

The Light of the World

Text & Background:

- Feast of Booth takes place in Jerusalem. (This would later be used as a model for Hanukkah)
- Brothers say, "Leave here (Galilee) and go to Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works You are doing. For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." John 7:3-4
- Jesus replies, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify about it that its works are evil. You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come." John 7:6-8
- Jesus eventually goes to Jerusalem in private. People are looking for Him. Some think He's evil while others see Him as good.
- Jesus begins to teach in the temple during the middle of the feast. The Jews marvel at His learning without studying.
- Well, Jesus is bringing the message given to Him by the Father. He's not seeking His own glory, but that of the Father's.
- Jesus points out their hypocrisy by seeking to kill Him for healing a man on the Sabbath. They circumcise on the Sabbath, but yet He can't heal a man on the Sabbath?
- There's division among the people - is He the Christ? He's speaking openly to the authorities and they say nothing to Him!
- Pharisees send officers to arrest Him, but they don't because, "No one ever spoke like this man!"
- On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"
 - The Feast of Tabernacles (Booths): Leviticus 23:33-43; Deuteronomy 16:13-17; Numbers 29:12-40; Nehemiah 8 (this last passage connects the idea that the leaves were used to make the booths).
 - It was the last of three great annual festivals in the year when men would travel to Jerusalem (and the last of 7 feasts mentioned in the Pentateuch). Considered the greatest of the three, occurring late September-October.
 - Read Leviticus 23:39-43. This is what they did and their meaning.
 - "Furthermore, in keeping with Sukkot's purpose to remember the wilderness journey, later Israelites added a water-pouring ceremony to recall those occasions when the Lord gave Israel water in the desert (Ex. 17:1-7; Num. 20: 1-13)."
 - Every other day of the Feast of Sukkot, the priestly procession would march around the altar one time, holding and waving the four species of lulav branches and shouting praises to Yahweh God. But on the seventh day, this circling procession was done seven times while singing with a loud voice the song of redemption and salvation in the Hoshanna prayers. At this time the people also waved their palm branches while the Levites chanted the Hallel (Psalms 113-118).
 - **From John Truth Commentary:** "The Mishna also tells of a water-pouring procession (*lulab*), where water was brought from the Pool of Siloam in a golden goblet and poured into a silver funnel into the Kidron, and was thus supposed to bless the thirsty land; as well as the illumination of the Court of the Women during the feast." . . . "Large lamps were lighted in the Court of the Women on the evening of the first day of the Feast, and they brightened the whole city. Whether this was repeated throughout the Feast is debated, but it is certain that on the final evening this was not done. These words of Jesus were spoken in the Court of the Women (v. 20), making the application of the allusion this much more certain. The Lord seems to be saying that while they were now missing the brightly shining lights of the Feast, He was come to be the 'light of the world.'

