

*Living Waters – Drink, Live, Overflow*

John 7:37-39

Reading: Isaiah 12:1-6

Bethany Baptist Church  
September 20, 2020

*...pray...*

The **Jewish calendar** prescribes **seven** annual festivals (in this order):

*Passover (Mar/Apr), Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Day of Atonement, ...and... Tabernacles (Booths, "The Feast," Sept/Oct).*

So **The Feast of Tabernacles** (*The Feast*) was the *final celebration* of the year, and the celebration that provides the *context* for **John 7** (Jesus was teaching at *The Feast*).

**The Feast** celebrated **God's presence with Israel** when He led them out of Egypt and through the wilderness for **40** years.

God's presence was manifest in an **elaborate worship tent** (tabernacle).

God continually **met the whiny Israelites' needs**, like giving **water** from a **rock**.

*The Feast* also reminded the Jewish people that God had promised to **dwelt among them again**, in the coming of the **Messiah**.

**The Feast of Tabernacles** was officially a **seven day feast**, but there was a final assembly on the **eighth day**. So **unofficially** it became an *eight day festival*.

In the **fall (Sept/Oct)** Jerusalem would be crowded with **multiplied thousands** of worshipers – from *Jerusalem, Judea/Galilee*, and across the *Roman Empire*.

People began by **building shelters** (*branches*) in Jerusalem's *streets* and on their *roofs*.

As the feast began, every day the priests would **draw water** from the **pool of Siloam** in a **golden pitcher**.

The **priests** would lead an elaborate procession, with the crowd of worshipers, into the **temple courts**.

The people carried **branches** in their *right hands* (*myrtle, willow, palm*) and **fruit** in their *left*.

As the procession passed the **Water Gate**, there were **three blasts** from a **shofar** (*ram's horn*). The procession *kept going*.

**Scripture** was *recited* and the **crowd** (*thousands!*) *sang* from the **Psalms** (*Hallel*).  
(113-118)

As they approached the **altar** the priest led them **around the altar one time**, then he poured out the **golden pitcher** through a **funnel** at the base of the altar.

But on the **seventh day**, the *final* day, the *priest* and the *pitcher* and the *procession* *circled* the altar **seven times**.

**Sacrifices** were made each day: **13 bulls** – first day, **12** – second day, **11** – third day... until on the **seventh day**, the *final* day, the *priest* sacrificed **seven bulls**.

The **seventh day** also featured a special **water pouring ceremony** and a **lights ceremony** (ch 8).

The **eight** (*assembly*) **day** featured more *sacrifices*, **dismantling the booths**, and repeated singing of the **Hallel Psalms**.

The **eight day** was the **final day** of the **final feast** of the **festival calendar**.

And (John 7) – “*on the last day, the great day of The Feast, Jesus stood and cried out...!*”

**Open your NT** (*tap your app*) and let's join Jesus in **John 7:37**.

Jesus has been **teaching** the festival crowds and **dismantling** the Jews' criticisms and **eluding** their attacks.

Now, on the **final day** (*eight* day), probably just as the celebration *winds down*...

Jesus **stands** and **promises** His followers an incomprehensible *blessing*: God is going to *come* and *live inside them*. We are His **tabernacle**!

**Jesus promises the abundant life by the coming of the Holy Spirit. (37-39)**

1. **Jesus** *invites the thirsty* (vv.37-38).
2. **John** *explains the River* (39).

**Jesus invites the *thirsty*.**

1. Did anyone here but me see that **last Superbowl game!?! Did you keep your TV on and stick around for the interviews and highlights!?!?**
  - a. Imagine that after the **last touchdown** was scored, and the **last second** runs out, and the **interviews are over**, and **voices** are almost *too hoarse* to shout...
  - b. A man stands in the **middle of field** and begins to **cry out** at the top of His voice...
  - c. And promises something greater than an **NFL championship**, a **Superbowl ring**, and a **Vince Lombardi trophy**...
  - d. Something **greater** than everything the **Superbowl** symbolizes!
  - e. *Would He have your attention...?*
  
2. *Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out.*
  - a. The **last golden pitcher** had been poured out, the **last sacrifice** had been offered, and the **last hymn** had been sung.
  - b. Then the **Galilean rabbi** *grabbed* the spotlight and *stood* in the temple.
  - c. ?Were His **hands raised** to command the crowd's attention? Were they **down at His sides** in resolute simplicity, or were Jesus's hands **stretched out**, to invite all who listened:
  - d. *"If anyone is **thirsty**, let him come to Me and **drink** !"*

3. Jesus was **inviting** you (“*anyone*”!?!) to Himself. He says you must be **thirsty**. He invites you to **come** to Him. He commands you to **drink!** His invitation can be summed up in *thirsting, coming, drinking*.

