**Book of John**

**Introduction**

**GOSPELS ... 4 Views**

**Matthew: Jesus is revealed through his fulfillment of prophecy and of the Jewish messianic expectation. Theme verse: Matthew 5:17 I did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.**

**Mark: Theme of Mark:**

**Jesus: Messiah and Son of God: suffering servant and savior of mankind.**

**Theme verse: Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**

**Luke: Jesus is revealed as Messiah primarily through his ministry to the sick, downtrodden, women, the outcast and the Gentile. Theme verse: Luke 2:11 (to lowly shepherds) Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.**

**John: Jesus is revealed through his miracles and through his statements about himself.**

**Central Theme**

**Jesus is the divine son of God who reveals the father, providing eternal life to all who believe in him**

**Key Verse: John 1:14 and/or 3:16**

**Purpose John 20:30-31**

**But these are written that you may believe[a] that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**

Important to read them according to their intention…

- Mark 50’s

- Matthew, Luke 60’s

- John late 70’s to 90’s

Probably as the first generation begins to die off. Most or perhaps even all the other apostles were dead. John had had 40-50 years to think about what was key to the gospel (but perhaps not emphasized in the synoptics)

Background :

Unique things about John:

Things in the synoptics but not in John:

No parables

No exorcisms

No table fellowship

Very little emphasis on the Kingdom of God

No birth, baptism, temptation, transfiguration, agony in the Garden, Lord’s Supper

Things in John but not the synoptics:

More dialogues 5:19-47, 6:25-59, 7:14-44, 8:12-59, 9:40-10:21, 10:22-42, 12:23-36

More personal conversations/interviews 3:1-21, 4:1-38

More private teaching with the disciples 14:1-16:37

Raising of Lazarus the key turning point (as opposed to the cleansing of the temple) that led to the execution of Jesus.

More emphasis on the Holy Spirit (John 14, 16)

Jews put is a relatively negative light “The Jews.”

-Roman Jewish Tension during Jesus life

- Jewish Christian tension during writing of John

A.D. 70 - Fall of the Temple

Council of Jamnia -

1. Reject the Septuagint - Set the Hebrew Canon

2. The prayer of “Minim” - A curse on Christians

Minim = Heretic

Five peoples who can be classified as Minim

■ One who denies the existence of God or the ruler of the world

■ One who says there are two or more rulers of the world

■ One who accepts there is one Master of the world but maintains He has a body or a form

■ One who denies that He is the sole First Being and Creator of all existence

■ One who serves entities that serve as intermediary between him and the eternal Lord such as stars, constellations or any other entity

"For the apostates let there be no hope. And let the arrogant government be speedily uprooted in our days. Let the naẓereen and the minim be destroyed in a moment. And let them be blotted out of the Book of Life and not be inscribed together with the righteous. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who humblest the arrogant" (Schechter)."[4]

**Chronology** based on festivals and ministry of three years.

Far more emphasis on Judean ministry

80% of material is unique to John (as compared to the synaptics)

**Simple Vocabulary - Deep theology**

**More philosophical (for example using the word logos) yet more Jewish in perspective**

**Symbols and metaphors** (light, life, bread, gate, door, shepherd, etc.

Often hard to know who is speaking: Jesus or John (ex. Jn 3:16-21)

**Miracles as signs** of who Jesus is

**The use of irony** (ex. John 3:14 When I am lifted up….

Can anything good come from Nazareth? John 1:46

Irony is an important feature in this gospel. The author is fond of setting up situations in which the reader knows something important that some of the actors/speakers in the narrative do not know. In that situation the actors are made to say something of far greater significance than they know. Examples include 4:12; 7:27, 35–36; 8:22; 11:50; 12:12–15, 19; 13:37; 19:19.

**Dualistic language** – Life-Death, Light –Darkness, Truth –False, Believe-Unbelief, Things above-Things below

**Beloved disciple**

**Words** very strongly emphasized:

Believe 98 times (~15/gospel)

Life 35 times (~6 times/gospel)

Emphasis on who Jesus is. Jesus does not hide who he is at all. He makes it clear from the beginning exactly who he is.

7 I AM statements

I AM the bread of life 6:35

I AM the light of the world 8:12,9:5

I AM the door (and the gate) 10:7

I AM the good shepherd 10:1,14

I AM the resurrection and the life 11:25

I AM the Way the Truth and the Life 14:6

I AM the true vine 15:1

All are metaphors

Things to bear in mind:

John is more of an inspired reflection on who Jesus is than a chronological, historical account.

Sometimes same events positioned differently

Most famous example is the cleansing of the temple. Late in synoptics, early in John

John probably puts it up front to make a point

John does not rely on the Synoptics, but he assumes his readers are aware of the other three gospels. This will explain why he does not include the Lord’s Supper, birth, etc.

Outline:

I. Prologue 1:1-1:18

II. Book of Signs 1:19-12:50

III. Book of Glory Passion Story 13:1-20:31

IV. Epilogue 21:1-21:25

Theme: The Son of God who reveals God’s glory.

