

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES AND THE BOOK OF REVELATION

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A few studies have offered evidence for a connection between the Hebrew festivals and the book of Revelation.¹ Others have noted specifically the relation between the Feast of Tabernacles and Rev 7:9-17.² This study seeks to explore in greater detail the relation between the Feast of Tabernacles (FT) and the book of Revelation. Specifically, it extensively examines the OT elements of the FT and takes note of parallels in Revelation that seem to suggest a typological function for the FT that finds its fulfillment in the eschatology of the Apocalypse. If such a relation can be demonstrated, we can learn more about the eschatology of Revelation from a close study of the FT.

The Feast of Tabernacles

In order to study the relation between the FT and the book of Revelation, it is important to explore extensively the OT background and significance of the FT. This includes its relation to the other Hebrew festivals, as well as the details of the FT itself and the explicit commemorative and other significance given it in the OT.

General Background

The FT was the major pilgrim festival of the nation of Israel. It was the last of six cultic festivals mandated by Yahweh in Lev 23, namely, the

¹See, e.g., Richard M. Davidson, "Sanctuary Typology," in *Symposium on Revelation, Book 1: Introductory and Exegetical Studies*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 6 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 119-126; Jon Paulien, "'Seals and Trumpets: Some Current Discussions,'" in *Symposium on Revelation, Book 1: Introductory and Exegetical Studies*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee, vol. 6 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 190-92.

²See, e.g., J. A. Draper, "The Heavenly Feast of Tabernacles: Revelation 7:1-17," *JSNT* 19 (1983): 133-47; Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *The History of Sukkot in the Second Temple and Rabbinic Periods*, Brown Judaic Studies, no. 302 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1995), 91-94; Hoakan Ulfgard, *Feast and Future: Revelation 7:9-17 and the Feast of Tabernacles*, Coniectanea Biblica, New Testament, no. 22 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1989).

Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the FT.³ It was also referred to as the Feast of Ingathering (Exod 34:22), because it was celebrated at the end of the agricultural year, after the fall harvest of grain and wine had been gathered in (Lev 23:39; Deut 16:13). Of the six festivals, three in the spring and three in the fall, only three were designated as pilgrim festivals, at which every adult male was required to appear before Yahweh at the tabernacle or temple every year. These were the Feast of Unleavened Bread (including the Passover), the Feast of Weeks, and the FT (Exod 23:14-17; 34:18, 22-24; Deut 16:16).

The spring festivals began with the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the first month of the Hebrew sacred calendar, at the beginning of the spring barley harvest. At that time the nation commemorated their deliverance from slavery in Egypt by roasting and eating a lamb or young goat, followed by the eating of unleavened bread and bitter herbs for seven days. They also offered to God the first sheaf of barley from their fields as an expression of gratitude for the harvest.

Fifty days after the presentation of the barley sheaf on the day following the Passover, the Feast of Weeks (or Feast of Harvests) was celebrated. At that time the firstfruits of the wheat harvest were dedicated to God in the form of loaves of bread made from the firstfruits.

In the seventh month, at the time of the fall harvest, the Feast of Trumpets prepared the people for the judgment to take place on the Day of Atonement. This was accomplished by a solemn blowing of trumpets at the door of the tabernacle or temple. The first day of this festival came eventually to mark the beginning of the civil year, and is known as *Rosh Hashanah*, or New Year's Day.

Nine days later, on the tenth day of the seventh month, was the Day of Atonement, or *Yom Kippur*, the most solemn day of the year. It represented the day of judgment for the people of Israel. At that time, anyone who had not done serious soul-searching, self-denial, and putting away of sin was to be put out of the congregation of Israel. It was to be kept as a fast, not as a feast, and no work was to be done. As soon as this day passed, there was great rejoicing in Israel.

The FT began five days after the Day of Atonement, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, and continued for seven days. Coming at the end of the agricultural year, celebrating the abundance of the harvest, and

³The text also includes the bringing of an offering of the firstfruits of the harvest, but Exod 34:22 seems to indicate that this was a part of the Feast of Weeks, not a separate festival. Cf. Timothy K. Hui, "The Purpose of Israel's Annual Feasts," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 147 (1990): 150-51. The Mishnah indicates that the firstfruits could be brought any time between Pentecost and the FT, but not before Pentecost (Bikk. 1.3, 1.10).

designated as a time of rejoicing for God's guidance and blessings (Lev 23:40; Deut 16:14-15), it came to be the most popular and well attended of the feasts of Israel.⁴ It was frequently referred to merely as "the Feast."⁵ If an Israelite attended only one pilgrim festival a year, it was normally the FT (cf. Judg 21:19; 1 Sam 1:3, 7, 21).⁶

During the FT the people were supposed to construct temporary shelters of boughs and branches of trees on the hills surrounding the location of the tabernacle or temple, and they were to camp in them as a reminder of the way in which God had sheltered them with his presence during their sojourn in the wilderness. A final, eighth day was designated as a holy convocation and a solemn assembly. There is a division of scholarly opinion as to whether it was considered a part of the FT or a separate event.⁷ It was, at any rate, the final celebration of the Israelite festival year.

General Significance

The festivals of Israel were invested with great religious significance. Some of this significance is very explicit in Scripture, especially its commemorative significance. A number of scholars have also noted a dual or even triple significance for many, if not all, of these festivals, including not only reminders of Israel's past, but also an attempt to call attention

⁴Norman Hillyer states regarding the FT, "Josephus describes it as 'the holiest and greatest feast' [*Ant.* 8.100], and in similar fashion Philo and the Rabbis throughout the Mishnah, distinguish it from all the other religious celebrations." ("First Peter and the Feast of Tabernacles," *The Tyndale NT Lecture*, delivered at Tyndale House, Cambridge, 9 July 1969, *Tyndale Bulletin* 21 [1970]: 40) He adds, 40-41, "What the seventh day, or sabbath, was in relation to the week, the seventh month seems to have been in relation to the year. It completed not only the liturgical cycle, but also the agricultural year. It marked the autumnal equinox, heralded the long awaited 'former rains', and determined the timing of a sabbatical year."

⁵See John 7:2; George W. MacRae, "The Meaning and Evolution of the Feast of Tabernacles," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 22 (1960): 261.

⁶Rubenstein, 93; R. K. Harrison, "The Feasts and Festivals of Israel," *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (1988), 1:787, concludes that the feasts in Judg 21:19 and 1 Sam 1 "were evidently the feasts of booths," though Neh 8:17 notes that Israel had not lived in booths since the days of Joshua.

