

## Bible Fellowship Teaching Plan for John 7:25–39 (June 7, 2026)

### “If Anyone Thirsts, Let Him Come to Me and Drink”

Central Truth: Jesus is the true Messiah, the One sent by the Father, and the only source of eternal life and spiritual satisfaction.

John’s purpose (20:31): “These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

Primary theme: Jesus artfully uses the imagery of the Feast of Tabernacles to reveal Himself as the fulfillment of Israel’s deepest spiritual hopes

Introduction: the Feast of Tabernacles--a national, harvest celebration; a commemoration of God’s provision in the Israelites’ wilderness wanderings; based on Leviticus 23. Key part of the daily ceremonies: priests drew water from the Pool of Siloam, procession to the Temple, water poured out amid rejoicing--looking back to God’s provision and looking forward to prophetic fulfillment (Isaiah 12:3)

Key verse: “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink” (7:37)

#### I. The Crowd Debates the Identity of Jesus (25-27)

- A. The people are amazed to see that Jesus speaks publicly without interruption, yet their leaders wanted Him dead
- B. The people’s speculation: “Could this be the Christ?”
- C. Their fatal misunderstanding: “We know where this man comes from”
- D. They relied on tradition, speculation, popular expectations

#### III. Jesus Declares His Divine Origin (28-29)

- A. Jesus “cried out”--strong, emotional emphasis and deep concern over their spiritual ignorance

### B. Their knowledge was superficial

- They knew His hometown, His family, His earthly appearance
- But they did not know the Father, His divine mission, or His heavenly origin

### C. The Father Sent the Son (major theme in John's gospel)

- He was sent by the Father
- He acts with divine authority
- He speaks divine truth

Key Teaching: To reject Jesus is to reject the Father who sent Him.

Application: Many people today know a lot about Jesus but don't truly know Him

## IV. Two Responses to Jesus (30-32)

### A. Some wanted to arrest Him but couldn't

- They viewed His claims as blasphemous
- "His hour had not yet come" (key phrase in John's gospel)

### C. Others believed: "Will the Christ do more signs than this man has done?"

Key insight: For honest hearts open to God, the evidence that He is the Messiah was overwhelming

## V. Jesus warns the crowd (33-36)

### A. An urgent appeal: "I will be with you a little longer"

### B. A solemn warning: "You will seek me and you will not find me." Either He would continue to escape their attempts to arrest Him or the opportunity to believe will pass forever.

C. The crowd's confusion: will He go to "the Dispersion among the Gentiles and teach the Gentiles?"

- "Dispersion": Jews scattered throughout the world beyond Israel (1 Peter 1:1)
- The "Greeks" (or "Gentiles"): a sarcastic declaration of the value they placed on Jesus

D. The irony: it would be the Jews of the dispersion and the Gentiles who would most readily receive the gospel

#### VI. The Great Invitation (37-38)

- A. As the Feast comes to a conclusion, the people reflected on their spiritual emptiness and longing for the fulfillment of prophecy
- B. Then Jesus stood and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink."
- C. Not only would their individual longing for spiritual contentment be satisfied, they would also become a channel of God's abundant blessing to others: "Torrents of living water will rush from the core of the one who believes on Me."

#### VII. Excursus: John Explains the Living Water (39)

- A. The living water is the promise of the Holy Spirit
- B. The Holy Spirit would come at Pentecost, after Jesus' glorification (His death and resurrection)

#### VIII. Major Themes from the Passage

- A. Many people know facts about Jesus without truly knowing Him.
- B. Spiritual traditions can sometimes obscure spiritual truth.
- C. Jesus came from the Father and perfectly reveals Him.

- D. God's timing cannot be overturned by human opposition.
- E. Jesus alone satisfies spiritual thirst.
- F. The Holy Spirit transforms believers into channels (free-flowing wells, not cisterns) of living water.
- G. Every human soul thirsts for meaning, forgiveness, peace, wholeness, eternal life
- H. Jesus alone satisfies, for He is the Bread of Life, the Living Water, the only source of eternal life

The invitation remains: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink."

#### IX. Closing Challenge

The crowds in Jerusalem stood face to face with the Son of God and still many failed to recognize Him. Their traditions, assumptions, and spiritual blindness kept them from seeing the One standing before them offering living water and eternal life. The same choice stands before every person today.

