

## Can This Be the Christ? (Part 3) John 7:37-52

Some questions in life are the kinds of questions you like:

- Should we go to the swimming pool or the ocean? Or mountains or ocean?
- Do you want blueberry cheesecake or chocolate cheesecake?
- Would you like a filet-mignon or a rib eye?

If those are the hardest questions you face in a given day, then it's a good day!

Other questions are more challenging and significant:

- (1) Where will I go to school?
- (2) What will I major in?
- (3) Where can I get a job?
- (4) Is this the one?
- (5) Should I invest in this business, or this ministry?
- (6) Should I have that difficult meeting?
- (7) Am I prepared to die?

The question facing the crowd at the Feast is this: *What will I do with Jesus?*

- I submit to you that **this is life's most important question.**
- How you answer this question **impacts all other questions.**
- **It will shape your identity, influence your choice of community, and define your purpose in life.**

So let's look at this question from this marvelous text.

**J.C. Ryle**, "It has been said that there are some passages in Scripture which deserve to be **printed in letters of gold**. Of such passages the verses before us form one. They contain one of those wide, full, **free invitations to mankind, which make the Gospel of Christ so eminently the "good news of God."**

2 parts: (1) The Savior's Invitation, and (2) The People's Mixed reaction.

### **#1: The Savior's Invitation (John 7:37-39)**

Our text begins with **"On the last day of the feast, the great day...."**

- Each day of the Feast of Tabernacles included a water ceremony.
- Priests descended to the Pool of Siloam and filled their golden pitchers with water. (The Gihon Spring flowed into the Pool).
- The choir sang **Isa 12:3**, "With joy you shall draw water from the wells of salvation."
- The priests then carried the water up the hill to the Water Gate.
- And the crowd carried a lulab in one hand (**tree branches** reflecting their desert tents), and an ethrog in the other (**citrus branches** reflecting the harvest season).
- They sang together the hallel Psalms (**113-118**).
- The priests **arrived to the temple and poured the water on the altar, while the people gathered around him singing.**
- On the seventh day, this experienced **happened seven times.** (Burge)

As I mentioned, later an eighth day was added, so it's unclear that Jesus gave his great invitation on the seventh day (cf., Deut 16:13), immediately following this ritual, or the eighth day (cf, Lev 23:36) after they stopped with the water ceremony.

• In either case, Jesus makes his pronouncement in this most cherished time.

This water ceremony was significant on multiple levels.

- At one level, **it was a plea to God for rain.** They celebrated the harvest but prayed for rains during Autumn, which was often a season of draught in Israel.
- On another level, **it was a reflection on the wilderness experience, most specifically, God's provision of water from the rock** (Num 20:8, 10; Ps 105:41).
  - In the ceremony, water was flowing from the sacrificial altar at the temple, and there you can see the **Christological significance.**
  - Christ, our rock was struck, as Paul says in **1 Cor 10.**
  - Jesus is our **source of salvation and life and vitality.**
  - **He will be struck; he will die, but he will descend and give us life giving joy and satisfaction and power through the Holy Spirit.**
- Moreover, **it was a look to the future,** for the prophets like Ezekiel (47:1) and Zechariah (14:8) spoke of **great eschatological blessing, as water would flow from God's life giving temple.** Now understood, refers to Christ, who is our great temple, the place where we meet God and find life.

**In short, Jesus provides the ultimate water.**

He is the fulfillment of Israel's hopes and longings.

- He was the water they needed.
- But he wasn't just the source of water for Israel, but **for the whole world.**

Notice also that Jesus **"stood up and cried out"**

- Usually teacher sat, but Jesus stands up and shouts.
- Normally, Jesus was not shouting. Isaiah said that he would speak tenderly to those who were wounded (42:2), but here he cries out.
- Why? Because nothing is more important than this!
- He spoke loudly and emphatically and emotionally.
- **You cry out when something is important: "Get out of the road!" "Run, there are two outs." "Shark!"**

Let's answer **3 questions** from this great invitation....

