

John 7-9 in Light of the Feast of Tabernacles

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One of the various themes that filters through the Gospel of John is the replacement or transcendence of “holy places” with the person of Christ.¹ This is clearly seen in the manner in which John treats the Savior’s cleansing of the temple early in his ministry (see John 2:13-22).² Note also how John reports the replacement of the sacred site of Bethel with the “Son of Man” in John 1:43-51;³ Jacob’s well⁴ of water with Christ’s living water in John 4:4-1;5 the sacred mountain of Gerizim with a God that must be worshiped in “spirit and truth” in John 4:20-26; a place of healing, the Pools of Bethesda,⁵ with Christ, the sole healer in John 5:1-9; and finally, the waters of the Pool of Siloam with the living waters (baptism) offered by Christ in John 9:1-7.⁶ In John 7-8, the same theme is found. In addition to a “holy place” being supplanted, John apprises us of the circumstances revealing the replacement of a “sacred time” with the person of Christ. The “sacred time” being replaced was the Feast of Tabernacles or *sukkoth* as it is known in Hebrew. It is one of the three feasts commanded by the Lord that all males should annually attend (Ex. 23:17; 34:23) and what Josephus calls the “most holy and most eminent” of the three feasts of the Hebrews.⁷ Yet, understanding the way in which Christ replaced this most important feast is intimately connected with the feast itself. However, as is often the case in scripture, John assumes the reader is already aware of the activities surrounding the Feast of Tabernacles therefore no details of the feast are given. John only tells of the movements and sayings of Christ in connection with the feast. But as Raymond Brown has said, in order to understand what the Savior said during John 7-8 “one must have an intimate knowledge of the celebration of the Tabernacles.”⁸

The focus of the following pages will be to provide that “intimate knowledge” of the Feast of Tabernacles that Brown spoke of in order to reveal in what way Christ replaced that sacred time with himself. To arrive at this, the feast will be examined through both Biblical and Rabbinical sources. It will then be possible to examine John 7-8 in the light of the Feast of Tabernacles background noting the impact of Jesus’ sayings upon his listeners. It will also become clear that the replacement theme found in John 9, the healing of the man born blind at the Pool of Siloam, is part of an overall story recorded by John, making John 7-9 one grand unit.

FEAST OF TABERNACLES IN THE SECOND TEMPLE PERIOD

Sources

There are two major sources available that aid our understanding of how the Feast of Tabernacles was practiced during the second temple period. First, the Bible. Scriptural legislation regarding the feast are found in the five books of Moses (Ex. 23:14-17; 34:22,23; Leviticus 23:33-44; Numbers 29:12-40; Deuteronomy 16:13-17), Nehemiah (8:13-18), and Zechariah (14). Second, Rabbinical writings. Chief among these is the legislation found in the Mishnah and Talmud.⁹ Though these legislations were written 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. Added to these sources are some references found in the works of Josephus, a Jewish historian writing shortly after the time of Christ at the end of the second temple period.

Feast of Tabernacles, One of Three Temple Feasts

After the children of Israel were freed from Egyptian bondage and led by Moses to Mt. 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” (see Exodus 19). 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 three feasts were held at the three times of the year when many parts of the ancient world held celebrations associated with the harvest of crops. But, as Abraham Bloch has pointed out, most of these pagan celebrations were “characterized by excessive feasting, orgies, and pagan rites.” Therefore, “It was important to raise the moral tone of the agricultural folk festivals and to endow them with an uplifting religious and social significance.”¹⁰ This was best done by doing two things. First, locating the central activities of the feast at the temple with the priests in charge. Hence, 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” has reference to a temple or sanctuary. Regarding this, 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 stems from the basic conception of the temple as a divine dwelling place and actually belongs to the temple’s technical terminology.”¹¹ 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 *ohel mo'ed*, which literally means “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.¹²

Though the Lord commanded that all males appear at 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).

The second thing necessary to change the focus of the agricultural feasts was to give each feast a religious focus. 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 Mt. Sinai in the third month following their exodus from Egypt.¹³ It also foreshadowed the giving of the higher law at a future time.¹⁴ The Feast of Tabernacles recalled Israel’s wandering in the wilderness for forty years and their eventual arrival into the promised land, Israel’s permanent home. It also anticipated the future coming of the Messiah. However, it may have taken Israel many years to view these feasts as times of worshipping God.