John CH 1 The Prologue

**Literary form is Poetic, perhaps a Hymn ?**

CHIASM: A -B - C- D- C- B -A

**V:1-5 Identity and Mission of the WORD**

**V: 6-8 The Testimony of John the Baptist to the Word**

**V: 9-10 The Incarnation of the Word**

**V:10-13Response to the Word**

**V:14 The Incarnation of the Word**

**V:15 The Testimony of John the Baptist to the Word**

**V:16-18 The Identity and Mission of the Word**

**Masterpiece of “Christology “**

**John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word.**

**John uses a word loaded with Greek philosophical connotations for Jesus.**

ἐν ἀρχῇ - *en archon* In the beginning - Genesis was called “ In the beginning”

**“LOGOS” Means word but a lot more than the English word “word.”**

**Jewish: The Word of God is all Powerful**

**Ps 33:6**

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made,their starry host by the breath of his mouth.

**Isaiah 55:11**

so is my word that goes out from my mouth:It will not return to me empty,but will accomplish what I desireand achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

Greeks ....

For Heraclitus (before Socrates) the Logos is **“the omnipresent wisdom by which all things are steered”**

F**or the Stoics, the Logos is the common law of nature, immanent in the universe and maintaining its unity, the divine fire, the soul of the universe**.

Philo of Alexandria exploited the concept in a striking fashion. He saw the Logos *as t****he agent of creation***, distinguishing between the Logos as a *thought* in the mind of God, his eternal wisdom, and its *expression* in making formless matter a universe. The Logos is *the medium of divine government of the world;* it is “the captain and pilot of the universe.” The Logos is *the means by which man may know God*, for **God is unknowable by the mass of mankind; they can know him only in and through the Logos: [[1]](#footnote-1)**

John’s use of the word logos is purposefully enigmatic. He makes Jesus all of these things.

John 1:1 the Word (logos) was with God and the Word was God.

John is laying down who Jesus is. That is his purpose in the book—that we might believe who he is.

John 1:4-5 Introduces the light vs dark theme.

v. 5 Darkness has not understood (overcome) the light. John is using a double meaning here on purpose.

v. 6-9 introduces JTB More about Jesus as light.

v. 12 We can become children of God

John 1:14 Logos became sarx. Wow!!!! God became literally flesh/meat. This is a shocking thing—a scandalous thing to the Greek mind.

He came and tabernacle among us. (A lot of emphasis on the Feast of Tabernacles in John)

Why did God/Logos come in flesh and tabernacle with us?

1. 1:14 So that we could see his glory.

2. 1:18 So that we could see God.

Jesus is the one who makes God known. To the extent that it is possible to see God, this is what we have in Jesus.

John 1:18 - “Monogenes “ Monogenes = ONE Begotten (Unique), One and Only

Nicene Crede: Begotten, not made.

How is Jesus different? V. 14b full of grace and truth v. 17 grace and truth versus law.

Jesus brought equal measures of grace and truth.

Moses = Law Jesus = grace and truth

**John 1:19-12:50 The book of signs.**

The signs reveal Jesus’ identity and call for us to make a decision. (that is the pattern, as mentioned above)

7 signs

[knew the heart and thoughs of Nathanael 1:43-50]

water to wine 2:1-11

healing of official’s son 4:43-54

healing at pool of Bethesda 5:1-5

feeding of 5000 6:1-14

walking on water 6:16-21

man born blind 9:1-12

resurrection of Lazarus 11:1-44

[miraculous catch of fish John 21:1-13]

Themes of the signs: purpose: to cause people to believe and to give glory to God

Miracles have a pattern:

Miracle

Response or challenge

Follow-up teaching

Response

I. 1:47-50. [knowing Nathanael’s mind and heart, which causes belief (1:49) “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.]

II. Water to wine Jn 2:1-11.

metaphor/symbol: the marriage feast in heaven. Isaiah 25:6 Eschatology

empty jars = Jewish ritual wine = New Covenant

In the synoptics, the miracles point to the Kingdom of God

The result? 2:11 God’s glory was revealed and people (the disciples in this case) put their faith in Jesus.

III. Another “sign” Jesus clears the temple Jn 2:12-17

“The Jews” demand a sign to prove his authority to act this way.

John 2:18-19

Note: The Jews assumed that authority as an inspired teacher must be supported by “signs.”

Jesus: No sign will be given you if you demand one.

Aside:

The miracles Jesus did not do. You learn almost as much about Jesus from the miracles he did not do as you learn from the miracles he did do. It is kind of like this: You learn almost as much about a person by what they do NOT say as by what they say.

The miracles Jesus did NOT do:

A. He did not work miracles as a response to a challenge or to defend his claims about himself. Jn 2:18-22.

B. He did not do miracles to convince the hard-hearted or to force people’s mind. Matthew 13:55-58 He did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith. Jesus was not willing to put on a show to convince people.

Jn 13:27 Satan did not hesitate in this area at all. (notice v. 28 Jesus did not resist this)

Implication: Jesus was fully on board with the Father giving us free will and letting us decide.

