

Living Water

Read John, chapter 7, especially verses 37-39

I / INTRODUCTION: THE FEAST OF BOOTHS [or ‘TABERNACLES’]

1 / I am calling this lesson “Living Water” because we want to major on Jesus’ announcement, pronouncement, and invitation in **verses 37-39**.

2 / But since that self-pronouncement was given **‘on the last day of the feast, the great day,’** we need to understand more about what **‘feast’** it was.

3 / So if you begin reading in **verses 1-2**, you’ll discover that the occasion was **‘Now the Jews’ Feast of Booths [Tabernacles] was at hand.’** This word John uses is a compound word from two words: *skeinōs* which is the common word for ‘tent’ [as in **John 1.14**] + the word that means ‘to construct by joining together’ [as in **Hebrews 8.2 ‘set up’**]. So a ‘tabernacle’ or ‘booth’ was a temporary shelter or lean-to which had been constructed by tying, binding, or putting other things together.

4 / This is the only time this particular word is used in the New Testament, although the Feast of Booths / Tabernacles is referred to numerous times in the Old Testament.

5 / **The Feast of Booths** was one of the three most prominent feasts observed by the Jews along with Passover and Pentecost. It was commanded by God to be observed in **Leviticus 23.33-43**. The purpose of the booths was to remind them **‘that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I AM the LORD your God.’** The booths would remind them that:

1. Yahweh had delivered them from bondage and slavery in Egypt
2. that they belonged to Him
3. that they were ‘pilgrims and strangers’ in the earth
4. that their ultimate home and destination was in the eternal, final Kingdom where they would find their eternal resting place
5. that He had provided for all their needs and wants adequately, fully, sufficiently, and satisfactorily.

6 / This feast was also ‘the happiest season of all.’ **“And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days.”** This feast was the final feast of their festive calendar year. **It was celebrated on the 15th day of the seventh month [our September-October],** and it marked the happiness of the full harvest being brought in and stored up for the coming year: **‘when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD seven days.’** I have always thought that their Feast of Booths was very much like what our Thanksgiving is to us.

7 / They would observe the Feast of Booths by moving out of their houses for those seven days. They would construct their booths out of the leafy boughs of trees and live in them. They did no work during those seven days – because God was providing for them. And there were numerous offerings and sacrifices to God that accompanied their feasting and joyous celebrations. [This Feast was also five days after The Day of Atonement.]

8 / ALSO, over the centuries, the Jews had added other ceremonies. One prominent celebration was to go to the Pool of Siloam with a golden vessel, fill it with water from the pool, and march back in joyous celebration to the altars where their sacrifices were being offered to Yahweh, and pour it into a basin prepared for it. All the while, they were singing and chanting from **Isaiah 12.3 & 25.6-9 & the Hallel Psalms 113-118**. As I say, for these seven days, there were joyous, exuberant, happy celebrations all day long for those days!

9 / Let me give you a quote here from Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple*, pages 277-279:

“While the morning sacrifice was being prepared, a priest, accompanied by a joyous procession with music, went down to the Pool of Siloam, when he drew water into a golden pitcher, capable

of holding three logs (rather more than two pints) ... At the same time that the procession started for Siloam, another went to a place in the Kidron Valley, close by, called Motza, whence they brought willow branches, which, amidst the blasts of the priests' trumpets, they stuck on either side of the altar of burnt-offering, bending them over towards it, so as to form a kind of leafy canopy. Then the ordinary sacrifice proceeded, the priest who had gone to Siloam so timing it, that he returned just as his brethren carried up the pieces of the sacrifice to lay them on the altar. As he entered by the 'Water-Gate,' which obtained its name from this ceremony, he was received by a threefold blast from the priests' trumpets. then priest then went up the rise of the altar and turned to the left, where there two silver basins ... Into these the wine of the drink-offering was poured, and at the same time the water of Siloam, the people shouting to the priest, 'Raise thy hand,' to show that he really poured the water into the basin which led to the base of the altar ... As soon as the wine and water were being poured out, the Temple music began, and the 'Hallel' was sung...to the accompaniment of flutes ... When the choir came to these words, 'O give thanks to the LORD' [Psalm 118.1], and again when they sang, 'O work then now salvation, O Yahweh' [Ps 118.25], and once more at the close, 'O give thanks to the LORD' [Ps 118.29], all the worshippers shook their *lulavs* [*these were clusters of palm, myrtle, and willow branches*] towards the altar."

10 / I hope this gives us just a little idea of how happy, joyous, and celebratory this Feast of Booths was to them.

II / vv 1-9 / "I AM NOT GOING UP TO THIS FEAST [YET]..."

1 / Now, leading up the core passage we want to treat, let's briefly review how the occasion was set up...

2 / In these verses, Jesus' **'brothers' [or kinspeople]** were taunting him in their belief to go to Jerusalem and 'show yourself' to His disciples and followers that He is in fact their Christ and Messiah. Jesus delayed His going because He knew the raging enmity that the Jewish leadership had for Him. He knew that 'the Jews were seeking to kill Him' / v 1.

3 / He would go, but it would be in the Father's time. He remained in Galilee where He was at that time...

III / vv 10-24 / "HE ALSO WENT UP...ABOUT THE MIDDLE OF THE FEAST"

1 / He did go to Jerusalem after the festivities had already begun – not to stage a grand entrance with fanfare, but when He could enter with His disciples and blend in with the other attendees, pilgrims, and celebrants.

2 / He began teaching in the public courts of the Temple compound. The people heard Him gladly. Even the Jewish leadership who were conspiring and plotting to kill Him were marveling in amazement at His wisdom, learning, and authority – knowing that He had not attended their schools and seminaries of learning.

