The Testimony of John the Beloved

The 27th Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

JOHN AND THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

BRUCE K. SATTERFIELD

One of several themes woven through the Gospel of John is that Christ is the fulfillment of ancient Israel's sacred times such as the Sabbath or the Feast of Passover. For John, these sacred times, which were an important part of New Testament period Judaism, were types and shadows of Christ and his role as savior and redeemer of the world. This theme is a central aspect of John 7 through 9. In these chapters, John records the Savior's activities during the Feast of Tabernacles, or, in Hebrew, Sukkoth.

The Feast of Tabernacles was one of the three feasts the Lord commanded that all males should annually attend (see Exodus 23:17; 34:23) and what Josephus calls the "most holy and most eminent" of the three feasts of the Hebrews.¹ Understanding how Christ was the fulfillment of this most important feast is intimately connected with the feast itself; but as is often the case in scripture, John assumes the reader is already aware of the activities associated with the Feast of Tabernacles and gives no details of the feast. John tells only of the movements and sayings of Christ in connection with the feast. But in order to understand what the Savior said in John 7 through 9, "one must have an intimate knowledge of the celebration of the Tabernacles."² The following discussion provides that "intimate knowledge" of the Feast of Tabernacles to reveal how that sacred time was meant to be a type and shadow of the Savior. The feast will be examined through both biblical and rabbinical sources. It will then

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be possible to examine John 7 through 9 in light of this background, noting the effect of Jesus' sayings upon his listeners.

The Three Feasts of the Jews

Two important sources aid our understanding of how the Feast of Tabernacles was practiced during the Second Temple period: biblical and rabbbinical or Jewish writings. Biblical legislation regarding the feast is found in the five books of Moses (see Exodus 23:14-17; 34:22, 23; Leviticus 23:33-44; Numbers 29:12-40; Deuteronomy 16:13-17), and in Nehemiah (8:13-18). Added to the biblical legislation are various descriptions of the Feast of Tabernacles found in rabbbinical writings. These are important to consider because by the time of Christ, several additional developments had become part of the activities associated with the feast. Familiarity with these developments is essential to understanding John 7 through 9. Our only sources for these additional activities are the rabbbinical writings, chief among them being the legislation in the Mishnah and Talmud. Though these regulations were codified years after the destruction of the Second Temple and present an idealized picture of the customs associated with the Feast of Tabernacles, much of what the rabbis have said still seems to be applicable.

After the children of Israel were freed from Egyptian bondage and led by Moses to Mount Sinai, the Lord had Moses prepare Israel to enter into a covenant with him in order to make of them “a peculiar treasure unto [the Lord] above all people” (Exodus 19:5). The initial covenant Israel entered into included this command: “Three times thou shalt keep a feast unto me in the year. . . . Three times in the year all thy males shall appear before the Lord God” (Exodus 23:14, 17). The three feasts became known as the Feast of Passover, the Feast of Weeks (often called the Feast of Pentecost), and the Feast of Tabernacles.

The central activities of the feasts were in the temple. This is apparent from the injunction that all “males shall appear before the Lord God.” Though no word for temple or sanctuary is used in this command, the phrase “before the Lord” does refer to a temple or sanctuary. Menahem Haran states: “In general, any cultic activity to which the biblical text applies the formula ‘before the Lord’ can be considered an indication of the existence of a temple at the site, since this expression divine dwelling terminology.”

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In light of the fact that the feasts were intended to be the King James, would be a time for the triumph of Passover reminding the people of the events of freedom from slavery, thereme of Israel in the third month after the giving of the law, and the recalled Israel’s eventual arrival in the Land. The central activities of the feasts were in the temple. This is apparent from the injunction that all “males shall appear before the Lord God.” Though no word for temple or sanctuary is used in this command, the phrase “before the Lord” does refer to a temple or sanctuary. Menahem Haran states: “In general, any cultic activity to which the biblical text applies the formula ‘before the Lord’ can be considered an indication of the existence of a temple at the site, since
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John and the Feast of Tabernacles

this expression stems from the basic conception of the temple as a divine dwelling-place and actually belongs to the temple's technical terminology."

