

Feast of Booths

John 7 Background Info. (Positive Action Bible Studies)

On the seventh and last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, the Jews had a special ceremony called the Feast of the Rejoicing of the House of the Water-Pouring. This was a ceremony of messianic significance in which water drawn from the pool of Siloam was poured out from a golden vessel in the temple at the time of the morning sacrifice. Prayers were also made for good rainfall during the coming season. This ceremony commemorated two events: (1) the water smitten from the rock at Sinai (Exo. 17:1-7), and (2) the coming reign of the Messiah and the river of living water that flows from His throne (Ezek. 47:1, 9).

The water-pouring ceremony involved three divisions of priests. • The first division would slay and prepare the sacrifices.

Y• The second went out of the temple through the east gate to the Kidron Valley, where they dumped the ashes from the sacrifice. There, they cut down willows measuring 25 feet in length. The priests then lined up shoulder-to-shoulder in rows 30 feet apart holding their willows. The road back to the temple would be filled with pilgrims waving palm branches and chanting the Hallel (Ps. 113-118). The closing words of Psalm 118 are “*Ana Adonai Hoshiana*” (“Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord...Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord”). This day was known as the “Great Hosanna,” a day of prayer and great rejoicing for speedy salvation through the Messiah.

Y• Meanwhile, the third group of priests, led by the high priest, exited south through the water gate to the pool of Siloam far down in the valley to the south. There the high priest drew the water known as “living water” into a golden vase. His assistant carried a silver vase containing wine.

Y Then they began a slow, long ascent back up the hill past the ancient city of David and back into the temple area. As the high priest and his priests made their way back from the south, the priests with the willows marched up to the Temple Mount from the east to their respective gates.

Y As they walked, the willows would make a swishing sound, like a rushing wind (Spirit) approaching the city (a picture of Pentecost). A *shofar* (horn) was blown as they reached their respective gates.

Y• The priests with the willows entered the temple and circled the altar seven times. They then laid their willows against the altar to form a *succot* (tabernacle). The priests who slew the sacrifices then ascended to the top of the altar and laid the sacrifices on the altar. The people gathered in the courts and the area around the temple.

• Entering the temple court by the water gate, the high priest moved slowly toward the altar. There, he mixed the clear water with red wine and poured it into two silver cups on the southwest corner of the altar. All music stopped for this dramatic moment, and a hush fell over the entire temple complex as the moment arrived.

Usually, the Levites clanged their cymbals and sounded trumpets as the water flowed over the two cups on to the altar. The trumpets sounded, and the people sang, “With joy therefore shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.”

Whenever this ceremony was completed, the people rejoiced with a very great noise. In fact, the rejoicing was allegedly so loud that the rabbis said, "He who hath not seen these festivals knows not what rejoicing means." It was sometime during this awesome ceremony that Christ startled the huge assembly with a loud cry: "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).