

# ***International Bible Lessons Commentary***

## ***Leviticus 23:33-43***

**New Revised Standard Version**

***International Bible Lessons***

**Sunday, February 28, 2016**

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The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, February 28, 2016**, is from **Leviticus 23:33-43**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** discusses *Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further* to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. If you are a Bible student or teacher, you can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

## ***International Bible Lesson Commentary***

### **Leviticus 23:33-43**

**(Leviticus 23:33) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying:**

One reason to study the Old Testament is because God spoke directly to people, and His words are recorded in the Bible. Another reason is God acted (and still acts) in history, and the Old Testament recorded acts of God. Furthermore, and specifically, speaking of the Old Testament primarily (the New Testament was still being written), the Apostle Paul wrote about and to Timothy: "and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

**(Leviticus 23:34) Speak to the people of Israel, saying: On the fifteenth day of this seventh month, and lasting seven days, there shall be the festival of booths to the LORD.**

The Feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread were celebrated in the first month of the Jewish calendar. Six months later, the Day of Atonement and Feast of Tabernacles were celebrated. On the fifteenth day of Tishri, the Feast of Tabernacles (or Feast of Booths) was to begin and last for seven days. Jesus went to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, and halfway through the feast Jesus declared the about himself truth and

asked a question: “My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me. Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him. Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?” (John 7:16-19).

**(Leviticus 23:35) The first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall not work at your occupations.**

On the first day (the fifteenth day of the month) of the Festival of Booths, the Israelites were to do no regular work. Jesus’ brothers did not believe in Him at the time Jesus went to the Feast of Tabernacles; therefore, they mocked Him and told Him to go to the feast and make himself famous: “No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world.’ For even his own brothers did not believe in him” (John 7:4-5). Jesus did not go to the feast because His brothers told Him to go or for the reason they stated. Jesus went to do the will of God and seek the glory of God according to God’s perfect timing and the Law of Moses.

**(Leviticus 23:36) Seven days you shall present the LORD's offerings by fire; on the eighth day you shall observe a holy convocation and present the LORD's offerings by fire; it is a solemn assembly; you shall not work at your occupations.**

The people were to offer food offerings to the LORD. Earlier in the month, they had already celebrated the Day of Atonement and had made sacrifices for their sins. We might compare the Feast of Booths to any large reunion or family gathering, but the Feast of Booths also discussed sacred teachings and religious news. For example, at the Feast of Booths Jesus attended, John wrote: “Now at the festival the Jewish leaders were watching for Jesus and asking, ‘Where is he?’ Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, ‘He is a good man.’ Others replied, ‘No, he deceives the people.’ But no one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the leaders” (John 7:11-13).

**(Leviticus 23:37) These are the appointed festivals of the LORD, which you shall celebrate as times of holy convocation, for presenting to the LORD offerings by fire—burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its proper day—**

Leviticus 23:37-38 provide a summary of the festivals that the LORD told Moses to celebrate. These included: in the month of Nisan – Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Feast of First Fruits; in Siwan – Feast of Weeks or Pentecost; in Tishri – Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths). Purim was not celebrated until after the deliverance of the Jews recorded in the Book of Esther. All of these were sacred assemblies and not pagan holidays. Everything they offered, ate, and drank, was offered to the LORD, even as they offered themselves to the LORD’S service.

**(Leviticus 23:38) apart from the sabbaths of the LORD, and apart from your gifts, and apart from all your votive offerings, and apart from all your freewill offerings, which you give to the LORD.**

The LORD commanded the Israelites to celebrate feasts that honored and thanked God for giving His people their land and good harvests. God also commanded them to celebrate feasts that honored and thanked God for His acts of salvation in their history; such as, leading them out of slavery in Egypt, through the wilderness, and into the Promised Land. They were to offer sacrifices for their sins and give other gifts to God throughout the year in order to live continually before the LORD in conscious understanding of God's presence in their midst and the importance of service to God.

**(Leviticus 23:39) Now, the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall keep the festival of the LORD, lasting seven days; a complete rest on the first day, and a complete rest on the eighth day.**

The Feast of Booths celebrated the harvest and provided food for their feast as well as a remembrance of God's leading them out of bondage in Egypt. They were to rest on the first day of the feast (which would not always fall on a Sabbath, because of their lunar calendar) but which they were to treat as a Sabbath. They were to rest on the eighth day of the feast and treat it as though it were a Sabbath and do no work. The time was truly to be spent in the worship of the LORD, teaching from the Scriptures, reminding people of the laws of God and their history, and fellowship with each other. Jesus found this to be a perfect time for teaching about His coming and His true nature.

**(Leviticus 23:40) On the first day you shall take the fruit of majestic trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days.**

The Feast of Booths also celebrated and thanked God for His saving acts in their history as a kingdom of priests, for the whole nation was to teach all the nations of the earth about the true God. They were commanded to make temporary booths or tabernacles to live in, and as they constructed these they were to teach their children and remind themselves about God rescuing them from slavery in Egypt and their wilderness wandering when God also provided them with food they did not plant and harvest (manna) and shelter. The festival was to be a time of rejoicing before the LORD, not a time for selfish revelry and sinful pleasures.

**(Leviticus 23:41) You shall keep it as a festival to the LORD seven days in the year; you shall keep it in the seventh month as a statute forever throughout your generations.**

Today, believers might think of God's law regarding festivals as God's way of providing for the Israelites two one-week vacations every year six months apart. These were for physical rest and spiritual renewal with the true God. God intended for His people to

celebrate these festivals for their own good and to help them avoid the pitfalls of sacrificing to idols (especially the fertility gods of their pagan neighbors).

**(Leviticus 23:42) You shall live in booths for seven days; all that are citizens in Israel shall live in booths,**

Only Israelites were required to live in these temporary shelters because this was part of their salvation history. Whereas the foreigner could eat the Passover Feast with the Israelites and learn about God as Savior, Lord of lords, King of kings, and Mighty God over all — and come to saving faith in the true God — the foreigner would not really understand the meaning of the Feast of Booths, which would never be a part of their history or future life of faith.

**(Leviticus 23:43) so that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.**

In this verse, God gives the reason for the celebration of the Feast of Booths. Whereas their pagan neighbors mostly celebrated festivals that sought to gain the favor of their idols and guarantee a good harvest, the Israelites were to praise and thank God for His actions in their national history and personal lives. The reasons for the Israelite feasts are similar to the reasons Christians celebrate the Resurrection Day of Jesus Christ and Pentecost: Christians praise and thank God for His gracious and saving acts in history and in their lives — granting them eternal life here and hereafter.

### **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. Why should believers study the Old Testament?
2. What are some of the most important feasts according to the Law of Moses?
3. Why did Jesus go to the Feast of Booths?
4. What did the Feast of Booths commemorate?
5. Today, how might believers think of the scheduled feasts that God commanded?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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