That these feasts were to be held at a temple can be seen in the name given to the first sanctuary of the Israelites. What is called in the King James Version "the tabernacle" is in Hebrew named ohol mo'ed, meaning "tent of meeting" or "tent of feasts." Of this, Roland de Vaux wrote: "Against [the] background of daily, weekly and monthly worship, the great annual feasts stood out in relief. The general word for a 'feast' is mo'ed: the term means a fixed place or a fixed time—a rendezvous—and the desert Tent was called 'ohel mo'ed' or 'The Tent of Meeting.' Thus the word came to mean a meeting or an assembly, and finally an assembly or meeting to celebrate a feast." Though the Lord commanded that all males should come to the temple during these three feasts, it appears that, at least during the Second Temple period, often the whole family participated in the worship associated with the feasts (see Luke 2:41-50).

In light of how modern temples are used, it seems clear that these feasts were intended to be teaching experiences in which Israel would be reminded of past events and taught of future events. Further, this would be a time to renew covenants made with God. The Feast of Passover reminded Israel of their exodus from Egyptian bondage and the triumph of God over idolatry (see Exodus 12:12). It also was to remind them of the future coming of the Messiah, who would free them from spiritual bondage. The Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, reminded Israel of the law God gave to Israel at Mount Sinai in the third month after their exodus from Egypt. It also foreshadowed the giving of the higher law at a future time. The Feast of Tabernacles recalled Israel's wandering in the wilderness for forty years and their eventual arrival in the promised land—Israel's permanent home. It also anticipated the future coming of the Messiah.

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

Length of the feast. From Leviticus (23:33-44), we learn that the Feast of Tabernacles was to be held for seven days. The first day was to be a holy convocation; the Hebrew mikra kodesh means "a holy summons." "It stresses the summons to an assembly where Israel, in a state of special holiness, is called to fulfill its sacred functions. Holy
convocations were central aspects of each of the three great Feasts and the Day of Atonement. They were days of rest, like the sabbath, and in later times were known as sabbaths." An additional holy convocation was to be called after the seven days were complete, making the feast a total of eight days. The eighth day was referred to as the "great day of the feast" (John 7:37).

Dwelling in booths. We are told in Leviticus that the Israelites were to build booths, or small huts, outside their houses. During the seven days of the feast they were to live in the booths so that their "generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 23:43). It is from these booths (Hebrew, Sukkoth) that the Feast of Tabernacles receives its name. These booths were to remind Israel that their forefathers lived in tents during the wilderness journey and did so until they came into the promised land where they dwelt in permanent houses. Living in booths may have also reminded Israel that mortality is not the final and permanent resting place for mankind. Just as Israel was brought to a promised land for a permanent home, God's children will be brought into their final resting place only during the millennial reign of the Messiah.

The booths were generally of modest size, at least three walls and roof, and had to be outside. They could be placed in a courtyard or on the roof of a house. In Nehemiah 8:16, we are told that when the Feast of Tabernacles was reinstituted after the return of the Jews from Babylonian exile, the Jews set up their booths in a number of different places: "every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim." Rabbinical writings tell us that those traveling some distances were exempt from living in booths if they so desired (see Talmud Sukkah 26a).

Water-drawing ceremony. The order of events of an average day during the Feast of Tabernacles is revealed, albeit incompletely, in these words of Rabbi Joshua ben Hanania in the Talmud regarding the Feast of Tabernacles: "The first hour was occupied with the daily morning sacrifice; from there we proceeded to prayers; from there we proceeded to the additional sacrifice, then the prayers to the additional sacrifice, then to the House of Study, then the eating and drinking, then and after that night" (Talmud.

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drinking, then the afternoon prayer, then the daily evening sacrifice, and after that the Rejoicing at the place of the Water-Drawing all night” (Talmud Sukkah 53a).

A usual day began with the normal daily morning burnt offering; however, during the Feast of Tabernacles a rite was added to the daily burnt offering, called the water-drawing ceremony. During the preparation of the burnt offering,” a procession of priests, with the accompaniment of singing and flute playing, wended their way from the temple down to the Pool of Siloam, where a priest filled a golden flask with water while a choir repeated Isaiah 12:3: “With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation” (see Mishnah Sukkah 4:9; 5:1; Talmud Sukkah 48B). The Pool of Siloam was a collecting pool for the Spring Gihon, the principal water supply for Jerusalem. The Jews referred to water from springs or streams that was fit for drinking as “living water.” Living water was considered the most superior form of water for ritual purification.12

The priests returned to the temple via the Water Gate, a gate on the south side of the wall immediately surrounding the temple within the Court of the Gentiles.13 When they arrived at the Water Gate, a blast was made on a shofar, or ram’s horn. The shofar was a signaling instrument used to announce such major events as the beginning of the Sabbath, new moons, and the death of a notable person, as well as to warn of approaching danger. In this case, the shofar announced the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles, which began with the water-drawing ceremony.