### **A. Who's Invited? (37)**

- You see at one level, this invitation is for everyone – **"whoever."**
  - This is a universal invitation.
  - Jew, Greek, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Farsi Speakers, Spanish Speakers
  - **What kind of invitation would you like to receive?**

- But at another level, this invitation is more specific – **“the thirsty.”**
- This is the good news. The gospel is for those who are thirsty.
  - The thirsty are the desperate, the unsatisfied, unfulfilled, the needy.
  - Elsewhere Jesus calls these folks “weary” (Matt 10), the “poor” (Matt 5:3)

*Come, ye sinners, poor and needy  
Weak and wounded, sick and sore  
Jesus ready, stands to save you  
Full of pity, love and power*

*Come, ye weary, heavy-laden  
Lost and ruined by the fall  
If you tarry 'til you're better  
You will never come at all*

*I will arise and go to Jesus  
He will embrace me in His arms  
In the arms of my dear Savior  
O, there are ten thousand charms*

- If you are thirsty, then **that's a gift.** Our physical thirst is a gift. If we didn't get thirsty, we would die of dehydration!
- If you a thirsty, unfulfilled in this life, do something – drink....
- **This thirst is a realization that nothing in this life is going to satisfy the deepest longing in your heart: entertainment, travel, wealth, power, popularity. Nothing.**
- **One** of the ways you know you are being drawn to Jesus, is you begin to realize your thirst, and Jesus looks gloriously satisfying.

Those who are self-satisfied, feel they have no need for Jesus, and that's a tragedy. Pastor Sandy Wilson tells the following story of an exchanged he had with an older gentleman at a party:

“I know a man who is a ‘member’ of the church, but had never attended a service in about seven years. I met him at a party.

I said, “It's really good to meet you. I've been wanting to get to know you.”

“Well good.”

I said, “I would love to get to know you, and talk to you about your spiritual life, and about your involvement in the church.”

He said, “Preacher, let me tell you something. I'm as happy as I could be. I'm sixty year old. I have a beautiful 35-year-old girlfriend. We have a marvelous apartment down on the river. It's beautiful. My tennis game has never been better. My business is prospering. I'm making so much money, I don't know what to do with it all. I'm really just happy, and I don't have time for anything else.

Pastor said, “If I had been thinking of John 7 when I was talking to him, I could have said to him, “That's fine. You're not invited anyway. Because Jesus said anyone who is thirsty let him come to me.... As long as you play this game [of self-satisfaction], you are not even invited into the fullness of what God can give you... The guest list is made up of needy, hungry, thirsty people.”

**Stay thirsty, my friends.** Come to Jesus and drink.  
Go to him daily, and drink from the wells of his salvation.

## **B. What Are the Instructions?**

Go to Jesus. “Come to Me”

- It’s simple.
- Not: “Sign a doctrinal statement.”
- Not: “Recite a creed.”
- Not: “Give a check.”
- Not: “Go to a church service.”
- But: “Go to Jesus.”
- Jesus saves you. Jesus alone.

The people in Jesus’ day were religious, but they didn’t believe in Him.

- Drink. Don’t stop by just considering Jesus, but believe.
- Taste and see that He is good.
- He doesn’t say “do a bunch of religious works.”
- He says, “drink.”
- Receive grace.
- To come to Jesus and drink is to believe in him (38-39).
- Believing involves the whole person, including your affections.

Don’t stop drinking!

- When you drink something it becomes part of you. It impacts you.
  - Coffee, protein builder, cough syrup
- So all who receive Jesus, it changes them from the inside out.
- Several years ago, a four-year old girl in North Wales had her complexion turn a yellow-orange color. The doctor discovered the reason. She had been consuming one-and-a-half liters of Sunny Delight every day. The product was largely food coloring and sugar. The manufacturers admitted that their product could turn a person orange, but only if consumed in large amounts (Davis, 250). And that’s what happened.
- She became what she drank. And so do we.
- If you’re constantly drinking in a love for praise, a love of money, a love of sexual pleasure, or a love of success, it will change you spiritually.
- Drink deeply from the river of Christ’s delights.

