

Jesus made the declaration found in John 7:37-39a.

Jesus' statement at that exact moment was meant to demonstrate to the people that He is the fulfillment of the pattern of the Temple ceremony.

Jesus' Fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles During His First Coming

Just as God tabernacled with the Israelites during their 40 years in the desert, Jesus tabernacled with man in His first coming and will come again to tabernacle with man in His Messianic Kingdom.

John 1:14 describes Jesus' first coming: "*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*" (NIV) The Greek word interpreted as "made His dwelling", *skenoō*, is derived from *tabernacle*, and can also be interpreted as "to have one's tabernacle".

A Theory of Jesus' Future Fulfillment of Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles is a time to rejoice! Many believe that on this day, the Messiah Jesus will establish His kingdom on earth for one thousand years.

The saints reigning with Jesus for one thousand years is described in Revelation 20:4:

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Messiah for a thousand years."

When Jesus establishes His kingdom on earth, all nations will celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles (*Zechariah 14:16-19*):

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 Feast of Tabernacles. (NIV)

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Tabernacles, Thanksgiving and Christmas

The Puritans likely based Thanksgiving on the Feast of Tabernacles

Jesus was likely born on the Feast of Tabernacles
Jesus fulfills the Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:34-43, Deut. 16:13-17) is significant to two of our most popular holidays: Thanksgiving and Christmas. It appears that Thanksgiving is based on the Feast of Tabernacles and that Jesus was born on the Feast of Tabernacles.

What is the Feast of Tabernacles?

Leviticus 23:34-43

Deuteronomy 16:13-17

The Feast of Tabernacles or Booths (Hebrew: Sukkot) begins on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (Tishri), after the crops were gathered. God instructed the Israelites to observe the Feast of Tabernacles by building and living in booths for seven days, to remember the exodus from Egypt and that the Israelites lived in booths when God brought them out of Egypt. Also remember that God dwelt with the Israelites during their sojourn out of Egypt: *Exodus 25:8* "*Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.*" (NIV)

This feast is celebrated by a full week of rejoicing, dancing, singing and feasting and is called "Season of our Joy". To quote a Jewish publication, "on the Feast of Tabernacles we give thanks to God, the source of our sustenance and the bounty of the agricultural season".

The Feast of Tabernacles is the seventh feast. It depicts the Lord's rest, just as the pattern which God designed

in Genesis 2:2 suggests:

“By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.”(NIV)

The Puritans likely based Thanksgiving on the Feast of Tabernacles

It is believed that the first American Thanksgiving was based on the Feast of Tabernacles. The Puritans were great followers of the Hebrew Scriptures. The Bible was the Puritan’s guide to living. As noted previously, the Feast of Tabernacles is described in Leviticus and Deuteronomy. The Feast of Tabernacles was a feast held after the fall harvest to remind the Israelites of the exodus from Egypt. It also showed their thankfulness for their harvest and all that God had done for them. The Puritans felt that their situation was similar to that of the people of Israel in the exodus. The Puritans sought religious freedom in America. They identified with the Israelites, since they were wandering from the barren spiritual deserts of Europe to America, a kind of Promised Land. Jewish Scripture encouraged them to give thanks for their deliverance (which they likened to the deliverance of the Israelites) from a harsh first year in Plymouth Colony. The Puritans didn’t observe the Jewish festival of Tabernacles, but they did have a celebration to give thanks for their deliverance, in the fall of 1621.

Thanksgiving is compared to the Feast of Tabernacles in *The American Book of Days*, by Jane M. Hatch, 1978, page 1053: “Although Thanksgiving is one of the most popular holidays in the United States, the idea of setting aside a day to express gratitude for good fortune was not original in this country... Since biblical days, Jews have given thanks for abundant harvests with the eight-day Feast of Tabernacles - an observance that continues to the present era....”

Jesus was likely born on Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles is likely the day that Jesus was born. Since the fourth century, December 25 has been celebrated as the day of His birth, but it is generally

recognized that this date was likely set due to the “Christianizing” of pagan holidays.

When Constantine unified the Roman empire and converted it to Christianity, the dates of several Christian holidays were changed to accommodate holidays that were already celebrated by the Roman pagans. The Romans worshipped many gods, but their supreme god was the Sun. They celebrated the birthday of the Sun on December 25, which was their great winter festival. Instead of celebrating Jesus’ birth when it likely and meaningfully occurred on the Feast of Tabernacles, in 440 AD the church decreed His birth to be on a festival that was already celebrated by the Roman pagans (on Dec. 25).

The Romans also set aside a special day of the week to worship the Sun - the “day of the Sun”, or Sunday. In “Christianizing” the Roman empire, the Roman government decreed that Sunday would be set aside to worship the Christian God. Thus, the day of Christian worship was changed from Saturday to Sunday.

Many different factors point to Jesus’ birth occurring in the fall rather than the winter. Scholars have calculated that John the Baptist was likely born on the Feast of Passover. They conclude this based on the schedule that the priests served in the Temple. John the Baptist’s father, Zechariah, was performing Temple duties when the angel appeared to him and prophesied John’s birth. Zechariah’s wife Elizabeth became pregnant shortly after. We know that Elizabeth was six months pregnant when the angel appeared to Mary to tell her that she was pregnant with Jesus (Luke 1:26-31). Therefore, Jesus was born six months after John the Baptist. If John the Baptist was born on Passover, Jesus was born six months later, during the month of Tishri, the same month of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Another factor that suggests that Jesus was born in the fall, on the Feast of Tabernacles is that we know that there was “no room for them in the inn” when Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem. The fall Feast of Tabernacles was one of the three feasts that required the men of Israel to appear before the Lord (Deut. 16:16). Luke 2:3 speaks of a tax by Caesar Augustus where “*all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.*” (KJV)

The Roman authorities likely applied the census/taxation at the time when the inhabitants of Judea were already traveling for the Feast of Tabernacles.

Since everyone would travel to Jerusalem to appear before the Lord, the surrounding area would likely be very crowded (Bethlehem is only 3-4 miles from Jerusalem), thus “no room for them in the inn”.

We also know that shepherds were watching their flocks in the fields when Jesus was born. The flocks around Bethlehem were normally brought into a “sheepfold” or corral during the cold winter (approximately November through February). If it were winter, the shepherds would not have been watching their flocks in the fields. The reason that the flocks were in the fields was because it was still the fall season (the season of the Feast of Tabernacles).

How appropriate if Jesus (*Immanuel*, God with us) should make His dwelling place with us during the Feast of Tabernacles which means “dwelling place”.

Jesus Fulfills the Feast of Tabernacles

What Jesus Said

On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. (NIV) - John 7:37-39a.

A custom on the Feast of Tabernacles during the time of Jesus was a ceremony of pouring water. On the last day of the feast, called Hoshanna Rabbah, a priest would fill a water pitcher from the Pool of Siloam and carry it back to the Temple, followed by a procession of the people dancing, singing and chanting Psalms. The procession circled the altar seven times then the priest poured the water at the Temple altar. This was followed by rejoicing.

It was at this time during the Feast of Tabernacles, that