When the procession of priests and Levites returned from the pool of Siloam, they were met by pilgrims who had come to the temple mount. Each pilgrim brought a lulab, which consisted of a tree branch in one hand and a citron in the other (see Mishnah 3:1–7). The lulab was to be waved while the morning sacrifice was being offered with the special water libation. The waving of the lulab was a biblical injunction: “And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days” (Leviticus 23:40).

Upon the blasting of the shofar, the group moved toward the altar of sacrifice located in the Court of the Priests that immediately surrounded the temple. The priest carrying the golden flask filled with
water ascended the altar and prepared to pour the libation on the morning burnt offering. While doing this, the procession that had followed the priest circled the altar.

It appears that pilgrims were often allowed to join in with the priests who were circling the altar, though how many participated is not stated.14 George W. MacRae suggests that this procession was of priests alone,15 but an incident mentioned in the Mishnah may suggest otherwise. Mishnah Sukkah 4:9 tells us that after the water was poured into the silver bowl, it was said to the officiating priest: “Raise thy hand!” The reason for saying this was that “on one occasion [a Sadducean priest] poured . . . over his feet” the water (for the Sadducees did not hold to this tradition). This action so outraged the pilgrims that “all the people pelted him with their citrons.” This event suggests that if the pilgrims were not in the procession itself, they were at least close enough to be able to pelt the priest. The only logical place would be the Court of the Priests itself or perhaps the Court of the Israelites, though the latter seems less likely because of its size.16

Whether walking around the altar or observing the procession, the following was said by the pilgrims while waving7 their lulabs: “We beseech Thee, O Eternal, save us, we pray” (Mishnah Sukkah 3:9; see also 4:5). The priest who had charge of pouring the water then offered the water libation with a wine libation in two silver bowls on the southwest corner of the altar.

The water-drawing ceremony proceeded in this manner every day of the feast except on the seventh day, when the priests (and perhaps the pilgrims) circled the altar seven times instead of just once (see Mishnah Sukkah 4:5). The circumambulation of the altar seven times ended the water-drawing ritual. It was not performed on the eighth day (see Mishnah Sukkah 4:1, 5),18 though it appears that a prayer for rain was given on the eighth day (see Talmud Taanith 2a-3a).

Additional sacrifices. The chronicle outlined by Rabbi Joshua ben Hanania indicates that after the water-drawing ceremony there was an “additional sacrifice.” According to Numbers 29:12–40, in addition to the daily morning and evening burnt offering required by the law of Moses,19 there were additional sacrifices to be made during the Feast of Tabernacles. On the first day of the feast there were to be offered thirteen young bullocks, two rams, fourteen lambs of the first

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Rabbi Joshua ben enomy there was 9:12-40, in adding required by the made during the there were to be lambs of the first year, and one kid for a sin offering. On the second day of the feast, there were to be offered the same offerings except instead of thirteen young bullocks, only twelve were to be offered. On the third day the offerings were again the same with the exception of the bullocks: eleven were offered. This declination of bullocks continued until the seventh day when seven bullocks were offered (the other sacrifices remaining the same). On the eighth day, one bullock was offered with one ram, seven lambs and one kid for a sin offering. The account concludes with this injunction: “These things ye shall do unto the Lord in your set feasts, beside your vows, and your freewill offerings, for your burnt offerings, and for your meat offerings, and for your drink offerings and for your peace offerings.”

Upon the conclusion of the “additional sacrifice,” the pilgrims would have an opportunity to present their individual offerings, such as expressing personal devotion to God (through the burnt offering), or the cleansing of severe impurities (through the sin offering). This was a time of great rejoicing and singing including the singing of the complete Hallel or Psalms 113 to 118 (see Mishnah Sukkah 4:8).

When the personal offerings were completed, the afternoon burnt offering was performed.21

The lighting ceremony. Normally, upon the conclusion of the afternoon burnt offering, probably around sunset, the gates of the Temple were closed.22 On the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, however, the gates were left open so that all might participate in the final rite of the day: the lighting ceremony. This occasion proved to be a most joyous and festive observance. From the Mishnah (Sukkah 5:2-3) we are told that “at the close of the first Holyday” the priests would descend from the Court of the Israelites to the Court of the Women.23 In the court four huge candelabra were placed, each “with four golden bowls at their tops and four ladders to each one.” Each candelabra was fifty cubits in height. Wicks made “from the workouts drawers and girdles of the priests” were placed in each bowl and lit. It is said that “there was no courtyard in Jerusalem that was not lit up with the light” which came from these candelabras.

