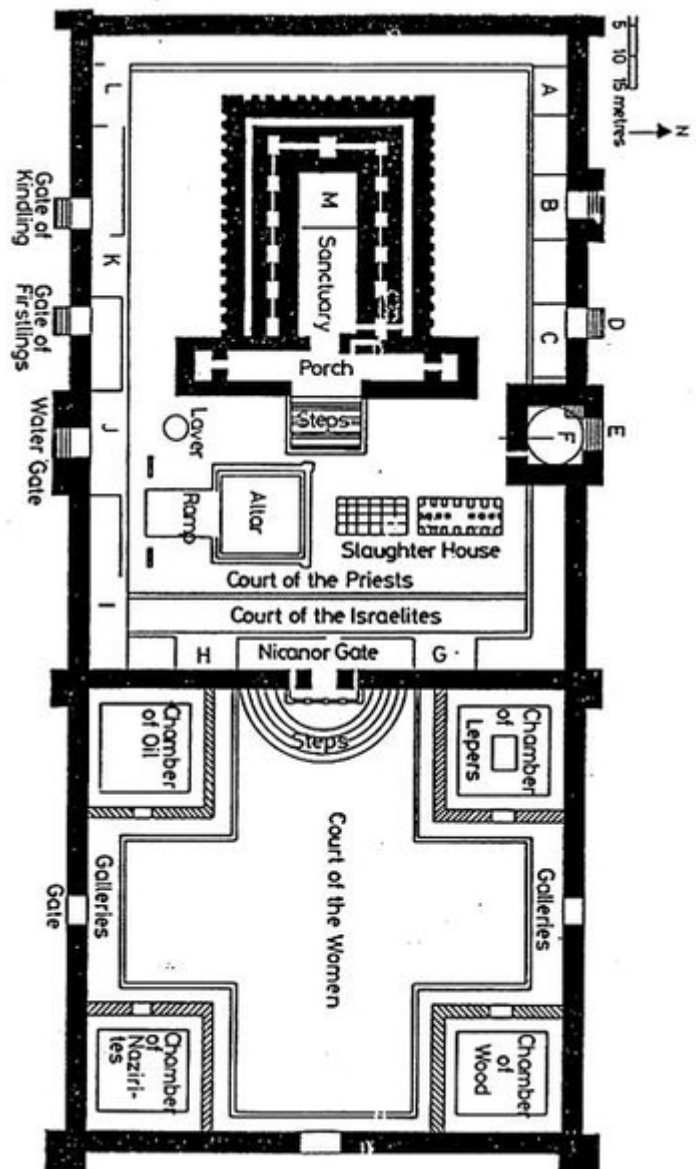
As the high priest was pouring, the people shouted "Raise your hand!" this was done because in 95 B.C., Alexander Jannaeus the high priest, a Saducee, poured the water on the ground. The people revolted, 6000 people died as a result when Alexander hired mercenaries to stop the revolt.

The priest would then ascend the altar and pour out the water-libation, while he did this another priest would pour out the wine-libation as specified in the Law. The choir of Levites sang the *Hallel* (Psalms 113-118).

At the right point, the people would respond waving the palm branches toward the altar singing: *Save now, I pray O Lord: O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity*" (Psalm 118:25). At this time the priests with their palm branches in hand, marched once around the altar.

When Jesus arrived in Jerusalem prior to Passover, the people greeted Him with Palm branches on his triumphant entry. The people viewed Him as Messiah, coming to save them in fulfillment of Psalm 118. The palm branches were from the imagery of the Feast of Tabernacles. We see a similar scene in Heaven in Revelation 7:9-10.

<sup>9</sup> After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne







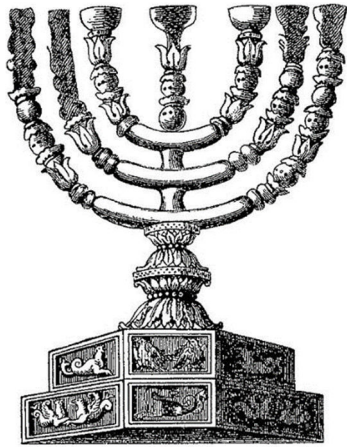
and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. <sup>10</sup> And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God,  
who sits on the throne,  
and to the Lamb.” **Revelation 7:9-10**

### *The Temple Lighting Ceremony*

On the evening of the second day of the feast was the Temple Lighting Ceremony, this was a celebration known as *Simchat Bet Hasho'ayva* (“The rejoicing of the House of Water Drawing”). The people would crowd in the *Court of Women*; a barrier separating men from women was raised. In the center of the Court of Women stood four huge menorahs to light the courtyard, the wicks for these menorahs were old priest garments. Members of the Sanhedrin performed torch dances, while people watched and walked with their oil lamps.

