

Water and Light (The Feast of Tabernacles)

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John 7

Let us look back to the last few chapters in John.

In John 5, he healed during the **Sabbath**. He declared that he is the **Lord of the Sabbath**. His Father is at work, and he, too, is at work in the midst of us.

In John 6, Jesus fed the 5000 during the **Feast of Passover**. He declared he is the Bread of Life. His blood would be shed for the salvation of humanity. He would become the last sacrifice.

As you see Jesus is moving again. He was moving from one side of the lake to another in the last chapter, now he wants to go to the south to Judea, where there is another festival, this time it is the **Festival of Tabernacles**. It is the feast of water and light.

Let us examine background of this feast.

It is described in three passages in the Bible: **Exodus 23, Leviticus 23, Deuteronomy 16**.

-What is this festival?

God is dwelling with His People in the wilderness. It is a celebration...

This festival also called festival of **"Booths."** All festivals are designed to remember **what God did to them in history**.

-People will put tabernacles or booths in their backyard, or porches. They will sleep in them. They remember how their ancestors lived in the wilderness under tabernacles, living in tents, and God was with them.

-At the same time, this is like the **harvest festival**. It is an agricultural festival, celebrating the harvest of grapes and olives in particular.

"In the time of Jesus, it [**the Feast of the Tabernacles**] was one of the three great annual pilgrimage feasts (the others being **Passover and Pentecost**), when tens of thousands of Jewish people would come to Jerusalem. All kinds of lavish celebrations took place, involving lighting of lamps, dancing by torchlight,

processions that ended with the pouring out of water and wine in the **Temple**, and a march of **priests** and people around the altar carrying citrus fruit and waving palm branches.

The festival, like Passover, was regarded as a key symbol of the great national hope: the coming of the **Messiah**, and liberation from Rome. The celebrations went on for a full eight days, starting and ending with a special **sabbath**.”¹

Let us dig in the text:

-Reveal Yourself in Jerusalem

After this, Jesus went around in Galilee. He did not want to go about in Judea because the Jewish leaders there were looking for a way to kill him. ² But when the Jewish Festival of Tabernacles was near, ³ Jesus’ brothers said to him, “Leave Galilee and go to Judea, so that your disciples there may see the works you do. ⁴ No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world.” ⁵ For even his own brothers did not believe in him. (John 7:1-5 NIV 11)

Jesus’ brothers asked him to make himself revealed to the larger public, that means appearing in Jerusalem. Time to leave Galilee and come to the major city, Jerusalem, and make big announcements as the prophet, or the Messiah. There is a feast, and this is a good opportunity.

Look how this paragraph ended.

Even his own brothers did not believe in him. (John 5:5 NIV 11)

In the synoptic gospels, we read that his brothers thought that Jesus had lost his mind (Mark 3:21). Last Sunday, I told you some of his disciples left him when they did not see signs. There is a group of followers who would like to see Jesus as a magician. Supernatural things can attract people. Again, I’ll say, Jesus performed signs so we can see God’s character and revelation in our world beyond the sign. Don’t get stuck with the signs.

-My Time Is Not Yet Here.

⁶ Therefore Jesus told them, “My time is not yet here; for you any time will do. ⁷ The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that its works are evil. ⁸ You go to the festival. I am not going up to this festival, because my time has not yet fully come.” ⁹ After he had said this, he stayed in Galilee. (John 7:6-9 NIV 11)

Do you remember in the wedding of Cana, “Woman, [Mother], **My hour has not yet come.**” (John 2:4 NIV 11)

Jesus knows the time when he will be arrested, tried and crucified. There is time for that. So he is careful about his steps. In his prayer in John 17, the first sentence is: **Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son. (17:1)**

For now, not yet; Jesus said:

“You guys go...I am not going on your timetable.” (He said the same to his mother).

Then we read:

However, after his brothers had left for the festival, he went also, not publicly, but in secret. (john 7:10 NIV 11)

-Who is this Man?

¹¹ Now at the festival the Jewish leaders were watching for Jesus and asking, “Where is he?” ¹² Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, “He is a good man.” Others replied, “No, he deceives the people.” ¹³ But no one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the leaders. (John 7:11-13 NIV 11)

Again, the Jewish leaders are not too happy with this man. Where is he? Some say he is good man. Some say He deceives the people.