The rest of the night was spent in joyous activities in the Court of the Women. Mishnah Sukkah 5:4 says: “Pious men and men of good deeds used to dance before them (the candelabra) with burning torches in their hands and sang before them songs and praises. And
the Levites on harps, and on lyres, and with cymbals, and with trumpets and with other instruments of music without number upon the fifteen steps leading down from the court of the Israelites to the Court of the Women, corresponding to The Fifteen Songs of Ascent in the Psalms [Psalms 120–34]; upon them the Levites used to stand with musical instruments and sing hymns."

The festivities surrounding the illumination rite concluded the festival day. It is not clear whether or not the illumination rite was performed every night or whether the lights simply remained lit during the whole feast.

The messianic nature of the feast. Both the water-drawing ceremony and the lighting of the candelabra were aspects of the feast not found in biblical legislation. Nevertheless, they had apparently become part of the ceremonies of the feast to portray the future messianic age. That is evident from the fact that as part of the ceremonies associated with the Feast of Tabernacles, Zechariah 14, a well-known messianic chapter of the scriptures, was read to all the people. Talmud Megillah 31a says: "On the first day of Tabernacles we read the section of the festivals in Leviticus, and for haftarah [a section from the prophetic books recited after the reading from the Pentateuch on Sabbaths and Holy-days], Behold a day cometh for the Lord (Zech. 14)."

What is the connection between Zechariah 14 and the Feast of Tabernacles? Zechariah describes the time when "the day of the Lord cometh." At a time when "all nations" have gathered against Jerusalem, the Lord will return and save his people by standing upon the Mount of Olives which shall "cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west" providing a way to escape through the valley thus created (v. 4). Having saved his people, the Lord insists that "every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles" (v. 16). Failure to keep this command would result in the rains failing (see vv. 17–19). This is the first biblical association of rain with the festival. But as MacRae said, "the fact that it was celebrated at the end of the harvest and immediately before the autumnal rainy season, we can well imagine that the petition for rain is as old as the feast itself." 32

With the coming of the Lord, the messianic age is inaugurated.

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Zechariah points out two important aspects associated with the messianic age. The first is perpetual light. Zechariah 14:6–7, describing the day when the Lord comes, says: “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.” The second characteristic of the messianic age is akin to rain, that of water. Zechariah says: “And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem” (Zechariah 14:8). It seems safe to assume that by the reading of Zechariah 14 during the feast the application of these messianic features to the Feast of Tabernacles was commonplace among the people.

It is evident that the two features of the messianic age described by Zechariah in chapter 14 were made an important part of the Feast of Tabernacles ceremonies. The water-drawing ceremony is the complement of the living water flowing from Jerusalem in 14:8. The lighting of the huge candelabra is the symbolic counterpart of the continuous day found in 14:6–7.

Zechariah 14 gives us further insight into the meaning of the lighting ceremony. When the Messiah comes, inaugurating the messianic age, he will be the light of all the world, not just of the Jews. This is perhaps why four candelabra were used in the lighting ceremony. Four is often a symbolic number representing geographical completeness or the four corners of the world. Thus, the lighting of the four candelabra would have symbolized that light would be given to all the world through the coming Messiah. This association would have been emphasized further by the fact that each candelabra had four bowls.

Jesus and the Feast of Tabernacles

Jesus is the living waters. John 7:14 tells us that Jesus arrived in Jerusalem midway through the Feast of Tabernacles. His first few days at the temple were filled with confrontations concerning the authority of his teachings (see John 7:15–36). Then on “the last day, that great day of the feast,” Jesus “stood” and issued this challenge: “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:37–38). John added, “But this spake he
of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive" (John 7:39). That is, the Holy Ghost, which is given to those who come unto Christ, brings life to their souls.