Later in the evening the Levitical choir would assemble in the Court of Israelites and then proceed through the Nicanor Gate. At the top of the stairs they would begin to sing the Psalms 120 to 134, one Psalm for each of the 15 stairs. The sound of music would then proceed from the trumpets, string instruments, harps and flutes as the Levites sang.



This celebration was repeated each night for the next six nights, this was done as a prelude to the Water Libation ceremony in the morning. The Talmud comments on the joy of this event by saying; “He that hath not beheld the joy of the drawing of the water [the Simchat Bet Hasho'ayva celebration] hath never seen joy in his life” (Sukkah 5:1).

The lighting of the Temple reminded people of the day the “Glory of the Lord” entered the Temple and filled it with His glory. This will occur again in the days of the Messianic Kingdom as the Lord Himself will rule from Jerusalem over the nations from the Temple.

<sup>1</sup> Then the man brought me to the gate facing east, <sup>2</sup> and I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east. His voice was like the roar of rushing waters, and the land was radiant with his glory. <sup>3</sup> The vision I saw was like the vision I had seen when he<sup>al</sup> came to destroy the city and like the visions I had seen by the Kebar River, and I fell facedown. <sup>4</sup> The glory of the LORD entered the temple through the gate facing east. <sup>5</sup> Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. **Ezekiel 43:1-5**

In the Gospel of John Chapters 7-10, Jesus is in Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles, he taught in the Temple on the last day of the feast, a Sabbath. In the context of the lighting ceremony Jesus is proclaimed His identity to Jerusalem. At dawn he comes to the Temple courts (lighting ceremony), it is at this point the Pharisees try to trap him, after he asks the one without sin to cast the first stone, they leave him. Jesus then declares Himself the light of the world while in the Temple courts during the lighting celebration.



<sup>1</sup> but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. <sup>2</sup> At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. <sup>3</sup> The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group <sup>4</sup> and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. <sup>5</sup> In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” <sup>6</sup> They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. <sup>7</sup> When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” <sup>8</sup> Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. <sup>9</sup> At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. <sup>10</sup> Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

<sup>11</sup> “No one, sir,” she said.

*"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."*

<sup>12</sup> When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, **"I am the light of the world.** Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." **John 8:1-12**

Later to validate his claim, he heals a man born blind from birth (John 9). This blind man puts his faith in Jesus after the Pharisees expel him because testified about Jesus and his healing. This man was healed on the Sabbath of the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

### *The Hoshana-Rabbah Ceremony*

The last day of the feast was the greatest day of the feast. On this day, the priest would blast their trumpets 21 times, when the water was poured, three sets of seven blasts. On this day the priests would also make seven circles around the great altar. As they circled the altar they sang Psalm 118:25 and the people raised palm branches. This is why it was known as *Hoshana Rabbah* or "Great Hoshanna"

On this day Jesus was in the crowd, Jesus proclaimed with a loud voice that He is the source of the "Living Water" that everybody is searching for.

<sup>37</sup> On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. <sup>38</sup> Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."<sup>39</sup> By this He meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified. <sup>40</sup> On hearing his words, some of the people said, "Surely this man is the Prophet."

<sup>41</sup> Others said, "He is the Messiah." **John 7:37-41**

The prophet Malachi foretold this day, when he said "The Lord you are seeking will come to his temple". Jesus is coming to the Feast and declaring for Israel He is the one they seek. He heals the blind man to validate his claim, and the blind man is expelled.

<sup>1</sup> "I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly **the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple: the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,**" says the LORD Almighty. <sup>2</sup> But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. <sup>3</sup> He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, <sup>4</sup> and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years. <sup>5</sup> "So I will come to put you on trial. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive the foreigners among you of justice, but do not fear me," says the LORD Almighty. **Malachi 3:1-5**

This leads to the murder of the Messiah as foretold by Isaiah 53, yet in the last days Israel will turn and accept the Messiah rejected.

