

THE FALL FESTIVAL

The Feast of Tabernacles was a time when Israel celebrated what God had done in the past, by preserving this chosen nation through the wilderness for forty years (Leviticus 23:33-43). It is also a time when we shall celebrate in the future, as the nations on earth shall bring their praise to the Lord at Jerusalem on a yearly basis in the kingdom that our Lord will set upon the earth (Zechariah 14:16). The celebration was timed with the harvest and lasted anywhere from September to late October. Solomon dedicated the temple during Sukkot, also known as the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles, which also reveals that it was a time when even Gentiles were invited to join in the celebration (II Chronicles 6:32-33). During this dedication at the Feast, there was a return of the glory of the LORD in great wonder and majesty (II Chronicles 7:1-3). So year after year, the people believed the glory of the LORD would return to the Temple on a particular day that would take place on the final day of the Feast. John brings it to our attention in John 7:37 and 38.

Returning earlier in chapter 7, we see that the Lord's brothers in the flesh (sons of Mary and Joseph) were trying to persuade Christ to go into Judea, make a name for Himself and reveal Himself for who He was. The thoughts of His half-brothers emanate from two revelations. The first is Christ's followers are falling away in Galilee. John 6:66: "From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." The rejection on the part of many was so serious that our Lord said to the twelve in John 6:67, "... Will ye also go away?" The second revelation is found in John 7:3-5: "His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe in him." It had been foretold in Psalm 69:8, "I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children." Yet, Christ's kinsmen were, in essence, saying, "Okay, go to Jerusalem when the world is gathered together and do your miracles there. The time is ripe!" Please note John 7:6a says, "Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come...." And in John 7:30 we read, "Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come." John makes reference to this again in John 8:20. There is a difference between Christ's "time" (second coming) and Christ's "hour" (first coming). Christ speaks of this "time" in Matthew 24:30: "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Christ's time is also referred to in Revelation 1:7, "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." The "hour" spoken of is Christ's approaching death, burial and resurrection. The world sees it in Luke 22:53: "When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness." But our Lord reveals the overwhelming providence

in this prayer shortly before the cross in John 17:1b: "...Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee."

In the midst of pinpointing the "time" of our Lord's revelation and the "hour" of His passion, these challenging words are set forth by the Lord Jesus in John 7:17: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." These words are as true and applicable today as they were on the day our Lord spoke them!

We come back to our Lord's presence at the Feast of the Tabernacles. He has journeyed to Jerusalem by Himself and taught in the Temple throughout the week. But first of all, I bring to your attention:

1. THE LIVING LIBATION

John 7:37, 38: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, 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." Why is this so significant? A custom had developed during the second Temple, i.e., "The Water Libation Ceremony." This was a visual prayer for rain. Israel has always depended on rain in order for the harvest to ripen. Rain has always been a symbol of life to the Jewish people. Each day of the feast, the High Priest would exit the Temple, descend the side of the Temple Mount with two golden pitchers and make his way to the Pool of Siloam to the spring-fed water (living water), fill both pitchers and then ascend up to the altar and pour the water over the altar.

The Lord was declaring, "I am the Living Water that you have been looking for. I will quench your every need!" Keep in mind it was believed on the last day of the Feast of the Tabernacles, the glory of the Lord would return to the Temple and that is exactly what our Lord is revealing in His declaration. The glory of the Lord was there!

2. THE ILLUMINATING ILLUMINATION

History tells us that for each day of the feast, another custom developed that was prominent during Christ's ministry, i.e., "The Illumination of the Temple Ceremony." There were four large menorahs or candelabra in the Temple Courtyard. Some literature suggests that these menorahs were an astonishing 70 feet tall! They were lit in an area of the Temple known as the Women's Court. It has been recorded that they cast such a bright light that they illuminated every courtyard in Jerusalem! In light of this light, Jesus gives the most spectacular statement following the feast in John 8:12: "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Later the Lord says He would be lifted up and believers would know that Christ is Whom He said He was (John 8:28). He further clarified that those who continue in this light would be made free and free indeed (John 8:32, 36)! Christ infuriated the Pharisees to the point of attempting His execution because He revealed that Abraham had seen the Light of Christ and rejoiced (John 8:56) and furthermore Christ elevated Himself above Abraham, declaring Himself Deity (John 8:58). Christ is the Illuminating

Illumination! John 1:9: "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

3. THE TABERNACLING OF THE TESTATOR

At this Feast of the Tabernacles, how can we not be reminded of John's prophetic word in the opening chapter of his Gospel in John 1:14, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." The word "dwelt" comes to us from the Greek word "skenoō" which means "to tent or encamp."

Our Lord would often make a teaching and illustrate what He was teaching. And this is done so beautifully here. In John 8, the woman caught in adultery is brought before Jesus who was standing in the well-lit court of the women. They set the women in the midst declaring that she had been caught in the very act of adultery (John 8:4). The scribes and Pharisees were attempting to "school" Jesus on the Law of Moses, which demanded her stoning. Jesus kneeled as though He had not heard them and wrote on the ground. I can only speculate, but I believe He wrote Leviticus 20:10 which demands that both the man and the woman guilty of adultery should die. That's why He arises and says, "...He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7b). Then a very important thing takes place in correlation to the Feast of the Tabernacles. Christ writes on the ground one more time. And I believe with all my heart, He wrote Jeremiah 17:13 and perhaps He began to write the names of those present and that's why they dropped the stones.

It was widely believed among the Jews that only God could restore sight to blinded eyes. So in John 9, Christ restores sight to the man blind from birth. The last thing the rejecting Pharisees wanted to hear were the words of the healed man in John 9:30, 32, 33! Just before Jesus gave him his sight, He proclaimed, "...I am the light of the world" (John 9:5b). He was the One the menorah illustrated.

Observe how Jesus brings it all together in John 9:11: "He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight."

The living water of Siloam illustrates that the Living Water (Jesus) is the only One who can forgive sins (such as the woman caught in adultery) and only Jesus can, as our Living Water, give sight to spiritually blinded eyes. Ephesians 5:14: "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

And all of this is possible because of Hebrews 9:16, 17. Our Testator, Jesus has secured our redemption, our forgiveness and our sight by His precious blood.

-Pastor Pope-