

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 42 Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?43 So there was a division among the people over him.44 Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him. John 7:37-44

John 7:1-13 was the record of the events at the beginning of the feast. John 7:14-36 was the record of the events at the middle of the feast. And today we consider the last part of John's record of Christ's attendance at the Feast of Tabernacles. The last part is found in John 7:37-53.

John 7:37. "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out saying, 'If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.'"

John 7:37 extends an invitation for people who are thirsty to come to Christ and drink.

Notice when this invitation to drink was extended. It was extended on the "last day" or "the great day of the feast."

Deuteronomy 16:13 seems to indicate that there were only seven days associated with the feast of booths. But according to Leviticus 23:34-36, it appears that there was an additional day, a special day, closely associated with the seven-day feast period proper.

Leviticus 23:34-36. "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'On the fifteenth of this seventh month is the Feast of Booths for seven days to the Lord. (35) On the first day is a holy convocation [assembly]; you shall do no laborious work of any kind. (36) For seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the Lord. [And no listen to the last part of this verse] On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation and present an offering by fire to the Lord; it is an assembly. You shall do no laborious work."

Though Deuteronomy 16:13 indicates the feast proper consisted of seven days, Leviticus 23:34-36 indicates there was an eighth day closely associated with the feast.

By Jesus day it would have been considered the "last" or "great" day of the feast.

How does this understanding impact our study of this passage? It means that the invitation was not extended while the specific daily rituals associated with the feast were taking place. But rather, the invitation was extended after all the rituals associated with the feast had been completed and the people were gathering in what Leviticus 23 called a "holy convocation."

It was during this period that verse 37 tells us that Christ "stood and cried out saying, 'If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.'"

The question that needs to be asked at this point is this: Does Christ's invitation on the "last day" or the "great day" of the feast have any connection with the various festivities that were connected to the feast itself?

Each day, for seven days during the formal feast period, a priest, accompanied by a very large multitude of Jews, would carry water from the pool of Siloam to the Temple in a golden vessel. At the temple the water was poured out into a bowl beside the altar, from which a pipe conveyed it to the bottom of the altar, while at the same time wine was poured in a similar fashion on the other side of the altar. Why was this done? The water ceremony conducted each day during the feast of Booths was a form of petition asking the Lord to provide rain for the next year's crop.

Listen to the words of Rabbi Akiba in commenting on the water ceremony. "Why has the torah commanded: Pour out water on the Feast of Tabernacles? The Holy One, blessed be He, has commanded: Pour out water before me on the Feast of Tabernacles, in order that the rain may bless you."

It is against this background of the water ceremony that we should understand the invitation of Christ. It is against this background of the water ceremony that we see Christ standing and saying,

"If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink."

Christ, in John 7:37, was changing the focus of the feast from liquid water that would provide life for their crops to the "living water" that would provide life for their thirsty souls (John 4:9-14).

This certainly was made very clear to the Samaritan woman after Jesus had asked her for a drink in John 4:9-14.

"The Samaritan woman therefore said to Him, 'How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?' ... (10) Jesus answered and said to her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, "Give Me a drink," you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.' (11) She said to Him, 'Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? (12) You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?' (13) Jesus answered and said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again; (14) but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.'"

Is your soul thirsty? Is there a need in your life for a personal relationship with God? If this is really what you want then you should know that Christ is even now inviting you to come to Him and drink so that the thirst of your soul will forever be satisfied.

Christ invites men to come unto him, not to Moses and his law, and obedience to it, and works of righteousness done by us.

How do we come to Christ and drink? We come to Christ and drink by exercising faith (John 1:12; 3:16; 5:24).

We come to Christ and drink when we, by the grace of God, believe that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God, who through His death, burial and resurrection opened the way to heaven.

"the well of living waters, and who is as rivers of water in a dry land, to thirsty souls: and when come to him, which is by believing in him, they are encouraged to drink; that is, to take of the water of life freely, or to take of his grace freely; salvation by him is of free grace, and the pardon of sin is according to the riches of grace, and justification is freely by his grace, and so all other blessings; and of this they may drink abundantly, or they may partake of it largely: there is a fullness of grace in Christ, and there is an abundance of it communicated to his people; it is exceeding abundant; it flows, and overflows, and may be drank of to satisfaction, till their souls are as a

watered garden, and they are satisfied with the goodness of the Lord.” John Gill

We will now go from the invitation to the promise. John 7:38. "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From His innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'"

Notice that Christ introduces this thought with the words "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said." We may consider Isaiah 58:11 as such a passage.

"And the Lord will continually guide you, And satisfy your desire in scorched places, And give strength to your bones; And you will be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail."

Certainly this passage, though not identical to John 7:38, does contain the same thought.

There are many passages of OT Scripture with these statements about water and fulfilling life. Pr.4:23;5:15; the eschatological waters of Ezekiel 47:1-9;

But the best may be beginning in Nehemiah 8 through Nehemiah 9 because Jesus is teaching here in the context of the Feast of the Tabernacles and during the re-gathering in Jerusalem in Nehemiah And Ezra's day, it was once again reinstated.