### ***Modern Observance***

Today Jews all over the world celebrate the feast of Tabernacles by building temporary booth or tents to dwell in during the 7-day period. Jewish family will eat their meals in these booths and very religious families will spend the night in them.



In the synagogue the congregation circles the synagogue while singing Psalm 118, this feast became closely tied to Yom Kippur, Feast of Atonement, so on the 7<sup>th</sup> day, Hoshana Rabbah, it became known as the day God's judgments on Yom Kippur could be reversed. Willow branches were beaten in the synagogue to remove the leaves picturing repentance and the removal of sins.

Since there is no Temple water and lighting ceremony, a new holiday, Simchat Torah, Rejoicing of the Law occurs on the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup>

### ***The Future Fulfillment***

The *Day of Atonement* (Yom Kippur) is a day of sorrow and mourning. God calls Israel to mourn for their sin, to lament over their wickedness. In the last days, as Israel is gathered from the nations back into the land, the prophets foretell a horrendous time as the nations of the earth. Israel will rebuild the Temple as foretold in Daniel 9:27 and Matthew 24:15, however the Temple will not save them. Only turning to the one rejected, Jesus Christ will save the nation of Israel from the nations of the world.

<sup>1</sup> Come near, you nations, and listen;  
pay attention, you peoples!  
Let the earth hear, and all that is in it,  
the world, and all that comes out of it!

<sup>2</sup> The LORD is angry with all nations;  
his wrath is on all their armies.  
He will totally destroy<sup>[a]</sup> them,

he will give them over to slaughter.....<sup>8</sup> For the LORD has a day of vengeance,  
a year of retribution, to uphold Zion's cause. **Isaiah 34:1-2,8**

When Israel cries out to Messiah, Messiah return with the armies of Heaven, Israel will finally receive the promises and rest for obedience. The Second coming is pictured in both the Old and New Testament (Zechariah 12:9-11, Matthew 24:30, 25:30, Daniel 7:13-14,26)

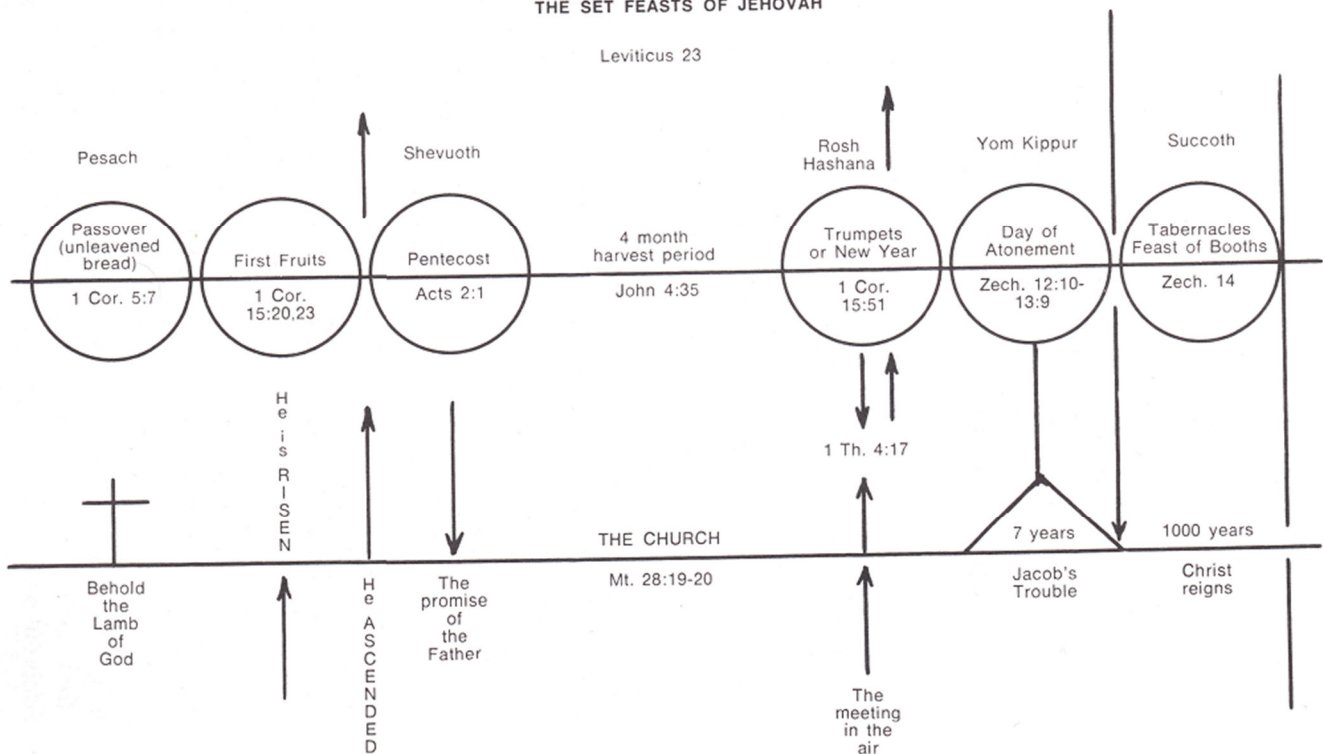
<sup>11</sup> I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. <sup>12</sup> His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. <sup>13</sup> He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. <sup>14</sup> The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.

