

## THE GOSPEL OF

## JOHN

## HOLIDAYS

## STUDENT LESSON

As we get older, I feel like we appreciate the holidays more and more. I'm not just talking about Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Eve (even though we just had them). I'm talking about ALL the holidays. Some may appreciate them for the traditions that take place. Others enjoy seeing family or friends. One of the highlights for me, personally, is having the time off from school and work!

HOWEVER! The most important part of every holiday, and the most *overlooked* part, is the reason WHY the holiday was celebrated in the first place! It's most commonly discussed around Christmas. We get caught up in the presents, the food, and the lights so much that we often forget about Jesus entirely. What about other holidays?

For example, what pops into your mind when you think of the Fourth of July? The American Flag? Hot dogs? Fireworks? Barbeque? What about the Revolutionary War? How many years go by where you celebrate the Fourth and you completely forget that the holiday marked the start of our country's independence from England. The bloody birth of our great nation is celebrated by... eating... hot dogs...

Don't get me wrong! It's awesome that we can celebrate our freedoms in this country by enjoying good food and gathering with friends and family. But we often forget the true meaning and origins of the holidays. In fact, take a look at the word "holiday." It derives from the "Old English *haligdæg* (or) 'holy day.'"<sup>1</sup>

This week we will be diving into part of Jesus' time at the Festival of the Tabernacles. This isn't a celebration that we as Christians partake in. But it's important to learn about what Jesus was doing there, the significance of the festival, as well how it plays into our passage. I pray that this week, you will learn what it means to have Jesus as the Light of your life as well as discover how belief in Jesus brings to light the reason why we don't celebrate the Jewish feast.

## Open it

### 1. What is your favorite holiday?

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.etymonline.com/word/holiday>

# Daily Devotions

Day 1 — Today's Theme: Explore It

Read John 8:12–30.

2. Who does Jesus claim He is?
3. What does Jesus claim will happen if you walk with Him?
4. Which Law are the Pharisees thinking of when they say Jesus' testimony is invalid?
5. Where does Jesus say He comes from? What does this make of the Pharisees?
6. Why doesn't Jesus condemn the Pharisees?

## Day 2 — Today's Theme: What is the Feast of the Tabernacles?

### Read John 8:12.

The Feast of Tabernacles is a Jewish holiday dedicated to the remembrance of the exodus out of Egypt. When the people of Israel were in the wilderness, God would send a pillar of cloud in the daytime and a pillar of fire during the night for them to faithfully follow.<sup>2</sup> Much like how our Thanksgiving has reminded us to be thankful, the Feast of Tabernacles was a requirement for Jews to take time to thank the Lord for how they were blessed that season during the harvest.<sup>3</sup>

In Numbers 29:12–40, we can see the variety of sacrifices the Jews were required to come up with by the time the feast came around. With easily over **two dozen animals** being sacrificed **most of the eight days**, this holiday required a lot of preparation. I'm sure they really felt the weight of this sacrifice on their flock as well as their wallets! Besides the burnt offerings, to remember Israel's wandering in the wilderness, tabernacles, (temporary shelters) were put up where the Jews were required to eat and sleep throughout the 8 day-long celebration (hence, the Feast of *Tabernacles*). Throughout the week, there would be worship and fellowship with family in these tents.

So, why don't WE as Christians celebrate it? I mean, this sounds kinda fun, doesn't it? It's sorta like having a weeklong camping barbeque! Fortunately, this guy named **JESUS** came along and He changed everything. These celebrations were more than just celebrations. The sacrifices listed in Numbers were the main purpose of the festival. The two types of sacrifices mentioned were Sin Offerings and Burnt Offerings. The Sin Offerings showed a sinner's seriousness of their sin, while the Burnt Offerings showed a sinner's devotion to God.<sup>4</sup> So if a Jew didn't partake in the sacrifices they would have been disobeying God. Also, since Jesus was around as well, if they didn't believe in Him as their Savior, then their sins wouldn't be forgiven.

7. **Which holiday do we celebrate that the Feast of Tabernacles reminds you of the most? Why?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. **The main traditions of the Feast of Tabernacles are the sacrifices, eating and sleeping in the tent for all eight days, and worship. This festival is a requirement for the Jewish faith. Why do we not have to participate in it for our salvation? Think of the symbols of the Feast of the Tabernacles and who Jesus is in relation to them.**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. **Without the sacrifices, the Feast of Tabernacles is a remembrance of God providing for His people when they were traveling in the wilderness. How can we as modern-day Christians celebrate and remember what God has done for us? What modern-day sacrifices or celebrations for God can you think of?**

---

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 13:22

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.learnreligions.com/feast-of-tabernacles-700181>

<sup>4</sup> Life Application Bible: New International Version. (1991). Wheaton, IL:Tyndale. NIV Study Bible. Page 171.

