

Jesus and the Feast of Tabernacles

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Main Scripture: John 7

All Scripture is from the NKJV unless otherwise indicated

I. Jesus' unbelieving brothers go up to the Feast of Tabernacles.

Jesus would not go into Judea because the Jews sought to kill him. It did not say that He could not, but that he would not. We are not called to be wreckless, but rather wise as serpents and harmless as doves, (Matthew 10:16).

We are also given the reason that His time had not yet come. Sometimes we want to jump in and go ahead of God's timing. Paul did this as soon as his sight was restored. He preached to the Jews right away. He did not take the time to pray and ask the Lord what He wanted him to do. It wasn't. Paul was called to preach the Gentiles. And in his haste it became necessary for him to leave the city via a window because the Jews sought to kill him, long before he did the work the Lord had called him to do, (Acts 9:20-25).

However, just because it was not Jesus' time didn't mean He was idle. Notice that He walked in Galilee. While in Galilee he did many miracles and taught often.

A. His brothers

1. They thought themselves able to advise Jesus. Thereby showing their doubt in His judgement. Have we ever suggested to God that He do something a certain way? Even if our intentions our good can we advise God?

1 Corinthians 2

16 For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

2. They assumed they knew His intentions. They thought He was seeking fame.
3. They wanted Him to perform, not for His glory, but perhaps so they could ride into the limelight on His coat tails. "Hey, did you just see that man heal that lame guy over there. Yep, that's my brother."

B. Timing

1. Jesus said it was not His time. Many of the signs, miracles and events were in accordance with an appointed time: the water into wine (John 2:4), Jesus being taken (John 7:30), glorified before the Greeks (John 12:23) depart from this world (John 13:1) and His death on the cross (John 17:1).
2. When a person has goals to accomplish, time must managed well. Matthew Henry states in his commentary on this passage that the "confinement of business is a thousand times better than the liberty of idleness."
3. We view life as a movie or a play. We don't know what is going to happen next. God, however, holds the script. He knows all things. He knows the best time.

That is His hour. Often we want things to happen in our time and hour. We must wait for His hour. This does not mean idleness, but rather what Jesus did, doing what we can where we can, just as He walked in Galilee.

4. Satan doesn't have a lot of long-term future plans. In fact, that is a topic a conversation he would rather avoid. His fate is sealed. Therefore he is always looking for what he can do now. It is the only thing he can tamper with. He tries to destroy today, to steal today, to distract today.
5. When your going with the world timing isn't as important. If you go along with the politically correct ideas, you can pretty much say anything, anytime you want. However, if you go against the accepted views, if you testify that the works of the world are evil, then watch out.

C. Who is Jesus?

1. Some thought He was a good man. (John 7:12)
2. Some thought He was a deceiver of the people. (John 7:12)
3. Some thought He was an excellent teacher. (John 7:15)
4. Some thought He was a Sabbath-breaker. (John 7:23)
5. Some thought He was a prophet. (John 7:40)
6. Some thought He was possessed. (John 7:20) When He mentioned that some are trying to kill Him some time had passed since He healed on the Sabbath. These people had forgotten would transpired before, (At the very least, six months before).
7. And some, the Messiah, the Christ (John 7:26)

II. At the Feast

A. Other names of the Feast of Tabernacles

1. Feast of Booths.
2. Sukkot.
3. Feast of Ingathering.

B. Details about the Feast of Tabernacles

1. It was to commemorate God's provision during the forty years of wandering in the wilderness as well a His provision of the year's harvest. This was similar to Thanksgiving Day, and like Thanksgiving it reminded them of their history.
2. The people lived in booths and decorated them with the fruit from the harvest, as both a reminder of the past and a celebration of the final harvest of the year. The frailty of the booth served to remind them of the frailty of life, and to humble any potential arrogance that may come with success and wealth.
3. It was the third of the pilgrim feasts, (the others were the Feast of Unleavened Bread & the Feast of Weeks).
4. It was the most joyful feast, especially the Bet Hasho'ayva (drawing of water). The ancient rabbis said, "One who has not seen the rejoicing of the drawing of water has never seen rejoicing in his life."

5. There were more animal sacrifices than any other feast (70 bulls, 14 rams, 98 lambs and 7 goats. (Numbers 29:12-34) The Talmud teaches, regarding the 70 bulls, that "the seventy nations of the world were represented in the offerings as Israel made atonement on their behalf."