⁷The fact that the eighth day is not mentioned in Deut 16:13-15 is cited as evidence that the eighth day was not, originally at least, a part of the Feast. Neh 8:18 seems to refer to Lev 23:36, 39, noting an eighth day which is different from and not a part of the seven. The last, great day of the Feast in John 7:37, therefore, is widely disputed as to whether it refers to the seventh or the eighth day of the Feast. The Mishnah (*Sukk.* 4:1,8; 5:8; *Arak.* 2:3), however, speaks of the Feast as having eight days, and seems to assume that "the last Festival-day of the Feast" (*Sukk.* 4:8; cf. 2:6) is the eighth day. (Quotations from the Mishnah in this article are from Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah: Translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933]). See also the discussion in Mitch Glaser and Zhava Glaser, *The Fall Feasts of Israel* (Chicago: Moody, 1987), 177-178, and in Philip Goodman, *The Sukkot and Simhat Torah Anthology* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1973), 329.

to salvific events in their future, both Christological and eschatological.⁸ One of the more cogent assessments is the following:

The sacred seasons of Israel stem directly from divine revelation and were designed to illustrate significant aspects of the eternal redemption that God had already ordained for His own under the OT. The Hebrew calendar of convocations is therefore not to be explained on the basis of natural phenomena, such as the phases of the moon or the Palestinian agricultural cycle, as proposed by liberal theology (cf. Eichrodt, I, 120-23). Neither may it be attributed to pre-Mosaic custom, whether Canaanite or nomadic (cf. Pfeiffer, p. 40). Israel's feasts served rather as divinely revealed expressions of the moral obligations of His people, as memorials of God's saving acts in the past, as sacraments of His saving power in the present, and as types of His anticipated victory over sin in the forthcoming first and second advents of Jesus Christ.⁹

The FT was called *Sukkot*, the name for the booths or shelters which God had instructed them to put up in commemoration of their experience in the wilderness between the time they had left Egypt and their entrance into the promised land of Canaan. During these forty years, they had no permanent home, no place to plant gardens and fruit trees or reap the harvest of their labors. They camped in a parched, arid land, depending for their daily sustenance on bread miraculously supplied from heaven and water springing supernaturally from a rock. They had the divine presence accompanying them, visible in a sheltering cloud for cooling shade by day and in a warming fire for light by night. The Shekinah glory of God appeared also in the tabernacle in their midst (Exod 25:8; 40:34-35, 38).

On the first day of the FT, the people of Israel were required to "take the fruit of majestic trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook," and they were to "rejoice before the Lord" for seven days (Lev 23:40).¹⁰ The purpose of this exercise was "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" (v. 43).

⁸See Jean Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy*, Liturgical Studies, vol. 3 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), 334; Hillyer, 40; Hui, 149-50; and Hans K. LaRondelle, "The Sensus Plenior of Israel's Restoration Promises: The New Testament Typology of Israel's Exodi from Egypt and Babylon," Lecture for the Evangelical Theological Society, Toronto, Canada, 28 December 1981; typewritten ms., Adventist Heritage Center, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, 8-9.

⁹E. D. Isaacs and J. B. Payne, "Feasts," *ISBE*, fully rev. and illustrated ed. (1979-88), 2:293. Other scholars have pointed similarly to an eschatological antitype for the FT. Danielou, 337-338, describes how Methodius and Jerome both clearly taught such an antitype. He goes on to show how Gregory of Nyssa also shared a similar view, and he personally argues that the FT is connected with the last Parousia (*ibid.*, 346-347).

¹⁰Unless otherwise noted, all Bible texts in this article are quoted from the NRSV.

There appear to have been two key ideas in this exercise. One was to remember their past experience of God's leading and care in their lives. The other was to rejoice at the memory—and at the fact that it was only a memory. At the time they would be celebrating the festival, they were expected to be already settled in the land of promise.¹¹ They no longer needed to dwell in temporary shelters. They were at home. They could build houses and live in them. They could plant fields, orchards, and vineyards and eat the produce from them. Through faithfulness to the covenant, they could drive out their enemies from the land and dwell in safety, with the temple of God and his presence therein established permanently in their midst.

Twelve Significant Elements

From the biblical texts that describe the FT and that were used in the liturgy of the festival, twelve significant components emerge for which we will seek to note parallels in the book of Revelation.

Gathering

One of the key elements of the FT was its designation as a "holy convocation" (Lev 23:35-37; Num 29:12), or a gathering of people who had consecrated themselves to God.¹² These people were to gather in the presence of Yahweh, who had redeemed them from bondage by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, to express their gratitude and unworthiness through various cultic offerings (Lev 23:37, 43; Deut 6:20-24). This gathering was in response to the gathering in of an abundant harvest as a result of God's blessing: "When you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall keep the festival of the Lord, lasting seven days" (Lev 23:39).

Rest

A second major element of the FT was that of rest. The festival was to begin and end with a sabbath of complete rest from all labor (Lev 23:39). The people were instructed not to carry on their regular occupations (v. 35). This was a symbol of the rest that God gave them

¹¹The instructions to celebrate the annual festivals were given early in Israel's wilderness experience, before the last thirty-eight years of wandering. There is no evidence, however, that Israel celebrated the feasts until after the occupation of Canaan. It would have been difficult to celebrate harvest festivals in the wilderness. Harvest and pilgrim festivals were obviously intended to be celebrated after the occupation.

¹²The Hebrew *qadš* connotes the quality of separation or consecration for a sacred purpose (cf. Lev 10:10; 20:7). Hui, 153, notes, "The concept behind the holy convocation is not so much the sacredness of the occasion but rather the 'sacredness' of the people. It is a holy convocation because of the 'holiness' of the people gathered together."

from their enemies, both their freedom from enforced labor in Egypt at the beginning of their sojourn (cf. v. 43; Deut 5:15; 16:12) and the peaceful rest from strife they were to experience in the promised land of Canaan at the end of their journey (Deut 12:10-12).

Harvest

A third major aspect of the FT was the focus on the completion of the harvest, the ingathering of all the fruit of their labor at the end of the agricultural year. This is, in fact, the only aspect mentioned in Exod 23:16 and 34:22. In Deut 16:13, the Israelites were instructed to keep the festival "when you have gathered in the produce from your threshing floor and your wine press." It is because of this emphasis that it was also called the Feast of Ingathering. Thus, another aspect of rest was introduced: rest from their physical labors in the field. This, in turn, contributed to another significant component of the festival: joy.

Rejoicing

The people were instructed that they should "rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days" (Lev 23:40). One can observe in Deut 16:13-15 the close relation that existed between the harvest and the rejoicing:

You shall celebrate the Feast of Booths seven days after you have gathered in from your threshing floor and your wine vat; and you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your towns. Seven days you shall celebrate a feast to the Lord your God in the place which the Lord chooses, because the Lord your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you shall be altogether joyful.