Feast of Tabernacle Customs

During the second temple period, the Feast of Tabernacles included a number of rituals. Some were instituted through Biblical legislation while others were developed and added over time. Those not found in the Bible are only known through Rabbinical writings.

Length of the Feast

In the priestly writings of Leviticus (23:33-44), we learn that the feast was to be

held for seven days. The first day was to be a “holy convocation”; the Hebrew is *mikra kodesh* which means a holy summons. “It stresses the summons to an assembly where Israel, in a state of special holiness, is called to fulfil 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.”¹⁵ An additional “holy convocation” was to be called after the seven days were complete making the feast a total of eight days.¹⁶ The eight day was referred to as the “great day of the feast” (John 7:37).

Dwelling in Booths

We are also told in Leviticus that the Israelites were to build booths or small huts outside of 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” (23:43). It is from these booths (the Hebrew is *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.¹⁷ In Nehemiah 8:16, we are told that when the Feast of Tabernacles was reinstated 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 a booths if they so desired (see Talmud Sukkah 26a).

Water Drawing Ceremony

In describing the rejoicing that was experienced at the place of the water-drawing¹⁸ during the festivities of the lighting of the candelabra, one of the rites of the Feast of Tabernacles which had developed by the second temple period,¹⁹ the Talmud tells of Rabbi Joshua ben Hanania who states:

When we used to rejoice at the place of the Water-Drawing, our eyes saw no sleep. How was this? 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 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.)

In this description, the order of events of an average day during the Feast of Tabernacles is revealed, albeit incomplete, as will now be shown.

The morning would begin 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,²⁰ a procession of priests with the accompaniment of flute playing and singing 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 Isa. 12:3: “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation” (Mishnah Sukkah 4:9; 5:1; Talmud Sukkah 48b). The Pool of Siloam was a collecting pool for the spring Gihon, the major water supply for Jerusalem. The Jews referred to water from springs or streams fit for drinking as “living water.” Living water was considered the most superior form of water for ritual purification.²¹

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 Gentiles.²² Arriving at the Water Gate a blast was made on a *shofar* (Heb. for ram’s horn). The *shofar* was a signaling instrument used to announce major events such as the beginning of the Sabbath, new moons, the death of a notable, or warned of approaching danger. In this case, the *shofar* announced the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles which began with the water-drawing ceremony.

Upon the blasting of the *shofar*, the group moved towards the altar of sacrifice located in the Court of the Priests which surrounded the Temple. Either earlier or during the same time the water-drawing rite was taking place, other priests decorated the altar with willows. The priests went to “a place below Jerusalem called Motsa” where they collected willow branches. These were brought up and placed around the altar so that “their tops bent over the top of the Altar” (Mishnah Sukkah 4:5). The priest with the golden flask filled with water ascended the altar and poured the libation on the morning burnt offering. While doing this, the procession that had followed the priest would circle the altar.

Already at the temple many pilgrims would have arrived with each having a *lulab*, which consisted of a tree branch in one hand and a citron in the other (Mishnah 3:1-7).²³ While the morning sacrifice was being offered with the special water libation, the pilgrims would wave their *lulabs*. 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). The *lulab* was a sign of the harvest.²⁴

It appears that pilgrims joined in with the priests who were circling the altar. However, this is a matter of debate. George MacRae seems to suggest that this procession was of priests alone.²⁵ 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 so outraged the pilgrims that “all the people pelted him with their citrons.” This suggests that if the pilgrims were not in the procession itself they were at least close enough for them to be able to pelt the priest. The only logical places would be the court of the priests itself or perhaps in the court of the Israelites though the latter seems less likely due to its size.²⁶ From an incident related by Josephus, it seems clear that the people did not hesitate to enter into the court of the priests during the Feast of Tabernacles. The text reads:

As to Alexander [Janaeus], his own people were seditious against him; for at a festival which was then celebrated, when he stood upon the altar, and was going to sacrifice, the nation rose upon him with citrons, [which they then had in their hands, because] the law of the Jews required, that at the feast of tabernacles every one should have branches of palm-tree and citron-tree: which thing we have elsewhere related. They also reviled him, as derived from a captive, and so unworthy of his dignity and of sacrificing.

The text then tells that Alexander was so outraged with the reaction of the people that he slew six thousand of them. The next action of the king is important in this discussion.

