

Living Water (John 7:37–52)
By Pastor Jeff Alexander (10/31/2021)

Introduction

1. An important reference to the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths is found in Leviticus 23:39. The time of this feast was late September/early October.

This feast was actually 7 days, but an eighth-day, was added, as a solemn Sabbath (rest) and celebration to the Lord. This day is the focus of verse 37.
2. The two powerful proclamations of Jesus (7:37, 38 and 8:12) during this time are separated by the story of the woman caught in adultery (8:1–11). The Greek of the passage clearly shows that 7:52 is followed by 8:12 in the original text, the key being the word translated “*again*.” The subject of both declarations exactly matches the rituals that pointed to the Messiah.
3. The water-pouring ritual involved bringing water from the Pool of Siloam and pouring it at the base of the altar as a memorial of the miracle of water from the rock in the wilderness (Numbers 20:2–13; Isaiah 12:3; Zechariah 12:10).

I. An Earnest Plea

1. A troubling contrast observed

In the middle of the joyful festivity that swirled around them as the feast was closing, Jesus observed the sad reality that the people did not understand what they were celebrating. Thus, we read that He stood on an elevated place and loudly proclaimed His message. With all eyes fixed upon Him due to His supernatural power and unrivalled teaching, Jesus explained the significance of the rite which they ignorantly celebrated.

2. His glorious announcement

- a. The Lord’s announcement explained the symbolic references in the feast. Messianic expectations were high, but spiritual blindness prevented people from recognizing that Jesus was the Messiah prophesied in these ceremonies (1 Corinthians 10:4).
- b. John provides an explanation about what the living water symbolized in verse 39. Jesus died for His own to make it possible for God to give the Holy Spirit to them permanently as Life-giver and Sanctifier (Acts 2:15–17, 32, 33).

3. The dawn of the age of the Spirit

What Jesus announced to the celebrating people was that the old era of the Father and the Law was ending and the new era of the Spirit was commencing (Daniel 9:27). The age of the Spirit will continue until Jesus returns. Then this age ends with the destruction of beast: “*The kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom*” (Daniel 7:27).

II. Prophetic Significance

1. The eighth day and the new creation

Additional prophetic significance is witnessed in the Feast of Booths. It has to do with creation and the plan of God as it relates to salvation and created order.

2. The eighth day and salvation

God created the earth in six days, then rested on the seventh, sanctifying that day and making its observance a requirement for mankind (Exodus 20:9, 10). While the Lord rested on the seventh day at creation, that rest ended when Adam disobeyed, and the human race was plunged into sin (John 5:17). As the Father rested after He finished the work of creation, so the Son rested when He finished the work of salvation. Thus, He was raised on the eighth day, the day prophetically added to the seven-day Feast of Booths. On that day He announced, *“If any man thirsts, let Him come to me and drink.”*

III. The Response and Law

1. The people

Some understood Jesus (they *“heard the words”*), some concluded that Jesus was the Prophet promised in Deuteronomy 18, and others that He was the Messiah promised and expected. The passage in Deuteronomy warns that Yahweh’s judgment would fall on those who did not listen to that Prophet.

The discussion again resulted in division over Him. Jesus deliberately provoked that division (Luke 12:51). Paul expands on that in 1 Corinthians by showing that the cross and the message of the gospel is God’s plan to destroy human wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:18, 19). Jews demand signs.

In this turmoil of division, some even wanted to conduct a citizens’ arrest (v. 44). This commotion prompted the Jewish leaders to act, sending temple officers to arrest Jesus.

2. The chief priests and the Pharisees

The temple officers sent to arrest Him (v. 32) returned to the chief priest and Pharisees without Him. Their reason for failing to bring Him was power of His words, *“No one ever spoke like this man!”* In the final analysis, it was the fear of God that seized them and paralyzed them in their mission. Jesus’ *hour* was yet six months future.

The response of the Jews was to attack the officers personally: *“You let Him deceive you.”* Then they pridefully asserted that none of the authorities were deceived by Him. Was that true? John immediately counters by introducing Nicodemus into the narrative (John 3:10). Nicodemus saw the leaders as being guilty of violating the law.

Some of the Jewish leaders, such as Nicodemus and Joseph, did believe. While they believed in Him, for fear of the Jews they kept silent. The Lord would force them to speak out eventually. As a case in point, Nicodemus was confronted with something that broke his silence. True believers will not remain silent.

3. The Law

Nicodemus may have been hoping for an official hearing to take place by getting the other members of the Sanhedrin to return to proper legal procedure. The bias of the chief priests and Pharisees against Jesus violated the law’s requirements for fair judgment and thorough and honest investigation (Deuteronomy 1:16; 17:4; 19:18).

Lessons

1. Are you like the people who hear and believe? Has the Lord opened you heart to the truth? Do you recognize that Jesus is truly the Savior of mankind?
2. Are you trusting Him and nothing else to save you from your sins and the wrath of God?
3. Are you openly testifying to the world that Jesus is Lord?