

New Testament Lesson # 17

April 29-May 5

John 7-10

I Am the Good Shepherd

By Lenet Hadley Read

**I. It was significant that Jesus appeared at the Feast of Tabernacles, for everything about that Holy Time had foreshadowed Him.**

A. Its rituals were a witness of Him. The High Priest was to pour water out as an offering to the Lord in a plea for the end-of-the-year-rains, that they might have good crops in the spring. It was as the High Priest poured these waters that Jesus cried out, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink" [John 7:37-39]. In doing so He was testifying that **He was the source of physical and spiritual drink**. It was very bold for him to speak so openly. But He knew His time was coming, though not yet. And He knew He was setting in motion the events which would lead to his atoning work.

B. Actually this Feast witnessed more of Christ's Second Coming. **It witnesses of the coming forth of His Spiritual Word in the Latter-days, through The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints**. It witnesses of His Word that is going forth now, gathering in His elect in preparations for His Second Coming. But as His Word is the source of all truth, it was appropriate He connect His word with that Feast at that time too.

C. This feast is also a witness of the final and completed Gathering of the Harvest. As the people dwelt in shelters upon which they hung the fruits of their harvest, it was **a witness of the Millennium, when Christ's spiritual harvests will all be gathered in and we will rejoice with Jesus Christ, our True Shelter, in His Completed Harvest**.

**II. A Baptist Minister recently witnessed of Christ's Latter-day spiritually nourishing drink.**

A. Pastor Lynn Ridenhour recently spoke at a Book of Mormon Conference. He is a Baptist minister, who teaches from the Book of Mormon, recognizing it is the word of God. But this particular presentation was on the prophet Joseph Smith, whom he recognizes as a prophet.

Brother Ridenhour said that even when young he dreamed of going to Israel to see where Jesus had walked. But he says **since learning the truths of the Restored Gospel, he now realizes what is important is not the land, but the people!**

He said the Protestants were aware that Judah was to receive the scepter --- the ruler ship of Israel through Jesus Christ. But he said that Protestants failed to grasp that Joseph of Egypt received the Birthright. So the **people** are the most important thing --- and [he pointed to us Latter-day Saints in the congregation], "You are the People, the Restored Israelites!" He also said that Joseph was also given a land, and it was the land of America, A Promised Land.

He sees his work as bringing more Protestants to understand these truths and to build bridges between Latter-day Saints and other Protestants.

His main purpose is to witness that Christ has sent His Latter-day Word, like His Latter-day rains, to the people.

**III. The Woman Taken in Adultery**

A. Jesus shows He has come to remove sin from sinners, if they would repent. To witness of this truth was His motivation behind His actions with the woman taken in adultery. Thus

He was not condoning her sins, but showing that if she would repent, and “Go and sin no more,” she could be forgiven, through His coming atoning work.

B. But there is more to the story...

Israel was the “Bride” with whom He, as Jehovah, had covenanted at Mt. Sinai. But Israel for the most part had lost their faithfulness to God. Throughout the Old Testament the prophets had called Israel “adulterers” for worshipping idols, and this included the “things of the world” as well as actual idols. So as a body, the Jews themselves were still “adulterers.”

**And now this charge became particularly significant, as their Bridegroom-God was now among them. He had repeatedly shown that He had come as the Bridegroom. But they were in the very act of “rejecting Him.”** So when He said, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her” (John 8: 7), not only were they all sinners, **but they were even guilty of the same sin they accused the woman of --- spiritual adultery.**

III. Jesus also used the events of the Feast of Tabernacles to teach that He was the Light of the World.

A. During this Feast, Giant Candelabra were set up all over the city. Thus it was a Festival of Lights!

B. So as those lights gleamed throughout the city, Jesus also testified, “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).

C. Thus Jesus used the things He had commanded for The Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:33-36), part of the Mosaic Law, to now testify of Himself --- that He was the Lord God Himself who had come to redeem them with Spiritual Drink, Great and Forgiving Love, and Glorious Light,

D. But they rejected all these witnesses, and began to plot to kill him.

IV. Therefore Jesus made a bold declaration, after trying in vain to show them who He really is. He did so in response to their claiming that they had “Abraham to their fathers.” [Meaning that he was the source of their authority]. Jesus then testified that He was greater than Abraham.

