

## “The Tabernacle of God is with Men”

*“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle 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.’”* (Rev 21:3)

The birth of God's greatest man and man's greatest God, *Yeshua HaMashiach* is the pivotal event in all of human history. This is the reason why Christmas is one of the most prominent days of the Christian liturgical calendar. It is a time when most Christians—even nominal ones—turn their thoughts and their worship toward God. The true reverence and devotion to *Yeshua* that comes to the hearts of people during this time are to be commended; however, Christians should recognize the truth that the nativity did not occur on December 25. *Yeshua* was actually born during the time of *Sukkot*, (the Biblical Feast of Tabernacles, mid Sept.—early Oct.) It was at that time of the year that the Word of God *tabernacled* in human flesh. It was then that God became man.

With the precision that has always characterized His actions, God brought forth His Son in the fullness of time (Galatians 4:3-5) and caused Him to *tabernacle* among men (John 1:14). The Almighty Father was not (as some would suppose), reacting to the failure of His previous plan for man and adopting a new course of action by establishing a new religion. The birth of the Messiah was just another step in the continually unfolding plan of salvation that was formulated before the creation of the world.

Since we are certain that God is thoroughly consistent and systematic in everything that He does, it is only reasonable that we should expect Him to schedule such a momentous event as the birth of His only begotten Son at one of the predetermined festivals of His divine calendar. And, so it was that Messiah *Yeshua* was brought into the world as a baby in Bethlehem (*Beit Lechem*, house of bread) during the Festival of *Sukkot*.

The Biblical Feast of Tabernacles is significant to all believers, for it was at this set time that the Son of God became flesh. Before that time, various tabernacle-like structures had been constructed by men of God to house His visitation. However, it finally came time for God to be manifest in the flesh (*“Great beyond all question is the formerly hidden truth underlying our faith: He was manifested physically and proved righteous spiritually, seen by angels and proclaimed among the nations, trusted throughout the world and raised up in glory to heaven”* 1 Timothy 3:16) in a body prepared of the Father (*“And then, “Look, I have come to do your will;” he takes away the first system in order to set up the second. it is in connection with this will that we have been separated for God and made holy, once and for all, through the offering of Yeshua the Messiah’s body”* Hebrews 10:7, 9-10).

Just as it was the Feast of *Sukkot* in the seventh month (2 Chronicles 5:1-3) when Solomon dedicated the great material dwelling-place which, though designed to do so, could not contain God (*“And Shlomo did build him a house. But HaElyon does not live in places made by hand! As the prophet says, Heaven is my throne, says Adonai, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house could you build for me? What kind of place could you devise for my rest?”* Acts 7:47-49), so during the Feast of *Sukkot*, a suitable dwelling place for all the fullness of the Godhead (Colossians 2:9) was brought forth in the likeness of sinful flesh (*“For what the Torah could not do by itself, because it lacked the power to make the old nature cooperate, God did by sending his own Son as a human being with a nature like our own sinful one. God did this in order to deal with sin, and in so doing he executed the punishment against sin in human nature”* Romans 8:3).

While the time of the birth of Messiah *Yeshua* is not generally understood, it can be learned from the record of the Holy Scriptures. A very simple and rudimentary explanation for the time of His nativity is this. *Yeshua* was thirty years old when He began His ministry. It is generally understood that His ministry lasted for three and one-half years and it is an indisputable fact that He was crucified at Passover in late March or early April (on Aviv 14). There are six months from *Sukkot* to *Pesach*. Since *Yeshua* was thirty-three and one-half years old when He died and since He died on Passover, then He must have been born at Tabernacles.

The Messianic prophecies of Isaiah lend credence to this belief. The time of the fulfillment of *“unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given... his name shall be called... the mighty God..., the Prince of Peace”* is said to be at a time

when “the people... have seen a great light... when they joy before thee according to the joy of harvest” (Isaiah 9:2, 3; 6). The time when the Child was born who would be the Prince of Peace was at a time of rejoicing like the joy in harvest. The harvest is at the end of the civil year, and its completion is at the Feast of Ingathering (another name of the Feast of Tabernacles), this is the time for rejoicing over the harvest.

Another piece of evidence which supports this account of the timing of the birth of Messiah *Yeshua* is the fact that shepherds were said to be abiding (living) in the open fields around Bethlehem, watching their flocks at night. Since the livestock was brought from the open fields around the Feast of Tabernacles, we must conclude that He must have been born *before* the winter months while there is still grass growing in the fields.

Placing the time of the nativity at the Feast of *Sukkot* coordinates with the descriptions of contemporaneous events and circumstances. At the time of *Sukkot*, shepherds would still have been abiding in the fields; however, by December 25, the livestock would have been moved to shelter, and the shepherds would certainly not have been living in the open fields. Since the Feast of *Sukkot* was the time of ingathering, it would have been the most natural time of the year for the Roman government to impose taxation on the people of Israel. Autumn would also have been a time when Miriam (Mary) could have undertaken the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem (on an animal). Such a journey in her condition would have been virtually impossible during winter.

The New Testament explanation of the nature of the Son of God as both God and man that is recorded in *Yochanan's* (John) Gospel lends support to the timing of the nativity at Tabernacles. John 1:14 declares “*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.*” A literal translation of this passage from the Greek is, “And the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us.” It is certainly more than coincidence that it was in the Feast of Tabernacles that the Word of God became flesh and tabernacled with men. Throughout their history the Feast of *Sukkot* had been a time when our Jewish people dwelt in booths and searched the eastern skies for the sign of the appearance of the Messiah.

So we see that it can be logically established that the date of the Nativity of our Lord *Yeshua* was in fact during the Feast of Tabernacles (*Chag HaSukkot*) in the 7<sup>th</sup> Jewish month *Tishri* (September/October). This deduction does no injustice to our intelligence nor to the Scriptures themselves, for every scripture regarding the time and circumstances of His birth points to the Feast of Tabernacles as the season of the Nativity.

While the vast majority of Christians today do not recognize the true date of the birth of Messiah *Yeshua*, more and more are awakening to a greater awareness of the richness of their heritage in the Judaic faith of our Father Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Holy Days of YHVH (*Adonai our Elohim*) are becoming more and more important to them than the holidays of men.

What a joy it is to commemorate the date when the Word of God began to tabernacle with men during the time of the Festival of *Sukkot*! How much more significant is this historic time of God's calendar than the traditional time of man's calendar! Unto us was born this day a Savior, *Yeshua* the Messiah. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will! *Chag Sameach!*