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~~0000~~ "LIVING WATER" = JOHN 7:14-26, 37-39; ACTS 2:1-4" 10/24/17 1.

Pentecost is a special day for many Christians. Many observe it every year, some more avidly than others. Catholics, some mainline denominations, and other liturgical folks switch their vestments and pastoral stoles to red, often with embroidered doves or flames to symbolize the Holy Spirit. Male pastors may wear red neckties; and women clergy may wear red shoes. It is generally a happy day.

Pentecost can be even more special for the churches who are on the charismatic end of the spectrum. Worshipers may feel led by the Spirit to stand, raise their hands, shout, or even speak in tongues. Like the psalmists, their worship is punctuated with vocal praise and bursts of applause, unlike those who believe Habakkuk 2:20 should apply to modern worship: "The LORD is in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silence...."

Jews celebrate Pentecost, though on the day before, seven weeks and a day from the second day of Passover. Greek speakers called it "Pentecost" (meaning "fiftieth") because it was held on the 50<sup>th</sup> day after Passover.

Observant Jews anticipate the arrival of Pentecost by counting the days, even as Christians may count the days of Advent, or from Ash Wednesday to Easter. Jews do not use the term "Pentecost", but Shavu'ot meaning "weeks". The festival also called "First-fruits", once celebrated the spring harvest of winter wheat (Exodus 34:22). Israel's traditions combined an agricultural holiday with a historical memory; rabbinic calculations in the Talmud claim that God gave the law to Israel on Mt. Sinai exactly 49 days after the Passover celebration.

So, while Jews memorialize the giving of the Law on Pentecost, Christians commemorate the giving of the Holy Spirit.

### Living Water ~~000000~~

Our text is not from the familiar story of the descent of the Spirit on Pentecost in Acts 2, but is drawn from an account in the Fourth Gospel in which Jesus speaks of the coming of the Spirit.

- The setting of this text was also a festival, though it was not Shavu'ot, but Succoth, otherwise known as the "Feast of Booths" or "Tabernacles." That festival occurred in the fall, shortly after the solemn Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). It also combined agricultural and historical elements, celebrating the fall harvest while also commemorating Israel's 40 years of wilderness wandering, when the people lived in tents. In Jesus' day, Jews → OVER



would build temporary shelters and camp out in them during the week-long festival. Much of John's gospel is centered around Jesus' visits to Jerusalem, all of which coincided with Jewish festivals, which faithful Jews sought to celebrate in Jerusalem when possible. 2.

→ The early part of John located Jesus in Galilee as the feast of Booths/Succoth drew near. His brothers urged Him to go to Jerusalem but Jesus knew it would be dangerous for Him, so He insisted that they go without Him (vs. 8). Later, however, Jesus decided to go (vs. 10). After overhearing much conversation and debate concerning Him, Jesus gave up His attempt at anonymity: at midweek He went to the temple and began to teach (vs. 14).

People listening to Jesus expressed astonishment that He could teach so forcefully without being a trained rabbi, but Jesus insisted that His teaching had its source and authority in God (verses 15-18).

He accused those who had criticized Him for healing on the Sabbath of hypocrisy, noting that they circumcised on the Sabbath (verses 19-24). The crowd also argued over whether He should be understood as the Messiah. Jesus did not claim the title outright, but insisted that though the people may have known Him and His earthly background, they did not know the One who had sent Him. Some sought to arrest Jesus (verses 25-26).

This text finds Jesus in the temple, this time on the last day of the festival. If His prior teachings had not created a stir, this one would: "While Jesus was standing there, He cried out, 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink.'" (verses 37-38).

This translation is one of several options. Theologians and exegetes have long debated whether Jesus or the believer then becomes the source of "the river of the water of life." Whatever the interpretation, the clear intent remains the same: Jesus invites all who were spiritually thirsty to come to Him and drink, and the act of "drinking" from Christ is connected to belief. In other words, Jesus recognized the human thirst for spiritual wholeness and extended an invitation to receive from Him, observing that only believers would take advantage of the offer.

The story of Jesus and the woman of Samaria comes to mind. When Jesus offered her "living water," she did not understand. He then explained, "Every one who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring



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of water gushing up the "eternal life" (John 4:13-14).

The Fourth Gospel also records Jesus speaking of Himself as the "bread of life" (6:35, 48), the "light of the world" (8:12, 9:5). His choice of water as a metaphor in this context was probably linked to a symbolic water ritual that accompanied the Feast of ~~Weeks~~ Weeks. Translate "Sukkah," from a collection of rabbinic writings known as the "Mishnah," describes an impressive water drawing and libation ceremony performed each day of the festival. A golden flask containing three measures of water was drawn from the Pool of Siloam, which was fed by Jerusalem's primary water source, the Gihon Spring. As the flask of water was brought into the city through the Water Gate, priests would announce its coming with three ceremonial blasts from the (shofar an instrument made from a ram's horn), blowing a tekriyah (a long blast) a teruah (a broken toccata blast), then another tekriyah (Sukkah 4:9).

When the water cask was paraded into the temple, a priest would ceremonially carry it up the steps of the altar, where there were two large bowls (whether silver or pottery is a matter of debate), one for wine offerings, and one for the water ritual. As the congregation watched, the priest would pour a measure of the water into the ~~left~~ bowl. The water would then spew out through two small openings near the bottom, creating a fountain effect on the water washed over the altar.

The ceremony must have been imposing and accompanied by exuberant praise, for Sukkah 5:1 adds "Anyone who has never seen the rejoicing at the place of water drawing has never seen rejoicing in all his days."

### The Coming Spirit

The latter part of verse 38 presents a conundrum for it claims to quote scripture ("As the scripture has said"), but there is no Old Testament equivalent to what follows; "out of the heart shall flow rivers of living water." As noted above, some interpreters take this as a reference to the believer, while others think the reference is to Jesus.

Most translators say the rivers of living water will flow "from his heart," but the word used is keilia, which normally means "side," though it could also be used as a reference to one's heart. Some interpreters take it as a general reference to the body. The NET has "From within Him shall flow rivers of living water."

Others suggest that the quotation may have been shaped by the author's belief that when a Roman soldier pierced Jesus' side with a spear during the crucifixion, "blood and water came out." (John 19:34).

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While water is the topic, we are aware that the real subject is the Spirit, for which 4. the water of life is a metaphor. When we come to verse 39, there is no question about who is speaking, as the narrator adds an obvious editorial comment: "Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in Him were to receive, for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified."

The point is that while Jesus was still physically on the earth, the Spirit had not yet come upon believers. Only after Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, when He had been fully "glorified" would the Spirit be given to the believers and members of the church.

The memorable Pentecost experience described in Acts 2:1-4: "When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributed and resting on each of them. 4. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."

By: JACK M. BRANCH #R17203

CENTURY CORRECTIONAL INST.

400 TEDDER ROAD

CENTURY, FLORIDA. 32535-3659