The effect of this challenge is more meaningful when we understand the water-drawing ceremony of the Feast of Tabernacles. Having daily drawn water from the Pool of Siloam, then pouring it on the morning offering while shouting, "Save us Lord," the absence of the water-drawing ceremony on the eighth day would have been profound. Hence, on the day when living water was not drawn from the spring and only a prayer for rain was offered—a day that perhaps symbolized Israel's dependence upon God for water that sustains life—the Savior declared that if anyone thirsted, he should come to Him for living waters. The water he offered was not for physical but for spiritual survival. His water was the cleansing and sustaining influence of the Holy Ghost necessary for the salvation of the souls of mankind. Interestingly enough, the Jerusalem Talmud\(^{30}\) states that the Jews understood the water-drawing ceremony to be symbolic of the Holy Ghost: "Why is the name of it called, The drawing out of water? Because of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, according to what is said: 'With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.'"\(^{30}\) Thus the prayers of the priests and pilgrims attending the Feast of Tabernacles had been answered but not in the way they had expected.\(^{31}\)

**Jesus is the light of the world.** On the day after the Savior's challenge to come to him for living water, the Savior was once again at the temple teaching. While in the Court of the Women,\(^{32}\) the Savior declared to the multitude, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). Could there be any doubt in the minds of his listeners as to what he was claiming? In the very place where the huge candelabras were lit giving light to "every courtyard in Jerusalem," symbolizing the continuous light given to all the world during the messianic age, Jesus proclaimed that he was that light,\(^ {33}\) not only the light of Jerusalem but of all the world. Jewish tradition held that God gives man light.\(^ {34}\) It is obvious that he was claiming to be the Messiah in their hearing.

To give credence to his claim, the Savior demonstrated his power to give light to the world in John. In John 9:2-4, he healed a blind man who "saw a man while he was passing and said unto him, 'Are you the Christ the Son of David?'" Then he said to him, "While it is day: while it is day, ye shall walk in your own light, and ye shall not walk in darkness." He then added, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." When the blind man asked, "Where is your light?" Jesus replied, "You are my light." This is a striking contrast to the blindness of the religious leaders, who had rejected the Savior as the Messiah they expected. They saw themselves as the light of the world, but in reality, they were spiritually blind.

**Conclusion**

It is undeniable that Jesus is the light of the world. His claim to be the Messiah was not just a matter of personal pride or ambition, but a statement of his divine mission. He demonstrated his power to give light to the world through the healing of the blind man, as well as through his teaching and miracles. The religious leaders of his time rejected his claims, but his followers believed in his teachings and were guided by his light. In contrast, the world continues to walk in darkness, led by their own false lights and prophecies. It is up to us to choose whether we will follow the light of Jesus or continue to walk in darkness.
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to give light to the world through a miracle that is recorded only by John. In John 9:1-7, the story of a man born blind follows on the heals of the Feast of the Tabernacles. The story begins when Jesus “saw a man which was blind from his birth.” When asked why, the Savior responded “that the works of God should be made manifest in him.” Then he said, “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” Upon that “he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.” The man did exactly what he was told. After he had washed his eyes in the same pool that the priest had drawn water from as part of the water-drawing ceremony of the Feast of Tabernacles, he came out seeing.

Two important symbols of the Feast of Tabernacles—water and light—were present in the miracle. By spitting onto the ground, Jesus demonstrated that indeed the living waters, or the Spirit of the Holy Ghost which can give man light, does indeed come from him, for “out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38). That is further emphasized by the man’s washing in the waters in the pool of Siloam, which also symbolized the Holy Ghost.

CONCLUSION

It is undeniable that Jesus’ statements during the Feast of Tabernacles are highlighted by the feast itself. The Savior chose a sacred time of the year when the Jews looked forward with great rejoicing through ritual action to the coming of the Messiah. Through the instrumentality of the feast, Jesus declared that he was the promised Messiah, the literal fulfillment of everything promised in the Feast of Tabernacles. It is clear from the hostile reactions of the Jews that they saw it this way, supposing that he was speaking blasphemy (see John 7:30, 32, 44-53; 8:59).

NOTES


3. During the Second Temple period, many Jews, including the Pharisees, followed an oral interpretation of the written law of Moses found in Exodus through Deuteronomy. This is often referred to as the "oral law." In the New Testament, the oral law is called "the tradition of the elders" (Matthew 15:2; Mark 7:3, 5). In the second century after Christ, the oral tradition was reduced to writing and systematically organized by Rabbi Judah the Prince. It is called the Mishnah. The Mishnah is grouped into six orders, which in turn are divided into sixty-three treatises called tractates.

