

## John 7:37-53

### "All Who Are Thirsty"

Declarations, divisions, and decisions. This is the drama that unfolds in our final section of John chapter 7.

Jesus has been moving and ministering amid the multitudes (seemingly) for the last few days of the Feast of Tabernacles. It's the last major feast of the year and the last feast He would partake of prior to the Passover, during which He would be crucified for the sin of the world, approximately 6 months from our present passage. —

I mentioned to you as we entered this chapter that the Feast of Tabernacles was essentially a week-long festival. The families would camp out in little makeshift huts they built. The fathers would speak to their children of God's faithfulness throughout the years of Israel's wilderness wanderings, on the heels of their Exodus from Egypt, how He led them by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. They would teach their children of God's faithful provision. Every morning, God's new mercies would rain down manna from heaven, satisfying their hunger.

Being at the end of the dry season (the drought of summer), water sources running low, each day the high priest would lead a procession down to the pool of Siloam, where he would fill up a golden pitcher with water, and they would sing the Hallel psalms (113-118). He would then lead the procession back to the temple, and as he poured out the water at the base of the altar, they would quote passages such as Isa 12:3, *"Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation."*<sup>1</sup> And Isaiah 55:1, *"Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price."*<sup>2</sup> The ritual would remind them of two things. #1 It reminded them of the rock smitten by Moses in the dry and dusty desert where they wandered as a nation, how God caused living waters to pour forth, bringing salvation to the nation... And it served as a reminder of the deeper thirst in the heart of all mankind that can only be satisfied by God.

This went on each day of the feast, and on the 7<sup>th</sup> day (the last day), they would do this 7 times. This is the scene that the curtain draws back on, beginning in Vs 37 of John Ch 7. Vs 37-39

Sometimes when you're teaching through the Scriptures, the hardest part isn't found in prayerfully pursuing what *to* say, but in prayerfully pursuing what *not* to say (because there's such an enormous amount of insight and information you could dwell on).

<sup>1</sup> *The New King James Version* (Is 12:3). (1982). Thomas Nelson.

<sup>2</sup> *The New King James Version* (Is 55:1). (1982). Thomas Nelson.

Strictly speaking, the feast lasted 7 days. The 8<sup>th</sup> day was a holy convocation, a solemn assembly. There was *no* pouring out of the water, no psalms were sung, the pitcher remained empty, and a Priest would read from Isaiah 44. *"For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, And floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, And My blessing on your offspring;"*<sup>3</sup>

So people speculate: Did Jesus cry out against the backdrop of the outpouring of the water? Or did He cry out against the backdrop of Isaiah 44 on the day no water was brought forth? We don't know. What we *do* know is that, regardless of the happenings around Him, what He did was somewhat *dramatic* and *disruptive* to their rituals.

It seems to me (though I could be wrong) that day 7 is more fitting. There's celebration, there's jubilation, the priest is pouring out the libation, and in the midst of it all, Jesus stands forth and cries out, *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink! He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of His heart will flow rivers (torrents) of living water."*

Believe me when I tell you that the message this sent was crystal clear. Jesus is there declaring, "I am the fulfillment of all that these rituals foreshadow. I am the One who can satisfy your thirsty soul. I am the rock smitten, that living water might flow forth, bringing salvation to the world." This is like, "Tell me You're the Messiah without telling me You're the Messiah."

Jesus is declaring, "I am the source of salvation and satisfaction that the Scriptures have pointed to and have promised." Back in Chapter 6, He did the same kind of thing regarding the manna in the wilderness. The earthly bread which the people partook of brought to their minds the heavenly bread that rained down in the wilderness. Jesus took that image and said, *"I am the bread of life."*<sup>4</sup> He said, *"I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."*<sup>5</sup> Now, in chapter 7, the people are rejoicing in these water ceremonies, petitioning God for rainfall and being reminded of the miraculous water given in the wilderness, which brought salvation to the nation... Jesus stands up and says, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me!" He's saying, "I am the source of the life-giving waters of God."

<sup>3</sup> *The New King James Version* (Is 44:3). (1982). Thomas Nelson.

<sup>4</sup> *The New King James Version* (Jn 6:48). (1982). Thomas Nelson.

<sup>5</sup> *The New King James Version* (Jn 6:51). (1982). Thomas Nelson.

He calls out the craving that's found in the heart of every human being and says, "I am the One who meets the universal need of every man." (And there's so much here.) Take note of the universal appeal of this invitation. It goes out to "*anyone*." "If *anyone* thirsts..." Ethnicity is irrelevant. He's not calling out the beautiful people, the super spiritual, or the incredibly talented. Political status doesn't matter. It's not the academically elite He's homing in on. It doesn't matter if you're young or old, rich or poor, where you've been or what you've done. "If *anyone* thirsts... (Jesus says), Come to Me."