Every other fountain eventually runs dry. Only Christ satisfies. Only Christ forgives. Only Christ gives eternal life.

The question is not whether Jesus has spoken clearly. The question is whether we will come to Him, believe Him, and drink deeply from the living water He alone provides.

Jesus still cries out to thirsty souls: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink."

Sunday School Lesson for June 7, 2026  
John 7:25-39

Welcome to Sunday School on the go from the First Baptist Church in Tallassee. I'm Jim Glass, one of the teachers in the Pairs and Spares Class, and, on this first Sunday in June, we're well into our study of the deep and wondrously profound gospel according to John, whose purpose in writing this book, as he tells us in chapter twenty, verse 31, is "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

Following Pastor Trey's sermon on the challenges to Jesus' authority laid before Him as He spoke in the Temple during the Feast of Tabernacles in the first 24 verses of chapter seven, we'll be looking into the second part of this confrontation as the people debate and Jesus answers questions about where He's come from, where He's going, what signs He's done, and what's He's been saying in verses 25 through 39.

By way of review, the feast He was attending was the Feast of Tabernacles. It was a kind of national harvest festival, and, according to Leviticus, chapter 23, it was to begin on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after they had gathered the crops from the fields. One commentator adds that "Every Israelite appeared in holiday attire, bearing in his hands a palm-branch, or wearing some significant emblem of earth's fruitfulness. ... [O]ne of the most striking features of the feast was the drawing of water in a golden vessel from the pool of Siloam, and carrying it in procession to the Temple, where it was poured out with such a burst of triumph from the trumpets of the Levites, aided by the Hallelujahs of the people, that it became a common Jewish saying, 'He who has not seen the rejoicing at the pouring out of the water from the pool of Siloam has never seen rejoicing in his life.' This pouring out of the water before God seemed to be an acknowledgment of His goodness in watering the corn-[fields] and pastures, and also a commemoration of the miraculous supply of water in the desert; while to some of the more

enlightened it bore also a spiritual significance, and recalled the words of Isaiah, “With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.” The Lord Jesus was very familiar with each of these traditions, and He used this particular opportunity to proclaim a message perfectly crafted to the occasion and to all those who would hear and believe.

This could well have been Jesus’ first public appearance in the Temple as a Teacher. In chapter two, John told us He had been there before--not to teach, but to cast out those who sold the sacrificial animals and changed money. As the Jewish leaders listened to Him speak, John says they marveled at what they heard. They apparently knew that He had never received any formal training from one of their approved schools of religion, but they also recognized His great depth of biblical knowledge and historical interpretation. In verse 22 of the opening chapter of his gospel, Mark writes, “The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.”

After reminding the Jewish leaders that His teaching and authority originated with God, accusing them of failing to keep the Law of Moses, and rebuking them for having complained that He had violated the Law by healing a man on the Sabbath, the Lord Jesus concludes His message to the Jewish leaders in verse 24 by commanding: “Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.”

This blunt, direct challenge to the authority of the Jewish leaders wasn’t lost on the audience. As the people listened to the rather intense and contentious debate between Jesus and their leaders in verses fifteen through 24, they were astonished that they--the very ones whom the people understood wanted Jesus dead--were letting Him get away with talking to them the way He was. John tells us in verse 25: “Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, ‘Is not this the man whom they seek to kill? And here he is, speaking openly, and they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ?’”

As the people who lived there in Jerusalem and had a greater awareness of the local gossip than those, like Jesus and His disciples, who had traveled all the way from Galilee--as the people of Jerusalem marveled at the lack of response from the Jewish leaders to these bold claims and accusations from Jesus, they wondered whether their own leaders were now convinced that Jesus was, in fact, the Messiah. They knew their leaders were looking for Him--John told us so in verse ten--and that they had planned to kill Him--chapter five--, but, in spite of the things Jesus was saying, they weren't raising a finger even to interrupt Him. They didn't attempt to arrest Him, they didn't try to defend themselves, and, except for a lone voice in the crowd, no one really challenged what He was saying.

