

39 John 7:37-39 Rivers of Living Water

REVIEW / INTRODUCTION

Last week we discovered crowds of people seeking to discern whether Jesus was the Messiah. We also saw religious leaders filled with pride and blinded to the identity of Jesus. We then discovered the masses had a theology problem; crowds of people could not discern the identity of Jesus because they got their beliefs from popular stories rather than the word of God. Theology matters and our knowledge of scripture matters. If we give equal weight to God's word and Christian fiction or the History Channel our theology will suffer.

This week we will read about events that occurred on the last day of the Feast of Booths. The Feast included powerful symbolic elements that found their fulfillment in the coming of Jesus Christ The Son of God and Messiah. Let's read the text.

READING THE TEXT

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.

PREACHING THE TEXT

37 On the last day of the feast, the great day,
THE LAST DAY, “THE GREAT DAY”

This feast of booths had one unifying theme; God is near and will provide all we need for this life and the next. In theology classes we speak about a God who is *transcendent*, who comes into our sphere of existence and does real things to sustain and guide us. God is near.

During this festival, booths were constructed with no roof. The idea is that God is the one who we rely on to cover and protect us. Other parts of this feast involved lots

of music and dancing and two powerful ceremonies that spoke volumes about our view of God.

****SLIDE: Show picture of temple area with tall lights being lit**

The first ceremony was a **light ceremony**. In the court of women there were light towers nearly 75 feet tall. On the top of these towers were four metal branches that were rounded and held between 10 and 20 gallons of lamp oil in each branch. Workers climbed really tall ladders and put a torch to the ponds of lamp oil. You know the sound that is generated when we are stupid and put too much gas on a fire that we are trying to start? Imagine 100s of gallons of lamp oil roaring to flame. These giant lamps lit up the temple court so that tens of thousands could worship into the night. They were the lamp that **illuminated worship for Israel**. Jesus in chapter 8 will call himself not just the lamp of Israel but **the light of the world**.

****SLIDE: Show water and wine image**

Water Ceremony

On the last “great day” of the feast the focus was water. Imagine a whole parade of worshipers and flutists led by the priest to the pool of Siloam. The priest has two golden pitchers. One is for wine. He fills the other with water from the pool. As the flutes continue to play, a great choir chants **Psalm 118**. The whole procession heads back to the Temple through the Water Gate. A trumpet sounds as the priest enters the Temple area. He approaches the altar where two silver basins are waiting. He pours wine into one of the basins as a drink offering to the Lord and water from the pool of Siloam into the other.

The whole ceremony, with the parade and the flutes and the singing was such a joyful occasion that one of the ancient rabbis wrote: *"Anyone who has not seen this water ceremony has never seen rejoicing in his life."*

The water ceremony was to thank God for His bounty and to ask Him to provide rain for the crops in the coming year. Today, many people take water for granted. We simply turn the tap and *walla*—water! Not so in the Middle

East during the first century. Water was often scarce. The people were very much aware of their dependence on God for the rains that were so vital for the preservation of life. No wonder the prophets came to see rain as a symbol of salvation and the work of God's Holy Spirit:

Ezekiel 36:25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean.

So it was on this last “great day” of the feast that;
Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

STOOD AND CRIED OUT IF YOU ARE THIRSTY

The question today is this; “are you thirsty?” Will you be satisfied with the stagnant waters of this life or are you thirsty for something more? Are you willing to settle for the constant promise of life and joy from things in this world that never deliver? Are you thirsty for joy and hope and life and meaning that does not quickly fade?

COME TO ME AND DRINK

If you are thirsty for more, come to Jesus and drink the life giving waters of His Spirit. I recall when I was a teen all kinds of things that promised life and meaning. I felt empty and dead inside. Perhaps if I found the right girl then I would feel full and my life would take on meaning. Perhaps if I excelled in sports the applause would give my life meaning.

I realized that I was still empty and dead inside even though I was next to someone. I just found someone to be empty and dead next to me. But the lack of meaning and life and purpose was acute. On one occasion I scored 22 points in the first quarter and even as I rested on the bench and got ready to go back in the game I realized I was still thirsty for meaning and life and joy. Drinking deeply from Jesus is the only thing in this life that filled that void of true life.

38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"

BELIEVES IN ME

The kind of belief that Jesus calls us to is more than mental assent. Demons give mental ascent that Jesus is Lord. They believe and shudder in fear of their coming judgment. No this belief is a deeper miraculous belief that leads to salvation.

OUT OF THE HEART OF THE BELIEVER

Not only does Jesus promise to feed you the life giving water of His presence. He promises to create in your heart a *fulness of life* that constantly wells up within you and overflows in joy and creates thirst for God in those around you. You become in Jesus Christ the artesian well that people come to find the water of The Spirit, because they see it in you.

RIVERS (not spickets or streams)

The picture that Jesus is painting for His hearers is powerful and worthy of reflection. Normally life giving water was drawn from a spring fed well. You take water out of it, and the water pressure pushes more water up into the well so that it stay full. You dip water out and it just keeps finding its level.

Water represents life from The Holy Spirit. It represents the flow of things like physical life and hope and faith and love and joy even eternal life. These aspects of life flow from The Holy Spirit which is given to us by Jesus when we come to Him. But like the well you do not run out of joy. You do not run out of love. You do not run out of hope and faith. Because as you express love and joy and faith, the Holy Spirit keeps filling your heart so that like a well it keeps seeping up into your heart keeping you filled.

And when God leads you to attempt difficult things for His name sake, The Spirit flows into your heart at an incredible rate giving you spiritual power and faith big enough for whatever challenge God has given you.