The element of joy reappears when the Feast was reinstated after the return from Babylonian captivity. Neh 8:17, after describing how the Jews built booths and lived in them for the first time in hundreds of years, observes, "And there was very great rejoicing." This was not just because of the opportunity to live in booths again after such a long time, but was because of the salvific significance that this act had for them. The meaning of every aspect of the feast elicited a response of joy in the participants. Funeral eulogies and fasting were forbidden during the FT.¹³ The Mishnah records regarding the celebration of the water ceremony which had become such a significant part

¹³Hillyer, 41.

of the festival, "They have said: He that never has seen the joy of the Beth ha-She'ubah has never in his life seen joy" (Sukk 5:1).

Remembrance

Another key aspect of the FT is the whole concept of celebrating the remembrance of God's guidance and protection in Israel's past. H. S. Miller says, "The *purpose* of the feast was commemorative, to keep alive the remembrance of the historical fact that Jehovah 'made the children of Israel to dwell in booths when' he 'brought them out of the land of Egypt.'"¹⁴ By building booths to remind them of God's sheltering protection during their wilderness sojourn, they were emphasizing the contrast with their permanent homes in the land of promise, having just completed an abundant harvest from their land.

Shelter

It seems obvious that the building of booths and living in them during the festival was a very important aspect of the FT. God instructed them that the purpose of this exercise was "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 Israel" (Lev 23:43).

The booths were called *sukkot*, from which the feast got its Hebrew name. The symbolic significance of the *sukkot* was very great. The defining characteristic of a *sukkah* was that it must produce shade. The shade was created by the *shakh*, the thatched roofing made of branches of palms and leafy trees that therefore constituted the major requirement of the *sukkah*, according to Rabbinic law.¹⁵ This shade was a symbolic reminder of the sheltering divine presence during Israel's sojourn in the wilderness.

The *sukkah* thus symbolizes the clouds of glory, protection, the divine presence, and love. The ritual dwelling in the *sukkah* should cause the occupant to experience these sentiments.¹⁶

¹⁴H. S. Miller, *The Gospel in the Hebrew Tabernacle, Priesthood, and Offerings* (Houghton, NY: Word-Bearer, 1939), 217; cf. Hillyer, 40.

¹⁵Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, "The Symbolism of the Sukkah," *Judaism* 43 (1994): 377. Rubenstein's article is well worth studying for a better understanding of the broad range of significance of the *sukkot* as related to the Feast.

¹⁶*Ibid.* William Raymond Scott points out that the Targums explicitly identify the booths in Lev 23:43 with the cloud of glory which functioned for Israel as God's sheltering presence in the wilderness ("The Booths of Ancient Israel's Autumnal Festival," Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1993 [Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1993], 120-21); cf. Hillyer, 63. There is even an association made in Jewish Midrash between the *sukkah* and the *shekinah* (Rubenstein, "Symbolism," 376). For biblical examples of the

It was not enough to see the shade of the *sukkah*. One must experience it by actually dwelling in the shade.¹⁷ And in this experience one is not alone, for the *sukkah* becomes a symbolic space for God to dwell among his people. "Here the symbolism is reified: God—not his glory or cloud—actually enters the festival *sukkah*."¹⁸ Thus, the experience becomes not just a reminder of the divine presence in their past but a tangible representation of his presence in their present.

Newness

When the Israelites were commanded to observe the FT, they were instructed to "observe the festival of ingathering at the end of the year" (Exod 23:16).¹⁹ This feast occurred at the end of one religious and agricultural calendar and the beginning of a new year, with new opportunities for both spiritual and agricultural life ahead.

The Day of Atonement was just ended, representing the day of judgment for the people of God at the end of the year. The FT was celebrated in purity, the people having received atonement for sin on the Day of Atonement. The process of repentance and confession of sin, however, tended to create a psychological distance between the people and God. The FT provided the reassurance, through the *sukkot*, that God still wanted to shelter his people with his divine presence.²⁰

The harvest was gathered in; now the people would look ahead to the blessing of rain to nurture the seeds of a new growing season. Indeed, this was a time of newness.

Water

Water played an important role in the harvest festival. In order to have a harvest, it was necessary that a dry season precede the festival, providing opportunity for a quality harvest to be reaped, one in which the produce would not be spoiled by too much moisture at the wrong time. But once the harvest was garnered in, the people looked forward to the rains that would prepare the ground for a new planting season so that

parallels between divine shade and sheltering presence, see Pss 17:8; 36:8 (MT); 57:2 (MT); 63:8 (MT); 91:1-4; 121:5-7; and Hos 14:8 (MT).

¹⁷Rubenstein, "Symbolism," 381.

¹⁸Ibid., 376.

¹⁹MacRae, 253, joins several other scholars in arguing that the phrase usually translated "at the end of the year" here "indicates rather the 'beginning of the year.'"

²⁰Rubenstein, "Symbolism," 382.

the next harvest would also be a bountiful one. That this rain was understood to be a providence of God connected to their right relationship to him as indicated by their worship of him at the FT is shown by Zech 14:16-19:²¹

Then all who survive of the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the festival of booths. If any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain upon them. And if the family of Egypt do not go up and present themselves, then on them shall come the plague that the Lord inflicts on the nations that do not go up to keep the festival of booths. Such shall be the punishment of all the nations that do not go up to keep the festival of booths.

The importance of water at the feast finally resulted in the development of the elaborate ritual of the water-drawing ceremony known as Beth ha-She'ubah, which was celebrated every morning for seven days.²² During this ceremony, the priest, accompanied by a throng of celebrants, would carry a pitcher from the temple down to the Pool of Siloam, fill it at the pool while the people recited Isa 12:3 ("With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation"), and return to the temple surrounded by the chorus of worshipers chanting the Hallel (Pss 113-118) and waving palm branches and citrons. Once back at the temple, the pitcher of water, along with another pitcher of wine,²³ would be poured into a basin draining out below the bronze altar into the Kidron Valley, while a choir of Israelites chanted Ps 118:25: "Save us, we beseech you, O Lord! O Lord, we beseech you, give us success!" The Talmud explains that the pouring of the libation at the altar was ordained by God as a symbolic prayer for rain for the coming growing season.²⁴

John 7:37-38 highlights the significance Jesus gave to the role of water at the FT when he stood up on the last day of the feast—probably the eighth day, when there was no water ceremony—and cried out,

²¹Verse 8 is also explicit in introducing water in this same context: "On that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem."

²²For details of the ceremony, which are beyond the scope of this article, see Glaser and Glaser, 174-178.

²³MacRae, 273, connects these two silver pitchers with the "bowls before the altar" in Zech 14:20.