On the one hand, the people in the crowd shared the surprise of the Jewish leaders that Jesus spoke with such clarity, insight, and commanding authority. On the other hand, they knew the Jewish leaders believed He had continued to violate their Sabbath laws. Now, seeing what appeared to be a change of heart, the people consider for a moment that maybe--just maybe--the Jewish leaders have been convinced that Jesus really was the long-awaited Messiah.

The question itself and the insight the people had into the expectations regarding the Person and work of the Messiah are significant. They've seen or heard of His miracles--healing, feeding thousands, perhaps even changing water to wine--, and they've heard about or listened to His teachings. They've taken all that and weighed it against what they knew or thought they knew about the Messiah--from the Law of Moses, the writings and the prophets, as well as from the apocalyptic writings of the last three hundred years / and they're trying to put the pieces together. The religious authorities aren't doing anything to stop Jesus from speaking openly, in spite of the fact that they had determined to kill Him. Could He really be the Messiah?

The question anticipates a negative answer, but there seems to be enough doubt in their minds that they asked the question. It also shows how widespread and how detailed the ideas of the coming Messiah were, and they

expected their leaders to sort through all the doubt and tell them if He was the Messiah.

Regardless of what the Jewish leaders had decided, the people in the crowd analyze the possibility that He is, in fact, the Messiah, bringing together all the various data points they're aware of, and they quickly conclude that He can't be their long-awaited Deliverer--verse 27: "But we know where this man comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from." There was none of the mystery, the secrecy, the unknown about Jesus. They knew where He grew up, who His parents were, who his brothers and sisters were, even, most likely, where and when He was born.

There was no sudden appearing in the wilderness or glorious entrance into the Temple. A popular tradition, perhaps inspired by Daniel, chapter seven, or Malachi, chapter three, said the Messiah would make a sudden entrance into the temple--a dazzling appearance at his Messianic enthronement, descending in the clouds of heaven, and that no one would be able to know where He came from. After all, in the prophecy about the Messiah recorded in Isaiah, chapter 53, the prophet asked, "Who shall declare His generation?" a difficult phrase to translate, but it caused the people to assume that no one would know who His parents would be.

And there were a host of prognostications that had developed over the years, recorded in Jewish literature that shaped their expectations as well. For example, in the Song of Solomon, chapter two, verse nine, we read, "My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag." One Jewish commentator creatively explained that "A [gazelle] appears and then is hid; so the Redeemer shall first appear and then be concealed, and then again be concealed and then again appear." "[He] shall first appear and then be hid, and then, at the end of 45 days, shall reappear, and cause manna to descend."

They understood that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem alright, but many believed that, after his birth, He would be hidden or taken away in some

mysterious manner, then appear again from some unexpected place. Jesus felt the need to address such misconceptions in His warning in Matthew, chapter 24, verse 23: “If anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it.”

So immersed were the people in these strange ideas that had only a shred biblical foundation that the people bragged, “We know where this man comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from.” So with everything they knew--or thought they knew--they quickly dismissed the idea that He could be the Messiah.

Unmoved by their conclusions that were the result of their ignorance, Jesus pressed on--verse 28: “So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, ‘You know me, and you know where I come from. But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know. I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me.’” Jesus tells them that they have at least some understanding of where He’s come from. Back in chapter six when He fed the 5,000, and He told them He was the Bread of Life, some of them said--verse 42: “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?”

These snooty, big-city folks of Jerusalem thought they knew everything, and the Messiah certainly wouldn’t have come from Nazareth. Even Nathaniel, when Philip told him in the first chapter of John’s gospel “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote--Jesus of Nazareth.” Nathaniel said, “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” But there was **far** more to where He had come from than where He was born and who they thought His parents were.

The English Standard Version reads that Jesus “proclaimed,” but most other translations say that “Jesus cried out.” He spoke with a loud expression of strong emotion. He’s troubled by their gross misunderstanding of Who He is, so He’s moved to speak with even greater passion in His voice. Matthew,

Mark, and Luke use this word only once as they speak of the Lord crying out from the cross, but John uses it three times in his gospel--here, again in verse 37, and then in chapter twelve, verse 44 as Jesus confronts another set of misunderstandings about Him. He doesn't want them to get this wrong.