- A water-drawing ritual is how they would begin each day. They would draw water from the Pool of Siloam and bring it to the altar. It was poured over the altar and this ran outside the city walls into the Kidron Valley. "The mixed water and wine would flow down a conduit which carried the water to the Brook of Kidron located across from the eastern wall."
 - The priest returned to the Temple with the golden pitcher of water and joined another priest who was carrying the drink offering of wine. The shofar was blown three times. Together the two priests ascended the ramp to the Great Altar and poured their libations into silver funnels. During this ritual, the people gathered at the Temple's Court the Women and sang praises called the Hallel: Psalms 113—118. The Levites, standing on the 15 semicircular stairs in the court, also sang and played musical instruments. The mixture of the water and wine at the altar symbolized the life and joy associated with the Holy Spirit.
 - About now, several priests holding willow branches marched once around the Great Altar, reciting for all to hear, "Save now (hoshanah), I beseech thee, O LORD! O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity!" (Ps. 118:25).
 - Following the singing and chanting, a great silence descended on the sanctuary. The people felt and listened to the wind, reflecting on the spiritual significance of the water ritual. They were expressing a desire for personal, spiritual refreshment. Only God's Spirit, symbolized by the water, could satisfy their thirsty souls. Finally, a benediction closed the celebration and all went home to gather under their sukkot.
 - The water ritual took place every day for all seven days. On the seventh day, it took on an intensity filled with excitement and anticipation. This last day of the Feast was Hoshanah Rabbah (the Great Praise Day). And it was then that an extraordinary incident took place.
 - After the Temple was destroyed, the rabbis reflected on this celebration and said, "He who has not seen the rejoicing at the place of the water-drawing has never seen rejoicing in his life" (Talmud Sukkah 51b).
- The people are divided - is it the Prophet? The Christ? Isn't the Christ to come from Bethlehem?
- Now we come to the next "I am" statement. [John 8:12-20](#). I think about John 1:1-9.
 - "Each afternoon of the seven days, priests and pilgrims gathered at the Court of the Women. Four large oil lamps illuminated the court. It was said that the light from these lamps was so bright it penetrated every courtyard in Jerusalem.
 - As the women watched from the upper terraces, the "men of piety and good works used to dance before the oil lamps with burning torches in their hands, singing songs and praises." Meanwhile, "countless levites played on harps, lyres, cymbals and trumpets and instruments of music" (Mishnah Sukkot 5:4). The light festivities continued all night until dawn.
 - The illumination from these imposing Temple lamps symbolized two realities. The first was the reality of the "Light of all Lights"— the Shekinah Glory—the visible presence of God that filled the first Temple, which Solomon built (1 Ki. 8:10–11). The second was Ha'or Gadol (the Great Light) who would soon come and bring light to those who were spiritually dead and dwelling in darkness (Isa. 9:2).
 - There were either 4 poles with lamps (70-75ft tall) or one pole with 4 lights on it - each lamp holding 5 lbs. of oil. "During this ceremony the priests and Levite's would use their own worn out clothing for wicks."
- This seems to take place at the close or soon after the end of the festival. The lights are all out . . . or are they? Following Jesus gives you light.
- As you continue through chapter 8, you'll find:
 - A discussion of testimony - Jesus and the Father give their own testimony to who Jesus is.
 - Jesus warns them that if they do not believe they will die in their sins (but they're not hearing Him).
 - Some Jews believed in Him and Jesus promises that abiding in His word would set them free.
 - There's a discussion of fatherhood - they are of their father the devil, whereas Jesus' Father was God.

- Jesus again promises life, but they are ultimately offended when He claimed to be "before Abraham", ending with the words, "I am."
- Now we come to chapter **9:1-7**.
 - This man was healed by Jesus after washing in the pool of Siloam (where they drew the water for the daily water-pouring during the festival).
 - Here, our Lord helps a man see, but something much greater than 20/20 vision. He helps Him see Jesus, not as a man (vs. 11), or a prophet (vs. 17), but as the Son of Man (vs.35-37. Let me read verses 39-41:
- **John 3:16-21**
 - Here are key take aways about the light:
 - He didn't come to condemn.
 - People don't like to be exposed.
 - You've got to be exposed in order to be helped. A physician has to address the bad news before he can address the problem. Jesus isn't exposing to hurt and embarrass, but to help.
 - **John 12:27-36**. What do you see when He was lifted up? Is it not the Bread of Life given for the world? Is it not the light of the world on a hill?
 - How do you feel when hearing His words from the beginning of His ministry, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden."

References and other material:

Following from https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Hebrew_Roots/Holy_Days/Tabernacles/Tabernacles/Hoshanna_Rabbah

On this last (7th) day, at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, the High Priest would lead a procession off the Temple Mount and through the streets of Jerusalem down to the Pool of Siloam to fill the golden pitcher which he carried, with the Living Water (Mayim Chaim) from the pool. As on the other days of the feast, he led the procession back to the Temple. There he is handed a silver pitcher full of wine and he pours the water and the wine out together and he prays on this day for two things. First, for the rains, the former and the latter rains for the natural harvest. Then he prays "God in heaven, send Your Messiah soon and in our days. We cry out for our our Messiah now" (Psalm 118:25-26)

Each night of the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) there was a great ceremony called the "Illumination of the Temple," which involved the ritual lighting of four golden oil-fed lamps in the Court of Women. These lamps were huge menorahs/candelabras (seventy-five feet high) lighted in the Temple at night to remind the people of the pillar of fire that had guided them in their wilderness journey. All night long they shone in their brilliance, illuminating the entire city.

