

**Find Life in the Son:  
Come!  
John 7:37-53**

## **Introduction**

Last time we were together in John's Gospel, we witnessed a swirl of questions about Jesus. He is unique in history. He does not fit the mold. And when you look at what He did and said, you are forced to deal with who Jesus is. Not everyone answers that question well.

Today we come to the climax of Jesus' ministry during the Feast of Tabernacles. He calls us to leave the sidelines of confusion, speculation, and debate and just come to Him to drink freely from the waters of salvation.

**37** On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

**38** Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" **39** Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. **40** When they heard these words, some of the people said, "This really is the Prophet." **41** Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Is the Christ to come from

Galilee? <sup>42</sup> Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" <sup>43</sup> So there was a division among the people over him. <sup>44</sup> Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him. <sup>45</sup> The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why did you not bring him?" <sup>46</sup> The officers answered, "No one ever spoke like this man!" <sup>47</sup> The Pharisees answered them, "Have you also been deceived? <sup>48</sup> Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him? <sup>49</sup> But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed." <sup>50</sup> Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, <sup>51</sup> "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?" <sup>52</sup> They replied, "Are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee." <sup>53</sup> They went each to his own house.

1. Jesus: Invitation (37-39)
2. Crowd: Confusion (40-44)
3. Leaders: Disdain (45-52)

### **1. Jesus: Invitation (37-39)**

<sup>37</sup> On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink."

The Feast is the Feast of Tabernacles that commemorated God's provision during the wilderness wanderings and anticipated God's blessing in the Messianic kingdom. In the wilderness God led and protected His people with a pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. He provided water from the rock in the desert. Without water we die. So every morning each day of the feast a priest would fill a golden pitcher with water from the fountain of Siloam. He would carry it in solemn procession to the altar of burnt sacrifice and pour it out before the Lord with the drink offering of wine. Trumpets would sound and the people would sing from Isaiah 12:3, "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation."

So the invitation Jesus cries out is at the end of the week fits well what has been going on each day of the festival.

Condition: If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Not the first time He's given this kind of invitation. He's done so on many occasions.

Nobody comes and nobody drinks who is not thirsty.

Thirsty for what Jesus offers—thirsty for forgiveness, thirsty for freedom from the domination of sin, thirsty for a restored relationship with God, thirsty for salvation.

If you don't thirst for these things, you won't want Jesus and you won't come to Him to drink.

If you think Jesus is there just to provide the muscle to achieve your own goals, or to entertain you, or to make you feel good about yourself, or whatever other self-centered objective you have, you don't understand Who He is—or quite frankly, who you are. You don't understand the value of what He offers. You don't understand the desperate need of your own life.

If you think you have to fix your own brokenness before you dare come to Christ for salvation, you don't understand how hopeless and helpless you are on your own. Only Jesus can quench your thirst. Nothing less will do. "All the fitness He requireth is to feel your need of Him."

Without water we die. Without Jesus we cannot live. God is the only Source of life. Jesus is the only one who can get you to God.

To come to Jesus and to drink is a picture of relying on Him to give you the water of eternal life from the wellspring of God Himself.

His invitation sounds remarkably like that of Isaiah in Isaiah 55:1-3

<sup>1</sup> Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. <sup>2</sup> Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. <sup>3</sup> Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.

Isaiah 55:6-7

<sup>6</sup> "Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; <sup>7</sup> let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Jesus' invitation comes with a promise—a prediction of what will inevitably happen in our lives if we come.

John 7:38-39

<sup>38</sup> Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" <sup>39</sup> Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

So coming to Jesus is not just a decision you make. It's not just a momentary religious experience. It's the beginning of a new life that is fruitful and beneficial. And it works this way for everyone who actually comes to Him to drink. *The water of life not only quenches your own thirst; it makes you a source of refreshment to others. Your transformed life flows out from you to others and blesses them.*

How is that possible? Life comes from being reconciled to God. When you trust in Jesus the vitality of God's life flows into you in the Person of Holy Spirit. He transforms the believer from the inside out. He makes us beneficial to others. Think of the fruit of the Spirit. Fruit grows from life. And fruit is beneficial. Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. These qualities come from a person's character, but they profoundly impact those around them. They are relational in nature. You get your relationship with God right, and you finally have the roots of making your relationship with other people beneficial.