He also built a partition-wall of wood round the altar and the temple, as far as that partition within which it was only lawful for the priests to enter; and by this means he obstructed the multitude from coming at him.²⁷

It is S. 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.²⁸

In a footnote, Safrai says: “In Mishnah Sukkah 4:5 the identity of the encirclers is not given, but it is understood in this way in Palestinian Talmud.”²⁹

Whether walking around the altar or observing the procession, the following was said by the pilgrims while waving³⁰ their *lulabs*: “We beseech Thee, O Eternal, save now, we beseech thee, O Eternal, send prosperity, we pray.” Mishnah Sukkah 4:5 gives an alternative to what was said: “R. Judah said, (they were saying), ‘Ani waho, save now.’”³¹ The priest who had charge of pouring the water³² went up the ramp and offered the water libation with a wine libation into two silver bowls on the south-west 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 pilgrims?) circled the altar seven times instead of just once (Mishnah Sukkah 4:5). The circumambulation of the altar seven times ended the water-drawing ritual. It was not performed on the eighth day (Mishnah Sukkah 4:1, 5),³³ though it appears that a prayer for rain was given on the eighth day (Talmud Taanith 2a-3a).

Rabbinic writers have assigned meanings to the rites of the pouring of water on the altar and the waving of the *lulabs*. Talmud Rosh Hashanah 16a describes the meaning of the water-drawing rite in this way:

Why did the Torah enjoin on us to pour out water on Tabernacles? The Holy One, blessed be He, said, Pour out water before Me on Tabernacles, so that your rains this year may be blessed.

The thought seems to be that by keeping the feast with the water-drawing ceremony the people would be in harmony with the law of Moses thus reaping the blessings of the law. A close look at the blessings and curses associated with the law of Moses found in Deuteronomy 28 reveals that those who keep the law will be blessed with rain.³⁴ Hence, we are told in the Mishnah that

The world is judged at four periods in the year: on Passover, for grain; on the Festival of Weeks, for the fruits of trees; on the New Year, all the inhabitants of the world pass before Him, like flocks of sheep, as it is said, He Who fashioneth the hearts of them all, Who understandeth all their doings; and on the Festival of Tabernacles, they are judged for water. (Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 1:2)

The Talmud suggests that upon the conclusion of the Feast of Tabernacles, the people actually looked for a sign from heaven regarding this judgment. The sign would be given in the direction of the wind. The Talmud states:

But [did not] R. Isaac b. Abdimi say: ‘On the night following the last day of the [*Sukkoth*] Festival all were gazing upon the smoke arising from the pile of wood. If it inclined northward, the poor rejoiced and the people of means were sad, because the rains of the coming year would be abundant and their fruits would rot.³⁵ If it inclined southward, the poor were depressed and the men of means rejoiced, for there would be little rain that year and the fruit could be preserved. If it inclined eastwards, all rejoiced;³⁶ if westwards³⁷ all were depressed’? (Yoma 21b)

Further evidence for the association of rain with these rites is seen in the following statement found in the Talmud:

When do we [begin to] make mention of Rain? R. Eliezer says: From the time of the taking up of the Lulab; R. Joshua says, From the time when the Lulab is discarded. Said R. Eliezer: Seeing that these four species (Lulab) are intended only to make intercession for water, therefore as these cannot [grow] without water so the world [too] cannot exist without water. (Ta’anith 2b)

The Jerusalem Talmud³⁸ gives another view of this rite:

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.’³⁹

Additional Sacrifices

According to the chronicle outlined by Rabbi Joshua ben Hanania quoted earlier, following the morning sacrifice and the prayers that followed would be “the additional sacrifice.” According to Numbers 29:12-40, in addition to the daily morning and evening burnt offering required by the law of Moses,⁴⁰ there were additional sacrifices to be made during the Feast of Tabernacles. On the first day of the feast there was to be offered 13 young bullocks, 2 rams, 14 lambs of the first year, and one kid for a sin offering. On the second day of the feast, there was to be offered the same offerings except instead of 13 young bullocks there was only to be offered 12. On the third day the offerings were again the same with the exception of the bullocks. Only 11 were offered. This declination of bullocks continued until the seventh day when 7 bullocks were offered (the other sacrifices remaining the same). Then a change occurred 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 feast, 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.”