In celebration and anticipation of the return of the Shekinah glory to Israel, the holiest of Israel's men danced and sang psalms of joy and praise, before Yahweh God. This festival was a reminder that He had promised to send His Light, to a sin-darkened world. Yahweh God promised to send the Messiah to renew Israel's glory, release them from bondage, and restore their joy. This is the background for the impact of the words said by Y'shua in the Temple courtyard when he announced, "I am the Light of the world." John 8:12

He is the Light, the source of illumination, to bring the lost out of darkness. He had come up to Jerusalem for the feast and went into the Temple, to teach the people and illumine their hearts. (John 7: 1-9; 14-30).

Y'shua made His declaration that it was also through Him that the people would receive the living water which was typified in the feast, " On that last day, that great day of the feast, Y'shua stood up and cried out, saying,'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" John 7:37-39

During the time of Y'shua, the high point of the Sukkot celebration was the "drawing of water" (Simchat Bais HaShoava) ceremony. This expressed the messianic hope of the people at that time who in their oppression by their Roman overseers, and their understanding of the prophecies, were looking for the advent of their Messiah. So when Y'shua appeared on the scene, with the themes of light and water on their minds, they were ready to identify Him as the "Son of David" and hope for deliverance by Him from their oppressors. (John 7:14-30; 37-38; 8:12)

In His proclamations to the people He was appealing to their need for the true light which lightens every man and the real water of life which satisfies the thirsty soul. He combined two of the messianic symbols of the feast - the water libation and the light of the candleabras in the Temple precinct, to illustrate the fulfillment in Himself of the promised restoration of Israel under Messiah in the age to come.

Other sources:

<https://israelmyglory.org/article/the-feast-of-tabernacles-in-the-days-of-jesus/>

<http://jewishroots.net/library/holiday-articles/illumination-of-the-temple-ceremony.html#:~:text=During%20the%20Feast%20of%20Tabernacles%20%28Sukkot%29%20there%20was,that%20had%20guided%20Israel%20in%20their%20wilderness%20journey.>

<https://www.dasydministry.org/-%20New%20Folder/Illumination%20ceremony%20PDF.pdf>

<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/tractate-sukkah-chapter-4>

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/feast-booths/>

<https://www.bible-truth.org/Feasts-Tabernacles.html>

In the New Testament, Jesus celebrates the feast of Tabernacles in John 7, and it is within this context that Jesus invites the thirsty to drink from Him and declares that He is the light of the world (Ulfgard, Story of Sukkot, 258–61). At the beginning of John 7, His brothers tell him to go show Himself to the world, since this feast was one of the biggest gatherings of Jews (see Josephus, below, for other public events at this feast). Jesus' teaching at the feast relates to the importance of the reading of the law. Jesus' invitation to the thirsty to come to Him to drink in John 7:37–44 relates to references to the Feast of Tabernacles in Zech 14:1–21 and Ezek 47:1–12; the setting is the water libation service, where water was brought up to the altar and poured over it (Rubenstein, History of Sukkot, 117–31). In John 8:12, when Jesus declares he is the “light of the world,” the setting could be the last night of the feast, when celebrants stayed up all night in the temple courts, which were lit by enormous lamps (Rubenstein, The History of Sukkot, 137–38).

Austin, B. M. (2016). Booths, Feast of. In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

4. (244) Upon the fifteenth day of the same month, when the season of the year is changing for winter, the law enjoins us to pitch tabernacles in every one of our houses, so that we preserve ourselves from the cold of that time of the year; (245) as also that when we should arrive at our own country, and come to that city which we should have then for our metropolis, because of the temple therein to be built, and keep a festival for eight days, and offer burnt offerings, and sacrifice thank offerings, that we should then carry in our hands a branch of myrtle, and willow, and a bough of the palm tree, with the addition of the pome citron. (246) That the burnt offering on the first of those days was to be a sacrifice of thirteen bulls, and fourteen lambs, and fifteen rams, with the addition of a kid of the goats, as an expiation for sins: and on the following days the same number of lambs, and of rams, with the kids of the goats; but abating one of the bulls every day till they amounted to seven only. (247) On the eighth day all work was laid aside, and then, as we said before, they sacrificed to God a bullock, a ram, and seven lambs, with a kid of the goats, for an expiation of sins. And this in the accustomed solemnity of the Hebrews, when they pitch their tabernacles.

Josephus, F., & Whiston, W. (1987). *The works of Josephus: complete and unabridged* (pp. 95–96). Peabody: Hendrickson.