Instead of fruit, the metaphor Christ uses here is rivers of water. A believer who has come to Christ and has drunk deeply from the wells of salvation not only has his own thirst quenched for himself. He becomes a blessing

to others. He has a reason for existence. He's on mission. Wherever he goes people are refreshed and restored from what flows from his life. Are you that kind of person?

- Who is drinking from the rivers that flow from inside you because you've been transformed on the inside by the Holy Spirit of God?

John explains from his vantage point at the end of the century some sixty years after the events of this chapter that Jesus was speaking of the Holy Spirit who had not yet been given in this way to every believer until the Day of Pentecost. Jesus was glorified in His dying on the cross for our sins and rising from the dead and ascending into heaven. From Pentecost onward believers were empowered by the Holy Spirit to bear testimony about Jesus Christ and to make disciples of all ethnicities. The water of life they received from Jesus flowed out to the whole world through gospel witness. The Book of Acts records the first 33 years of gospel advance. Rivers of life flowed out to people all over the earth through believers full of the water of life from God.

The verse right before what people sang from Isaiah each day of the Feast of Tabernacles tells us something about the personal benefit

of drinking from the wells of salvation Jesus alone can give us.

Isaiah 12:2

Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation.

### **Applications**

- Is what are you thirsty for what Jesus offers, or are you seeking something else instead?
- When did you first come to Jesus to drink from the wells of salvation?
- What evidence can you see that beneficial rivers are flowing from your life to others around you?

### **2. Crowd: Confusion (40-44)**

<sup>40</sup> When they heard these words, some of the people said, "This really is the Prophet."

<sup>41</sup> Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Is the Christ to come from Galilee?"

<sup>42</sup> Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" <sup>43</sup> So there was a division among the people over him. <sup>44</sup> Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

The Prophet is the one Moses predicted in Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19.



**15** The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen.

**18** I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. **19** And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.

At the time of Jesus many viewed the Prophet as the forerunner to the Messiah, not the Messiah Himself. But Peter in Acts 3:22-23 and Stephen in Acts 7:37 make clear that the Prophet, the Messiah, and Jesus are one and the same. People were confused.

Others in the crowd believed that Jesus was the Messiah. They were new believers with much yet to learn, but they had gotten far enough to trust in Jesus.

But others pushed back. They knew that Micah 5:2 identified Bethlehem, the city of David, as the Messiah's birthplace. Because Jesus grew up in Galilee, they assumed He had been born there. So while they saw with their own eyes evidence that would lead them to conclude that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, they could not figure out how He could be the Messiah since they thought He was from Galilee. They were right about the Messiah's birthplace, but they were

uninformed about where Jesus was born. If they had known that, they would have known Jesus matched the prophecies perfectly.

*Often the confusion people experience regarding Jesus has to do with being uninformed or misinformed about Him.* The Christian faith is a reasonable faith, not a leap in the dark. And the eyewitness history God has preserved for us in the Scriptures untangles the confusion people can face regarding the identity and ministry of Jesus. What the apostles did was to spread the word concerning Him so that people knew the truth. We need to do the same. Get people exposed to the accurate record of who Jesus is, what He said, and what He did, and their confusion will dissipate.

### **Applications**

- What questions about Christ, the Bible, or Christianity do you need to investigate more?
- What friends or acquaintances do you know personally that could use your help in finding Biblical answers to what confuses them about Jesus and the gospel?
- What is your strategy and timetable for engaging with them to help them?

### **3. Leaders: Disdain (45-52)**

**45** The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why did you not bring him?" **46** The officers answered, "No one ever spoke like this man!" **47** The Pharisees answered them, "Have you also been deceived? **48** Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him? **49** But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed."