We need to present the case for Christ and let people make their decision.

C. He did not work miracles to take care of his own physical needs Jn 4:6 Jesus was tired.

Jn 19:28 Jesus was thirsty. Mark 11:12, Luke 4:3-4 hungry (Satan tempted him to turn stones to bread after 40 days without food).

Implications: Jesus fully accepted his humanity. Praying for ourselves to avoid physical need or sacrifice perhaps should not be our top priority in prayer.

D. He did not use his power to judge or destroy his enemies. Luke 9:52-56. “Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to destroy them?” Jesus rebuked them. Jn 12:47 “I did not come to judge but to save the world.”

E. (and this contains them all) He did not use his power to end the crucifixion. Mark 15:29-30. Imagine how Jesus felt? What would you have done? Matthew 26:52-53. Jesus: I could call on my Father and he would put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels.

Imagine having absolute power and willfully holding back that power. Amazing!!!

Back to 2:18-19. What is the sign of Jesus?—the sign proving my right to be greater than the temple? I will be raised from the dead on the third day.

Note the irony here.

**John 3 and 4 Personal interviews**

The interviews have a pattern:

Jesus gives an enigmatic metaphor which provokes thought

Confusion

Jesus explains the metaphor

Jesus identified

John 3 The insider believes

Nicodemus, although open, represents the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees.

Nicodemus doesn’t get it. v.3 Noone can see the kingdom unless he is born again.

v. 10 Jesus seems a bit hard on Nicodemus. “Don’t you understand these things?” But he could have read Ezekiel 36:24-27.

v. 14 The solution to spiritual blindness? Look to Jesus. (Numbers 21:8-9)

Irony… so the son of Man must be lifted up.

3:16-21 John summarized his message (Is Jesus or John speaking here?)

Dualism

Eternal life now vs Perish v. 16

Saved vs Condemned Already v. 18

Light vs Darkness v. 19

John 4 The outsider believes

Romans 4 First for the Jews, then for the Gentiles Romans 1:16

IV. Jesus heals official’s Son 4:43-54 (parallels Matt 8:5-13, Luke 7:1-10) “the second miraculous sign”

Healing for Gentiles too.

Healing from a distance.

Result: faith 4:53 Your son will live “he and all his household believed.”

Gentile man believes without seeing. (unlike Thomas, but like us John 20:29)

V. 3rd sign. Healing at the pool of Bethesda 5:1-5

Here we begin to see the theme of Jesus replacing/being greater than the Jewish festivals.

Jesus the Lord of the Sabbath, (and of booths, Passover)

1. Jesus greater than the Sabbath Jn 5:1-18

2. Jesus greater than Passover Jn 6:1-70

3. Jesus greater than Booths/Tabernacles Jn 7:1-9:41

4. Jesus greater than Festival of Lights (Chanukkah) Jn 10

5:18 Result: The Jews tried even harder to kill him. Why? He claims to be equal to God.

“My father is always at work and I, too, am working” (v17)

(skip the long discourse after this event, and skip to the conclusion)

Jesus: There are three things which testify about me:

a. John the Baptist 5:31-33

b. The miracles (the work I am doing) 5:36

c. Prophecy/Scripture 5:37-40

Note: There are other claims of Jesus which are not recorded as I AM statements:

Jn 5:39,40 The Scriptures are about me.

5:45 I am greater than Moses. If you believed Moses, you would believe me (and therefore would not be offended that I healed on the Sabbath). You are rejecting Moses

VI Sign #4 Feeding 5000. **Now the gospel begins to pick up speed**.

Theme: Jesus will replace Moses and will replace the Passover.

Type: Marriage feast with God

John 6:4 The Jewish Passover was near. (to set up the connection)

Jesus to Phillip: Where should we buy bread? (Phillip was from Bethsaida. He lived closer to this site than the other apostles) 200 denarii = 200 day’s wages for a common worker. Phillip faces the facts.

Jesus gives bread (like the manna) and fish.

Q: What did Jesus actually do here? CS Lewis In his miracles, Jesus does what God does all the time, except in a small way.

People’s response: Increased faith. 6:14 “Surely this is the prophet” (cf Deuteronomy 18:17-19 Notice the strong words to the Jews listen to him)

What did Moses do? Bread, part the Red Sea, gave water. Jesus will do all these things.

VII Aside: Sign #5 Jesus walks on water Jn 6:16-24 (Matt14:22-33, Mark 6:47-51 where the power of Jesus is more emphasized. This is not the main emphasis of John with this miracle)

John’s emphasis: Jesus walks on the water as a parallel to Moses parting the water. An Exodus/Passover scene.

v. 20 “It is I” (I AM that I AM *ego eimi*) (Recalls Exodus 3:14) Do not be afraid. Suddenly they are on the other side (recalling the crossing of the Red Sea)

[aside: This is when Peter walked on the water to Jesus (Matt 14:28-33]

VIII. Discourse on Jesus as Bread of Life. A key discourse in John!

v. 25-27 Seek spiritual food, not physical food (We need that message!)