## **C. What Are the Blessings? (38-39)**

### **i. A Dynamic Picture: Living Water**

The Call: “Whoever *believes* in me.” Believing is drinking here. It’s not just intellectually believing, but coming in your heart and receiving Him.

The Scriptural Support: “The Scripture has said...”

- This doesn't refer to only one specific verse, but a variety of texts, and the overall message of Scripture.
- It would include verses like Ex 17:6; Prov 4:23, 11:25; Zech 13:1; Ps 105:41; Isaiah 43:19; 44:3, 58:11; Ezek 47:1-11; Joel 3:18.

The Satisfaction You Experience: "Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water"

### Personal Satisfaction:

- Your thirsty heart will be satisfied! It won't be satisfied elsewhere!
- Verse **39**: The Spirit will be in you!
- "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

### A Means of Blessing to Others

- This verse stresses not only what we will experience, but how we will be a means of blessing to others.
- "Out of your heart (a satisfied heart), will flow rivers of living water" – they will flow **in you, and from you**. It's living water.
- When you truly come to Jesus, you aren't a stagnant pond but a life-giving river.
  - Some people are **life-giving, others are life-taking**.
  - Jesus-centered, Spirit-filled people are life giving.
  - They live to bless others.
- Some Christians want a version of Christianity that's lived in isolation.
  - They make no attempt to influence others.
  - **They have a Dead Sea faith – the sea that receives from the Jordan but gives nothing back.**
  - **No, we are blessed to be a blessing to others.**
  - **A Christ-centered, Spirit-filled life is not a self-centered life, but an others-focused, God-glorifying life.**
- John may have had **Isaiah 58:11** in mind, "You will be like a well watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail."
  - And that's an interesting background because Isaiah actually rebukes private false piety that included fasting (with wrong motives); and exhorts the people to public action and acts of mercy.
  - Read it **58. Like a garden, you feed, nourish, revive others.**
  - **Proverbs 11:25**, "Whoever brings blessing ["a generous person," CSB] will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered."

### A sign of a Spirit-filled life is that we are nourishing, blessing, and enriching others.

- We do this through word and deed; evangelism and edification, and acts of mercy and justice.

**James Boice:**

To hear most Christians talk you would think that the sole purpose of Christ's coming was to save them and satisfy them. That is one purpose, of course. But that is not the way in which I find the Christian life described in my Bible. That kind of Christianity produces a shallow, experienced-centered, introverted, and eventually selfish approach to life and to those around us. We are not called to that.... The work of the Holy Spirit is to make you precisely as Christ was in the world. And that means getting outside yourself, getting interested in others, and becoming useful. Have you entered into that promise? Are other experiencing abundance of blessing through you?"

**Jesus saves us from our self-absorption.**

**He saves us from our addiction to ourselves, and the Spirit empowers us to be a blessing to the world.**

## **ii. A Specific Prophecy: the Holy Spirit (39)**

**Jesus explains his statement.**

**"The Spirit had not been given"** doesn't mean that the Spirit was inactive up to that point.

- The OT speaks about the Spirit a lot.
- But after the cross and resurrection and ascension (when Jesus would be "**glorified**"), something new and greater would happen: **Pentecost**.
- Acts 2 shows us how the gift of the Spirit was poured out on these new believers and this transformed everything.

Walter was saying to me last week that his kids are still young enough that when they're asked, "Where do you want to eat – we will take you anywhere?!" They respond, "Chic Filet."

But my kids are older. And some of you can relate. While they do love Christian chicken, they all usually say "steak."

