

BROKEN CISTERNS

“Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” —JOHN 7:38

Along with Passover and Pentecost, the Feast of Tabernacles was one of the three main celebrations in the Jewish calendar. It was a Thanksgiving feast, lasting eight days, where the people acknowledged the fall harvest and God’s provision for them. From all over, they travelled to Jerusalem in Judea for what was a festive and joyful celebration.

We read in John 7:1, “Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to take his life.” Verses 12-13 tell us, “Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, ‘He is a good man.’ Others replied, ‘No, he deceives the people.’ But no one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the Jews.”

On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus spoke openly and boldly about Himself. It had been eight days of feasting, drinking, partying; a ripe seduction for indecent and immoral behaviour. John 7:37-38 says, “Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, springs of living water will flow from within him.” Jesus does not condemn the people, but feels compassion. He proclaims for all to hear who He is and what He can do for them. He uses the same imagery as God did when He said to Jeremiah, “My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug

their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water” (Jeremiah 2:13).

When we turn away from God, and therefore away from the living water, which John describes as the Holy Spirit (John 7:39), we do not move into no man’s land. The glitter of alternative things tantalizes and we are easily seduced into digging our own cisterns. Any cistern other than Christ Himself is broken; perhaps a small crack we hardly notice at first, so we keep living from broken cisterns. But the crack gets bigger and the cistern is soon unable to hold water. We are left drained, weary and thirsting for something else. This is the picture Jesus sees on the last day of the celebrations, and He says to the people, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.”

The message Jesus gives is for both believers and unbelievers; believers to come back to Him, and unbelievers to simply come to Him. “Whoever believes in me,” Jesus says, “streams of living water will flow from within him.” This is the life of Christ, Himself, the only cistern that will never crack, never break and never run dry.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, I ask that you always be in me that stream of living water and keep me from digging my own cisterns. Thank You, Lord.

TO REFLECT UPON: Have I dug my own cisterns and feel a need to come back to the fresh, living water Jesus gives?