“Work” for spiritual food. An interesting concept. (Reminds us of Matthew 6:19 Store up treasures in heaven)

v. 28-29 What is the work of God? Believe. Ironic on the part of Jesus and ironic for “faith –only” Christians today.

v. 30 Jews demand a sign again (recall clearing the temple)

Jesus: I gave you bread. I am greater than Moses. Isn’t that testimony enough?

(this comment is for the Jews, but also for the unbelieving reader)

In fact: I AM the bread of life.

Q: In what sense is Jesus the bread of life? Both physically v. 35 and eternally v. 47-51.

What is “bread” for you? What is it that will fulfill you? Jesus offers this! v. 34 We want this bread! What do you hunger for (35b) What do you thirst for? (35c)

People’s response: grumbling 6:41

Jesus takes it higher: 6:48-51. What is he claiming? He is spiritual bread which, if eaten gives eternal life.

v. 53-59 You must eat the flesh and the blood. He is talking about being the Bread of Life.

This is not a prefigure of the Lord’s Supper. The Lord’s Supper is a remembrance of this fact. We must participate intimately in Jesus.

v. 60-70 Response. Many left Jesus. v. 67 John to reader: What about you?

Peter: To whom shall we go?

**John 7:1-9:41 Tabernacles Discourses.**

Tabernacles: the Feast of Tabernacles or *sukkoth* (literally, tabernacle) 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

1. Harvest Festival (Fall Harvest)

2. A remembrance of wilderness wandering—of living in intimate fellowship with God.

Jesus’ point: I am tabernacling with my people (John 1:14 The Word became flesh and tabermacled among us)

Jesus travels to Jerusalem at Tabernacles in secret because many were plotting his death.

Jesus at Tabernacles: Many claims!!!

1. Jn 7:16-19 “If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.

Response: You are demon-possessed.

2. Jn 7:37-44 (Look at the context 7:25 John is using the people to represent his reader? Who is this guy? Is what the “Jews” are saying about him correct, or is he the Christ? v. 31 When the Christ comes, will he do more miraculous signs than this man?)

John 7:37 If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him. Look at the response!!!

Jesus is drawing their attention to the Miracle of Moses bringing water from a rock.

Note, the context is Feast of Booths with its water theme. An important part of Tabernacles for us is the water-pouring ceremony.

During the Feast of Tabernacles a priest marched in procession from the Temple to the Pool of Siloam. He filled a golden pitcher with water from the Pool of Siloam, after which he recited Isaiah 12:3. ”With joy, you will draw water from the well of salvation.” With a solemn procession from the Pool of Siloam. (which is where the man born blind had to wash). Then the crowd marched with the priest and the pitcher, passing through the Water Gate (this is why it had that name) to the temple (which was dedicated on the last day of Tabernacles) carrying myrtle and willow twigs, tied to a palm branch in the right hand, and a citron or lemon in the left. They sang the praise Psalms 113-118. On the 7th day they did this seven times. The water was poured out at the altar of burnt offering. The water was a symbol of the Holy Spirit, drawing attention to the Messianic age.

“To appreciate the Messianic significance of Christ’s offer of His living water, it is important to remember Zechariah’s vision of the coming of the Lord when ‘living waters will flow out of Jerusalem.’ On that day, all the nations will come to Jerusalem ‘ to keep the feast of booths’ (Zech 14:8,16). Similarly, Ezekiel sees the coming of a Messianic ‘Prince’ who will celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles (Ez 45:25) and then water will flow from the threshold of the Temple to all the land (Ez 47:1-11).

Jesus spoke of offering streams of living water on the last great day of the feast (7:37)—the day that they did not do the water ceremony.

Jesus said, “as the Scripture has said. This is probably a reference to Joel 3:18.

Jesus: The Messianic age has come. The new Moses is here

[an interesting side note. John is the only one who mentions that Jesus said “I thirst” on the cross. The one who offers living water, from whom, if we go to him we will never thirst, thirsted in the cross]

See the response 7:40-52.

7:41 Some begin to think he is the Messiah? John to reader: What about you?

Next: John 8:12 I am the light of the world. Again, this has a direct reference to the Feast of Tabernacles.

**The Illumination of the Temple**

The two major ceremonies of the Feast of Tabernacles were the water procession and the illumination of the Temple. Most commentators maintain that the setting of Jesus’ self-proclamation as the Light of the World is the nightly illumination of the Court of Women that took place during the Feast of Tabernacles.

The meaning of the illumination of the Temple was similar to that of the pouring of the water. The light shining out of the Temple into the darkness around was seen ‘as a symbol not only of the Shekinah (God’s glory manifested in the Most Holy above the ark) which once filled the Temple, but also of the ‘great light’ that ‘the people that walked in darkness’ were to see, and which was to shine ‘upon them that dwell in the land of the shadow of death’ (Isa 9:2).