What was the meaning behind these offerings? The Talmud offers this suggestion:

R. Eleazar stated, To what do those seventy bullocks (that were offered during the seven days of the Festival) correspond? To the seventy nations. To what does the single bullock (of the Eighth Day) correspond? To the unique nation [Israel].⁴¹

A more Christian interpretation might be that the multitude of Mosaic sacrifices will be fulfilled in one sacrifice, even Jesus Christ.

Upon the conclusion of the “additional sacrifice,” the pilgrims would have opportunity to present their individual offerings, such as expressing personal devotion to God (through the burnt offering) or those associated with 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 113-118 (Mishnah Sukkah 4:8).⁴² Upon the conclusion of the personal offerings the afternoon burnt offering was performed.⁴³

The Lighting Ceremony

Normally, upon the conclusion of the afternoon burnt offering, probably around sunset, the gates of the temple would be closed.⁴⁴ However on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles the gates were left opened so that all might participate in the final rite of the day. This occasion proved to be a most joyous and festive observance.

Mishnah Sukkah 5:2 says that “At the close of the first Holyday” the priests would descend from the Court of the Israelites down into the Court of Women.⁴⁵ In the court four huge candelabra were placed, each “with four golden bowls at their tops and four ladders to each one.” The Talmud says that each were fifty cubits in height (Sukkah 52b). Wicks made “from the worn-out drawers and girdles of the priests” were placed in each bowl and lit (Mishnah Sukkah 5:3). A Mishnaic source informs us that “there was no courtyard in Jerusalem that was not lit up with the light” which came from these candelabras (Sukkah 5:3) and the Talmud mentions that “a woman could sift wheat by the illumination” of these lights (Sukkah 53a).

The rest of the night was spent in joyous activities in the Court of 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 Women's Court, corresponding to the Fifteen Songs of Ascent in the Psalms [Psalms 120-134]; upon them the Levites used to stand with musical instruments and sing hymns.

The festivities surrounding the illumination rite concluded the festival day. However, it is not clear whether or not the illumination rite was done every night, or whether the lights remained lit during the whole feast.

The Messianic Nature of the Feast

The water drawing ceremony and the lighting of the candelabra were additional aspects of the feast not found in Biblical legislation.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, they had apparently become part of the ceremonies of the feast to portray the future messianic age. We gather this from the fact that as part of the ceremonies associated with the Feast of Tabernacles, Zechariah 14, a messianic chapter, 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? Chapter fourteen 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 the toward the west" providing a way to escape through the valley created. Having saved his people, the Lord insists that "every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up⁴⁷ from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles" (vs. 16). Failure to keep this command would result in the rains failing (see vs.s 17-19). This is the first Biblical association of rain with the festival. But as George MacRae has said: "When we consider the original agricultural nature of the festival and 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."⁴⁸

With the coming of the Lord, the messianic age is inaugurated. Zechariah points out two important aspects associated with the messianic age. The first is perpetual light. In Zechariah 14:6-7, describing the day the Lord comes, it says: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark:⁴⁹ 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" (Zech. 14:8).⁵⁰ 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.

From the foregoing, it is possible to see 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 compliment 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 understanding as to 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 the Jews. This is perhaps why four candelabra were used in the lighting ceremony. Four is often a symbolic number representing geographical completeness. This is because there are 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 would have been emphasized further by the fact that each candelabra had four bowls.⁵¹

JESUS AND THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

Jesus and the Living Waters

It is in this setting that we find Jesus in John 7-9. John 7:14 says that Jesus arrived midway through the feast.⁵² His first few days at the temple were filled with confrontations concerning the authority of his teachings (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). Then 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 impact of this challenge is lost unless one understands the water-drawing ceremony of the Feast of Tabernacles. For seven days the priests had drawn water from the pool of Siloam, a pool of living waters. The water was poured into the silver bowl on the altar while pilgrims chanted to God, “Save now, we beseech thee.” To emphasize the importance of this ritual, on the seventh day of the feast, the pilgrims encircled the altar seven times. 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 any thirst, they should come to *him* for living waters. However, the water he offered was not for physical but spiritual survival. His water was the cleansing and sustaining influence of the Holy Ghost necessary for the salvation of the souls of mankind. The prayers of the priests and

pilgrims attending the Feast of Tabernacles had been answered . . .but not in the way they had expected!

The theme of Christ as the living waters permeates the gospel of John wherein is recorded several incidences 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 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 to wine (John 2:1-11) and the Savior’s walking on water (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 that when the 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.⁵³

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 only recorded 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” that he might comprehend “all things” (D&C 88:6). Thus, he became 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.