²⁴Abraham P. Bloch, *The Biblical and Historical Background of Jewish Customs and Ceremonies* (New York: KTAV, 1980), 187-188.

Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the Scripture has said, "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water."

The allusion is probably to passages like Isa 58:11, though the reference is uncertain.²⁵ John interprets the water in Jesus' invitation as referring to the Holy Spirit, "which believers in him were to receive" (John 7:39).²⁶

Fruit

In God's instructions to Israel for the FT, he asked them to gather the fruit of majestic trees (Lev 23:40). In Jewish tradition, the fruit chosen to represent these fruits was the citron, called *etrog*.²⁷ In the celebration of the feast, participants would hold an *etrog* in the left hand, a palm branch in the right hand, and wave them in the air while chanting the liturgy of the feast. The fruit of majestic trees represented God's goodness in providing for them bounties for which they had not toiled significantly during the year. Jean Danielou points out that the *etrog* became associated with the tree of life in the customs of the feast.²⁸

Palm Branches and Leafy Trees

Besides the fruit of majestic trees, the celebrants at the FT were to gather, according to Lev 23:40, "branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook."²⁹ They were used not only in constructing the booths to provide shelter and shade but also as something to hold and wave in the rituals of the festival.³⁰ "A little bunch

²⁵Isa 58:11 says in part, "You shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail." Cf. also Prov 18:4; Isa 12:3; 44:3; 55:1; Ezek 47:1; Joel 2:28; and Zech 14:8 for other verses that use similar imagery for water and/or the Spirit in the OT. MacRae, 273, notes that sources invested the water ceremonies at the FT with a mystic significance connected with both the waters of Creation and the eschatological streams mentioned in passages like Zech 14:8 and Ezek 47:1-12 (to which Rev 22:1-2 directly alludes).

²⁶Hillyer, 47-48, points out that the Talmud explains that the water-drawing ceremony is so named "because of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, according to what is said" in Isa 12:3. See also F. J. Badcock, "The Feast of Tabernacles," *JTS*, o.s. 24 (1923): 169-74.

²⁷MacRae, 271. Bloch, 188, 191, says that the citrus fruit was chosen, according to Sukk 35a, because it grows near water, as well as because the fruit and its tree are equally pleasant.

²⁸Danielou, 338-339.

²⁹Cf. Neh 8:15: "Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths, as it is written."

³⁰MacRae, 272, points out that willow branches were also used in the temple for decorating the altar during the FT. See also Hillyer, 46.

of myrtle and willow twigs tied around a small palm branch” formed what came to be called a *lulab*.³¹ Its chief component, the palm branch, “was a symbol of immortality, of victory, rejoicing and deliverance.”³² Following the instruction to gather the branches, Lev 23:40 says, “And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days.”³³

Gratitude

In Deut 16:16-17 Israel was instructed that those who attended the festival were not to appear before the Lord empty-handed, but “all shall give as they are able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God that he has given you.” A variety of types of offering were to be brought: burnt offerings, grain offerings, drink offerings, sin offerings, votive offerings, freewill offerings, and offerings of well-being (Lev 23:36-38; Num 29:12-39). Some of these were regular offerings, while others were special or additional offerings just for the FT. More offerings were sacrificed at the FT than at any other festival.³⁴ The principle was that no one should enjoy the blessings of God without an expression of gratitude shown by reciprocation in giving “according to the blessing of the Lord your God that he has given you” (Deut 16:17).

Light

The Bible is less explicit about the importance of light at the FT, but it can be readily derived from various passages, including Ps 118:27³⁵ and Zech 14:7,³⁶ which came to be recited in the liturgy of the festival, and John 8:12 and 9:5, which are frequently taken to be theologically

³¹MacRae, 271.

³²Ibid., 272. MacRae adds, “Besides the peculiar symbolism of the Lulab, all the branches used in the ceremony—even those used to build the booth—may be said to have signified the favor of God in granting a fruitful harvest and in the cycle of annual growth to have symbolized the stage of maturity in nature at which the feast was celebrated” (ibid.).

³³At the Triumphal Entry recorded in John 12:12-15, the people who came to attend the Passover festival “took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him [Jesus], shouting, ‘Hosanna!’” and reciting a messianic passage from the Hallel (Ps 119:26).

³⁴Hillyer, 44.

³⁵“The Lord is God, and he has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar.” MacRae, 264, points out that this explicit mention of the light theme and of the branches makes Ps 118 better suited to Tabernacles than to any other feast.

³⁶“And there shall be continuous day (it is known to the Lord), not day and not night, for at evening time there shall be light.” Cf. MacRae, 269.

connected with the FT story in chapter 7.³⁷ It is also well known from the literature of the period. Accounts of the festival in the Mishnah include a description of the illumination of the temple and its surroundings by four enormous golden lampstands, each fifty cubits high, with large golden bowls of oil atop each that, when kindled, cast a light so brilliant that “there was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that did not reflect the light of the Beth ha-She’ubah” (Sukk 5:3). Jesus seems to have utilized this aspect of the FT when he announced while apparently still at the festival, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life” (John 8:12), and again, “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world” (9:5).³⁸

Salvation

Probably the most important passage of Scripture used in the liturgy of the FT was the Hallel, Pss 113-118. This was chanted every day by those participating in the water ceremony. Salvation is one of the dominant themes of the Hallel.³⁹ Ps 118:14 declares, “The Lord is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation.” Near the end of the Hallel is the cry, “Save us, we beseech you, O Lord” (118:25a). From the Hebrew words *hoshi’ah na’* (save now) in this verse, the seventh day of the feast came to be known as Hoshana Rabbah, the day of the Great Hosanna.⁴⁰ The name for the day reveals the focus on this urgent prayer for speedy salvation through the Messiah.⁴¹

Jesus used the opportunity on “the last day of the festival, the great day” (John 7:37), to proclaim that he was the Messiah, the one who could meet Israel’s need for salvation by offering them the water of life. His proclamation highlighted the emphasis placed on salvation at the FT. For the first seven mornings they had gone to the Pool of Siloam to draw water, chanting a paraphrase of Isa 12:3, “With joy we will draw water from the wells of salvation.” But now, in response to their expressed desire for salvation, Jesus would offer them the water of life, revealing that he himself is the well of

³⁷Badcock, 171; MacRae, 275.

³⁸Bloch, 172-173, notes that the lighting of the lamps looked back to the fire which gave light to Israel in the wilderness, and he makes the connection from Ps 105:39,41 with Jesus’ claims at the FT, recorded in the Fourth Gospel.

³⁹Ps 117:4,13; 118:14,21,25.

⁴⁰Goodman, 329, notes, “This liturgy derives from the belief that judgment decreed on the Day of Atonement was finalized on Hoshana Rabbah.”