It seems most probable that it was in the context of this illumination ceremony that Jesus said: “I am the light of the world’ he who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

By proclaiming Himself as the light of the world, Christ revealed Himself to be the fulfillment of the Messianic pillar of fire that guided the Israelites through the wilderness.

The figure of living water typifies Christ as the Savior, while that of the Light represents Jesus as the Revealer of God’s will for mankind.

Jesus said: ‘I have come as light into the world, that whoever believes in Me may not remain in darkness” (John 12:46).

Through Jesus we can become “sons of light” John 12:36)

More on Jesus as the light of the world in John 9

John 8:27-30 When you have lifted up the Son of Man (look at the irony!!!) they you will know that I am the one I claim to be. Notice v. 30 Many put their faith in him. What about you?

John 8:46-59 The highest claim of Jesus?

v. 46 Can anyone prove me guilty of sin? imagine any human being who has ever lived making this statement in front of those who know him/her well? See the response in v. 48. He is crazy! (not a logical response, but they had nothing else to say)

v. 51 If anyone keeps my word, he will never see death. v. 58 Before Abraham was born, I AM. Wow. Response: They picked up stones to stone him. Q: Which camp are you in? No middle ground here!!!!

**John 9:1-41 Sign #6 Healing of the man born blind. Jesus proves that he is the light of the world.**

John 9:3-5. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

[also note, v. 3 that the man was blind so that the glory of God might be seen]

Note that this miracle involves both water (from the Pool of Siloam, no less) and light, recalling the two great ceremonies at Tabernacles.

When the man washed the dirt from his eyes in the Pool of Siloam, a brilliant light entered his eyes for the first time.

Note that the man’s faith (and the amount of light he has) grows more and more as the story goes along:

v. 11 the man Jesus.

v. 17 the Prophet.

v. 33 he is from God.

v. 38 Lord, I believe!!!

Of course, the parents and the Pharisees have the opposite experience.

Summary: John 9:39-41.

**John 10: More claims of Jesus and testimonies about Jesus.**

John 10: Context: The feast of Dedication Hanukkuh. (John 10:22)

John 10:7 I am the gate (to heaven v. 9) (John 14:6 I am the way, the truth and the life)

John 10:11, 14 I am the good shepherd.

Note: The shepherd discourse in Ezekiel 34:2-10 was part of the Hanukkuh liturgy.

Also note that the need for the dedication of the temple was because of bad shepherds (Daniel 11, 1st Macabbees)

David as a foreshadow. He laid down his life for the sheep 1 Samuel 17:34)

John 10:14-18 I am the good shepherd, and I am also the sacrificial sheep! I am a willing knowledgeable sheep!

v. 19 Response: You are demon possessed! You are mad!!! (again, John calling us to make a choice about Jesus)

John 10:25, 32, 38 The miracles testify to my right to say these things.

John 10:30 I and the Father are one!

Response: They try to stone him (10:31) (Why? You, a mere man, claim to be God)

**John 11: Sign #7 (for John) the greatest sign of Jesus’ ministry. The Raising of Lazarus**

John 11:4 This sickness will not end in death (irony here)

John 11:4 Why? (the usual reason) so that God and his Son will be glorified.

John 11:23-26 I AM the resurrection and the life.

Question for the reader: Do you believe Jesus????

Again, Jesus proves his claim by performing an equivalent physical miracle.

John 11:38-44

11:40 belief and glory again.

Response:45-51 Deep irony here!

v. 48 is ironic. (and it happened in AD 70 because they did NOT believe in him)

v. 50 is very ironic. It is better that one man should die for the people, rather than the entire nation perish.

John’s challenge to the reader: Which are you? John offers a stark choice. Will you believe and, by believing, have life in his name (John 20:29-31).

John 12. Last chapter in “The Book of Signs.” The signs are now completed, but the passion narrative has not quite started.

Before I get started, other claims and I AM statements, not in my “territory.”

John 14:6 I am the Way the Truth and the Life.

John 15:1f I am the true vine. (and you are the branches)

John 12 A transition.

1. During this chapter we enter Jerusalem.

2. The public ministry of Jesus comes to an end.

3. The “Book of Signs” ends and the “Book of the Passion” begins

Theme of John 12: The glorification of the king

1. His anointing.

2. His triumphal entry.

3. God: I will glorify your name

4. Jesus will be “lifted up.”

John 12:1-3 Jesus is being prepared for burial.

12:12 The passion story begins as Jesus enters Jerusalem.

The scene of Jesus entering Jerusalem is similar to the crowds who welcomed Simon Maccabeus into Jerusalem with shouts of praise and waving palm branches (1 Maccabees 13:51)

Crowd shouts Hosannah (save us now) Sounds like Psalm 118:22-26, a psalm which was read at Passover. The crowd is hailing Jesus as king and Messiah. Their political deliverer.

Jesus rides in on a donkey. Warriors ride in on horses. He comes in peace, not as a conquering king.