**Revelation 19:11-14**

<sup>13</sup> "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man,<sup>[a]</sup> coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. <sup>14</sup> He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. **Daniel 7:13-14**

With the return of Jesus the Messiah, begins the Messianic kingdom as promised by the prophets. During this period Jesus will rule over the nation, He will "Tabernacle" with His creation, ruling from the Temple in Jerusalem. Israel will become the chief nation on the earth as promised in Deuteronomy 28:1-2. This period is known as the Millennium because Revelation 20 describes it as lasting 1000-years. This period of rest and fellowship is the foreshadowing pictured in The Feast of Tabernacles.

**THE MEANING OF THE JEWISH HOLY DAYS**  
THE SET FEASTS OF JEHOVAH



The very nature of world will change; it will revert back to like it was in the days of Adam and Eve before the fall. Man's fellowship with the animal kingdom will even change during this period. Man will have dominion over the animal world; even the little child will lead the lion in those days.



He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;  
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.  
<sup>5</sup> Righteousness will be his belt  
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

<sup>6</sup> The wolf will live with the lamb,  
the leopard will lie down with the goat,  
the calf and the lion and the yearling<sup>[a]</sup> together;  
and a little child will lead them.

<sup>7</sup> The cow will feed with the bear,  
their young will lie down together,  
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.

<sup>8</sup> The infant will play near the cobra's den,  
the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest.

<sup>9</sup> They will neither harm nor destroy  
on all my holy mountain,  
for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD  
as the waters cover the sea. **Isaiah 11:4b-9**

The earth will also celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles as the nations come to Jerusalem to worship the King. In Zechariah 14:8, the prophet foretells a day when water will flow from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea, turning it into a living sea, where fish will be caught (Ezekiel 47:9). The Lord who is King over the earth is the Messiah Jesus Christ, notice in verse 17 we are told people will come to Jerusalem to "Worship" the



King the LORD Almighty. When we look back at John 7, and 8 Jesus declared himself the source of “Living Water” and “The Light of the World”, He was rejected by Israel. Here during the Millennium Israel will have the fellowship they rejected at the First Coming of Messiah.

<sup>8</sup> On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half of it east to the Dead Sea and half of it west to the Mediterranean Sea, in summer and in winter. <sup>9</sup> The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name.



<sup>16</sup> Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles. <sup>17</sup> If any of the peoples of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, they will have no rain. <sup>18</sup> If the Egyptian people do not go up and take part, they will have no rain. The LORD<sup>b</sup> will bring on them the plague he inflicts on the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles. <sup>19</sup> This will be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles.

<sup>20</sup> On that day HOLY TO THE LORD will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, and the cooking pots in the LORD's house will be like the sacred bowls in front of the altar. <sup>21</sup> Every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holy to the LORD

Almighty, and all who come to sacrifice will take some of the pots and cook in them. And on that day there will no longer be a Canaanite<sup>g</sup> in the house of the LORD Almighty. **Zechariah 14:8-9,16-20**