## Day 3 — Today's Theme: Just as the Prophecy Foretold

### Read John 8:12.

Jesus opens up this passage by immediately claiming that He is “The Light of the World.” In the Bible, we aren’t given any written context to show us what has prompted Jesus to say this. So, let’s put on our thinking caps and dive in!

John 7 describes how Jesus attended the Feast of Tabernacles and began teaching. The Feast was dedicated to remembering how God had blessed the Jews in the wilderness in Exodus. One tradition during the Feast of Tabernacles is that the Jews lit a candelabra that burned for the duration of the eight-day festival.

According to the *Mishnah Sukkah*, the official Jewish book that details the traditions of the Feast of Tabernacles, “the light from the candelabra was so bright that there was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that was not illuminated from the light of the Place of the Drawing of the Water” (Mishnah Sukkah 5:3).<sup>5</sup> This is to symbolize how God had shown Himself as a pillar of fire.<sup>6</sup> “As darkness fell, the cloud turned to fire, lighting up the night.”

In John 8:12, Jesus said “*I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.*” This completes the parallel with God showing Himself in the wilderness in Exodus. Briefly mentioned last week, Jesus said He was the living water.<sup>7</sup> This week He’s saying He’s the light of the world. This DIRECTLY parallels with God in Exodus. God provided the Jews with the water from the rock as well as appeared in the form of a cloud during the day and a pillar of fire by night.<sup>8</sup> <sup>9</sup> Jesus’ signs and symbols often coincided with a prophecy or an event that happened during the Old Testament. Because the Feast is about the Exodus, the timeline of God’s influence would be fresh in the Jews’ minds.

**10. Read Exodus 14:19–20, and 23–25. How does this passage tell you more about Jesus now that you know that Jesus is the living water and light of the world?**

**11. Think about the symbolism that Jesus utilized in John. The light in the dark that many had looked at for eight nights disappeared. How does the fact that Jesus is a light that will not disappear give you comfort?**

**12. Now that you know how Jesus is a light in your life, how can you be a light to your world? (School, friends, family, work)**

---

<sup>5</sup> Because the Mishnah Sukkah isn’t Biblical text, we can examine the traditions of the Jews in the Oral Torah not as a complete collection of Scripture and Gospel, but as an insight on how those who believed in God lived BEFORE Jesus. THEREFORE, traditions established in the Mishnah Sukkah book are outdated, might not be essential for our understanding, or unnecessary for salvation. However, we are looking at the Torah to obtain a better idea of the celebratory event that Jesus was attending.

<sup>6</sup> Exodus 14:20

<sup>7</sup> John 7:37-39

<sup>8</sup> Exodus 14:19, 17:6

<sup>9</sup> <https://bible.org/seriespage/19-light-world-john-812-30> Deffinbaugh

## Day 4 — Today's Theme: Nuh-Uh! Says Who?

### Read John 8:13–30.

After Jesus claims that He is the light of the world, “*The Pharisees replied, ‘You are making those claims about yourself! Such testimony is not valid!’*” (John 8:13). Jesus refutes this by saying that He can prove them wrong in two ways. Jesus says that they “*judged [him] by human standards*” (John 8:15). The standard for truth back then was “*if two people agree about something, their witness is accepted as fact*” (John 8:17). Because Jesus was “*not alone [and] the Father who sent [him] is with [him],*” Jesus’ claims are valid (John 8:16). The Pharisees, from there, continue to question Jesus. Then they question His answers. This goes back and forth for a while.

Not everything makes sense right away the first time. For the Pharisees, even though the Old Testament prophesied about Jesus (scripture that the Pharisees had memorized), they didn’t recognize Him as the true Messiah. Thankfully, there were those mentioned at the end of our section that grew to faith in Him, but not all believed even after that (John 8:30).

**13. Sometimes, even as Christians, we have questions about Christianity. We may learn something new in school that contradicts what we’ve learned in church or vice versa. Who can we talk to and how can we find out if what we’ve learned is Biblical or follows sound doctrine?**

**14. What things would you tell a friend who asked you how you know that Christianity is true?**