Irony: He will be made king and he will be glorified, but not how the people think.

v. 9-11 and 17-18 Lazarus is causing troubles for Jesus. The raising of Lazarus is very much in the air and everyone knows it. Bethany is less than two miles from Jerusalem. Today it is within Jerusalem.

12:19 irony The whole world has gone after him(prophetic)

12:23 The hour has come. The time is here. The stage is set. All is prepared. No turning back now. This leads to 12:24

12:24-26 The closest to a parable in John. Living for Jesus is like a grain of wheat which dies, and therefore produces much fruit. Jesus is obviously talking about himself, but he is also talking about us. “Hate your life” = willing to die for Jesus.

Glorification through death.

Message for us: The way to fruitfulness is sacrificial dying.

12:27-28 John’s equivalent of Gethsemane

12:29 John’s equivalent of the Mt of Transfiguration.

12:31 Now is the time. All is ready. Let’s get it done. Satan is judged, I will be lifted up.

12:32 (reminds us of 3:14, 8:28 His death has the power to draw people to Jesus.

12:34 People are confused.

This time, Jesus does not answer them. His public ministry is done. v. 36 He departs from them.

12:37-50 Summary of the Book of Signs. End of the public ministry of Jesus. Final appeal.

12:44f some more claims

13:1f The Book of Passion begins. Jesus’ public ministry is now done. From now on, we see Jesus in intimate discussions with his apostles. We have seen almost none of this in John so far (although the synoptics have quite a bit of interactions is Jesus with the apostles).

John 2-12 Jesus is speaking to “the world”

John 13-17 Jesus is speaking to the church (in the form of the 12 disciples)

A little chronology problem.

The Synoptics have the Lord’s Supper on the eve of the Passover (Thursday evening), and therefore Jesus was killed on the Passover.

John 18:28 has people “eating the Passover” the next evening. Explanation:

1. John is wrong and he purposefully places Passover one day later so that Jesus can be killed when the Passover lambs are killed.

2. “Eating the Passover” is a reference to the entire festival, including the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

3. There were conflicting dates among different groups as to when the Passover was celebrated: 14 or 15 Nisan.

I believe that #2 is the correct explanation, but cannot rule out #3.

**John 13. Jesus shows his love**

Jn 13:1 Jesus showed that he loved them to the end. A double meaning here. He love them until the very end and he loved them “completely” or “utterly.”

Jesus mentions his love for his disciples 31 times in 13-17.

13:3-11 Jesus shows his love. Both a symbol of his love and service and a symbol of how his sacrifice will cleanse them.

13:12-17 Go and do likewise for one another.

13:18-31 Jesus announces his betrayal and prepares them for the shock. I am in control, not Judas. Besides, this was prophesied Psalm 41:9. A very intimate portrayal.

v 23-24 the disciple whom Jesus loved.

v. 25 John leaning on Jesus breast.

v. 33 Little children.

v. 31 Judas leaves. Now Jesus gets down to business. He gives his farewell address.

Now it is time for God to be glorified and for me to be glorified.

13:34 Jesus’ command: Love one another.

Summary:

We know the story of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. As he said, Jesus was, indeed, glorified.

**John Ch 14**

Two things are going on here.

1. Jesus is trying to reassure them that he is with them and that, even when he is gone, He will still be with them in the form of the Holy Spirit. You guys will be OK.

2. He is both setting an example and giving them a command to love.

John 14:1-4

a. Jesus is commanding us to believe/trust in him. (the imperative is used

b. Jesus is using wedding commitment as a metaphor. In a Jewish marriage, the groom gave a commitment to build a “room” for his bride. If she accepted the offer, he went and built a room (either an addition to his family house, or a separate house nearby). When the dwelling was built, he came a brought her to that dwelling place. That is when the marriage was consummated. But…. in Jewish eyes they were married when they made the commitment to each other. The parallel is very obvious

c. Jesus is claiming, in the strongest possible terms, to be God. He equates “believe in God” with “believe in me.”

Thomas: How do we get there? Jesus must have been SO frustrated. I AM the way.

Again, he claims deity. If you have seen me, you have seen the Father.

Philip: Show us the Father Again, Jesus must have been VERY frustrated. Phillip. Were’nt you paying attention??? You have seen the Father. I have revealed him to you.

v. 10 Jesus: I do not speak on my own authority. (note, it was not until he was resurrected that he claimed to have been given all authority Matthew 28:18)

v. 12 You will do greater works than I have done. Miracles? NO. He is talking about the work of bringing salvation to Jews and Gentiles.

v. 14 Ask anything in my name… In the authority of Jesus. Even if we ask thing that are not according to his will? If you ask for something which is against his will, then, by definition, you are not asking in his name.

If you ask [me] anything in my name. Oldest manuscripts have as [me] This is one of the more clear examples showing we can pray to Jesus (also Stephen in Acts 7 and Rev 22:20.