This is an appeal to the free will of man. *Anyone* can come. Only one condition, one caveat, one question to consider. Do you thirst? — Jesus says, "If *anyone* thirsts..." Here's the truth. *Everyone* thirsts. When man sinned (all the way back in the garden) and his relationship with God was severed, there was instantly a chasm, a void in his life, and in his heart. Because we were created to have *fellowship* with God, and when God isn't in your life... something is missing.

But man tries to satisfy his thirst (oftentimes) by drinking from the mudholes of this world. "If I just had more money (says everyone), then I'd be truly satisfied." When you make 30k a year, 50k is all you need. People who make a million think 5 million is the magic number. What people don't stop to realize is that a *spiritual* need can never be satisfied through *material* means.

But all your social media ads are seeking to convince you that if you just had the influence that *they* can bring you, the product that *they* can provide, the food that only *they* can make, a bigger house, a newer car, the right man in your life, the right woman in your life, then all your sorrows would flee away. You'd finally be happy... satisfied with life. But here's the deal: the flesh is never satisfied. You're always thirsting for something more, something that always seems *just* out of reach... Because (at the risk of redundancy) what you're looking for isn't *physical*, it isn't *emotional*, it's *spiritual*.

That's what Jesus is appealing to here. That deep inner longing of your heart that no matter what you try, or what you do, it comes up lacking, *longing* for something more. "If you're thirsting for more than what this world can provide," Jesus says, "Come to Me, and I will satisfy your soul." He doesn't say, "Come and beg." He doesn't say, "Go knock on 1,000 doors." He says, "Come to Me and drink."

But notice you're not simply a reservoir into which the water goes. You become a conduit through which the living water flows, spilling into the lives of those around you.

Here, Jesus provides the *meaning* of the *metaphor*. What He means by, “Come to Me and drink,” then He gives an anticipation *for*, and the expectation *of*, the one who does. To “come to Jesus and drink” is to place your faith in Him. To “believe,” that is, commit *to*, rely *on*, trust, and take confidence *in* Jesus for both time and eternity, for the forgiveness of your sins and your righteous standing before God... To “drink” is to receive. It’s an act whereby I accept into my innermost being that which has been made available to me.

Jesus says, “You receive Me into your innermost being; not only will the Spirit of God come *into* you... He will flow out *through* you, bringing life and times of refreshing to those *around* you.” “...out of his heart (from the deepest recesses of who you are) will flow *floods, torrents, rivers* of living water. In other words, as believers, we’re not meant to be *reservoirs* into whom the Spirit of God *goes* (though certainly His Spirit resides in us). But we’re to be *conduits* through whom the Spirit of God *overflows*.”

You will become a source of blessing to others. One mark of a Spirit-filled believer is that he/she will be a source of refreshment and renewal to others. Listen, where water flows, life goes. Next time you plant a garden, don’t water it and see what happens. Refuse to water your crops or even your houseplants. You’ll note that they wither up and die. No fruit will come forth. But if you’re watering them, and refreshing them, there will be life, and vibrance, and fruitfulness.

God wants to use your life. The Lord doesn’t want the work of His Spirit to end *with* you, He wants it to flow *through* you. Throughout your NT, you’ll find the principle of spiritual cross-pollination: provoking one another to good works, building up, blessing, edifying, and encouraging (refreshing) one another.

It’s one of the defining marks of a follower of Christ. In Jn 13, Jesus will draw attention to another fingerprint of His followers... “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have *love* for one another.”<sup>6</sup> He never identified a great knowledge of Scripture (though certainly we’re called and commanded to study) as a fingerprint of His followers. He never said that all would know we were His by what we campaign against, the causes we’re willing to champion— He spoke of serving one another, loving one another, and being a source of life and refreshment to one another.

Listen, it’s my heart that when you leave here, you leave refreshed! Not because of me or because I’m such a great speaker (that’s something up for debate 😊)

<sup>6</sup> The New King James Version (Jn 13:35) (1982). Thomas Nelson.

But because the Person and power of the Holy Spirit have spilled out through me and edified, or encouraged you, have strengthened or affirmed your faith, have directed or perhaps corrected you in some capacity. Even so, those whom you speak *with*, minister *to*... There should be something about you that when you're a part of the equation, times of refreshing come into their lives; the Holy Spirit ministers *to* them *through* you. You're speaking things necessary for the edification of the saints.

That's what Jesus is speaking about: the work of the Holy Spirit in/through your life. *"This He spoke concerning the Spirit (Vs 39), whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."* (A reference to the cross and His subsequent resurrection.) Jesus would later tell His disciples that after He ascended to the Father, He would send the Helper, the Holy Spirit Who would empower them to be witnesses to Him, to shine and share Jesus unto the uttermost parts of the earth. (You being here today testifies to the truth of His Word.) — This looks forward to Pentecost and the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.