If they think that He's come on His own, pulling Himself up by His own bootstraps to rise on the wings of His own ambition, and pursuing self-glorification, they were terribly mistaken. They think they know all about His origin, but, in reality, their "knowledge" is only superficial--they've missed the point entirely. He hasn't come on His own; He has been sent--sent by Someone else; sent by the One Who is true--the One they don't know. In every chapter since chapter four now, Jesus has been telling them over and over again that God the Father had sent Him.

As Jesus "cried out," the very words He uses project the gravity of His message that no English translation bears out. The English Standard Version reads, "But I have not come of my own accord," while others have "and I have not come of Myself." The "but" or "and"--depending on your translation--introduces a contrast. The Christian Standard Version brings this out when it places a period after "You know Me and you know where I am from" and begins a new sentence with "Yet I have not come on My own."

And the words "of Myself" are emphatic. Again, our English translations don't show this, but what Jesus was telling them was, "Yes, you know something about my family and where I've lived, and yet, of the most important thing of all--why I have come--you know nothing at all." Their perception of Him was totally insufficient as long as they think He's no different and no better than they are. They had to go beyond His earthly origin and human appearance if they're to make any sense out of His teaching and His healing and to understand why He had come.

Not only has He not come on His own initiative for His own glory with His own agenda; but He's been sent, and the One Who has sent Him "is true."

The word for “true” here is the same word that we find in the first chapter of this gospel and verse nine when John says, “The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.” It’s an extremely significant word, meaning true as opposed to “phony” or “counterfeit.” It doesn’t just mean truthful but “real,” or “perfect,” and here it means that the One Who sent Him is the “true” Sender--the One who, in the highest and most perfect sense, has conceived and executed a mission of the greatest and highest purpose, and He was fulfilling that mission regardless of the personal cost precisely because it was the Father Who had sent Him.

He was telling them that to know Him apart from knowing the One Who sent Him is pointless, and, if they didn’t know the One Who sent Him, they can’t possibly know where He’s really from. The emphasis Jesus made on the difference between their knowing and His knowing doesn’t come out in our translations. It’s as if He were saying, “In stark contrast to the fact that you don’t know Him, I know Him; in fact, I came from Him, and it is He and no One else Who has sent me.” The real, living God, has sent the real, living Christ, but they don’t have any idea Who God really is--they don’t know anything about His character and His purposes, so they can’t possibly know where Jesus is from.

The Jerusalem multitudes were suffering incurably from the superstitious limitations of their own faith, from the traditions, the formalism, and legalism that had strangled and snuffed out the truth. In many ways, they had lost the God whose great Name they claimed to honor. They failed to comprehend His nearness to them, His unbounded love, the standard of His holiness and His righteousness, and the way to return to a right relationship with Him. Jesus’ words were a searing rebuke of the entire religious system that prevailed in Jerusalem. Because they didn’t understand or know the Father, they were unable to see the possibility of His sending His last and greatest message through His own Son. As a corrective to their spiritual ignorance, Jesus tells them in the simplest terms, “I know him, for I come from him, and he sent

me.” John told us in the opening chapter of his gospel and verse eighteen: “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.” And that’s exactly what Jesus was doing.

As a result, Jesus’ exposure of the people’s ignorance and His claim to supernatural knowledge, Divine origin, and Divine commission, was too much for these Jerusalemites. They thought it was blasphemy; so--verse 30, “they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come. Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, ‘When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?’” The proper and appointed time for His death had not yet arrived. There were still more to whom He would reveal Himself that they might believe that He is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, by believing, they might have life in His Name.

There were political considerations. There was an underlying fire of enthusiasm burning in the hearts of those who had heard His words and seen His miracles. There was a superstitious fear that He might indeed be their promised Savior, in spite of their misconceptions. All these emotions stirred the people to want to arrest Him--to call His hand, to shut Him up, or to force Him to reveal Who He really was--but a greater force stopped them in their tracks: “His hour had not yet come.” Ever since Jesus had, in their minds, “violated the Sabbath” by healing the man who had lain at the Pool of Bethesda for 38 years, they had been looking for an opportunity to kill Him. Then, when they heard His message that followed their criticism, they wanted to kill Him for the great offense of blasphemy. But His hour had not yet come.