14:15-18 First promise to send the Holy Spirit. (of three 14:16-17, 26 15:26, 16:7-15) But… It starts with a commandment to love. Sending of the Holy Spirit is based on love (shown by obeying him, also 14:21,13))

Jesus: I will not leave you alone (in fact, in John 16:7 he tells them it is better for them if he goes away and sends the Holy Spirit, than if he stays with them in the flesh..

v. 15 Another (*allon*) another of the same kind. Like, I will send you another book. (the implication is that the Holy Spirit is deity).

Counselor (*parakletos*) literal meaning: the called-alongside one Used of a defense attorney.

With you and in you both Greek words for :with.”

“orphaned” When a Jewish Rabbi died, their disciples were said to have been orphaned.

v. 20 equates The Father in Jesus, Jesus in us and us in Jesus.

v. 23 “we” will make our home with him equating the Holy Spirit with Jesus and the Father. In other words, God will live within us.

v. 23-24 Again, he equates love with obeying the commandments/Word of Jesus.

v. 27 I leave my Shalom with you. This word is bigger than English word peace. It is fullness, satisfaction, fulfillment, rightness of relationships. We are back to the reassurance theme here. Do not be troubled or afraid.

v. 28 used (falsely) by Arians and JWs to claim that Jesus is not deity. This is about lesser in the sense of submission, not in the sense of nature.

Satan has no power over me. Why? because I obey the Father. (message for us?)

v. 31 Arise, let us go. A bit strange here. Where did they go? Away from the table, preparing to leave? Might they have left the upper room at that time? Not clear.

**John Chapter 15 The Vine and the Branches.**

A common metaphor. ***Psalm 80:8-18***, ***Isaiah 5:1-7***, Jeremiah 2:21 Ezekiel 15:1-8 also Ezekiel 19:10 and Hoseah 10:1.

John 15:1 In what sense is Jesus a vine? He is the connection to the Father, to the Holy Spirit, to the life-giving essence. In what sense is God a gardener?

In what sense are we branches? In the sense that our purpose, in this metaphor, is to bear fruit.

15:2a He cuts off every branch which bears no fruit. Is this a threat that if we do not bear fruit, we will be cut off?

Answer: Maybe, but the stronger sense of John 15 is a promise that, if we are attached to the vine, we will bear fruit that will last.

It is more like, those parts of us which are not going to be fruitful, he cuts off so that we can bear more fruit. If this passage is a warning, it is more a warning that we will be pruned than that we will be cut off.

15:3 You are already made clean = you have already been pruned. Pruned = cleaned.

Is 15:2a (he cuts off every branch…) connected to 15:6 (a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned) and therefore to Matthew 7:15-20 (every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire)?

15:4 What is the key teaching in John 15? We should abide (remain) in Jesus.

Note: Abiding is commanded. It is something we do.

Q: How do we abide in Christ? (Jesus’ answer is not what we would expect)

15:8 As Jesus glorified the Father by doing the work given to him, so we glorify Jesus by doing the work he gave us. What is that work? Bearing fruit.

How? 15:9-10 by keeping his commands. That is fairly simple.

What is this fruit? 15:7-8 It is the things we ask for. Interesting. The fruit is the product of our vision. (also v. 16-17 (see below))

15:9-17 **The key to abiding is loving and obeying** (esp. v. 10).

Q: What is the connection between loving and bearing fruit?

v. 11 The result: Joy. Sounds like John 10 Life and life to the full.

v. 12-15 Again, the key to abiding is love. Jesus even calls us friend (2 Chron 20:7, Isaiah 41:8, James 2:23 Abraham as a friend of God) . He even dies for us. That’s love! Our obedience is that of a friend who willingly obeys rather than as a slave who is forced to obey. In that sense, we also “lay down” our lives to him.

v. 16-17 bearing fruit again. In this context, he is talking about preaching and sharing the gospel. But even here, it is connected with accomplishing the things we ask for (16b my Father will give whatever you ask for). It involves fulfilling our purpose as we desire it.

15:18-16:4 The love and fellowship we have in Jesus is contrasted to the hatred we will have from the world.

Outline: six if… then… statements v. 18, 19, 20 (2x), 22, 24.

Believe it or not, this is all part of Jesus’ comforting his disciples (and us).(see, for example, John 16:1)

Jesus’ assurance (which may not sound very reassuring) is that it is only natural that the world will hate you. To the extent that you are like me, you will be hated by the world. In any case, it is me, not you who they are hating.

v. 26-27 Jesus goes back to comforting. The Counselor (*parakaleo* the caller alongside) will come. He will help you to know the truth and will testify to me that you are OK. In other words, those people can say what they want, I am going to listen to the Holy Spirit, not to them!!! Do not worry.

v. 27 The Holy Spirit is not an angel (sent from the Father). He is God (proceeds from the Father)

16:2 You will be kicked out of the Synagogues. This was fulfilled in about AD 90, when the “Twelfth Benediction” of the synagogue service was added: “May the Nazarenes and heretics perish in a moment, be blotted out of the book of life, and not be written with the just.”

16:4 Again, these things are said so that they will remember he warned them.

**John 16 Jesus Comforts the Disciples**

Jn 16:6 It is for your good that I am going away. Why? Because it is better for us to have the Holy Spirit living in us than to have Jesus living among us. If I do not go away, He cannot come.

