

John – Chapters 7-8  
Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles  
or Sukkoth  
or the Festival of Booths

One part of this section is not in the original manuscript and may even be left out of some of your versions.

The Woman caught in Adultery is not part of John's original Gospel.  
It sounds like an authentic story, but John didn't put it here.

1. It is not in the very oldest manuscripts.
2. It interrupts the flow of chapters 7 and 8 which are the story of Jesus at the Festival of Booths and focus on answering Jewish objections to his claim of Messiah and deity.
3. When it begins showing up in the manuscripts, it is in different places: sometimes in its current location; sometimes at the end of John; sometimes in Luke and not in John.

That raises some interesting questions:

how and why it got in there;  
if it's not part of the inspired original, should it be considered scriptural;  
since it's not original, should it be left in future editions of the Bible; and  
what does an obvious addition say about the idea of inerrancy?

I said it raised some interesting questions;  
I never said that we were going to dive into any of them

Nonetheless, we're going to consider this story by itself and then look at the rest of chapters 7 and 8  
in their original uninterrupted version

Why is this one of the most popular and famous stories in the Bible?

Perhaps because it's one of those stories where we've been each of the 4 main characters:

We've all been the teachers of the law and the Pharisees, testing and tempting God with our smug  
self-righteousness and superiority as we ignore our own sins and need of forgiveness to condemn  
somebody else....

We've all been the woman caught in the very act of adultery, painfully aware and embarrassed by  
our obvious guilt and shame....

We've all been part of the crowd, going along with it and watching what we should have the courage  
to stand against.....

Hopefully we've all been Jesus, refusing to be drawn into the temptation of being part of the gang  
and standing up for mercy and forgiveness, but also being willing to acknowledge and confront  
wrong whether it's found in an angry mob of church folks or a frightened but guilty woman....

You'll recall that the feeding of the 5000 took place near Passover, which would be in the spring.  
Now we're at the Feast of Tabernacles, which was in the fall, about six months later.

These are some argumentative chapters. As you'll recall from the basic outline, there will be a rising  
level of conflict between Jesus and the Jewish authorities that will culminate in his crucifixion in  
about another six months.

So, while you may not agree with the way the movie presents these scenes, these are not pleasant

times.

Some of these arguments we've heard before, and some of it has more relevance for Jesus' and John's original audiences and  
We can skip much discussion on parts of these chapters

if

everyone has been convinced by now that Jesus was and saw himself to be the Messiah;

everyone has been convinced by now that Jesus is and saw himself to be God incarnate;

everyone has been convinced by now that the people of Jesus' day also recognized that he was proclaiming this and proving it by miracles, but some simply refused to believe.

If we've got a general consensus on those points, then we can focus on the questions and claims that have special significance for us:

Two of these claims require some background information and context if you're going to more fully appreciate what you'll see and read:

### Living Water and The Light of the World

Notes on the Feast from other handout::

In the Old Testament, God instituted a religious calendar for the Israelites to follow. The seventh day, the seventh year, and the end of seven "seven years" were significant to Him. Within each year, there were seven specified feasts (Leviticus 23). In the spring, three feasts were celebrated together: Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Firstfruits. These feasts remembered, respectively, Israel's deliverance from Egypt, God's gift of the Promised Land, and the spring harvest. Fifty days after Passover came Shavuot, sometimes called Pentecost, which celebrated the end of the grain harvest and the anniversary of the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai.

In the fall were the holy days of Rosh Hashanah, or the feast of Trumpets, and Yom Kippur, the day of atonement when Israel went before the Lord and asked forgiveness to escape His judgment. Immediately after these two feast days came the most joyous one of all, the only feast God commanded the people to "rejoice before him" (Leviticus 23:40)—the feast of Sukkot, or Tabernacles as it would come to be known. And rejoice they did.

The week-long celebration began after the fall harvest (figs, pomegranates, dates, and grapes) had been gathered and the olives hung heavy on the trees. Now was the time to be glad. Following God's command the people built booths of olive, palm, and myrtle branches (Nehemiah 8:15). The booths provided shade, but there needed to be enough space in the branches so the people could see the sky, reminding them of their

years in the wilderness.

These booths, or *sukkot* (pi. *sukkah*) gave the feast its name.

The Pharisees had adopted another custom based on God's commands in Leviticus 23:40. They took the branches of the three trees—olive, palm, and myrtle—and tied them together.