3 / Jesus boldly proclaimed that His knowledge and wisdom came directly from God, His Father. When He publicly accosted His enemies among the Jewish leadership and 'outed' them for wanting to kill Him, Jesus connected their murderous plots directly back to the healing of the lame man in chapter 5 where they had decided among themselves that He must die / see v 23.

IV / vv 25-36 / "I KNOW HIM, FOR I COME FROM HIM, AND HE SENT ME!"

1 / There was a 'buzz' that erupted and spread among the people. They couldn't deny the wisdom, power, and authority of everything He said ... and how He said it.

2 / They began to debate among themselves: *“Look at His boldness! Could He be our Christ? Could He be our Prophet? But He can’t be because we know where He comes from, ‘and when the Christ appears, no one will know where He comes from.’ But, ‘When the Christ appears, will He do more signs than this Man has done?’”*

3 / The Pharisees had seen and heard enough. The people were spiraling out of control. Many more were believing in Him. They had to move...and quickly.

4 / So they sent the Temple ‘police’ to arrest Him and bring Him in. / v 32. They had to get Him off the streets. But as we shall see, even when they sent the Temple ‘police’ to arrest Him, the guards returned without Him. **“Why have you not arrested Him?”** The officers could only respond: **“We’ve never heard anyone speak like this Man speaks!”** / vv 44-46.

V / 37-39 / **“IF ANYONE THIRSTS, LET HIM COME TO ME AND DRINK!”**

1 / Now, go back to the lengthy description of this ‘water ceremony’ that accompanied the Feast of Booths festivities. We’re even told that **‘On the last day of the feast, the great day’** that were even more elaborate ceremonies. For instance, some historians say that on this last, great day, the priests would march around the altar of sacrifice seven times instead of just once. Regardless, it was the ‘grand finale’ of the week-long Feast celebrations.

2 / It was on this day, at this time, that Jesus approaches the altar, takes a public position, and with His strong, authoritative voice **‘cried out’**: **“If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink! Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”**

3 / Everyone’s attention was fixated and riveted on Him!

4 / Pastor J. C. Ryle outlines this brief message this way: [1] a case supposed, **“If anyone is thirsty...”** [2] a remedy proposed, **“Let him come to Me and drink...”** [3] a promise held out, **“Whoever believes in Me, out of his heart will flow rivers of water...”** Let’s follow that outline:

5 / **A case supposed.** Everyone is thirsty. The Feast of Booths already was celebrating how Yahweh had satisfied their hunger and all the needs of their lives with the abundant harvests He had provided. More than that, the Feast of Booths not only pointed backward to Yahweh’s salvation from Egypt, but it also pointed forward all the way to the End when Yahweh would provide for His people a heavenly eternal feast in His Kingdom / see **Isaiah 25.6-9**. They had just quoted and sung from **Isaiah 12.3**, **“With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation!”** This salvation was salvation from all their enemies. It was a promise of the Christ, their Messiah, their Savior who would come to finally and fully deliver them. But look at yourself! You are thirsty, too! We thirst for whatever it is we believe will satisfy our deepest and innermost longings. Whatever it is you are seeking for, working for, grasping for, longing for that you hope will fill you with satisfaction and fulfillment – whatever it is that you think will finally give you peace, security, a sense of well-being – that is what you are thirsty for. What is it for you?

6 / **A remedy proposed.** So when Jesus announces, **“Let him come to Me and drink!”** ... what He is announcing is **“I AM EVERYTHING THIS WATER SYMBOLIZES! I AM THE LIVING WATER THAT YAHWEH PROMISED YOU HE WOULD GIVE YOU! I AM HE! AND I AM HERE!”** And so He is. Jesus Christ – in Himself – is the fullness and the lasting satisfaction that you need ... you just may not realize that He is what you need and the satisfaction you’ve been thirsting for. Drink of Christ!

7 / **A Promise held out.** “But,” you ask, “How do I drink of Christ?” Jesus tells you: **“Whoever believes in Me, out of his heart will flow rivers of Living Water.”** You believe and trust in Jesus Christ as the Savior from your sins that God has provided and given you. When Jesus promises that Living Water will spring and abundantly flow from within you, He is promising the Holy Spirit will quicken you, give you eternal life, and live in you. That Holy Spirit is the very Spirit of Christ Himself / see **Romans 8.9-11**. This is the ‘born again’ experience that Jesus told Nicodemus that he must receive / **John 3**. This is the eternal life of the Living Water that Jesus told the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well

in Sychar that she was actually thirsty for ... and that He would gladly and freely give her / **John 4.10-14. Do you believe? Will you receive His gift of His own Living Water of eternal life?**

8 / But what can John possibly mean by his inspired commentary on what Jesus meant by that statement? **Now this He said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.** Well, this we know:

1. The Living Water is the Holy Spirit [as we have just explained].
2. The Holy Spirit certainly was already present and active in the world and in the Kingdom of God.
3. There was a future fullness of the giving and work of the Holy Spirit of some kind.
4. This receiving of the life, power, and fullness of the Spirit would be given in relation to Jesus' death, resurrection, and His glorification in His ascension.

Surely this last statement gives us the key. Although the Holy Spirit was already present, working, regenerating, and indwelling those who had been saved by their faith in God, His work would surely be increased and intensified as He was given to believers in Christ to fulfill the final age of the Gospel. So what Jesus is promising is that in the Gospel, the Holy Spirit would fulfill a much more public and pronounced ministry as the Gospel of Christ is preached, proclaimed, and believed on in the world.

DO YOU BELIEVE?