“His hour” was the time appointed by God for His crucifixion and death that we’ll learn more about in chapter thirteen. When that hour comes, God will relieve them from all their fear and trepidation, and, as we read in Matthew, chapter 26, verse three: “Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, . . . , and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him.” Until God’s appointed time

came, the people would be powerless to carry out their designs against the Lord.

And yet, Jesus sees beyond “His hour” to the time when “I am going to him who sent me.” He had been sent. He would do what He had been sent to do, all with a view to His glory and joy afterwards--Hebrews, chapter twelve, verse two: “For the joy that was set before him, [He] endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

There were those who wanted to put Him away, but there were also those who were beginning to be convinced that He really is the Messiah--verse 31: “Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, ‘When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?’” The people knew the prophecies about the Messiah. They probably recalled, for example, Isaiah, chapter 35, verses five and six: “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.”

Just after Matthew tells us about Jesus calling James and John to follow Him, we read in chapter four, verse 23: “And he”--Jesus--“went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.” For those who had seen the abundant evidence of His power to work these miracles, they believed that He is the Messiah. For them, they knew, so they asked, “What more does He need to do?”

Well, when the Pharisees heard that people were actually defending Jesus and beginning to think that He was the Messiah, they knew they had to do something--verse 32: “The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him.” John speaks of the “chief priests”--plural--even though there was only one chief priest at a time, but he probably included all those who had previously served in that capacity as well as the current occupant of that position.

It's beyond the scope of our assigned verses for today, but you just have to know what happened when these officers of the Sanhedrin went to arrest Jesus. So--spoiler alert!--verse 45: "The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, 'Why did you not bring him?' The officers answered, 'No one ever spoke like this man!'"

After these background notes, John brings us back to center stage in verse 33: "Jesus then said, 'I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come.'"

These words of Jesus are full of tenderness. In about six months from that moment, He would return to the One Who sent Him by way of the cross. Even then, they were seeking his life. He lets them know that He's fully aware of their intentions, that He will not be with them much longer, and implies that they should earnestly seek Him while they can. He was about to die, but they had the opportunity right then to believe Him and receive eternal life.

Before we go on, I'd like you to stop and think for a moment here about the grace and mercy of the Lord Jesus as He encourages each and every one of them not to be left out: "I'll be with you a little longer, and then I'll be gone." Do you see who's in the audience--who it is that He's speaking to? To the officers who would later arrest Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, to those in the crowd who would soon cry out, "Crucify Him!" and those who would shout, "His blood be on us and on our children!"

The officers hear Him saying there is nothing they can do to change the trajectory of His life--all their power is useless and their strength is ineffective. When He chooses to go, He will go, and not a moment sooner. He will not be forced by anyone, but will go of His own choice, and, where He goes, they cannot pursue Him, neither will they be able to find Him. The officers have no idea what He means, but they're convinced by His words that they can't stop Him. "I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent

me. You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come.”

A little later, Jesus will meet with His disciples in a place called the Upper Room where He'll eat His last meal with them before He's arrested and crucified. In the course of their discussion just after Judas left, Jesus tells them in John, chapter thirteen, verse 33, “Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and, just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’” The words are almost the same, but the different tone, meaning, and application are worlds apart.

He addresses them as “little children”--the tenderest name the Lord ever used to describe His disciples. As he said to the officers and the crowd, He now says to the disciples, “I will be with you a little longer,” but doesn't tell His disciples that He is going to the One Who sent Him. He told the crowd, “You will seek me,” but to His little children, He doesn't say, “You will not find me.” He tells the Jews there in Jerusalem, “Where I am you cannot come,” but to His disciples, He says, “**now** I also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’” That little word “now” makes His announcement a reality just for the present moment. His disciples will seek Him, and, as they seek Him, they'll find that their searching will not be in vain--they will find Him. He would be going to prepare a place for them so that where He is they might be also. Although they will be separated from Him for a moment, they will be gloriously reunited once again.

Alexander MacLaren applies the hope of our searching for the Lord today by saying, “To seek for Him is joy; to find Him is joy. What can be a happier life than the life of constant pursuit after an infinitely precious object, which is ever being sought and ever being found; sought with a profound consciousness of its preciousness, found with a widening appreciation and capacity for its enjoyment? ‘Ye shall seek Me’ is a word not of evil but of good cheer; for buried in the depth of the commandment to search is the promise that we shall find.”