Over time, the rabbis held many debates concerning the Mishnah. The records and minutes of these debates were added to the Mishnah. This compilation has become known as the Talmud. Two different groups of rabbis produced a Talmud: a group in Babylon and a group in Jerusalem. The Babylonian Talmud is the most commonly used of the two. It has been translated into several languages. The Jerusalem Talmud is not often used and is only found in Hebrew. For a complete discussion of the history of the Mishnah and Talmud, see Isaac Unterman, *The Talmud: An Analytical Guide to Its History and Teachings* (New York: Bloch, 1952).

In this paper, all references to the Talmud refer to the Babylonian Talmud unless otherwise stated. Further, in this paper, I will follow MacRae's thinking who states: "We shall not be concerned with the dating of the Mishnah; there is no doubt that at least some of the precepts in it go back long before the final crystallization of the written form. It would be idle also to be deterred by the fact that many of the legal prescriptions are meaningless in view of the destruction of the Temple. As far as the feast is concerned, the Mishnah presents an idealized picture of the Temple ritual but also the necessary information for the proper observance of them elsewhere." "The Meaning and Evolution of the Feast of Tabernacles," 270-71.


6. Talmud Pesahim 68b states that the Feast of Weeks commemorated "the day on which the Torah was given." See also Talmud Megillah 31a and the book of Jubilees 1:1; 6:17-19. This is the view not only of ancient Judaism but of modern Jewry as well. Writing of this feast, Rabbi Hayim Hailev Donin states: "Shavuot [Hebrew, 'Feast of Weeks'] commemorates the awesome event experienced by the children of Israel seven weeks after their exodus from Egypt when they camped at the foot of Mt. Sinai somewhere in the Sinait Peninsula. This event was

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7. It should be remembered that as a result of rebellion, the law
Israel ultimately received at Mount Sinai was the law of Moses, which
was only preparatory for the higher law that would be given later. The
law of Moses functioned through the authority of the lesser, or Aaronic,
priesthood. The higher law promised would function under the author-
ity of the higher, or Melchizedek, priesthood. It would include the ordi-
nances associated with that priesthood, the first of which is the laying
on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. The reception of the gift of
the Holy Ghost was given on the Day of Pentecost (see Acts 1–2), an
appropriate time to demonstrate that the higher law had been given by
God to Israel.

8. J. C. Rylaarsdam, "Convocation, Holy," in Interpreter's Dictionary of

9. In the Talmud the eighth day is actually considered a separate fes-
tival (see Sukkah 48a).

10. See Talmud Shabbath 154b and Louis Ginzberg, The Legends of the
Jews, 7 vols. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1913),
4:405. Roofs were generally flat with a staircase ascending from the out-
side and were used for a variety of reasons.

11. The Mishnah describes the rite of the burnt offering as being per-
formed in four parts with each part being determined by lot. The first lot
was the clearing of the ashes from the altar (Yoma 2:2; Tamid 1:4). The
ashes were cleared from the altar "at cockcrow or close to it, either before
it or after it" but during "the Festivals at the first watch" for "before cock-
crow time drew near the Forecourt was already filled with Israelites"
(Yoma 1:8). Josephus tells us that the temple gates, which were normally
kept closed until morning, were opened at midnight during festivals
(Antiquities of the Jews, 18.2.2). The second lot determined "who should
slaughter, who should toss the blood, (and) who should remove the ashes
from the Inner Altar, (and) who should clear away the ashes from the
Candlestick, (and) who should take up the limbs [of the burnt offering]
to the Altar-slope" (Yoma 2:3; see also Tamid 3:1). The animal could not
be slaughtered before dawn; therefore, the captain of the temple (sagan
ha kohanim) said to one, "Go forth and see if the time has arrived for
slaughtering." The priest went to a high point of the temple to see if the
light of morning lit up the east "as far as Hebron." If so, the animal could
be slaughtered (Yoma 3:1; see also Tamid 3:2–7). The third lot determined
who would offer the incense upon the inner altar (see Yoma 2:4; Tamid
5:2–6:3). The fourth lot determined which priests would offer the burnt
offering on the altar (see Yoma 2:5; Tamid 4:3). For detailed descriptions
concerning the offering of the morning and evening burnt offerings (the

12. According to Mishnah Mikvaot 1:1: "There are six grades among ritual baths, in ascending order of superiority." These are (1) water in cisterns, (2) water of rain drippings, (3) mikvehs, (4) wells, (5) salty water or hot water from a spring, and (6) living water (see Mikvaot 1:1-8). Only "living water" could be used in the purification of lepers (Leviticus 14:5) and the purification necessary after defilement caused by dead corpses (Numbers 19:17).