“Before Abraham was, I Am.” (John 8:58). His statement had many meanings.

A. He is testifying that He existed prior to Abraham’s birth, due to the pre-mortal existence, but most importantly that **He was the God of Abraham.**

B. He is testifying that His very name is “I Am,” which He as Jehovah had used for His own when speaking to Moses out of the burning bush.

C. One Jewish scholar translated this term in a way which explains why Jehovah had used it in the burning bush. He translated it as meaning, “**I am He** who will be there at the appointed time.” And now that “appointed time had come and He was There!”

**D. “I Am” also likely signifies that God is not a God of the past. But God is a God who still lives, who still speaks, and who still acts for the salvation of man.** For a major problem has always been that some persons may believe in a God who spoke or did miracles in the past, but have great difficulty in believing in a God of the Now ---- who still speaks and who still acts. **Thus the Lord is Testifying not “I Was,” but “I Am!”**

V. Jesus’ healing the blind man taught many significant principles.

- A. Disabilities, trials, are not always related to our sins. (Exceptions would be alcoholism, tobacco smoking, other reckless living).
- B. The act of healing the blind man was an act to show contrast: **While the blind man was healed and began to “see,” those who supposedly “saw” were spiritually blind.**
- C. Jesus’ said the man’s blindness was so the works of God might be manifest. This likely had reference to the fact that the man had been born blind so that Jesus’ might heal him, and **thus bear witness to all of His power to make the physically blind see, but most of all to show that He had the power to heal men who were spiritually blind to see.**

VI. When Jewish leaders asked who He is, Jesus gives a beautiful sermon about the qualities of a good shepherd. In identifying Himself as The Good Shepherd He makes two strong witnesses.

- A. The Jews knew the Messiah **would come of the lineage of David, the chief example of a Good Shepherd, who endangered his own life to save one lamb from the wildest of beasts** (See 1 Samuel 17:34-35 and Luke 15:2-7). Thus He is the prophesied Son of David.
- B. Even more importantly prophets **had verified the Messiah would come as a Good Shepherd** (Isaiah 40:11; Ezekiel 34:23).
- C. And this includes the beautiful 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm which speaks of the **Lord as Shepherd**.  
**“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want....”**  
 The Psalms were an important part of Israelite worship, as they were their hymns, sung regularly in synagogue and temple worship.  
**Jesus is thus identifying Himself as the Lord who Is the Good Shepherd.**
- D. In giving this parable, Jesus seems to speak with patience, for **even these haughty Pharisees are among the Lost Sheep whom He has come to save.**
- E. After Christ’s death, his apostles continued to refer to Him as the chief shepherd, “that great shepherd of the sheep” (Hebrews 13:20).

VII. Jesus left another powerful witness at the Feast of Dedication. For He shows the fault of the priests in denying that He could be the Son of God, when their very scriptures teach that all men are the sons of God. [Though we understand that Jesus alone was the Only Begotten of the Father in the Flesh, meaning that He alone was born with divinity in the flesh].

- A. This event happened as He was accused of blasphemy for indicating He was the Son of God (John 10:33).
- B. He refers His accusers to Psalm 82, [See John 10:33-6], which says to mankind himself, “Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most high” (Psalm 82:6).
- C. But the Psalm also says that if men do not keep God’s commandments, [as explained in verses 2-4 which says the wicked judge unjustly and do not bless the poor and needy]. they will remain and “die [still just men].”
- D. The term “die like a man” has been taken out of context to say that someone should die with courage, like a man. But in truth this statement in Psalm 82 is a derogatory statement. Many who could become as God will fail and die still as men, if their faith and their obedience do not reach what God has determined as necessary. Thus they will not reach their wonderful and exalted potential. The Psalm warns that we children must do the will of the Lord, otherwise we will remain just men and women. And we will be as a prince who dies [falls], short of reaching his potential Kingship (Psalm 82:7).