Jesus is the Light of the World

On the day following 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 Women,⁵⁴ 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.⁵⁵ Not only the light of Jerusalem, but of all the world. Even the Jews own traditions had taught them that God gives man light.⁵⁶ That he was claiming to be the Messiah in their own hearing is obvious. That he was replacing both a sacred time and place is unmistakable.⁵⁷

To give credence to His claim, the Savior demonstrated his power to give light to the world through a miracle that is recorded only by John. In chapter nine, the story of the man born blind follows on the heels of the Feast of the Tabernacles. The story begins when Jesus “saw a man which was blind from his birth” (vs. 1). When asked why, the Savior responded “that the works of God should be made manifest in him” (vs. 3). 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” (vss. 4-5). 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” (vs. 6). The man did exactly what he was told. After he had washed his eyes in the same pool that the priest had drawn water as part of the water drawing ceremony of the Feast of Tabernacles, he came out seeing.

Two major 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). This is further emphasized by the washing of the waters in the pool of Siloam which has already been shown to have symbolized the Holy Ghost.⁵⁸

The necessity of God’s power to see and comprehend the things of God is taught in a modern revelation:

The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not; nevertheless, the day shall come when you shall comprehend even God, *being quickened in him and by him.*

Then shall ye know that ye have seen me, that I am, and that I am the true light that is in you, and that you are in me; otherwise ye could not abound. (D&C 88:50; emphasis added)

Jesus is the Great “I Am”

It is possible that the Feast of Tabernacles prompted another statement of importance from Jesus. In the scene just discussed, Jesus declared himself to be “the light of the world.” In John 3:19-21, Jesus tells Nicodemus that “when the light comes into the world,” men are forced “to take the option of seeing or turning away.”⁵⁹ In John 8:21-32 there seems to be a sense of urgency in accepting the light Jesus offers. Those who do will be made free. In verse 33 the Jews object saying that because they are of Abraham’s seed they “were never in bondage to any man.”⁶⁰ The arguing continues back and forth until the Jews challenge him: “Art thou greater than our father Abraham?” (vs.53) Jesus responded: “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad” (vs. 56). The Jews chided him, saying: “Thou art not yet fifty years old, and has thou seen

Abraham?” (vs. 57) Jesus’ answer is very instructive. Said he: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am” (vs.58). Upon this the Jews “picked up stones to cast at him” (vs. 59).

The reaction of the Jews towards Jesus’ use of “I am” has been well understood by most: he was proclaiming to be the I AM of Mt. Sinai. Yet, in the light of the background of the Feast of Tabernacles this statement takes on greater significance. At the conclusion of the water-drawing ceremony when the procession was circling the altar, it will be recalled that they said: “Ani waho! Save us we pray! Ani waho! Save us we pray.” Of this Davies has said: “The use of the phrase or formula ‘I am’ (Ani hu; Ani wahu or waho) by Jesus, therefore, in 8:58 is eminently fitting: the Feast of Tabernacles itself evoked it.”⁶¹ If this interpretation be correct, we can see Jesus’ replacement of this sacred time being complete. Not only was he their Messiah but also their law-giver from Mt. Sinai. He was their God! During the rituals of the Feast of Tabernacles, they prayed for the God to save them by giving them water and he has answered.

Conclusion

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

References

1. For a full treatment of this theme see W. D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1974), 288-335.
2. Concerning this scene W. D. Davies says, “John places the cleansing of the temple very early in his Gospel, in 2:13-22, to signify that a New Order had arrived. The ‘Holy Place’ is to be displaced by a new reality, a rebuilt ‘temple (*naos*),’ which John refers to as ‘the temple of his body (*tou naou tou somatos autou* [2:21])’” (Davis, *The Gospel and the Land*, 289).
3. Commenting on this W. D. Davies says: “The point of John 1:51, in part at least, is that it is no longer the place Bethel, that is important, but the Person of the Son of Man. It is in his Person that ‘the house of God and the gate of heaven’ are now found. Where the Son of Man is the ‘heaven will be opened’ and the angels will ascend and descend to connect that heaven with earth

...” (Davis, *The Gospel and the Land*, 289).