Here in verse 34, though, the words--“You will seek me and you will not find me”--aren’t so clear, and scholars have struggled to understand exactly what He meant. It could mean that, if they were to try to arrest Him, they would be prevented from doing so until His time had come. He could also have meant that, if they were to seek to find Him after the opportunity to believe in Him has passed, it would be too late. As Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem in the moment that Luke records for us in chapter nineteen, beginning in verse 41 of his gospel, the Lord said, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”

The nation as a whole was blind; they would soon crucify their King, the Lord of glory. As a result, they will invite annihilation on themselves as a nation. They would seek their Messiah in vain. The door will have been shut. They had the opportunity at that moment as He was speaking to them in the Temple to turn to Him in faith. In a little while, He would be gone, the time of His visitation will have passed, and then they would find it impossible to follow Him. We’ll see a similar conversation next week in verses twenty through 24 of chapter eight.

Well, the people in the crowd were now totally confused. They had missed the point of everything He had been telling them, and now that’s He’s warning them about the consequences of continuing to doubt that He had been sent by God the Father from Whom He had come and they hear about Him going away to a place where they can’t come, they don’t have any idea what He’s saying. The Lord’s commission to the prophet Isaiah has proven itself true once again: “Go, and say to this people: ‘Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people

dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.’”

John tells us in verse 35 that “The Jews said to one another, ‘Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? What does he mean by saying, ‘You will seek me and you will not find me,’ and, ‘Where I am you cannot come?’”

Their first impression of where He might go was to “the Dispersion among the Greeks.” The Jews regarded all non-Jews to be Greeks since they were the language group they were most familiar with. The King James Version interprets this group as “Gentiles” which is what the people meant in using the word “Greeks.” The “dispersion” referred to the Jews who were scattered throughout the Gentile world beyond Israel. At the time, there were Jews living in Egypt, in Asia Minor--now modern-day Turkey and those to whom Peter addressed his first letter--, in Greece, in Rome, as well as in places beyond. They wondered if He would leave the Jews in Israel because they had rejected Him and go instead to the Jews in these distant lands? And, while He’s there, would He also take His message about the Kingdom of God to the Gentiles?

To ask if He would go to the Gentiles was a sarcastic way of turning their noses up at the thought of their brethren of the dispersion who had chosen to remain in pagan lands rather than returning to their dear homeland of Israel as well as bringing His alleged violation of the Sabbath back into the picture. In other words, if He wasn’t going to uphold the Law of Moses, He might find a more receptive audience among the far less pious Jews living beyond the reaches of the holy city and the Gentile heathen who rejected the Law of Moses, so what difference would it make if He does take His message to the Gentiles?

Nothing could more completely express their utter disdain for Jesus than by suggesting that, failing to convince His own people that He was the Messiah--even in the courts of the Temple itself--He would, in a last act of desperation, try to get the Gentiles to believe. Ironically, these dispersed Jews and the Gentiles would be far more receptive of the gospel than these self-righteous Jews who thought so highly of their nearness to the Temple.; and, as John now puts pen to paper from his home in Ephesus to write this gospel some twenty years after the destruction of Jerusalem, he surely must have reflected on just how terribly wrong they had all been. One commentator notes that “The irony of history is seen in the fact that the very words of these Jews of Palestine are recorded in Greek, by a Jew of Palestine, presiding over a Christian Church in a Gentile city.”

John is so struck by their persistent ignorance of what Jesus was trying to tell them that he restates their confusion in verse 37: “What does he mean by saying, ‘You will seek me and you will not find me,’ and, ‘Where I am you cannot come?’” They seem to sense the dark, fearful mystery in the Lord’s declaration and are paralyzed by it, but they also seem to have convinced themselves that it was pure nonsense.

During the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus seems to have continued teaching in the Temple courts. On each of the seven feast days, the priests used a golden pitcher to draw water from the pool of Siloam, and carried it in a grand procession to the Temple to commemorate the Lord’s provision of water from the rock during their forty years in the wilderness. The water was solemnly offered by the priest as the singers chanted, “With joy shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation”--a quote from Isaiah, chapter twelve, verse three.