12. (209) When the multitude are assembled together unto the holy city for sacrificing every seventh year, at the Feast of Tabernacles, let the high priest stand upon a high desk, whence he may be heard, and let him read the laws to all the people; and let neither the women nor the children be hindered from hearing, no, nor the servants neither; (210) for it is a good thing that those laws should be engraven in their souls, and preserved in their memories, that so it may not be possible to blot them out; for by this means they will not be guilty of sin, when they cannot plead ignorance of what the laws have enjoined them. The laws also will have a greater authority among them as foretelling what they will suffer if they break them, and imprinting in their souls by this hearing what they command them to do, (211) that so there may always be within their minds that intention of the laws which they have despised and broken, and have thereby been the causes of their own mischief. Let the children also learn the laws, as the first thing they are taught, which will be the best thing they can be taught, and will be the cause of their future felicity.

Josephus, F., & Whiston, W. (1987). The works of Josephus: complete and unabridged (p. 117). Peabody: Hendrickson.

The Jews, at a later time, introduced two appendages to the original festival, viz., (1) that of drawing water from the Pool of Siloam, and pouring it upon the altar (John 7:2, 37), as a memorial of the water from the rock in Horeb; and (2) of lighting the lamps at night, a memorial of the pillar of fire by night during their wanderings.

Easton, M. G. (1893). In Easton's Bible dictionary. New York: Harper & Brothers.

And then, at night, how all these vast Temple-buildings stood out, illuminated by the great Candelabras that burned in the Court of the Women, and by the glare of torches, when strange sound of mystic hymns and dances came floating over the intervening darkness! Truly, well might Israel designate the Feast of Tabernacles as 'the Feast' (haChag), and the Jewish historian describe it as 'the holiest and greatest.' 1

Edersheim, A. (1896). The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah (Vol. 2, p. 149). New York: Longmans, Green, and Co.

The ceremony of the outpouring of water, which was considered of such vital importance as to give to the whole festival the name of 'House of Outpouring,' was symbolical of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.b As the brief night of the great Temple-illumination closed, there was solemn testimony made before Jehovah against heathenism. It must have been a stirring scene, when from out the mass of Levites, with their musical instruments, who crowded the fifteen steps that led from the Court of Israel to that of the Women, stepped two priests with their silver trumpets. As the first cockcrowing intimated the dawn of morn, they blew a threefold blast; another on the tenth step, and yet another threefold blast as they entered the Court of the Women. And, still sounding their trumpets, they marched through the Court of the Women to the Beautiful Gate. Here, turning round and facing westwards to the Holy Place, they repeated: 'Our fathers, who were in this place, they turned their backs on the Sanctuary of Jehovah, and their faces eastward, for they worshipped eastward, the sun; but we, our eyes are towards Jehovah.' 'We are Jehovah's—our eyes are towards Jehovah.' 1 Nay, the whole of this night- and morning-scene was symbolical: the Temple-illumination, of the light which was to shine from out the Temple into the dark night of heathendom; then, at the first dawn of morn the blast of the priests' silver trumpets, of the army of God, as it advanced, with festive trumpet-sound and call, to awaken the sleepers, marching on to quite the

utmost bounds of the Sanctuary, to the Beautiful Gate, which opened upon the Court of the Gentiles—and, then again, facing round to utter solemn protest against heathenism, and make solemn confession of Jehovah!

Edersheim, A. (1896). *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Vol. 2, pp. 149–150). New York: Longmans, Green, and Co.

But to return. When the Temple-procession had reached the Pool of Siloam, the Priest filled his golden pitcher from its waters. Then they went back to the Temple, so timing it, that they should arrive just as they were laying the pieces of the sacrifice on the great Altar of Burnt-offering, towards the close of the ordinary Morning-Sacrifice service. A threefold blast of the Priests' trumpets welcomed the arrival of the Priest, as he entered through the 'Water-gate,' which obtained its name from this ceremony, and passed straight into the Court of the Priests. Here he was joined by another Priest, who carried the wine for the drink-offering. The two Priests ascended 'the rise' of the altar, and turned to the left. There were two silver funnels here, with narrow openings, leading down to the base of the altar. Into that at the east, which was somewhat wider, the wine was poured, and, at the same time, the water into the western and narrower opening, the people shouting to the Priest to raise his hand, so as to make sure that he poured the water into the funnel. For, although it was held, that the water-pouring was an ordinance instituted by Moses, 'a Halakhah of Moses from Sinai,' this was another of the points disputed by the Sadducees.¹ And, indeed, to give practical effect to their views, the High-Priest Alexander Jannæus had on one occasion poured the water on the ground, when he was nearly murdered, and in the riot, that ensued, six thousand persons were killed in the Temple.