4. Of this Davies says: “But is it justifiable to regard it as ‘holy space’? There is no reference to this well in the OT. But in the Palestinian Targum on Gen. 28:10 we read: ‘Five signs were performed for *our father Jacob* at the time he went forth from Beersheba to go unto Haran...the fifth sign: after *our father Jacob* had lifted the stone from the mouth of the well, the well rose to its surface and overflowed and was overflowing twenty years: all the days that our father dwelt in Haran.’ We have already seen that John is occupied with Gen. 28, and, although we are dealing with a town of Samaria, whereas Haran was outside the land, it may be that we have an echo of this tradition in John 4. Certainly the association of Jacob with the well would automatically lend it a certain sanctity. The connection of patriarchs with wells is well established (Davis, *The Gospel and the Land*, 289-299).

5. The Pools of Bethesda may have a possible connection with the “healing gods in the ancient Orient and Greece.” See Davies, *The Gospel and the Land*, 311.

6. For treatment of this replacement see Davies, *The Gospel and the Land*, 313-316.

7. *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 8.4.1. See also George W. MacRae, “The Meaning and Evolution of the Feast of Tabernacles,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 22, no.3 (1960): 251.

8. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*. Anchor Bible Series Vol. 29 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 326.

9. 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 A. D., the oral tradition was reduced to writing and systematically organized by Rabbi Judah the Prince. It is known as 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. There were two different groups of Rabbis that produced a Talmud: a group in Babylon and a group in Palestine. The Babylonian Talmud is the most commonly used of the two Talmuds. It has been translated in several languages. The Palestinian Talmud is rarely quoted 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,” 270-271).

10. Abraham P. Bloch, *The Biblical and Historical Background of Jewish Customs and Ceremonies* (New York: Ktav, 1980), 184-185.

11. Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple Service in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1985; Originally published: Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 26.

12. Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Vol. 2 Religious Institutions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), 470.

13. Concerning the development of this feast from an agricultural feast to a religious feast, see, de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Vol. 2 Religious Institutions*, 493-495 and James C. VanderKam, “Weeks, Festival of,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 Vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:895-897. Though an agricultural based feast at first, by the time of the second temple period, the feast of Weeks was associated with the given of the Torah to Moses. Talmud Pesahim 68b states: “The Feast of Weeks, because it is the day on which the Torah was given.” See also Talmud Megillah 31a.; The Book of Jubilees 1:1; 6:17-19. This is the view of modern Jewry. Writing of this feast, Rabbi Hayim Halevy Donin states: “Shavuot [Heb. for feast of Weeks] commemorates the awesome event experience by the children of Israel seven weeks after their exodus from Egypt when they camped at the foot of Mt. Sinai somewhere in the Sinai Peninsula. This event was the Revelation, when God’s will was revealed to Israel. It marked the declaration of the Ten Commandments” (Hayim Halvey Donin, *To be a Jew* [New York: Basic Books, 1972], 239).

14. It should be remembered that as a result of rebellion, the law Israel finally received at Mt. 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 authority of the higher or Melchizedek Priesthood. It would include the ordinances 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 (Acts 1-2), an appropriate time to demonstrate that the higher law had been given by God to Israel.

15. J. C. Rylaarsdam, "Convocation, Holy," in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 4 Vols. (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1962), 1:678-679.
16. In the Talmud the eighth day is actually considered a separate festival (see Sukkah 48a).
17. Talmud Shabbath 154b; Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* 7 Vols. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1913), 4:405. Roofs were generally flat with a staircase ascending from the outside and were used for a variety of reasons.
18. The place of Water-Drawing is the Court of Women, see footnote 51
19. This ritual will be explained in detail in the following pages.
20. The Mishnah describes the rite of the burnt offering as being performed 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 or after it" but during "the Festivals at the first watch" for "before cockcrow time drew near the Forecourt was already filled with Israelites" (Yoma 1:8). Josephus tells us that the temple gates which were normally kept close until morning were opened at midnight during festivals (Antiquities, 18,29). The second lot determined "who should slaughter, who should toss 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; 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; Tamid 3:2-7). The third lot determined who would offer the incense upon the Inner-Altar (Yoma 2:4; Tamid 5:2-6:3). The fourth lot determined which priests would offer the burnt offering on the Altar (Yoma 2:5; Tamid 4:3). For detailed descriptions concerning the offering of the morning and evening burnt offering (the Tamid) see Shmuel Safrai, Ritual in "Temple," *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971): Vol 15:974-977; Shmuel Safrai, Daily whole-offerings in "The Temple," in *The Jewish People in the First Century*, 2 Vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 2:887-890; Aaron Rothkoff, Second Temple Period in "Sacrifice," *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971): Vol 14: 607-609; and Emil Schurer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*. A new version, revised and edited by Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Matthew Black. 2 Vols. (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1973), 2: 299-308.
21. According to the Mishnah Mikvaoth 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 (Mikvaoth

1:1-8). Only “living water” could be used in the purification of lepers (Lev. 14:5) and the defilement caused by dead corpses (Num. 19:17).