a. “*If anyone is thirsty.*”

i. **Thirst** - The Bible *loves* this picture of *spiritual longing*. To want to know God so bad you can practically *taste it*. *You have cotton mouth in your soul...*

1. **Psa 42:1** – *As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God.*

2. **Psa 63:1** – *My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You*

ii. At the point in each **day’s ritual** when the **golden water pitcher** was carried past the **Water Gate**, and as the **Shofar** was blasted those **three times...**

iii. The priests would cry out (Isa 12:3) - “*With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.*”

iv. Are you **thirsty**?

b. Jesus commands you to **come**. “*Come to Me.*”

i. Jesus **loves to invite**. **Men** and women. **Young** and old. **Poor** and rich. **Priests** and sinners.

ii. **Matt 11:28** – “*Come to Me, all you who weary and heavy laden, and you shall find rest for your soul.*”

iii. In fact, as Jesus **cried out** to Jerusalem’s crowds, He was **inviting** thousands who have spent the week *questioning* Him, *taunting* Him, and *pursuing* His death.

iv. Yet *still* He cries out, “*Come to Me.*”

- c. Jesus commands you to **drink**. But how do you **do that** (mean)...?
- i. **Drinking** is a simple picture of **believing**. To *drink* is to exercise *faith*.
  - ii. It's *simple*, but it **isn't** *trivial*.
  - iii. Jesus said to **truly believe** in Him is like **eating** His *flesh* and **drinking** His *blood*.
    1. **Sound hard...?** Turn back with me to **6:48-58** (read).
    2. **I.e., faith**, "**to drink/eat**" is to make Jesus you **only hope**, and the **Lord of your life**.
  - d. **All** of which means that Jesus is life's *ultimate satisfaction*. **All** that was pictured in the *symbols of the festival*. **All** that's promised in the *prophecies of the Bible*. ... **All** of the unfulfilled *needs/desires* to be right with God, **all** that leaves you so **soul hungry & thirsty....**
4. Then, to the *thirsty*, Jesus made a *promise* (38): *He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'*"
- a. ...which reinforces that **drinking** (37) is **believing in Jesus**. Let me *remind* you what Jesus said you're supposed to *believe*?
    - i. You must believe that Jesus is **God's Son** – *truly* God and *truly* man.
    - ii. That Jesus lived a **sinless life**, yet willingly died a **criminal's death**. **Why...?**
    - iii. Because you and I have **not** led a *sinless life*, and that invites God's unavoidable **judgment/condemnation**.

- iv. So Jesus **died on a cross** to *pay the complete penalty of sin* for all who *believe* (“*drink*”).
    - 1. **2 Cor 5:17** – *But God made Christ who knew no sin to **be** sin in our place.*
  - v. Then God **raised** Jesus from the dead (“*resurrection*”) to prove that He’s **accepted** Jesus’ sin payment.
  - vi. And so now Jesus is **alive** and He is with His heavenly Father.
  - vii. We call this “*The Gospel*” (“good news”) and it guarantees *complete forgiveness* and *eternal life*.
- b. But there *is* a **condition**: *faith*. Jesus is calling you to **believe** the **gospel**!
- i. If you **believe**, your sins will be **forgiven** and you will be spiritually, supernaturally **born again**.
  - ii. **Jesus** (2X, John 3) to **Nicodemus** – “*You must be **born again!***”
- c. And if you **believe** in Jesus, you won’t simply **drink in** the *living water*, you’ll **overflow** with *living water*!
- i. From your *innermost being* (lit. “*belly*”).

**Here is Jesus’ invitation: *come to Me, believe in Me, and your soul will become the headwaters of a river of life.***

**Who** is the **River**? ... And *living water* going **in** and *living water* flowing **out** – *what is that!?!*

1. In v.39 **John** paused his gospel to explain Jesus' words, because they are *eternally important*. **Read v.39**.
2. The “*overflowing river of living water*” is God’s **Holy Spirit**. John’s explanation is to the point, but it reminds us of a crucial, non-negotiable truth in the Bible: *The Doctrine of the Trinity*. God exists as **three in one**.
  - a. God exists as our **Creator** and **Judge**, and (for Christians) **Heavenly Father**. “*In the beginning, God created...*” “*Our Father, who art...*”
  - b. God exists as **Jesus, the Son**. “*I and the Father are one.*” **Col 2:9** – *For in Him (Jesus) all the fullness of the God-head dwells in bodily form.*
  - c. God *also* exists as the **Holy Spirit**. **Rom 8:9 (turn)** – *However you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.*
    - i. The apostle Paul makes an emphatically **Trinitarian** statement by *emphasizing* and *equating* “*the Spirit,*” “*the Spirit of God,*” and “*the Spirit of Christ.*”
    - ii. **OBTW**, there is an obvious *straight line* from **Paul’s teaching** in **Romans 8** back to **Jesus’ invitation** in **John 7!**
    - iii. The point is: God lives in **every believer** by His **Holy Spirit**.
3. Back to **John 7...** the apostle defined the *River* as being the **Holy Spirit**, then He placed the promise of the Spirit in the context of a timeline.
4.
  - a. **Read v.39:** there are **three points** on John’s timeline.
    - i. The *conversion* of **OT** saints (including those in the *gospels*).
    - ii. Who awaited the *giving* of the Holy Spirit.
    - iii. Which awaited the *glorification* of Jesus.