As our kids birthdays approach, I begin asking, "Where do you want to eat for your birthday?" It's usually something pricey. And it's amazing how the birthday list can keep growing, as their birthday approaches. It's not just steak, but video games, or new shoes, or a new ipod, or tickets to a ball game or a musical. With five kids, and one wife, I am buying birthday gifts every other month! (Some of you are like, that's cute. Five kids. That's weak sauce). That's a pretty good haul: steak, Ipods, some shoes, a show.

Think about **your favorite gift ever** – birthday, graduation, wedding, or Christmas...

- It's hard to beat an engagement/wedding ring for **long-term impact**.
- It's hard to beat money for the **influence** it brings.
- It's hard to beat personally made gifts for **stirring your affections**.

But there's a gift that beats an engagement ring for long-term impact, money for influence, and personal gifts that stir your affections: **The Holy Spirit**.

- Long term impact: Check.
- Influencing the world: Check.
- Stirring your affections: Check.

V. 39 – the Spirit had not been given ... yet. Soon the Spirit would be poured out.

Jesus promises this glorious gift, as he invites the world to come and believe in him for true life.

**The church** is now the community of the Spirit-filled.

- The Spirit would not just be “among” his people.
- Nor would he just indwell the *leaders*.
- **But every individual, male, female, would be indwelt by the Spirit of God, bearing the fruit of the Spirit, living on mission.**
- We are in the era of the Holy Spirit.
- John will teach us much about the H.S. in the upcoming chapters (14-16).

But Jesus must first go to the cross before this life of the Spirit could be experienced.

Before you experience a Spirit-filled life, your sin must be dealt with.

The rock must first be struck before we experience the life giving water of the Spirit.

## #2: The Crowd's Mixed Reaction (7:40-52)

What happens after Jesus' pronouncement is what we often see in Scripture: a mixed reaction. In the book of Acts in particular, we often see belief, unbelief, confusion, and hostility... We can break down the various responses into four groups:

### A. The Convinced (7:40-41)

This group is at least headed in the right direction, at best they genuinely believe.

Some believe Jesus is the **prophet** that Moses wrote about (40; Deut 18:15-18)

- Some may have only identified him as a prophet (not Messiah) – as a forerunner to the Messiah. Some were anticipating two different people.
- Others during this time were anticipating this prophet greater than Moses, who would also be the Messiah. If they believed this, they were correct. This is precisely what we read about in Acts 3:22-23; 7:37.
- Whether in group one or group two, they believed He was sent from God. One group was needed increased knowledge; others had it exactly right.

Others boldly said, “This is **the Christ**.” (41a)

- If this was indeed a true confession, then they would be some of the believing remnant within Israel.
- They had entered through “the narrow gate.”
- They were the thirsty that came to Jesus and drank.

## **B. The Cynical (41b-44)**

**41b** – This seems to imply a different group. They thought that the idea of the Messiah coming from the boondocks was absurd.

**42:** They wrongly assumed because Jesus was raised in Nazareth that he must have been born there.

- When in reality, he was actually born in Bethlehem, as the Scripture foretold.
- And he also was a descendent of David, as the Scripture foretold (2 Sam 7:12; Ps 132:10-11).
- Apparently, they were too lazy to examine the information; if they would, they would discover that Jesus actually met these expectations/qualifications!
- They seem to have no interest in examining these things.

**43:** the various views created division.

**44:** For the third time in this chapter, there’s an unsuccessful attempt to arrest him!

- **Jesus is like Jackie Chan; they can’t capture him!**
- Actually it wasn’t because he could do kung fu but because his time had not yet come (7:30). He was sovereign over the events of his life.

## **C. The Confused (45-49)**

**45:** The **officers** of the temple police were confused.

- They had been sent several days earlier to arrest him (v 32,), but they failed to do so.