22. 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* 15:418, 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* 5:198, 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*, 15:962,967).

23. The Mishnah describes the *lulab* as being made up of a combination of myrtle, willow branches, a palm branch and a citron (Sukkah 3:4). George MacRae describes the *lulab* as being made up of a “bunch of myrtle and willow twigs tied around a small palm branch” held in the right hand and a citron in the left. These were “carried in processions around the Temple courts; they are also held during the singing of psalms (the Hallel especially) and shaken at certain specified times” (MacRae, “The Meaning and Evolution of the Feast of Tabernacles,” 271-272).

Of the Lulabs, Leon Morris has said: “There was apparently a disagreement between the Sadducees and the Pharisees over the correct interpretation of Lev. 23:40, ‘And ye shall take you on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm-trees, and boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook . . .’ The former took the words to refer to the material out of which the booths for the observance of the feast were to be constructed, while the latter held them to mean that the worshippers were actually to carry branches of the trees named as they entered the temple. The Pharisaic interpretation prevailed among the people, and accordingly each worshipper, as he marched in procession, would carry a *lulab* in his right hand and a citron in his left” (*The Gospel According to John*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1971), 419-420).

24. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 327.

25. George W. McCrae, “The Meaning and Evolution of the Feast of Tabernacles,” 272.

26. 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 circumambulation 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 *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, 4 Vols. [Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1962], 1:456).

27. *Antiquities of the Jews*, 13.13.5.
28. Safrai, "Temple," in *The Jewish People of the First Century*, 2:894-895.
29. Safrai, "Temple," in *The Jewish People of the First Century*, 2:895. On what the Palestinian Talmud is, see note 9.
30. 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 Shammai says, Also at *We beseech Thee, O Eternal, send us prosperity, we pray*."
31. In order to avoid the repetition of the Tetragrammaton. Under the rules of gematria, *ani waho* is the numerical value of *ana h'*, the *O Eternal* in the phrase "We beseech thee, O Eternal, send us prosperity." (See note 16 Philip Blackman, *Mishnayoth 7 Vol.s* (New York: Judaica, 1963), 2:337.)
32. According to Mishnah Yoma 2:5, the daily Burnt Offering was offered by 9 to 12 priests each who had specific duties regarding the offering of the sacrifice.
33. 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). However, the Mishnah, which consists of earlier Rabbinical writings, 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* for seven days (see Leviticus 23:40).
34. Of those who keep the Law, Deut. 28:28 states: "The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season..." Of those who dishonor the Law, Deut. 28:23 warns that "thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass."
35. The wealthy would have to sell their fruits fast, i.e. cheaply.
36. Because it meant average rain, plenty of fruit, without danger of rotting so that the merchants could charge moderate prices.
37. The dreaded "east wind" of the Bible which came from off the Arabian desert bringing drought.
38. See note 9.

39. Jerusalem Talmud Sukkah 55a, quoted from Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 421; see also F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1983), 182, 187 n.13; John Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica* 4 Vols. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1979), 3:322-323.
40. See Exodus 29:38-42 and Numbers 28:2-4.
41. Sukkah 55b. Modern scholarship offers little in way of help in understanding the reason for the descending order of the bullock sacrifices.
42. See Safrai, Ritual in “Temple,” *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 982.
43. 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.” However, it is not clear whether the time on this was strictly held during the Feast of Tabernacles.
44. See Safrai, Ritual in “Temple,” in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 15:976.
45. 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 says took place in the Court of 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 because there was a “well, in the Women’s Forecourt, from which the water was drawn for libation on Sukkoth” (Backman, *Mishnayoth*, 2:341). However, 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 lxx 8 on Gen xxix 1)” (Brown, *The Gospel According to John*. The Anchor Bible, v. 29, 329).
46. The Rabbi’s believed that these traditions were given at Mt. Sinai but only passed down orally. See Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*, 3:322.
47. George MacRae writes: “The prophet insists upon the necessity of ‘going up to Jerusalem’ to celebrate the feast. We recall that even in the JE festival calendars a pilgrimage to the sanctuary was associated with the Feast of Ingathering. After the construction of the Temple and the installation of the Ark in it, the Temple became the pilgrimage center. There does not seem to have been any period, however, when the necessity of celebrating the feast at the Temple was looked upon as solemnly as the Passover visit to the Temple . . . the prescription of going up does not appear to have been a strict one, since Jesus apparently had a free choice about whether to