One of the concepts you will see in the Gospel of John is the divided house, the divided opinion about Jesus.

Did anything change in history?

-Teaching of Jesus During the Festival (14-36)

Not until halfway through the festival did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach. ¹⁵ The Jews there were amazed and asked, “How did this man get such learning without having been taught?” ¹⁶ Jesus answered, “My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?” ²⁰ “You are demon-possessed,” the crowd answered. “Who is trying to kill you?” ²¹ Jesus said to them, “I did one miracle, and you are all amazed. ²² Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the

patriarchs), you circumcise a boy on the Sabbath. ²³ Now if a boy can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing a man's whole body on the Sabbath? ²⁴ Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly." (John 7:14-24 NIV 11)

Jesus goes secretly to Jerusalem. He does not do things his brothers asked for. He decides to go to the Temple and teach. Jesus enters the Temple, not inside, but to the court. And he teaches again.

Remember, it is the **Tabernacles Feast.**

Water and Light

-People brought **water** and poured on the alter. (Let me show you on the screen where they brought the water).

"They saw this water ceremony on multiple levels. On the one hand, it was a plea to God for rain since the autumn is a time of drought in Israel. On the other hand, it was a source of rich symbolism. In the desert, **God brought water from a rock** (Numbers 20: 8,10)... Zachariah and Ezekiel had visions of rivers flowing from the temple in a miraculous display of God's blessing (Ezekiel 47:1, Zechariah 14:8). In a drought-stricken land, it was a spectacular vision of water, life-giving water flowing from God's life-giving temple."²

-It is also festival of **lights**, thus they built a 70 foot (7 stories) **menorah** in the courtyard in front of the temple entrance. The menorah lighted up the whole Temple district. It is very impressive.

Now think about this.

Like chapter 6, feeding the 5000 where Jesus is the bread of life, here Jesus will be teaching that He is the living water (Samaritan woman) and the Light of the World.

Let me take you back to first chapter:

In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome. (John 1: 4,5 NIV 11)

Please notice that all these Old Testament symbolism is back with new interpretation and they are fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

In the same chapter 7

Jesus said:

"Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them. (John 7:37b,38 NIV 11)

In chapter 8 he also says:

"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 NIV 11)

You except people do get it; right?

People don't get it who he is:

Where did Jesus go to school? answer: heaven (7:15)

Where is this man from? Answer: heaven (7:25-27)

Where is this man going? Answer: heaven (7:35)

Jewish Leaders wanted to kill him (7:1)

Reading these verses should help us to know who is Jesus, his identity and his mission.

Jesus keep saying that he is commissioned from God. And God equipped Him to teach.

He also said if their lives are in harmony with God, they will recognize who Jesus is.

-Again we see the Jewish leaders have problem with Jesus "working-healing" the disabled man. Instead of rejoicing with this man, they keep criticizing Jesus. And Jesus is showing how hypocritical they are. They don't keep the laws of Moses entirely, why? They cannot. No one can. Next Sunday we will see that they will bring a woman who was caught in adultery. The same issue, those without sin may cast the first stone.

-Again Jesus will defend himself saying he does things by God's authority. His authority comes from God.

Some believed and some did not. Same story now....

Application:

1. We can trust Jesus. He is trustworthy.

Yet there different options about his character

Some said, "He is a good man." (12)

Others replied, "No, he deceives the people." (12)

But no one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the leaders. (13)

If you say you trust Jesus, let it show in your life.

Do you trust Him? His promises?

Lately I have disappointments with the outcome of the Armenia war.

Do I trust Jesus?

He said he will be with us all the time.....

2. What does it mean that Jesus is the living water in your life?

"Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them. (John 7:37,38 NIV 11)

When you believe, you drink that water that Jesus provides. Then what happens? You will become a channel for the river of the living water.

Think creatively and examine yourself.

What is following out from you?

1 N.T. Wright, *John for Everyone*, p 93

2 Gary M. Bruce, *NIV Application Commentary* p227