The objections of the Jewish leaders hinges on the same basic question that caused confusion among the crowd, but their spirit is decidedly different. It is decidedly proud and dismissive, full of disdain, unwilling to do the least bit of investigation into the claims of Jesus. *Those who lead often develop an unteachable spirit characterized by disdain for what they consider common people and hostility toward anyone who threatens their power, prestige, and comfort.*

You'll notice that they don't actually deal with any of the observations or questions. They don't have an answer for what the officers report regarding the extraordinary teaching of Jesus. Instead they attack the officers as gullible fools.

They respond asking whether any of the authorities or the Pharisees have believed in Jesus, as if these men are the absolute determiners of what is true and what is not.

It's an arrogant position to take—and self-deceived.

Ironically, the answer to their question was yes. There were believers among them. Nicodemus was well on his way if not there already. The same with Joseph of Arimathea. There were those among them who believed but who were afraid to make it known yet because they knew it would mean vicious attack, including being thrown out of the synagogue as if they had denied the faith.

John 12:42-43

<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; <sup>43</sup> for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

They proceed to charge that only the gullible crowd would believe in Jesus, declaring that they don't know the law, that is the Scriptures. Their ignorance makes them accursed. This was their attitude toward anyone not in their approved group.

John 7:50-52

<sup>50</sup> Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, <sup>51</sup> "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he

does?" <sup>52</sup> They replied, "Are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee."

Here one of their own raised a legitimate and wise question, but they shoot him down for even asking. They bypass his insightful question, and turn on him with prideful disdain. If he's even asking the question, he must be from Galilee too, and he must be ignorant. He was neither. Their declaration goes too far. There were actually prophets of Israel from this region: Jonah was one, and possibly Nahum and Hosea, among others.

One more thing. God had sent prophets from Judah as well—like John the Baptist. They did not listen to him either.

These leaders' self-righteous sense of superiority over other people in other regions of the country is based on unwarranted ethnic and cultural pride. It runs contrary to the universal reality that all people everywhere are sinners in need of salvation. And that the salvation God offers is universal in its scope, as the Abrahamic covenant made clear from the start. And that God has sent prophets from rural regions not just the big cities. So their arrogance betrays ignorance or dishonesty or both.

The likelihood is that they are mainly focused on whether the Messiah could come from Galilee. If they had done their homework—as check with the eyewitnesses—they would have known Jesus was born in Bethlehem in fulfillment of the Micah’s prophecy. They would have known He was descended from David the King.

*But they could not open the door to honest searching for answers, because doing so had the potential to threaten their kingdom of self-promotion and self-protection.* Never mind if they missed out on finding their Messiah and entering into a life reconciled to God for real.

### **Applications**

- When have you witnessed those who have power or influence belittling those who ask legitimate questions?
- When have you found yourself protecting your pride rather than honestly searching for truth?
- What individuals or groups have you ever treated as less valuable or significant than yourself?

### **Conclusion**

Thirsty ones, weary ones, broken ones, longing ones, dying ones—Come! Come to Jesus.

1. Jesus: Invitation (37-39)
2. Crowd: Confusion (40-44)
3. Leaders: Disdain (45-52)

Closing Song: Come, Ye Sinners

### **Applications Summary**

- Is what are you thirsty for what Jesus offers, or are you seeking something else instead?
- When did you first come to Jesus to drink from the wells of salvation?
- What evidence can you see that beneficial rivers are flowing from your life to others around you?
- Who is drinking from the rivers that flow from inside you because you've been transformed on the inside by the Holy Spirit of God?
- What questions about Christ, the Bible, or Christianity do you need to investigate more?
- What friends or acquaintances do you know personally that could use your help in finding Biblical answers to what confuses them about Jesus and the gospel?
- What is your strategy and timetable for engaging with them to help them?
- When have you witnessed those who have power or influence belittling those who ask legitimate questions?

- When have you found yourself protecting your pride rather than honestly searching for truth?
- What individuals or groups have you ever treated as less valuable or significant than yourself?