13. The main sources for a description of the temple come from the Mishnah and Josephus. But there is discrepancy in the different accounts. According to Middoth, 1:4-5, and Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 15.11.5, there are seven gates into the Court of the Priests, including the Nicanor Gate (which does not actually open into the Court of Priests but into the Court of the Israelites). In Middoth 2:6, Shekalim 6:3, and Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* 5.5.2, eight gates are mentioned, not including the Nicanor Gate. Most scholars accept the smaller number, placing the water gate as the third gate from the west on the southern side of the Court of the Priests. This would place it close to the laver (see Shmuel Safrai and Michael Avi-Yona, "Temple," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 15:962-67).

14. It is Safrai's belief that the people were involved in the procession itself. Says he: "The people participated in all the rites of the Feast of Tabernacles and, with the exception of the water-libation which was performed by a priest or the high priest, their role in Temple rites and customs was equal to that of the priests. They surrounded the altar with palm-branches and with willow, which is, of course, the essence of the water-libation ceremonies... All the people participated in the procession around the altar, (from which they were barred during the rest of the year) with the palm-branch." "Temple," in *Jewish People of the First Century*, 2:894-95.


16. This is the view of J. C. Rylaarsdam, who describes this scene in this manner: "The water was brought up in solemn fashion with the blowing of the shofar at the city gate. The pilgrims, singing the Hallel and carrying their lulabs, witnessed the circumbulation of the altar by the priestly procession and waving their lulabs, joined in the great cry: 'Save us, we beseech thee, O Lord.' " "Booths, Feast of," in

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17. Mishnah Shabbat 1:18. "From the beginning and end O Eternal, save us, School of Shammai, we pray."

18. In the Talmudic rite was done at Taanith 2a-3a. Things, however, such as... performed was the... in Sukkah 4 the waving of the water on the altar, 19. See Exodus 20. See Safrai, Ri.

20. Mishnah Pesahim 6:1 at the eighth day. It is not... held during the Fea

22. See Safrai, Ri.

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25. MacRae, "Me 269: The association from Mishnaic time
John and the Feast of Tabernacles


17. Mishnah Sukkah 3:9 says: “And where do they wave?—At the beginning and end of Give thanks unto the Eternal and at We beseech Thee, O Eternal, save us, we pray; this is the view of the School of Hillel. The School of Shammasi says, Also at We beseech Thee, O Eternal, send us prosperity, we pray.”

18. In the Talmud, there is a debate about how often the water-drawing rite was done as well as when it was performed last in the feast (see Taanith 2a–3a). The Mishnah, which consists of earlier rabbinical writings, however, suggests that the last day the water-drawing ritual was performed was the seventh day (Sukkah 4:1; but see Rabbi Judah’s comments in Sukkah 4:9). This agrees with biblical legislation that requires the waving of the lulab, a ritual performed during the pouring of the water on the altar, for seven days (see Leviticus 23:40).


21. Mishnah Pesachim 5:1 says: “The daily burnt-offering was slaughtered at the eighth hour and a half and offered up at the ninth hour and a half.” It is not clear, however, whether the time on this was strictly held during the Feast of Tabernacles.


23. From Talmudic sources it appears that “the place of the Water-Drawing” is in the Court of the Women. Talmud Sukkah 53a tells of the rejoicing that took place after the lighting of the huge candelabra’s which Mishnah Sukkah 5:2 tells took place in the Court of the Women. Yet Talmud Sukkah 53a speaks of this place as “the place of Water-Drawing.” In a note on Mishnah Sukkah 5:1, Philip Backman suggests the reason for this name was that there was a “well, in the Women’s Forecourt, from which the water was drawn for libation on Sukkoth” (Backman, Mishnayoth, 7 vols. [New York: Judaica Press, 1964], 2:341). But Raymond Brown says of this place: “In connection with the water ceremonies at the feast of Tabernacles, the Jerusalem Talmud (Sukkah 55a) says that the part of the temple precincts traversed during the procession with the water was called the ‘Place of Drawing,’ because from there they drew the holy spirit” (also Midrash Rabbah lx 8 on Gen xxxix 1)” (Gospel According to John, 329).

24. The rabbis believed that these traditions were given at Mount Sinai but only passed down orally. See John Lightfoot, A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica, 4 vols. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1979), 3:322.