Jn 16:7 Theological note: I will send Him. Early church The Son is begotten of the father, while the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. Greek: ἐκπορευόμενον Latin: *Filioque procedit*

This Filoque doctrine in the Nicene Creed was a major cause of the split between East and West.

Jesus: I understand you will have grief, but you should not!

* **I will send the Comforter.**
* **Aside: Does the Holy Spirit “proceed from the Father and the Son” (filoque)? John 15:7**
* **He will convict the world**
* **He will guide you into the truth**
* **16:20 Your grief will turn to joy.**
* **16:25 I will speak to you plainly.**
* **16:33 Take heart: I have overcome the world.**

**John 17: Jesus Prays for His Disciples.**

What sticks out is Jesus’ incredible love for the apostles. Jesus is very concerned about his followers. 17:11-19 (read it)

Themes:

1. Glorifying God and Glorifying his Son 17:1

17:4 I have brought you glory by completing the work. Now, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. (Jesus is anticipating being raised to the Father’s side) Glory/glorify 9 times in John 17 alone. (36 in book of John) 17:1,4,5,10,22,24

17:22-24 We will see Jesus at the right hand of the father.

2. Knowing God 17:3, This is eternal life: to know God and to know Jesus who God sent (also20:30) also Jn 17:25-26

3. Unity and relationship. John 17:23

**John 18-19 John’s Passion Story**

Things to notice about the passion account in John:

Jesus is totally in control. He knows exactly what is happening and what he is doing.

He has predicted what is happening Jn 18:9,32 John 19:24, 19:36-37.

In Jn 19 many prophecies are noted to be fulfilled (unlike earlier in John, contrasted to Matthew) Why? The point is to show that Jesus knows **exactly** what he is doing. **He** is in control.

Note how bold he is with Annas as he confronts him. 18:20-21 Why question me? v. 23 If I said something wrong, testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?

Also, note the boldness of Jesus sandwiched between the cowardliness of Peter’s denials.

Also, notice how he questions Pilate almost as much as Pilate questions him. (18:34 Is that your own idea?)

19:11 “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above.”

Even in the very end, He gives up his spirit. Jesus even chooses the moment of his death. 19:30 “It is finished.”

**John Ch 20 Resurrection Appearances**

**Mary Magdalene**

**Peter and “the other disciple (John)**

**Mary Magdalene again**

**The disciples (- Thomas)**

**The disciples, including Thomas**

Summary:

John 20:26-31 Thomas finally believes. My Lord and my God!!

Jesus says to him (really to us!) Blessed are those who have not seen my glorification and still believe.

Note: vs 28 My Lord and my God! John begins and ends his gospel with a statement that Jesus is God.

John’s summary:

“These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of God and that, by believing, you will have life in his name.

…that you may believe *pisteuete*  present subjunctive that you continue believing (principally for those who already believe?) Both!

And to God be the glory.

**Ch 21 Epilogue**

An eighth miracle. This section appears to have been appended to the book, which has a very natural end with 20:31

An eighth sign… but note John tells us there were MANY more 21:25 Jesus did many other things as well.

Is it written by John? If anything it is more personal and more obviously by John than the rest of the gospel. 21:24 This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down.

Purpose of the epilogue: An eighth sign, but also to clear up the restoration of Peter and to belie the belief that John would not die until Christ returns

7 disciples are hanging out in Galilee. Have they abandoned Jesus? No, but they are back fishing.

Cast your nets on the right side…. Finally, John (the beloved disciple) recognizes Jesus. Peter is very fired up.

On shore, Jesus has already (miraculously?) begun cooking fish and bread like John 6

153 fish Details to show reader this is an eye-witness account.

What an amazing breakfast this must have been. Imagine being there. Jesus is very human here.

21:15-19 Jesus restores Peter to the preeminent place among the apostles.

Is there a great importance in the two uses of the word love? *philo vs agapas* Probably not because 1. John uses the two interchangeably and 2. They are speaking in Aramaic, which, like English, has one word for both concepts.

Three challenges “do you love me?” Why? Probably because of three denials.

Jesus: Feed my sheep. Peter to be a shepherd/elder

Jesus: You will die a martyr. Note: this was almost certainly written after Peter died (v. 19)

21-22 John is clearing up a misunderstanding in the church about this event.

v.

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 terrminology.”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 worshiping 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 4 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.” An additional “holy convocation” was to be called 15 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 reinstituted after the return of the Jews from Babylonian exile, the Jews set up their booths in a number of different places: “every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim.” Rabbinical writings tell us that those traveling some distances were exempt from living in 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. But an incident 25 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.

**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.”

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 turn to wine (John 2:1-11) and the Savior’s walking on water (John 615-21). To dramatize the point further, John, alone, records the piercing of the Savior’s side while upon the cross. In that account it is said the when 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 heals 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

**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? It is instructive that Jesus then said, “Before Abraham was born, I am.”

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

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)