Immediately after 'the pouring of water,' the great 'Hallel,' consisting of Psalms 113. to 118. (inclusive), was chanted antiphonally, or rather, with responses, to the accompaniment of the flute. As the Levites intoned the first line of each Psalm, the people repeated it; while to each of the other lines they responded by Hallelu Yah ('Praise ye the Lord'). But in Psalm 118. the people not only repeated the first line, 'O give thanks to the Lord,' but also these, 'O then, work now salvation, Jehovah,' 'O Lord, send now prosperity'; and again, at the close of the Psalm, 'O give thanks to the Lord.' As they repeated these lines, they shook towards the altar the Lulabh which they held in their hands—as if with this token of the past to express the reality and cause of their praise, and to remind God of His promises. It is this moment which should be chiefly kept in view.

Edersheim, A. (1896). *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Vol. 2, pp. 158–159). New York: Longmans, Green, and Co.

We can have little difficulty in determining at what part of the services of 'the last, the Great Day of the Feast,' Jesus stood and cried, 'If any one thirst, let him come unto Me and drink!' It must have been with special reference to the ceremony of the outpouring of the water, which, as we have seen, was considered the central part of the service. Moreover, all would understand that His words must refer to the Holy Spirit, since the rite was universally regarded as symbolical of His outpouring. The forth-pouring of the water was immediately followed by the chanting of the Hallel. But after that there must have been a short pause to prepare for the festive sacrifices (the Musaph). It was then, immediately after the symbolic rite of water-pouring, immediately after the people had responded by repeating those lines from Psalm 118.—given thanks, and prayed that Jehovah would send salvation and prosperity, and had shaken their Lulabh towards the altar, thus praising 'with heart, and mouth, and hands,' and then silence had fallen upon them—that there rose, so loud as to be heard

throughout the Temple, the Voice of Jesus. He interrupted not the services, for they had for the moment ceased: He interpreted, and He fulfilled them.

Edersheim, A. (1896). *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Vol. 2, p. 160). New York: Longmans, Green, and Co.

It opened with what probably was an allusion alike to one of the great ceremonies of the Feast of Tabernacles, to its symbolic meaning, and to an express Messianic expectation of the Rabbis. As the Mishnah states: On the first, or, as the Talmud would have it, on every night of the festive week, 'the Court of the Women' was brilliantly illuminated, and the night spent in the demonstrations already described. This was called 'the joy of the feast.' This 'festive joy,' of which the origin is obscure, was no doubt connected with the hope of earth's great harvest-joy in the conversion of the heathen world, and so pointed to 'the days of the Messiah.' In connection with this we mark, that the term 'light' was specially applied to the Messiah. In a very interesting passage of the Midrash we are told, that, while commonly windows were made wide within and narrow without, it was the opposite in the Temple of Solomon, because the light issuing from the Sanctuary was to lighten that which was without. This reminds us of the language of devout old Simeon in regard to the Messiah,^b as 'a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel.' The Midrash further explains, that, if the light in the Sanctuary was to be always burning before Jehovah, the reason was, not that He needed such light, but that He honoured Israel with this as a symbolic command. In Messianic times God would, in fulfillment of the prophetic meaning of this rite, 'kindle for them the Great Light,' and the nations of the world would point to them, who had lit the light for Him Who lightened the whole world. But even this is not all. The Rabbis speak of the original light in which God had wrapped Himself as in a garment, and which could not shine by day, because it would have dimmed the light of the sun. From this light that of the sun, moon, and stars had been kindled.^d It was now reserved under the throne of God for the Messiah, in Whose days it would shine forth once more. Lastly, we ought to refer to a passage in another Midrash, where, after a remarkable discussion on such names of the Messiah as 'the Lord our Righteousness,' 'the Branch,' 'the Comforter,' 'Shiloh,' 'Compassion,' His Birth is connected with the destruction, and His return with the restoration of the Temple. But in that very passage the Messiah is also specially designated as the 'Enlightener,' the words:^g 'the light dwelt with Him,' being applied to Him.

Edersheim, A. (1896). *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Vol. 2, pp. 165–166). New York: Longmans, Green, and Co.