In this passage Jesus presented this living water of His Spirit not like a bottle of water, or a pitcher, or even a well that finds its level and keeps staying filled because it is spring fed. He presented the water of The Spirit as the flowing, raging, waters of a river.

I will never forget sitting by Niagara Falls staring at the mesmerizing waters rush past. It was an incredible sight to my eyes, but of all my senses affected most were my hearing and my tactile sense of touch.

The roar of rushing waters was so great I could not hear right for a few hours after leaving the falls. The great sound put out by the falls is over 90 decibels which is close to the volume of a rock concert. And as millions of gallons of water were squeezed into the falls and blasted the sides and bottom of the basin I could feel the vibrations in my entire body.

Jesus used the illustration of Rivers of Living Water to indicate that The Holy Spirit can come like a torrent and shake the earth underneath us. The Holy Spirit would come like a torrent at Pentecost.

Some of us sit by the side of this torrent of the Spirit's presence and occasionally dip our toe in the water while Jesus beckons us to the middle of the rapids.

There is power in these rapids to wash you and make you pure. There is power in these rapids that will carry you

along for the ride of your life into the will of God. There is power in these rapids of God's presence to bring you joy when you can't come up with joy on your own. There is power in these rapids of God's presence to turn your life of meaningless repetition into God's plans to build His church and advance His kingdom and use you in a significant manner as His Ambassador. And it all becomes real and takes shape as we walk into the rapids of His presence and drink deeply of Him. Drink in life from His Spirit.

"AS THE SCRIPTURE HAS SAID"

John 4:14

but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."

Isaiah 12:3

Therefore you will joyously draw water From the springs of salvation.

7:39 Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive,

BELIEVING BRINGS THE SPIRIT

Jesus explained that the way one gets the living waters of the Spirit flowing in your life is to believe Jesus for salvation.

Somewhere between 9 and 10 days after Jesus ascended into heaven The Holy Spirit would come down like a mighty torrent of God's presence upon the upper room and His disciples. Later the Spirit would be given to the Gentiles (or non-Jews). From that time the life of believers was powered up by The Holy Spirit in several ways.

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE LIFE OF BELIEVERS

First, the Holy Spirit provides conviction of sin to all people.

John 16:8 "And when he [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment."

Second, The Holy Spirit serves as a helper or comforter.

John 14:16-17 "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him." The

Greek word translated as "Helper" or "Comforter" (KJV) refers to one who is called alongside another, providing the idea of a guide or encourager during times of need.

This takes place as God's Spirit indwells the believer from the point of salvation (Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Third, the Holy Spirit guides the believer into truth.

John 16:13 "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth." Rather than depending on our human reasoning, we have a supernatural guide in the form of God's indwelling Holy Spirit.

Fourth, the Holy Spirit helps believers to glorify the Lord.

John 16:14 *"He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you."* We have a desire to worship the Lord because God's Spirit lives within us as believers.

Fifth, the Holy Spirit gives special gifts.

1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12:3-8, and 1 Peter 4:10-11

reveal the names of many gifts God's Spirit provides to believers. Each believer has at least one (**1 Corinthians 12:7**), and each person is specifically gifted for the acts of service God has prepared for him or her (**Ephesians 2:10**). The gifts are given to allow the church to work together to meet needs, make disciples, and glorify God.

Sixth, the Holy Spirit enables believers to produce the fruit of the Spirit. **Galatians 5:22-23** shares, *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."* Without God's Spirit, people are unable to produce fruitful lives that reflect the desires of God.

Seventh, the Holy Spirit indwells believers. In addition to the many roles He plays in our lives, He seals us as belonging to God (see Ephesians 1:13-14). The Holy Spirit is the person of God who lives with us in our time on earth and teaches us to truly know and follow God.

-----end list of Holy Spirit actions in believers-----

This welling up of living waters is something that you are promised as a believer. And if this is not your reality then it is time to pray that God would fill you with The Holy Spirit so the God sightings can begin.

Finally at the end of verse 39 it is confirmed that Jesus is speaking about the time when The Spirit of God will be given after He dies, raises and ascends into heaven. It says;

39 (Continued) for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

So Jesus is speaking to a crowd about the nature of what they can expect if they believe in Him. If they put their faith in Him as the Messiah. Those who believe will

have this living water. The life giving Spirit will live inside of those who follow Jesus.

SUMMARY / CHALLENGE

If you are a believer, know that The Holy Spirit lives inside of you. If life is boring and there are no God sightings in your life then it could be a season of testing from God, or it could be that you are not slowing down and seeking to discern what The Spirit of God is wanting to show you or give you in order to transform your life to look more like Jesus.

I don't think you are going to raise the dead but i do think that The Holy Spirit can give you peace and patience and joy so that you no longer view yourself as a victim but instead you see yourself as a citizen of heaven. A child of God!

Pause, pray, ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit each day. And expect that God will guide you as you seek to live for Him and do His will. Expect the word of God to pop! To come alive! Expect your prayer life to be less like "saying your prayers" and more like experiencing the

presence of God like that torrent of living water that changes everything.

TAKING IT HOME

1. Are you regularly drinking deeply of The Holy Spirit?
2. Are you thirsty for more of God's presence in your life?
3. When you make decisions are you praying for spiritual discernment that comes from the Holy Spirit?
4. Do the fruits of The Spirit appear naturally and regularly in your life as a result of The Holy Spirit's work? In other words, do people look at your life and see love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness and self control?
5. How is God leading you to respond to this message?