⁴¹Victor Buksbazen, *The Gospel in the Feasts of Israel* (Philadelphia: Friends of Israel, 1954), 41.

salvation from which they should be drawing (cf. John 4:13-14).

The Eschatological Feast of Tabernacles

In the book of Revelation, imagery similar to these twelve FT elements can be found. It is seen in connection with the events that depict the celebration of the ingathering of the harvest of the righteous, including the period of the millennium and the final, permanent dwelling with God in the new earth.

Tabernacles Imagery in Revelation

There are two major passages in which FT imagery can be found in Revelation. One of these is 7:9-17, in which the redeemed people of God from all nations are gathered before the throne of God, dressed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and they are singing praise to God for his salvation. The one who is seated on the throne shelters them, and they hunger and thirst no more, the heat of the sun no more strikes them, and the Lamb is their shepherd and leads them to springs of the water of life.⁴²

The second passage, 21:1-22:5, describes postmillennial events and contains significant FT imagery. Other passages in Revelation which depict events that may relate to the FT include 14:1-5, 14:20; 15:2-4; and 19:11-20:15. These will be discussed below. It is important that we observe the parallels between the twelve significant aspects of the FT observed above and the same aspects in these passages in Revelation.

Gathering

The first important aspect of the FT was the gathering or assembly of a holy people, a people consecrated to God. This is exactly what we see in Rev 7:9-17 and its parallel passage in 14:1-5. A host of people are assembled before the throne of God, clothed in white robes, washed in the blood of the Lamb to indicate their holy or consecrated condition. In 14:4-5 their undefiled and blameless condition is made explicit. They have been vindicated in the judgment which precedes the *parousia* (cf. 14:7; Ezek 9:3-6; Dan 7:9-10,22), and have received the seal of God in their foreheads (Rev 7:3-4; 14:1). This parallels the experience of the people of Israel, who passed through the Day of Atonement judgment to celebrate the FT five days later. This scene, a proleptic celebration with singing and harp playing (14:1-5), takes place in eschatological time, after the return

⁴²Rubenstein, *History of Sukkot*, 91, says, "Rev 7:9-17 employs the most vivid Sukkot imagery in the Christian scriptures." For extensive analysis of FT imagery in Rev 7:9-17, see the works by Ulfgard and Draper cited above.

of Christ signified by the dual harvest of vv. 14-20.

The twofold harvest of 14:14-20 also indicates gathering. The reaping in v. 16 is a gathering (Matt 13:30), as is also the explicit gathering of the clusters of the vine in vv. 18-19. The first gathering is implicitly the gathering of the righteous, in parallel with the gathering and separation of the nations described by Jesus in Matt 25:31-33:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

This gathering is the one that results in the righteous being translated into the presence of God (cf. John 14:2-3; 1 Thess 4:16-17), which is where they are shown in Rev 7 and 14. In 7:9,13-14 and 14:4-5, they are revealed to be a holy people, chaste and blameless, arrayed in white robes, washed in the blood of the Lamb.

In Rev 21:24-26, there is a portrayal of the gathering of God's people from the nations to the holy city, where they worship God and the Lamb before the throne (22:3). This seems to reflect the prophecy of Zech 14:16, which relates this eschatological activity to the celebration of the FT: "Then all who survive of the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the festival of booths." Admittedly, there are some apparent incongruities in this prophecy, but the broader aspects of the prophecy reveal it to be an eschatological apocalyptic prophecy which finds partial application in Rev 21-22 (cf. Zech 14:6-11). The prophecy ends with everything being declared to be holy (vv. 20-21), recalling the FT designation, "a holy convocation" (Lev 23:34-36).

Harvest

We have seen already that the depiction of the return of Christ in Rev 14 is portrayed in terms of a dual harvest. The harvest of the righteous takes place before the millennium, as shown by Rev 20:4-6, which places the resurrection of the righteous before the millennium, so that they come to life and reign with Christ a thousand years, while the rest of the dead do not come to life until the thousand years are ended (v. 5; cf. v. 13). Those who are raised in the first resurrection are pronounced blessed and holy. Over them the

second death has no power (v. 6). This leaves no doubt as to when the harvest of the righteous takes place (cf. Matt 13:39-43; 1 Cor 15:50-54; 1 Thess 4:15-17). The FT celebrates this harvest, as seen in Rev 7.

Rejoicing

Rejoicing is naturally a key element of the FT imagery in the book of Revelation. This can be seen throughout the postharvest events in the book. In 7:9-10 a great multitude of the redeemed stand before the throne of God and before the Lamb waving palm branches and singing, "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!" The heavenly hosts join them in vv. 11-12, singing, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen!" Verse 17 notes that God will wipe away every tear from the eyes of the redeemed multitude.

In 14:2-3 the redeemed, represented by the symbolic number 144,000, are seen again, playing harps and singing a song of their redemption before the throne. This is likely the same song sung in 15:2-4 by those who have conquered the Beast and its image and the number of its name. They stand on the sea of glass with the harps of God in their hands and sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb, a song of praise and worship to God for revealing his judgments in their deliverance. The singing of this song is a reminder of the experience of Israel in the wilderness as revealed in the two songs of Moses found in Exod 15:1-18 and Deut 31:30 to 32:43. Since the FT was supposed to be a joyful reminder of God's blessings, protection, and providence during their wilderness experience (Lev 23:42-43), as well as a celebration of the abundant harvest (Deut 16:13-15,17), this song may be seen in light of the FT imagery.

In Rev 19:7 there is an explicit call to rejoice and be glad in celebration of the inauguration of the eschatological messianic age, represented figuratively by the marriage of the Lamb to his bride, the holy city, New Jerusalem (21:9-10). This could be understood in a FT setting, particularly in view of the messianic eschatology of the FT of Zechariah.⁴³

Again in Rev 21:3-4, when God begins finally to dwell with his people in the new earth under the terms of the fulfilled everlasting covenant, there is a repeat of the announcement that God will wipe away every tear from the eyes of the redeemed, and mourning and crying will be no more. This will be a time of unremitting joy and gladness, based on what God has done for his people. The text is a clear allusion to the eschatological prophecy of Isaiah found in Isa 65:17-19:

⁴³Cf. Zech 8:1-8; 9:9-10,16-17;14:8-11,16; Rubenstein, *History of Sukkot*, 49-50.

For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating, for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress.