Holding this cluster of branches (called *lulav*; pi. *lulavim*) in one hand and a citron (the fruit they decided was mentioned in Leviticus 23:40) in the other, they carried them to the Temple for each of the seven days of the festival (as religious Jews still do today).

There was another special element to the celebration of Sukkot, and it involved living water. Sukkot took place at the end of the dry season. The rains needed to begin immediately to ensure a harvest the following year.

Thus the celebration of God's harvest was coupled with fervent prayer for next year's rains. Some believe this custom came from Solomon's prayer at the Sukkot dedication of the Temple (2 Chronicles 6). He prayed that God would forgive the sins of the people when they prayed toward the Temple and that He would not withhold the rains (2 Chronicles 6:26-27). The people knew that no rain meant no life. So the priests added a ceremony that included a prayer for rain. They may have based this ceremony on Isaiah 12:3: "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation."

This part of the ceremony involved a procession of priests, accompanied by flutes, marching from the Temple to the **Pool of Siloam**, which was fed by the Spring of Gihon. One of the priests filled a golden pitcher (more than a quart) with water, and the procession returned to the Temple. They arrived just after the sacrifices were laid on the altar. The priest carrying the pitcher entered the priests' court through the Water Gate and, to the blast of the shofar, approached the altar. He made one circle around the altar as the crowd sang the *Hallel*. Then the priest climbed the ramp and stood near the top of the altar. Here there were two silver funnels leading into the stone altar for the daily drink offerings. As the crowd grew silent, the priest solemnly poured the water into one of the funnels.

Again the people, accompanied by the Levitical choir, began to chant the *Hallel*. The sound was deafening because of the thousands of pilgrims jammed into the Temple courts. In this way, they asked God for life-giving rain. The living water they used apparently acknowledged it was God who brought rain and life. The chant of the Hosanna—"O Lord, save us!"—now meant "Save us by sending rain as well."

It seems hardly possible, but the celebration became even more intense as the week drew to a close. When the seventh day of the feast arrived, the courts of the Temple were packed with worshipers. Chants of praise were heard throughout the city, and thousands of *lulavim* waved in the air. The priestly procession went to the living water of the Pool of Siloam. As the massive crowd waited expectantly, the sacrifices were offered, and the priests chanted, "O Lord, save us! O Lord, grant us success!" (Psalm 118:25).

The procession returned and entered the Court of the Gentiles, then went through the Water Gate into the priests' court. As hundreds of priests chanted the Hosanna ("Deliver us! Save us!") and thousands of people jammed into the Temple courts, the procession circled the altar seven times (remembering the walls of Jericho, which fell after seven circuits because of God's great power). Then there were three blasts on the trumpets, and the crowd grew still as the priest poured the living water into the tunnel. Now the chanting became even more intense: "Save us, hosanna! Help us, hosanna!" and the next verse: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of

the LORD" (Psalm 118:26). The waving of the *lulavim* reached a frenzy as branches were beaten against the ground until the leaves fell off.

Four great menorahs (over 75 feet high), placed in the women's court in remembrance of the miraculous unending supply of oil on Hanukkah, were also lit on Sukkot, commemorating God's deliverance of His people from the Syrians. (The bowls on top of the branched candles held more than 10 gallons of oil. The wicks were made from the worn-out breeches of the priests.) The light of the candles could be seen in every house in Jerusalem. Tradition records that the people, upon seeing the light, sang these words: "Our ancestors turned their backs on the Temple of the Lord, but our eyes are on the Lord." Truly the feast of Sukkot was one of great celebration. A rabbi once said, "Whoever has not seen Sukkot has not witnessed real joy."

2 Samuel 20:1- rejection of David for Absalom  
I Kings 12:16 – rejection of Jeroboam and House of David  
John 7:53 – demonstrates rejection of Jesus by Israel

#### Living Water (again)

Sukkot reference is to water from the rock (struck the 1<sup>st</sup> time, spoken to the 2<sup>nd</sup> time) John says that the Living Water is the Holy Spirit that had not yet been given because Jesus had not yet been glorified

Isaiah 44:3  
and  
Joel 2:28

#### Light of the World

Sukkot reference is to Shekeniah glory of God in the wilderness and in the tabernacle and in the temple and that Ezekiel saw leave the temple before its destruction. (John 8:23-25) And He said to them, "You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." Then they said to Him, "Who are You?" And Jesus said to them, "Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning. (NKJV)

(John 8:31-36) Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, 'You will be made free'?" Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. "And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed. (NKJV)

(John 8:56-59) "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad." Then the Jews said to Him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by. (NKJV)