Neh.8: 5-18 (obeying Dt.31:10-11) Their prayer is in Nehemiah 9:15,19-20

"5 Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. 6 Then Ezra blessed the LORD the great God. And all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the LORD with *their* faces to the ground. 7 Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, explained the law to the people while the people *remained* in their place. 8 They read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading. 9 Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest *and* scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the law. 10 Then he said to them, "Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." 11 So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, "Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved." 12 All the people went away to eat, to drink, to send portions and to celebrate a great festival, because they understood the words which had been made known to them. 13 Then on the second day the heads of fathers' *households* of all the people, the priests and the Levites were gathered to Ezra the scribe that they might gain insight into the words of the law. 14 They found written in the law how the LORD had commanded through Moses that the sons of Israel should live in booths during the feast of the seventh month. 15 So they proclaimed and circulated a proclamation in all their cities and in Jerusalem, saying, "Go out to the

hills, and bring olive branches and wild olive branches, myrtle branches, palm branches and branches of *other* leafy trees, to make booths, as it is written.” 16 So the people went out and brought *them* and made booths for themselves, each on his roof, and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim. 17 The entire assembly of those who had returned from the captivity made booths and lived in them. The sons of Israel had indeed not done so from the days of Joshua the son of Nun to that day. And there was great rejoicing. 18 He read from the book of the law of God daily, from the first day to the last day. And they celebrated the feast seven days, and on the eighth day *there was a solemn assembly according to the ordinance.*” Nehemiah 8:5-18, NAS95.
“15 “You provided bread from heaven for them for their hunger, You brought forth water from a rock for them for their thirst, And You told them to enter in order to possess The land which You swore to give them. 19 You, in Your great compassion, Did not forsake them in the wilderness; The pillar of cloud did not leave them by day, To guide them on their way, Nor the pillar of fire by night, to light for them the way in which they were to go. 20 “You gave Your good Spirit to instruct them, Your manna You did not withhold from their mouth, And You gave them water for their thirst.” Nehemiah 9:15-20, NAS95.

Initial reference is to Ex.17; Nu 20 the water from the rock. This parallels the manna from heaven Neh. 9:15 (linked to 9:13) , “the bread from heaven” according to Ex.16:4;Ps.78:24; Jn.6:31. The manna and the water are linked to the giving of the law. Dt. 8:3 and in Dt. 8:15-16 there is the mention of water from the rock and links it with manna.

By 9:20 “the manna and water linked to the law are now tied to the provision of the Spirit. The last three words demonstrate that the provision of the Spirit, according to Nehemiah, was bound up with the instruction of the people (i.e. in the law) So the gift of the law/Spirit is symbolized by the provision of the manna/water.” D.A. Carson.

John 7:37-38 is making reference to this set of associations.

Jesus already insisted that Moses in the law wrote about him Jn.5:46. In chapter 6 John has given us the teaching of the fulfillment of manna found in Christ, the true bread from heaven, Jesus himself, the Incarnate Word. (6:29ff.). In chapter 6 a tie to thirst (water) is given to us but the drink soon becomes realized to be Jesus blood and the food is his body. Now, in chapter 7. the and the connection with the Feast of Tabernacles, the water/thirst motif returns, and the tie with the Spirit which has

already been established in the book of Nehemiah is clearly made known.

There are many more passages linking water and spirit that are not in connection to the Feast of Tabernacles and all of them taken together anticipate the coming blessing of the Spirit.

But this promise was not just for His early disciples; it is for all those who are thirsty and who by faith will come to Him and drink. This is the kind of life that they should expect. We are never the source of the living water for others although we are a witness to the world with the Spirit's help.

John 7:39. "But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." Rivers of living water are the by-product of the Holy Spirit's work in and through our lives. Our challenge is not to produce the rivers of water, our challenge is to demonstrate outwardly what the Spirit has worked inwardly. How could it not? If we have, in fact, declared ourselves as the followers of Christ, then people will know this. And if we are living in Christ, then we will become an aroma to those who are being saved as well as to those who are perishing.

"But thanks be to God, who always leads us in His triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. (15) For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; (16) to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life." 2 Corinthians 2:14-15.

Are you experiencing this? If you are not, then either you are not a Christian, or I would venture to guess because of your own self-centeredness and personal selfishness you have grieved and quenched the Spirit of God.

John 7:40-44. "Some of the multitude therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, 'This certainly is the Prophet.' (41) Others were saying, 'This is the Christ.' Still others were saying 'Surely Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He? (42) Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the off-spring of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?' (43) So there arose a division in the multitude because of Him. (44) And some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him."

Can people, over time, ignore Christ? Absolutely not! And we will continue to see this point driven home to us this weekend as we see the extent of Christ's impact on the entire Jewish population including people that some people might not have expected.

In John 7:40-44, we saw the impact Christ had on the multitude. In John 7:45-53, we will see the impact of Christ on the innermost circle of Jewish religious leadership.

John 7:45. "The officers therefore came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, 'Why did you not bring Him?'"

Why did they ask this question? We can answer this by understanding specifically who these officers were.