25. MacRae, “Meaning and Evolution of the Feast of Tabernacles,” 269. The association of the Feast of Tabernacles with rain is well known from Mishnaic times. The tractate Ta’anith, which deals with special
faste that are called for due to continued drought, begins with the statement: "From what time should they begin to mention the Power of Rain? R. Eliezer says, From the first Holyday day of the Festival of Tabernacles; R. Joshua says, From the last Holyday day of the Festival of Tabernacles" (1:1).

26. Compare Psalms 46:4; 65:9; Isaiah 8:6; Jeremiah 2:13; Ezekiel 47:1-12; Joel 3:18; Revelation 22:1-2. On this, Brown comments thus: "The fountain of waters that overflows from Jerusalem . . . can be interpreted against the background of abundant rain sent by God during Tabernacles" (Gospel According to John, 327). Joyce Baldwin interprets this verse in this way: "The dream of an abundant water supply in Jerusalem will become fact. Instead of the spring Gilbon, which supplied water that ‘flowed gently’ to become the Siloam brook (Isaiah 8:6), and was never really adequate for the city’s needs, rivers independent of seasonal rainfall would rise in Jerusalem, to flow constantly to east and west until they reached the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean." Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, vol. 24 of Old Testament Commentaries (London: Tyndale, 1972), 203.

27. Numerology is an important aspect of Jewish thought. Numbers such as three, four, and seven represented wholeness or completeness: three because the number three has a beginning, a middle, and an end; four, because there are four corners of the world; seven, because the world was created in seven days. To emphasize the completeness of something, often the number was multiplied by itself: 3 x 3, 4 x 4, or 7 x 7.

28. The reason for his late arrival seems to be on account of the pressure of his unbelieving brothers who wished him to go to the feast simply to perform miracles. Brown sees this as a temptation faced by the Savior similar to the account in Matthew (4:1-11) and Luke (4:1-13) where the Savior is tempted to display his power by jumping from the pinnacle of the temple (see Brown, Gospel According to John, 308, for a complete discussion). Therefore, the Savior delays his departure to the feast so that it is clear that his reasons for being there are not to display his power.

29. See note 3.


31. The theme of Christ as the living waters permeates the gospel of John wherein is recorded several incidents that occurred during the ministry of Christ that revolve around water. For example, John records the story of the Savior offering living water to the woman of Samaria who was drawing water from a well. To her, he said: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." John 4:14.
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"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:13-14). That Christ has the power to give this living water is demonstrated through two stories that evidence Christ's power over water: the marriage at Cana where Christ turned water turn to wine (see John 2:1-11) and the Savior's walking on water (see John 6:15-21). To dramatize the point further, John, alone, records the piercing of the Savior's side while upon the cross. In that account it is said the when soldiers were breaking the legs of the three who were crucified, they saw that the Savior was already dead and "they brake not his legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water" (John 19:33-34; emphasis added). John's point is clear. The living waters do come from the Savior.

In view of this, the reader of John's Gospel is stunned to discover that while on the cross the Savior cried out, "I thirst" (John 19:28), a statement recorded only by John. He to whom all must go to receive "living waters" so they may "never thirst" again (John 4:14), now thirsted! This pathetic statement reveals that while on the cross, the Savior, in bearing our sins, infirmities, fears, guilt, and remorse, had "descended below all things" (D&C 88:6) and become like "the poor and needy" who "seek water, and there is none" (Isaiah 41:17). He had become like us—lost, alone, and thirsty. In this condition, the Savior gained the compassion and mercy needed to bring the living waters to those who seek it.

32. John 8:20 tells us that he was in the treasury, which is the Court of the Women.

33. J. H. Bernard sees the lighting of the candelabras as a possible background behind Jesus' saying but offers another possible reason: "But Philo's account of the Feast of Tabernacles would furnish an equally plausible explanation. He says that this feast is held at the autumnal equinox, in order that the world (kosmos) may be full, not only by day but also by night, of the all-beautiful light (tou paganou photos), as at this season there is no twilight (de septem. 24). . . . The passage of Philo shows, however, that the Feast of Tabernacles suggested the idea of light to some minds" (J. H. Bernard, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John, 2 vols. The New International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985), 2:291.

34. See, for example, Psalm 27:1; Isaiah 60:19. "The later Rabbis applied the thought to the Messiah: 'Light is the Name of Messiah,' they said" (Bernard, Critical and Exegetical Commentary, 2:292).