Remembrance

In the song of the redeemed noted above (15:3-4), there is a remembrance expressed of what God has done for his people. While the remembrance of former things will eventually be done away under the final fulfillment of the everlasting covenant in the earth made new (21:4-5; cf. Isa 65:17), this will not have immediate effect at the *parousia*, for the millennium takes place, as we have seen, before the resurrection of the wicked to face the Great White Throne judgment and the lake of fire (Rev 20:5,11-15).⁴⁴ The lake of fire necessarily precedes the creation of new heavens and a new earth, where all things are made new and the former things cannot be called to mind (21:4-5; cf. 2 Pet 3:10-13).

During the postharvest period represented by the FT, then, there is special attention given to the remembrance of God's blessings and providence in providing for the redemption of his people, illustrated by the songs which the redeemed sing.

Shelter

The concept of God as providing shelter and shade is explicit in the passages in Revelation that correspond to the FT. In Rev 7:15-17 there is explicit mention of the shelter he provides, along with other benefits reminiscent of the wilderness sojourn of Israel:⁴⁵

And the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life.

It would be difficult to find a passage that is more explicit in its Feast of

⁴⁴It is noteworthy that during the millennium, the righteous are depicted as seated on thrones and reigning with Christ as priest-kings, or judges (20:4,6; cf. 1 Cor 6:2-3). This seems to imply that they participate in some way in the judgment of the wicked, which is from the books of record (20:12) and comes to an end at the end of the millennium, when sentence is executed. Thus, this time must involve reminders of "former things."

⁴⁵This seems to be presented as a fulfillment of Isa 4:2-6.

Tabernacle imagery than this passage in Rev 7. In fact, J. A. Draper follows C. Vitringa and several other scholars in arguing that “the imagery of Revelation 7 was taken from the FT.”⁴⁶

Rev 21:3-4 presents a similar picture. The voice from the throne of God announces:

See, the home [*skēnē*] of God is among mortals. He will dwell [*skēnoō*] with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.

The Greek word *skēnē* used in this passage is the same word elsewhere translated “booth,” “tent,” or “tabernacle,” as in the FT. It is the word often used in the LXX to translate the Hebrew *sukkah* in the context of the Feast of Booths.⁴⁷ The verb *skēnoō*, used here in the future tense and translated “will dwell,” comes from the same root. That God himself places his *sukkah* among his people is highly significant for the FT imagery. God will dwell with his people in the *sukkah*. His presence, which was evident in the Shekinah glory in the wilderness tabernacle (God’s *sukkah* in the OT), will become a permanent shelter for them in the earth made new. The result is that death, pain, and suffering can no more touch them. Even though the gates to the city are never shut (21:25), nothing evil can enter (21:27), and nothing accursed will be found there (22:3).

Newness

Although newness becomes explicit after the new heavens and new earth are created and the New Jerusalem is seen descending from heaven (“See, I am making all things new” [21:5]), there is already an implicit newness that begins with the statement under the last bowl plague, “It is done!” (16:17). This pronouncement ushers in the end of human history and the beginning of the eternal reign of Christ (11:15-18; 19:6-7; cf. Dan 7:11-14). It signals the return of Christ in power as King of kings and Lord of Lords (19:11-21), at which time the first resurrection takes place and the saints begin their millennial reign with Christ (20:4,6). Babylon has been judged (16:19; 19:1-3); the Beast and the False Prophet have been cast into the lake of fire (19:20); the rest of the wicked have been slain with the sword coming out of the mouth of the Rider on the white horse (19:21,15),⁴⁸ and the birds of prey are gorged with

⁴⁶J. A. Draper, 133. In fact, he sees Rev 7 as a midrash on Zech 14 (ibid., 133-136).

⁴⁷Lev 23:34, 42 (twice), 43; Deut 16:13; 2 Chron 8:13; Ezra 3:4.

⁴⁸The sword represents the word of God, which judges the thoughts and intentions of

their flesh (v. 21); and the Dragon (Satan) is bound for a thousand years in the Abyss, unable to continue his work of deception until the thousand years are ended (20:1-3). The people of God are translated to heaven (cf. John 14:2-3; 1 Thess 4:16-17), where they reign with Christ as kings and priests for a thousand years,⁴⁹ while the desolate earth awaits its final doom. This represents the end of one age and the entrance into a new age, just as the FT signaled the end of the old agricultural cycle and the beginning of a new cycle.

Water

We should not be surprised to see water playing an important role in the FT imagery of the book of Revelation. In 7:16-17 the great multitude of the redeemed will thirst no more, for the Lamb "will guide them to springs of the water of life." Again, in 21:3, as a part of the fulfillment of the covenant, God declares: "To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life." This statement is remarkably parallel to the announcement of Jesus at the FT in John 7:37-38.

In the description of the holy city, the home of the redeemed people of God, this spring of the water of life, which originates at the throne of God (22:1; cf. Ezek 47:1; Zech 14:8), becomes a river which flows through the middle of the street of the city and waters the tree of life (22:2; cf. Ezek 47:2-9,12),⁵⁰ a source of life and health for all. The bride, which is the Holy City, New Jerusalem (21:9-10), joins with the Spirit (cf. John 7:39) in Rev 22:17 to offer a final appeal: "Let everyone who is thirsty come. Let everyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift."

Fruit

The *etrog* used in the FT liturgy finds its parallel in the tree of life of Rev 22:2, "with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month."

the heart (cf. Heb 4:12). This is clearly a symbolic representation. A more literal view may be observed in 2 Thess 1:6-10.

⁴⁹See Michel Gourges, "The Thousand-Year Reign (Rev 20:1-6): Terrestrial or Celestial?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 47 (1985): 679-681. Anthony Hoekema, though arguing a different point, agrees on the celestial nature of the millennium: "There is no indication in these verses [20:4-6] that John is describing an earthly millennial reign. The scene, as we saw, is set in heaven" ("Amillennialism," in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, ed. Robert G. Clouse [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1977], 169).

⁵⁰The water-drawing ceremony of the FT seems to have significant parallels to the passage in Ezek 47:1-12, which describes the water flowing from the south side of the temple eastward into the Kidron Valley, from whence it flows into the Arabah and down to the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea is brought back to life by this water of life.

This is in harmony with Jewish eschatological speculations and customs.⁵¹

But this is not the only fruit that appears in the FT parallels in Revelation. Even more in harmony with the biblical symbolism, the redeemed themselves appear after the harvest “as firstfruits for God and the Lamb” (14:4). As firstfruits, the 144,000 function as the representatives of the whole harvest of the redeemed.⁵² Thus the equation is made in Rev 7 between the symbolic number which is heard and the literal innumerable multitude which the symbolic number represents, not now composed of the twelve tribes of Israel, but of every tribe, nation, people, and language (vv. 4,9). This is the crop which is harvested in 14:14-16, in contrast to the fruit reaped in 14:17-20. The FT is, to a large degree, a celebration of the harvest, so the fruit of the harvest is a significant element of the eschatological FT.