Who are these officers? The officers that we find coming to the chief priests and Pharisees in John 7:45 are the very officers they had sent to arrest Jesus in John 7:32.

The Pharisees for the first time formally joined forces with the Sadducees. They did this so that certain officers, or in other words, the temple police could be officially enlisted to seize Jesus and bring Him back to them. And this is exactly what they did according to John 7:32.

In light of this, it is not at all surprising to us that when these officers returned without Jesus three or four days later on the last day of the feast that the Jewish leaders would ask, "Why did you not bring Him?"

In responding to the leaders inquiry concerning why they had not brought Jesus back, they did not defend themselves, but they rather spoke about how Jesus had impacted them (John 7:46). "The officers answered, 'Never did a man speak the way this man speaks.'"

This response is quite surprising. The officers could have responded that they had not brought Him because they were afraid of how those among the multitude who believed in Christ might have responded. But this is not what they said. Rather, these officers

said to the Sadducees and the Pharisees, "Never did a man speak the way this man speaks."

The officers shared with their leaders that they had been impacted by the way Christ spoke. Now let me ask you this. Would this response on their part protect them from the wrath of the Jewish authorities? Absolutely not!

When Christ is seen and heard, He cannot be ignored. And certainly these officers sent to arrest Jesus had not been able to ignore Christ. In fact, they were so impressed with Christ that they were willing to suffer the possibility of a harsh rebuke or perhaps even some form of punishment in order to share with these Sadducees and Pharisees what they had personally experienced when they heard Christ speak.

And what was their witness? "Never did a man speak the way this man speaks." The witness of these officers was not likely the product of genuine faith, but John intends that his readers perceive that the guards spoke better than they knew.

The response of the Pharisees to the testimony of the officers in John 7:47-49 was to show them how totally absurd it would be for any thinking person to be led astray by Christ.

John 7:47. "The Pharisees therefore answered them, 'You have not also been led astray, have you?'" What exactly are the Pharisees communicating in this verse?

The Pharisees are mocking these officers for thinking well of Christ. They mocked them because these officers are Levites and should know better.

The temple police who were given the responsibility for protecting the sanctity of the temple were Levites. They were priests and from the standpoint of the Pharisees should have known better than to have been so impressed with someone who was so obviously flawed as Jesus was flawed.

What else did the Pharisees tell these officers? John 7:48. "No one of the rulers or the Pharisees has believed in Him, has He?" What exactly are the Pharisees

communicating in this verse?

The Pharisees in John 7:48, by their question, seek to communicate to the Levites how united the Jewish leadership was in their rejection of Christ based on the Levites own observation. The Pharisees are in essence saying to these Levites, "No thinking person would think well of Christ. Consider your leaders. Have you seen any Sadducee or Pharisee speak well of Christ. Of course not! Why? You have not seen this because Jesus is obviously a fraud. Jesus obviously has impacted you but be careful. How could Jesus be the Messiah when the whole of the Jewish leadership is rejecting Him?"

But the Pharisees were not satisfied with simply reminding the Levites that the whole of the Jewish leadership had rejected Christ. They also wanted to point out to the Levites those who had accepted Christ and to disparage them. And who was this group they wanted to point out to the Levites.

The Pharisees in John 7:49 stand in contrast the impressive religious standing of their leaders who had rejected Christ to those among the multitude who had accepted Christ.

John 7:49. "But this multitude which does not know the Law is accursed." What exactly are the Pharisees communicating to the Levites about the multitude in this verse?

The Pharisees characterize the multitude as not knowing the Law. When they said the multitude did not know the Law, it did not mean that they did not know anything about it. They simply meant that they did not know as much as the Pharisees.

How else did the Pharisees characterize the multitude? They also characterized them as accursed. The Pharisees believed the multitude was accursed because their ignorance of the Law would inevitably lead them to transgression and therefore to judgment.

The Pharisees are in essence saying to the Levites, "Don't be duped by Christ as the many amongst the multitude who are ignorant and accursed have been duped."

But then they heard something from one of their own. John 7:50-51. "Nicodemus, said to them (he who came to Him before, being one of them), (51) 'Our Law does not judge a man, unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?' "

When Nicodemus spoke up in John 7:50-51, it was not to defend Jesus directly, but to raise a procedural point which, if observed, could work in the favor of Christ.

This comment by Nicodemus was obviously not well received by his fellow Pharisees. They considered his comment completely counter productive.

John 7:52. "They answered and said to him, 'You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee.'" Wrong, Jonah & Elijah did.

The response of the Pharisees was one of contempt, in essence saying to Nicodemus that only a Galilean would consider giving this fraud an opportunity to be examined by us (John 7:52).

These Pharisees obviously had a very low view of Galileans. And when their logical and powerful arguments did not squelch the positive view of the Levites, who had failed to arrest Jesus, and apparently failed to enlist the full support of Nicodemus to carry forward with their murderous plot to kill Jesus, they responded by treating Nicodemus with contempt.

The Pharisees and Sadducees formally had come together in John 7 to arrest Jesus and ultimately to put Him to death. But they were thwarted in their immediate plans to do this because "Never did a man speak the way this man speaks." And I would add never will another.