

**In Jerusalem, Part 1:
Teaching at the Feast of Booths**
Looking into the Face of Jesus
The Life of Christ 2: Pages 26-43
Manuscript: Lesson Plan 60

Introduction

Today we will be reading John 7:11-52.

Jesus said, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who

believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" (John 7:37b, 38). What did Christ mean by those words? What do they mean to us today?

(Read John 7:11-52).

Background—The Audience and Occasion

There were different groups present at this feast. The term "Jews" referred to the religious authorities in the region. The leaders of this group were called the "chief priests and the Pharisees" and also referred to the Sanhedrin. Chief priests were mainly Sadducees. Jewish families who made their homes in Jerusalem were also there (John 7:25). "The crowds" were mixed multitudes present for the feast, mainly composed of pilgrims from other places.

The Feast of Booths lasted seven days—in time it turned into eight days (the last day was a solemn Sabbath). It had historical significance because it represented the days Israelites wandered in the wilderness. It had an agricultural significance because it was a harvest festival after the main crops were in. This made the feast also known as the "Feast of Ingathering" (Exodus 23:16).

During the festival, the Jews lived outdoors in booths; these were temporary structures built with their own hands. These structures were located in streets, rooftops, around the temple, etc. During the week, they did everything in these structures to commemorate how God provided for their ancestors.

Seven bulls were sacrificed, representing the 70 nations on the earth. The ceremonies involved 46 priests and a number of Levites. Twenty-one trumpets were sounded in the temple courts. A huge candelabra was hung in the Court of Women to represent how their forefathers were guided in the wilderness by a pillar of fire. At night, men danced in the torchlight. This was the most joyous of the Jewish feast days.

The daily water ritual happened at the beginning of each day. White-robed priests would lead a procession of celebrants from the temple down to the Pool of Siloam (the main water source of the city). A priest would hold up a gold pitcher and then fill it with the water from the pool. People would cry, "With joy we draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3). Holding the pitcher above his head, the priest would lead the people back to the temple. People would chant Psalms 113-118. They would be greeted by trumpet blasts when entering the gates. The priest would then pour the water at the base of the altar of burnt offerings. The people would shout praises and trumpets would acknowledge the nation's desperate need for water then.

Significant Events of the Feast

Jesus appeared on the scene midway through the feast days (John 7:14). Jesus knew the Jews wanted to kill Him, but He went anyway because He knew it was His duty to teach. Apparently, this was the first time many of the Jewish leaders had heard Him teach because it says they were "astonished" (John 7:15). Jesus gave a discourse on why they were astonished; His words came from the Father (John 7:16). He ended this first discourse with the charge that they claimed to obey the Law, but they did not because they had plans to kill Him (John 7:19). The "out-of-town" people did not realize that the Jews wanted to kill Him (John 7:20). The reason the Jews wanted to kill Him was that the last time He was in Jerusalem, He healed a man on the Sabbath (John 5:18). He now had another argument about why their anger against Him about that incident did not make sense (John 7:21-23). He ended with John 7:24—"judge with righteous judgment." There was a discussion on whether Jesus really was the Christ because some thought Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 53:8 taught that the origin of the Messiah would be a mystery. They knew where he was from—Galilee (John 7:25-27). Jesus made the point that they truly did not know where He was from because He was from heaven (John 7:28, 29). Many started believing in Christ (John 7:31). Here is an interesting note in John 7:30: "they were seeking to arrest Him, but no one laid a hand on Him." Why? "His hour had not yet come." Jesus told the crowd He did not have much more time with them. The Pharisees sent officers to arrest Him, but they did not. Why not? (Read John 7:32-36). Jesus teaches on the last day about rivers of water. Remember the daily water ritual already discussed. It seems Jesus used this ceremony to offer "rivers of living water" (John 7:37, 38). John explains what the Lord meant by those words (John 7:39). There arose a division among the people; some believed, and some did not. The officers did not arrest the Lord because they were impressed with His words (John 7:46). Again, it was not His time.

Rivers of Living Water

Let us think about the phrase: Rivers of Living Water.

Rivers bring to mind power and abundance. Living means on-going. And

water is an essential need.

There are some lessons concerning the out-pouring of the Spirit here. The water from the rock had satisfied physical thirst. The Holy Spirit would satisfy the spiritual longings of those who put their trust in Jesus.

There are lessons about our thirst. We must acknowledge our need (John 7:37). We must accept Jesus as the only One who can satisfy our spiritual thirst. We must act on that belief—key words "come" and "drink."

Conclusion

Jesus, during the water ritual (before, during, after), made it clear that coming to Him was the only way to get this "water."

Sometimes we think what we do is what will quench our thirst—such as our worship. Quenching our thirst can only come through Him.

Worship will not necessarily get us to Him if we just make it a ritual or acts. Likewise, if we do not worship Him the way He tells us to (i.e., "in spirit and in truth, John 4:23).

We must find ways to "encounter our living Lord." We must get to the
"Spiritual Rock" (1 Corinthians 10:4).

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