On the eighth day--what John calls, “the great day”--the people celebrated their entry into the Promised Land by abandoning the homemade booths they had been living in for the past week and returned to their homes. The water from the rock ceremony was discontinued as well. As the excitement of the

feast began to fade and life return to normal, there were surely those who reflected back on the week and asked, “What was this all about?” “Where was the joy Isaiah promised?” All they saw was their hopelessness--bondage to their Roman masters and bondage to sin with no sign of deliverance.

Still, there seemed to have been true worshipers among the attendees at the feast who saw a spiritual meaning in the water and were acutely aware of their thirst for God to fulfill His promises about His Messiah. They wondered when the words of the prophet Joel would come true--chapter three, verse eighteen: “a fountain shall come forth from the house of the LORD.” Or when that deep river that Ezekiel saw in his vision of chapter 47, verse one would appear: “water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east.” Filled with disappointment and emptiness, these true worshipers suddenly hear a voice, clear and commanding as “Jesus stood up and cried out”--verse 38--: “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”

No passage in the Old Testament has the words exactly as John quoted Jesus, but the Lord may have brought together the messages of several prophets to provide a general reference from scripture. Isaiah, chapter 58, verse eleven, was probably one of those and reads, “And the LORD will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.”

Jesus had told the woman at the well in chapter four, verse fourteen, “Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty forever. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” He was telling them that those who place their faith in Him and truly believe will not only have their own thirst for spiritual vitality quenched, but they will also be a source of this living water for others.

And this source won't be a still, quiet cistern of water. The word "rivers"--plural--is the first word in the sentence, giving great emphasis to the overwhelming abundance of water as if He had said, "Torrents of living water will rush from the core of the one who believes on Me." Each and every believing soul will be a rock smitten in the thirsty land, from which crystal rivers of life-giving grace shall surge, and we see that in the preaching of Peter at Pentecost, the testimony of Stephen even as he's being stoned, the passion of Paul, and the lives of thousands of others since then who saw themselves as channels of blessing through whom the grace of God poured out upon thirsty souls.

It's at this point that John inserts an explanation as we've seen him do in defining terms that he thought his readers might not be familiar with. In verse 39, he writes, "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." We'll spend more time developing this idea when we come to chapter fourteen, but, for now, John wants us to know that it would be the Holy Spirit Who would release this flood of living water and the gifts of the Spirit as He descended upon the believers at Pentecost.

While it's true that some influence of the Holy Spirit had been experienced by the Old Testament saints and prophets, the Jews still looked forward to an outpouring of the Spirit, just as Jesus was explaining. In fact, there's a passage in the Talmud that tells us that, the water pouring ceremonies during the Feast of Tabernacles symbolized the future hope of an outpouring of the Spirit since they believed the Holy Spirit had departed the land after the deaths of the prophets Zechariah and Malachi.

Giving us a glimpse into the future, John tells us that the Holy Spirit would not come until Jesus was glorified--another important idea in John's gospel--referring, of course, to the Lord's death and resurrection. Not until Jesus had passed through death and ascended into heaven could the Holy Spirit descend.

Jesus' message here in our text is a clear invitation, centered in His words in verse 37: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink." Our Lord Jesus still stands and cries out in the midst of a thirsting world today: "Whosoever will / let him take of the water of life freely." For all who hear and believe, His truth remains. There is life--abundant life for us. Drink of any other fountain, and you'll only intensify your thirst and make life more difficult, spending your life's energy without renewing it and, in the end, losing your very soul. He alone has the words of eternal life. He alone is the Bread of life. He alone is the source of living water. Every thirst, every need, every hope, every true desire is satisfied in Him. Live in Christ and you will live in God [for you will have] found the center, the heart of eternal life.

Thank you for being a part of our study of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus seen through John's eyes that's meant to lead you to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, by believing in Him, you might experience the fullness of life that can only come in Him. Next week, we turn to chapter eight where John takes us to a rather ugly scene of a woman caught in adultery and her Jewish accusers who want to see if Jesus will carry out the demands of the Law of Moses. Following Trey's message on this event, we'll turn to verses twelve through 38 where Jesus speaks about His testimony, His departure, and how the truth could set them free.

As always, as it's still a good thing to do, keep calm, trust in the Lord, and wash your hands! God bless you!

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