

THE GREAT DAY

“In the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (John 7:37)

The Scriptures make an association between the “great day” of the feast and the announcement of Jesus. Let us study further and try to find out why.

The Jewish Feast of Tabernacles fell on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, five days after the Day of Atonement. It lasted for seven days (Exod. 23:16, 17; 34:22). It was one of the three major feasts that all the Israelites were required to attend. The first and the eighth days were days of rest. During this feast the Israelites were commanded to dwell in booths that they might remember that their ancestors lived in booths for forty years when God brought them up out of Egypt (Lev. 23:33-43). Every seven years the Law was to be read during this feast (Deut. 31:9 - 13).

The Scriptures indicate that the last day of the feast was greater than the others. It was called the “great day of the feast”. It was precisely on this day that Jesus cried out for thirsty people to come unto Him and drink. He continued: **“He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)”** (John 7:38-39)

William Barclay in his commentary on the Gospel of John helps us to understand the significance of that “great day”. He wrote: *“Each day of the festival the people came with their palms and their willows to the Temple; with them they formed a kind of screen or roof and marched round the great altar. At the same time a priest took a golden pitcher which held three logs – that is, about two pints – and went down to the Pool of Siloam and filled it with water. It was carried back through the Water Gate while the people recited Isaiah 12:3: ‘With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.’ The water was carried up to the Temple altar and poured out as an offering to God. While this was being done The Hallel - - that is, Psalms 113 - 118 – was sung to the accompaniment of flutes by the Levite choir. When they came to the words, ‘O give thanks to the Lord’ (Psalms 118:1), and again to the words, ‘O work now then salvation’ (Psalms 118:25), and finally to the closing words, ‘O give thanks to the Lord’ (Psalms 118:29), the worshipers shouted and waved their palms towards the altar. The whole dramatic ceremony was a vivid thanksgiving for God’s good gift of water and an acted prayer for rain, and a memory of the water which sprang from the rock when they traveled through the wilderness. On the last day the ceremony was doubly impressive for they marched seven times round the altar in memory of the sevenfold circuit round the walls of Jericho, whereby the walls fell down and the city was taken”.*

TOUCHE! It was against this background, and probably at this very moment, that Jesus stood and cried out for thirsty people to come unto Him and drink. It was both brilliant and utterly appropriate that Jesus would take advantage of what these people were already thinking about and use it to help them understand even greater spiritual truth.

We can do the same thing today. We can take advantage of “great days” and “special occasions” to teach spiritual truth. When the world celebrates a “new year” we can remind them that in Christ our sins can be completely forgiven and we can start a new life with a clean slate. When the world celebrates Valentine’s Day we can remind that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. When the world celebrates Mother’s Day, we can remind them that the church is like Jerusalem from above and is the mother of us all! Etc.

You see the principle. We take people where they are and lead them to where they ought to be. Some people look at every day alike (Rom. 14:5). Most, however, celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, political and religious holidays, and other special occasions. Let us do what Jesus did and take advantage of what they are already thinking about to teach them eternal truth. It is appointed unto every man once to die, and after that the judgment. Those are two Great Days we all need to get ready for. Maranatha!