Palm Branches and Leafy Trees

The tree of life, not only with its twelve kinds of fruit but also with its leaves, which “are for the healing of the nations,” becomes in Rev 22:2 one of the significant elements of the eschatological FT, closely associated with the river of the water of life (v. 1).

Palm branches also appear in the postharvest passages of the book of Revelation. The great multitude in 7:9-10 stand before the throne and before the Lamb, with palm branches in their hands, singing, “Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb.” We note elsewhere the significance of this song in relation to the theme of salvation, but at this point we should note the parallel with the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem described in John 12:13. At that time, the messianic character of the event was understood by the people—from Zech 9:9—and the palm branches were thus used in hailing Jesus as the messianic King, the Son of David, who had come to bring peace to the nations and establish his dominion from sea to sea, to the ends of the earth (Zech 9:10). While they apparently failed to remember that this would be accomplished through the blood of his covenant with them (v. 11), those who thus hailed him may have recalled that “on that day the Lord their God will save them for they are the flock of his people” (v. 16). They thus hailed his coming as Messiah by carrying palm branches and chanting, “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel” (John 12:13).⁵³

⁵¹Danielou, 338-339.

⁵²This conclusion may be drawn from Rom 11:16, and is supported by Exod 23:6; 34:22; Num 18:12; Deut 26:1-11; 2 Chr 31:5; Neh 10:35; Pss 78:51; 105:36; Jer 2:3; Rom 8:23; 1 Cor 15:20-23; and Jas 1:18.

⁵³Danielou, 341, sees the solemn procession on the seventh day of the FT as pointing to the coming of the Messiah and as partly fulfilled in this first coming, but to be more fully

It is significant that Jesus himself pointed to the future for the final fulfillment of the sentiment of this prophecy when he stated in Matt 23:39, "You will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'"⁵⁴ Rev 7:9-10 may be viewed as the final application of Zechariah's prophecy. But this time the jubilant throngs hail their Messiah with a due recognition of the role of the blood of the covenant, for "they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (v. 14).

Gratitude

A significant part of the pronouncements of praise to God in Rev 7:9-12; 15:3-4; and 19:1-8 is thanksgiving for the salvation wrought by God and the Lamb on behalf of their people. As the redeemed contemplate the way God has led in their history, they cannot bring any gift that is adequate to represent the debt they owe. Yet they cannot appear before the Lord entirely empty-handed (Deut 16:16), so they bring him an offering of praise. This is in harmony with the counsel given in Heb 13:15, in the context of the sacrifice of Jesus (v. 12) and our "looking for the city that is to come" (v. 14): "Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name."

Light

Several times in the description of the New Jerusalem in Revelation, the matter of light receives special attention. When John is first shown the city in 21:11, he describes it as having "the glory of God and a radiance like a very rare jewel." In v. 23 we are told that "the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb."⁵⁵ The next verse continues, "The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it."⁵⁶ In the following verse, John adds a note

fulfilled at the second coming of Jesus at the glorious *parousia*.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵This is a direct allusion to Isa 60:19: "The sun shall no longer be your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you by night, but the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory."

⁵⁶This seems to be an allusion to Isa 60:3: "Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn" (cf. 60:1; 42:6). These passages, along with Zech 14:7, apparently formed the basis for the significance of light in the FT liturgy. Buksbazen, 40, notes that the rabbis explain that the seventy bullocks sacrificed at the FT were for the seventy nations of the world, "looking toward their conversion to the God of Israel and their gathering under the Shekinah glory."

explaining why the gates will never be shut: "There will be no night there." Again in 22:5 this idea is reinforced: "And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light."

When Rev 7:15 describes the great multitude as worshipping God day and night in his temple,⁵⁷ it should probably be understood on these same terms: since there is no night, there is no cessation of the activity of worship. The continual light afforded by the glory of God makes it possible for ceaseless activity to take place, namely, the worship of God (cf. 4:8), just as with the bright lights burning all night in the temple during the FT, lighting the city like daylight.

Salvation

The white-robed multitude of Rev 7:10 cry out in a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!" In 19:1 a similar declaration is made in light of God's just judgments on Babylon, but the shout in 7:10 is probably to be understood in light of the announcement in 12:10, "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Messiah, for the accuser of our comrades has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God." This proclamation is made in light of the work of Christ on the Cross (12:11). It is the answer to the Hosanna ("Save now") which played such an important role in the FT liturgy. Jesus accomplished the provision for salvation at the Cross, and he effects that salvation when he translates those redeemed by his blood into his eternal kingdom, as seen in Rev 7.

Post-Parousia or Postmillennial?

It seems evident from the twelve correspondences cited above that the FT finds its parallel in those passages in Revelation that refer to eschatological events. This conclusion seems to be supported by other studies which demonstrate that the typology of Israelite cultic festivals is embedded in the literary structure of Revelation.⁵⁸ However, the point at which the FT symbolism begins to pertain is disputable.

Richard M. Davidson carries the Day of Atonement typology past the

⁵⁷In Rev 21:22 there is no temple seen in the city, for God and the Lamb are its temple. This suggests that the temple in the new earth has ceased to have its function, which is to provide for mediation and reconciliation between God and man. But judgment also takes place in the temple. The representation of the temple as still existent in Rev 7 suggests that the time in view is before the end of the millennium and the creation of the new earth, when sin and sinners are destroyed and all things are made new. Judgment still takes place during and at the end of the millennium (20:4,11-15), so the temple still has a function until then.

⁵⁸See Davidson, 119-126; Paulien, 190-192.

close of human probationary time and the *parousia*, through the millennium and the Great White Throne judgment, to the final destruction of sin and sinners. He begins the FT typology with the creation of all things new and God's dwelling with his people in Rev 21:1-7.⁵⁹ Jon Paulien is less explicit, but appears to follow a similar interpretation.⁶⁰

This interpretation has some merit, particularly the arguments that not all things are new until Rev 21, and that the primary FT imagery, apart from chapter 7, appears in chapters 21-22. At the same time, there are some valid arguments for seeing FT typology already from the time of the *parousia*. The harvest which is celebrated is the harvest of the good fruits, the righteous, which are gathered into the garner, not the harvest that is set aside for destruction. Further, the Day of Atonement typology ends with the close of the work of the High Priest in the sanctuary, the vindication of God's people, the High Priest's departure from the sanctuary, and the banishing of Azazel into the wilderness. These events all take place before or at the time of the *parousia* (11:15-19; 15:5-6,17; 20:1-3).