C. Ceremonies During the Feast

1. In Temple times, during the feast, white-robed priests, musical instruments and choirs were all a part of the joyous and symbolic festival. Additional lamp-stands were lit to light up the Temple courts, just like during Hanukkah.
2. Levitical choirs were accompanied by musicians on their string, wind and percussion instruments during the singing of the Hallel Psalms 113 to 118 - especially the messianic prophetic words of the latter part of Psalm 118.

Psalm 118

*20 This is the gate of the LORD, Through which the righteous shall enter.
 21 I will praise You, For You have answered me, And have become my salvation.
 22 The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone.
 23 This was the LORD'S doing; It is marvelous in our eyes.
 24 This is the day the LORD has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it.
 25 Save now, I pray, O LORD; O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity.
 26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We have blessed you from the house of the LORD.
 27 God is the LORD, And He has given us light; Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.
 28 You are my God, and I will praise You; You are my God, I will exalt You.
 29 Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.*

John 12

*12 The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,
 13 took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: "Hosanna! `Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' The King of Israel!"*

3. The shofars sounded frequently. Men danced for joy in the streets.
4. The priestly ritual of pouring water and wine down the silver bowls which funnels led to the base of the altar of burnt offering, was symbolic -symbolic of their thanksgiving for the rain which produced the harvests of the year. Prayers for more rain were offered for the next spring harvest. Israel gets about 20" of rain, however it is usually all between November and March.
5. The Water-Pouring ceremony was also symbolic of spiritual joy and salvation. The prophet Isaiah reflected upon this Temple ritual and said -

Isaiah 12

*1 And in that day you will say: "O LORD, I will praise You; Though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me.
 2 Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; `For YAH, the LORD, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation."
 3 Therefore with joy you will draw water From the wells of salvation.*

4 And in that day you will say: "Praise the LORD, call upon His name; Declare His deeds among the peoples, Make mention that His name is exalted.

5 Sing to the LORD, For He has done excellent things; This is known in all the earth.

6 Cry out and shout, O inhabitant of Zion, For great is the Holy One of Israel in your midst!"

D. The "Water Pouring" Ritual

1. King David had organised the Levitical choirs into singers and musicians. The full choir consisted of 4,000, including 288 Levites who were skilful players on wind, string and percussion instruments. (I Chronicles 23:5-6;25:1-7) These were divided into 24 orders.
2. During the seven days' Festival, each morning a procession of pilgrims and citizens followed a white-robed Levitical priest, who was carrying a golden pitcher. He led the people through the "Water-Gate" to the Pool of Siloam where he filled the pitcher.
3. The procession then followed him back to the Temple all the way singing, waving their palm branches, and dancing in the streets.
4. A most impressive ritual - the "Water-Pouring" ceremony! It was the highlight of the Festival. The water symbolized the rain. Now was the time to thank God, and to pray for the "latter rain" for the next Spring harvest.
5. Earlier that morning of the seventh and last day, the sacrifices had already been laid upon the great altar. The blood of the sacrifices had also been poured out at the base of the altar, for atonement.
6. Now the white robed priest bearing the golden pitcher with water from the Pool of Siloam, approached the altar. Another priest met him, bearing a golden pitcher of wine for the "drink offering," also prescribed in Leviticus 23:13. Together they mounted the ramp to the altar. Simultaneously, they poured the water and the wine down the silver funnels, emptying at the base of the altar, where the blood from the sacrifices had gone before.
7. Witness of the Holy Scriptures (Old Testament)

The Levitical choirs burst into song - the messianic and prophetic words of Isaiah:

Isaiah 12:2-3

Isaiah 44

3 For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, And floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, And My blessing on your offspring;

Joe 2:28

"And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions.

E. Hoshana Rabbah was the Great Salvation or Great Deliverence.

1. On this day the water pouring ritual was even more spectacular. The same was done as before but the silver trumpets gave only three blasts, now they gave three sets of seven. The priest now circled the altar seven times as they sang Psalm

118:25. Through all this celebration, two thoughts rose to the tops of the people's minds: 1) the life giving water/rains for the coming year and the coming of the Messiah.

2. Now in this context:

John 7

37 On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.

38 "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

Again, Jesus speaks to the people in terms they can understand, at a moment when what He says would have the most impact. The invitation for the lost of the world is always out there, but there are times when it is louder and clearer than at others. Jesus used the setting of the day, of that very hour, to make His message clear. We, too, should use every opportunity to make the message of the Gospel clear, at this very hour to those around us. Amen!