**46:** Their superiors ask why they returned empty handed, and they respond, “No one ever spoke like this man.”

- **“Have you heard this guy? I’m not ready to put him in an orange jump suit!”**
- They didn’t give any other reason. This would have taken some courage, as they had to know the Sanhedrin would not have responded positively to this.
- But they were impressed by Jesus, so they shared it.
- They were religiously trained Levites, according to some, but Jesus left these religious leaders amazed.
- So they don’t embrace him as Savior, but they aren’t ready to reject him.
- They really didn’t know what to do.
- They are definitely pressured by the chief priests and Pharisees to be negative toward Jesus, but the power and grace of his message, has left them wondering.



**47:** The Pharisees rebuke them with a question, “You haven’t been led astray have you?”

- “What’s wrong with you?”
- They speak condescendingly to these officers, when they were actually the ones who lacked spiritual discernment.

**48:** The question implies that if Jesus really were the Messiah, then the religious experts would believe in him.

- They had set themselves against Jesus.
- That’s why Nic came at night.

**49:** They continue in their condescension: they claim that if anyone believes in Jesus as Messiah then they are gullible or ignorant and consequently accursed/condemned.

We aren’t told what the officers eventually did.

Believing in Jesus would have cost them much, as it does everyone, especially those in contexts where believing may cost you your job, or family relationships.

#### **D. The Contemplative (50-52)**

**50:** The Pharisees previous charge that all the Pharisees had outright rejected Jesus wasn’t exactly true.

- One of the most prominent rabbis, Nicodemus (the same Nic at Night from ch 3), was an exception.
- He wasn’t a disciple of Jesus yet, thought it seems like he later became one (John 19:39), but at this point, his mind was open to the claims of Christ.

**51:** He doesn’t defend Jesus, but makes a procedural point: They must at least give Jesus a hearing (cf., Acts 25:16)

**52:** But they aren’t interested in being just, so they turn against Nicodemus with a condescending question, “Are you from Galilee too?”

- This was an insult.
- Remember Acts 2 – **How can Uncle Si speak perfect French?**

**53:** They add to the mockery telling him to go do some homework, so that he can find out that no prophet ever came from Galilee.

- This was also not true.
- They overlook Jonah (And others may have come from this region, eg Nahum, Hosea).
- The Pharisees demonstrate a lack of knowledge, and utter arrogance of these things.
- In their pride and hatred, they would soon put their Messiah to death.

**We aren't given all the details about Nicodemus, but it seems he kept searching and eventually found the truth, and believed in Jesus as Messiah.**

**That's our pray for you if you're not a Christian. That you would keep searching.**

**I've love the story of E.V. Rieu (who several commentators of John cite).**

**He was one of the world's renowned scholars of the classics, and had completed a wonderful translation of Homer into English for the Penguin classics series. He was 60 years old, and he had been an agnostic his whole life. The publisher soon approached him again and asked him to translate all the Gospels. When Rieu's son heard this he said:**

**"It will be interesting to see what Father will make of the four Gospels. It will be even more interesting to see what the four Gospels will make of Father."**

**A year later Dr. Rieu, was convinced and gloriously converted to Jesus Christ, and joined the Church. (Ht: Kent Hughes)**

**J.B. Phillips asked him, "Did you not get the feeling that the whole material was extraordinarily alive?"**

**Rieu replied, "I got the deepest feeling. My work changed me. I came to the conclusion that these words bear the seal of the Son of Man and God."**

**Phillips concluded, "I found it particularly thrilling to hear a man who is a scholar of the first rank, as well as a man of wisdom and experience, openly admitting that these words written long ago were alive with power. They bore to him as to me, the ring of truth." [cf., Jn 6:63]**

**What will you do with Jesus Christ? Riue, responded to his invitation. Many of you have. Others of you have not.**

**We say come to Jesus and drink. Find the life that is truly life.**

**If you have, keep coming to this endless fountain of blessing, and may your heart overflow with blessing to the world, by the power of the Holy Spirit.**

**This kind of life is possible because Christ our rock was struck at the cross, and has now poured out his Holy Spirit upon us.**

**Blessed be His holy name.**