Some have argued that the banishing of Azazel belongs to the millennium; therefore, the millennium must belong to the Day of Atonement typology rather than to FT typology. However, it should be noted that the binding of Satan in the Abyss, which is the basis for this argument,⁶¹ takes place before the millennium, not during the millennium. Once Azazel is banished, the Day of Atonement typology ends. It does not continue for a thousand years. The focus of the FT is not on Azazel's wandering in the wilderness, or on the fate of those cast out of the camp, but on the celebration of the vindication of God's people in the Day of Atonement judgment and on the celebration of God's blessings in an abundant harvest. This takes place almost immediately.⁶²

It seems possible, therefore, to understand the FT typology as applicable already during the millennium,⁶³ in which the focus is on the

⁵⁹Davidson, 124-125.

⁶⁰Paulien, 191.

⁶¹See Davidson, 124.

⁶²Ellen G. White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets As Illustrated in the Lives of Holy Men of Old* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1958), remarks, "This feast was to be preeminently an occasion of rejoicing. It occurred just after the great Day of Atonement, when the assurance had been given that their iniquity should be remembered no more. At peace with God, they now came before Him to acknowledge His goodness and to praise Him for His mercy. The labors of the harvest being ended, and the toils of the new year not yet begun, the people were free from care, and could give themselves up to the sacred, joyous influences of the hour."

⁶³The relation between Rev 19 and 20 and the express delineation in 20:4-6 of the relation of the two resurrections to the millennium seems to place the millennium after the

saints living and reigning with Christ for a thousand years. Although there is a further development at the end of the thousand years, when the earth is cleansed of sin and sinners and is recreated as an eternal abode for the righteous, there seems no good reason to exclude the millennial reign of the saints from the postharvest FT celebration. They have already been vindicated and received their main reward, which is to reign as kings and priests with Christ (1:6; 5:10; 20:4,6). It remains only for them to inherit the earth made new, purged of sin. That becomes the final event of the fulfillment of the covenant, but the primary aspect of the covenant is not about land, but is relational: "I will be your God, and you will be My people."⁶⁴ This has taken place already at the *parousia*. Revelation makes clear that the saints receive their reward at the *parousia*, not at the end of the millennium (11:8; 22:12).⁶⁵

Is there any view in Revelation of the saints during the millennium that would support such a view? The evidence in Rev 20:4-6 is rather sparse in terms of content that can be tied to FT typology. It is quite possible, however, to see Rev 7:9-17 and Rev 14:1-5 as millennial views. Certainly, both passages are found in contexts closely associated with the translation of those living through the final events of earth's history. There seems to be no valid reason to separate these scenes from that history by a thousand years. Although it is true that there is a reference in 7:17 to the wiping away of tears (mentioned also in 21:4), it is stated in future terms ("and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes"), so one need not insist that it requires a postmillennial setting.⁶⁶ Not only is the passage in the immediate context of the sealing of the saints and the great day of God's wrath, but also from their waving of palm branches, with praise and thanksgiving to God for their salvation, one gets a sense of the freshness of their experience, though this is not conclusive. However, the question and answer of the elder in vv. 13-15 seems to be definitive for the setting of the vision. The elder asks John, "Who are these,

parousia. For an excellent study showing this, see Gourges, 679-681.

⁶⁴Lev 26:12; Jer 7:23; 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 31:1,33; 32:38; Ezek 11:20; 14:11; 34:30; 36:28; 37:23,27; Hos 2:23; Zech 8:8; 13:9; 2 Cor 6:16; Heb 8:10; cf. Exod 19:5-6.

⁶⁵White, 541, seems to understand the FT typology this way: "The Feast of Tabernacles was not only commemorative but typical. It not only pointed back to the wilderness sojourn but, as the feast of harvest, it celebrated the ingathering of the fruits of the earth, and pointed forward to the great day of final ingathering, when the Lord of harvest shall send forth His reapers to gather the tares together in bundles for the fire, and to gather the wheat into His garner."

⁶⁶Most of the statements found in 7:15-17 are in the future tense, probably because they are from OT promises which were originally future in nature. Nothing can be deduced from the tense of these sayings one way or another about the precise time of their fulfillment.

robed in white, and where have they come from?" He answers his own question: "These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship him day and night within his temple."⁶⁷ The implication seems to be that the white-robed throng have only recently arrived at this setting before the throne of God and the Lamb. The same would appear to be true for the 144,000 in 14:1-5, particularly in light of the new song they are singing, which no one could learn except those redeemed from the earth. If the group in chapter 7 and the group in chapter 14 are taken to be the same group, a strong argument can be made for seeing the FT imagery in these passages as suggesting that the FT begins at the *parousia* rather than at the end of the millennium.⁶⁸

Conclusion

It has been shown that there is broad evidence for a FT typology that is fulfilled in the eschatology of Revelation. Twelve separate parallel elements have been traced in both the FT and the book of Revelation. The results of this study should leave little doubt that the FT is fulfilled in the post-*parousia* events described in Revelation. While the FT typology may apply in an ultimate sense to the postmillennial new creation, there appears to be good reason to apply it also to the millennial period, based on a careful study of the typology and its application in those passages of Revelation that apparently contain elements of FT typology.

⁶⁷Beatrice Neall, "Sealed Saints and the Tribulation," in *Symposium on Revelation, Book 1: Introductory and Exegetical Studies*, ed. Frank B. Holbrook, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 6 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1992), 270, notes that while a temple is mentioned in Rev 7, there is no temple within the New Jerusalem in eternity (21:22). The conclusion could be drawn that the setting of Rev 7 is different from the setting of Rev 21, namely, millennial, as opposed to postmillennial.

⁶⁸Aaron Kinne, *An Explanation of the Principal Types, the Prophecies of Daniel and Hosea, the Revelation, and Other Symbolical Passages of the Holy Scriptures* (Boston: Samuel T. Armstrong, 1814), 100, holds that the FT prefigured the millennial prosperity of the church and the rest and felicity of the church and saints in heaven. Although he is thinking in amillennial terms, his insights connecting the FT with the millennium are significant. John Ritchie, *The Feasts of Jehovah: Bright Foreshadowings of Grace and Glory*, 3d ed. (Kilmarnock, UK: John Ritchie, n.d.), 58, says, "The antitype of the FT, like those of the two that preceded it—is still in the future. Nothing that has yet taken place, answers to this season of festive joy; its answer is to be found in the future day of glory, when Christ and His risen saints shall fill the heavens above, reigning over a restored and rejoicing world." He sees the millennium as the antitype of the FT, following the two harvests of Rev 14:14-20, while "the long Sabbath of Eternity" following the creation of a new heaven and a new earth is represented by the eighth day of the festival, "the last great day of the feast." *Ibid.*, 59. Glaser and Glaser, 212-13, cite Rev 21:3-4 as "the ultimate and eternal significance of the FT."