5. **First, the conversion OT saints (incl. Gospels).** In every age, men and women were *saved by faith* in the Bible's promises of the *coming Savior* (Heb – "*for by faith, men of old gained approval*").
  - a. *Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah (OT)* all knew that a Savior was coming, but (e.g.) *Isaiah* knew far more details than *Adam*.
  - b. Yet they **all** were saved by *trusting* in whatever messianic revelation God had given *up to their time in history*.
  
6. **Second, OT saints had to wait for the giving of the Holy Spirit.** The Holy Spirit was only *automatically given* to believers (38) who lived *after* the **Pentecost Festival** recorded in **Acts 2**(40 days after Jesus' *resurrection*).
  - a. That day, the **Apostle Peter preached** to thousands of Jews who were in **Jerusalem** to celebrate **Pentecost**. "**Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit!**"
  - b. God used the **apostle's powerful message** and *thousands* believed in Christ. Each was *filled* with the Spirit - the *River of Living Water!*
  - c. Centuries earlier, the prophet **Joel** had predicted (2:28). "*It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind.*"
  
7. **But third, the Pentecost giving of God's Spirit was dependent on the glorification of Jesus (death, burial, resurrection, ascension).**
  - a. **Why?** Because the gift of the Holy Spirit (*River of Living Water*) to every believer is a blessing promised under the **New Covenant**.
  - b. And the **New Covenant** could only be **ratified** (*inaugurated*) by the **shed blood** of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 11:25) – the work that *glorified* the *Son*, and the *Father* who sent Him.
  
8. So, to *sum up vv.37-39*, Jesus promised His listeners that they could be **born again now** by believing in Him, but they would have to **wait for the Holy Spirit** until after the **Lord's glorification**, which would then establish the **New Covenant** and its **Holy Spirit blessing**

9. For those *Feast of Tabernacles* worshipers. Jesus' promise was **this**: *come to Me now, be born again now, but receive the Holy Spirit a little later.*

But for you and me, *believe now, be born again now, and receive the Spirit – now!*

Why is this passage so important?

The NT is absolutely *overflowing* with the *blessings* God promises **Christians** through the presence of the **Holy Spirit**.

I want to **encourage** you this morning with just **four**:

1. God lives **in You!** I remember when I **believed in Jesus** as a **15** year old **student**, one of the truths of the Gospel that *grabbed my attention* was this teaching that **God comes to live in every Christian**. And He *never leaves!*
  - **Again, Rom 8:11** – *But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*
2. God's Spirit **guides** you. Christians want to know/obey **God's will**. The Spirit helps make **God's will** clear.
  - **Rom 8:14** – *For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. I.e. God's children are led by God's Spirit.*
3. The Holy Spirit **grows** you. **God's goal** for Christians is that we become more **like Jesus**. The Holy Spirit is *right in the middle* of that project as He produces *Christ-like virtues* in our lives.
  - **Gal 5:22-23** – *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control: against such things there is no law.*

4. The Spirit **assures** you. Every church-goer occasionally **doubts** they are **really saved**.
- a. Perhaps it's because they really **aren't!** Because their **sinful lifestyle** proves they've **never repented** and **don't really follow Jesus**.
  - b. Still, **real believers** *also* struggle with **doubt**.
    - i. John said, *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may **know** that you have eternal life.* God wants you to have the joy of **salvation certainty!**
    - ii. The Holy Spirit comforts us that we are really God's children.  
**Gal 4:6** – *Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"*

What could be more fulfilling than to know for certain **God lives in you!** That God's Spirit will **guide you**. That He is committed to produce the **virtues of Christ** in your life.

*"If anyone is **thirsty**, let Him come to Me and **drink**. He who **believes** in Me, as the Scriptures said, 'For his innermost being will flow **rives of living water**.'"*

*...pray...*

# 329 – *Grace, Greater than Our Sin*