celebrate Tabernacles in Jerusalem or not (cf. Jn 7,2-10). It is therefore quite possible that in insisting on this point, Zacharia is advocating a return to the pristine obligation of going to the Temple” (MacRae, “The Meaning and Evolution of the Feast of Tabernacles,” 269).

48. MacRae, “The 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 fasts that are called for due to continued drought, begins with the statement: “When do we (begin to) make mention of the power of rain? R. Eliezer says: On the first day of the Feast. R. Joshua says: On the last day of the Feast.”

49. The New International Version translates this verse thus: “On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost.” Hinckley G. Mitchell, commenting on this verse, says: “It is clear, therefore, that the text, which now says that there shall then be no light, is corrupt, and that the original reading must have been, *There shall no longer be cold and frost*, such as sometimes add to the discomforts of a Syrian winter. In other words, the climate of the country will be so modified that it will never be too cold for the comfort of the fortunate inhabitants” (Hinckley G. Mitchell, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and Jonah*. The International Critical Commentary [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980], 346).

50. cf. Ps. 46:4; 65:9; Isa. 8:6; Jer. 2:13; Ezek. 47:1-12; Joel 3:18; Rev. 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” (Brown, *The Gospel According to John*. The Anchor Bible, v. 29, 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 Gihon, which supplied water that ‘flowed gently’ to become the Siloam brook (Isa. 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” (Joyce Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*. Vol. 24, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries [London: Tyndale, 1972], 203).

51. Numerology is an important aspect of Jewish thought. Numbers like 3, 4, and 7 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.

52. The reason for his late arrival seems to be due to the pressure of his non-believing 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,

The Gospel According to John. The Anchor Bible, v. 29, 308 for 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.

53. Of this, Brown writes: “We think it most probable that in this flow of water from the side of Jesus (from within him) John sees the fulfillment of Jesus’ own prophecy, taking place in the hour of Jesus’ glorification (cf. xii 23). The parenthetical vs. 35 triumphantly insists that this really happened just as Jesus had predicted and that there was an eyewitness to affirm it. Thus, for John the flowing of the water is another proleptic symbol of the giving of the Spirit” (Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*. The Anchor Bible Series, v.30 [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985?], 949-950).

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

55. 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 pagkalou photos*), as at this season there is no twilight (*de septen*. 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).

56. See for example, Psalms 27:1, Isa. 60:19. “The later Rabbis applied the thought to the Messiah: ‘Light is the Name of Messiah,’ they said” (Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, 2:292).

57. W. D. Davies sees the replacement the Feast of Tabernacles with the person of Christ as part “of a series of replacements associated with the feasts of Judaism in John. In chapter 5 the Sabbath feast is subordinated to the activity of Jesus in doing the work of life and judgment entrusted to him by the Father. In chapter 6 the manna of the Passover story is replaced by the multiplying of bread as a sign that Jesus was the bread come down from heaven. At Tabernacles, in Chapters 7-8, the water and light ceremonies are replaced by Jesus, the true source of living waters and the light of the world. And finally, at the Feast of Dedication the old tabernacle and Temple are replaced by the consecrated Christ” (Davies, *The Gospel and the Land*, 296).

58. See note 46.

59. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*. Anchor Bible, v. 29, 350.

60. Of this statement, Brown says: “ ‘The Jews’ seem to misunderstand Jesus’ words about freedom and take them in a political sense. Even on this level, however their boast is ill founded, for Egypt, Babylonia, and Rome had enslaved them. Perhaps they mean that, being the privileged heirs to the promise of Abraham, they cannot be truly enslaved, although occasionally God has allowed them to be chastised through temporary subjection” (Brown, *The Gospel According to John*. Anchor Bible, v. 29, 355).

61. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land*, 295.