### Vs 40-43

A couple of things I want you to see here. #1 Some accepted Jesus, others rejected Jesus. There was a division among the people concerning who He was... This will *always* be the case. There is no neutral ground concerning the Person of J.C. Everyone has an opinion about who He is, and there are times (many times) when it causes division. The word "division" (Vs 43) implies "violent dissension" (which is why, in Vs 44, we'll see that some wanted to take Him [arrest Him]). Jesus, by the very nature of His claims, *divides* people, and it can get *heated*. In Matt Ch 10, Jesus acknowledged this saying, *"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'"*<sup>7</sup>

The second thing I want you to see is that of those who rejected Him, it was primarily out of ignorance, unanswered questions (in their minds), or misinformation. They knew that Jesus spent most of His time in Galilee, so they assumed that's where He was born. They figured He must be of the tribe of Naphtali, or Zebulun or something. But the Messiah would be of the tribe of Judah, the lineage and offspring of David, hailing out of Bethlehem... *all of which was true of Jesus*, but they didn't do their research to verify the facts.

<sup>7</sup> The New King James Version (Mt 10:34–36). (1982). Thomas Nelson.

Of course, of those who *did* believe, they didn't know everything about Jesus either, but they didn't let that stop them. Here's my point: You don't have to know everything about Jesus or gain clarity on every uncertainty before you believe. If that were the case, *no one* would believe.

It's tragic the amount of people who reject J.C. because they can't connect the dots of the virgin birth, or where Cain got his wife, or understand the resurrection. Questions are ok, but some of these things we learn along the way, as we spend time getting to know and grow in Christ. Nathaneal (Ch 1), had issues with Jesus hometown as well. But he had the *courage* to "come and see." Don't allow your own lack of understanding keep you from placing your faith in J.C.

#### Vs 44-49

The religious leaders tried to have Him arrested, but they couldn't touch Him because it wasn't time (we talked about this last week). What I love is the temple guard's testimony about Jesus's teaching and the power of the Spirit of God! The reason they didn't arrest Him wasn't that they were incompetent; they were so impressed with what they heard that they couldn't in good conscience seize Him!

I'm sure they were dispatched in complete confidence. But as they approached the scene and could hear Him teaching with such authority, offering life and fulfillment to all who would believe in Him, they'd never heard anything like it! Rather than arresting Him, they wound up arrested by Him... They go back *empty-handed*! The chief priests and all were like, "Why haven't you brought Him?" Note their response, "No man ever spoke like this Man!" What's being implied is that He's no "ordinary human being." These were men who'd heard many Rabbis teach throughout the years, but no one ever spoke like Jesus.

Then the prideful, hard-hearted, spiritual elitism goes on full display in the Pharisees and chief priests. They immediately disregard their report and start *slandering* and *shaming* them because they're inclined to agree with the "common people" rather than the scholars and those who've made a life's work of studying the scriptures. "Have you been deceived like all the rest of those unstudied people out there? These people don't know the law! If they don't know it, they can't keep it; therefore, they're cursed! Of course, they're deceived! You don't see us following Him, do you?" The irony of all of this is that *they* were the ones under the heavy hand of God's wrath, because they'd *rejected* J.C.

#### Vs 50-53

Nicodemus (who'd interviewed Jesus back in Ch 3) steps up.



“Guys, this may be a little aggressive here. Shouldn’t we at least hear Him out before we decide to *arrest* Him and label Him a *deceiver*?” He takes a small stand for Jesus and receives immediate ridicule. Btw, whether you take a *big* stand for Jesus, or a *small* stand for Jesus, you’ll be ridiculed the same. So make a big stand...

“What, are you from the sticks, too, Nicodemus?” It’s equivalent to a big city guy seeking to belittle a guy from some small town, backwoods hick kind of place. — Rather than slow their roll and say, “You know what, you’re right, let’s allow Him to reason with us, and figure out who this Guy really is.” They opted for the ol’ “If you can’t answer the question, attack the person asking it” trick. **Close**

And just so you know, when they say, “Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee,” they’re wrong. Nahum was from Galilee, Elijah (it would seem) was from Galilee, and *Jonah* (whom Jesus would point to as a foreshadowing of His death, burial, and *resurrection*) was from Galilee...

Listen, a lot of people making a lot of wrong decisions about Jesus in this chapter. His brothers mocked Him, others debated about Him, people divided over Him... It happened then, it happens today. But the invitation of Jesus still stands, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.” Jesus wants to fill you, overflow you with His Spirit, and use your life to bring times of refreshing to those around you. Surrender to *Him*, and He’ll be glorified in *you*...

### **Prayer Points:**

Father, we thank You for being willing to send us Your Son that through His death, we might have life. Thank You for the promise of Your Word, fill us to the overflow with Your Spirit. Use our lives as conduits to bless and build up others for the glory of Your name.

The invitation stands today to all who are thirsty. Is that you? Are you tired of drinking from the waters of this world only to come up thirsting for more? Believe in J.C. and the water of life will flow into you, out through you, overflowing you even to the blessing of those *around* you.