



IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH

SERIES: JOHN (GOSPEL OF TRUTH)

LESSON: EXAMINING THE INVITATION TO ETERNAL LIFE

JOHN 7:37-39

APRIL 18, 2021

MAIN POINT

In today's lesson we will give our primary attention to John 7:37-39. In the passage:

- JESUS is clearly the significant *person* involved.
- ETERNAL LIFE is clearly the most significant *provision* being offered.
- The HOLY SPIRIT is clearly the most powerful *promise* being anticipated.

Jesus *explained* and *offered* salvation in an *urgent* and *visual* way. We can see it was urgent, because it was the last day of the feast. Rabbi's generally sat down as they taught and Jesus "stood and cried with a loud voice."

JOHN CONTEXT

To provide context for John 7:37-39, it is helpful to understand two things: the setting of the Feast of Tabernacles and the confusion of the crowd toward Jesus.

Feast of Tabernacles

Jews were to attend three festivals each year: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles or Booths. This latter festival had a double significance. (1) Historically, it was to remind the Jews of the conditions within which God blessed, led them, and delivered them from Egypt. (2) Practically, it was at the end of the harvest and was to celebrate the blessing of God on their crops. Exodus 23:16 calls it the “festival of ingathering.” Deuteronomy 16:13, 16 also says, “When you gather in thy labor out of the field.” In I Kings 8:2 it was called “The Feast.” In Leviticus 23:39 it was called “The Festival of the Lord.”

In John 7, Jesus really shied away from going with his disciples up to this festival.

His disciples reasoned that this was a great time to “show off.” Of course, He was never into that mode. They could not imagine him having an expansive and extensive vision of His kingdom and not taking advantage of the exposure he would get a large public gathering. With this in mind, the disciples said, “For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world” (7:4). Yet, Jesus responds, “You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come” (7:6).

And although Jesus did wait to go to the festival, he ends up going anyway. The expression about “*His time not fully come*” was first heard when His mother wanted him to correct the embarrassing situation at the wedding when the wine ran out. Jesus often spoke about His time or His hour. In this passage He uses a different word, and He uses it for the *only time*. In the other passages (John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:27) the word he uses is *hora*, which means an hour destined by God. It would not be negotiable, avoidable or questioned. In this passage the word is *kairos*, which characteristically meant an opportunity. It would have to do with the BEST time, the time when circumstances were most SUITABLE. It seems he was wanting to distance himself from his disciples and their poor understanding of what He was about.

You can almost imagine a carnival atmosphere as Jews move out of their homes into these little temporary family brush arbors. The ancient seven-day festival set out by God to be done each year has come and is almost over. As John records this year’s festival, confusion, contradiction, division and animosity have characterized the days of celebration. The vast multitude are coming to the end of the Feast of Tabernacles, or Feast of Booths with *no concluding understanding or blessing*. *This is Jesus’ last celebration of this great festival. They are down to the wire. It is the last day of a seven day event (7:37).* Jesus’ heart breaks to have them walking in the shadow of truth, but never discovering truth. He was aware of the root of the problem. He nailed it in v. 17: “*If anyone’s will is to do God’s will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.*”

Every lesson's purpose goes back to the one purpose that John identifies: *"but 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"* (John 20:31). Jesus would not pass up this greatest of opportunities to drive home the urgency of people believing and receiving eternal life.

The confusion of the crowd toward Jesus

In the larger passage we can see why John felt like this was an important event to preserve in the life and ministry of Jesus, particularly as it had to do with a clear message about salvation, which was John's primary objective (John 20:31). We see this when we look at confusing ideas being held by various ones in the crowd.

Notice these confusing ideas:

- UNBELIEF BY HALF-BROTHERS, v. 5, "Not even His brothers believed in him."
- UNBELIEF BY RELIGIOUS PEOPLE., v. 7, 19 "hated him," and "why do you seek to kill me?"
- ELIMINATE HIM AT ALL COSTS. VV. 30 "to arrest him," "sent officers to arrest him."
- CONTEMPT OVER THE ROLE HE WAS TAKING. John 7:14-15 - About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. The Jews therefore marveled, saying, "How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?"

The conclusions could have been described like this:

- v. 12 - He was a good man.
- v. 40 - He was a prophet.
- v. 20 - He was a deluded madman. He was a seducer, trying to lead Jews away from their traditions. He was accused of being a Sabbath breaker, being a drunkard and glutton, having questionable associations and destroying orthodox religion.
- v. 25, 26 - He was a man of courage. "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?"*
- v. 46 - Officers concluded that he was a most dynamic personality. "The officers answered, *"No one ever spoke like this man!"* The Pharisees answered them, *"Have you also been deceived"?*
- v. 31 - He was the Christ. *"Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, "When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?"*

At this point, you probably feel like you would like to be the fly on the wall that observes what Jesus is going to do with the weird, wild bunch that have gathered for celebration and find themselves in the midst of a philosophical and theological dog fight. With the interruption to their traditions and rigid protocol Jesus injecting himself into the conversation brings tremendous tension not usually associated with celebration. Before it is over, you may feel a little nervous, want to question Jesus, and even feel sorry for his opposition. But Jesus is going to force them and us to face some realities.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

If you had something you needed to say in a group setting and you knew a lot of the people in the group were negative toward you, what would you do?

If you knew the information you had would determine the eternal destiny of some of the people in the group, what would you do?

If you knew this was the last opportunity you would have to share this information before your life ended, what would you do?

Perhaps you can imagine the situation Jesus was in. Despite the confusion and hostility from some in the crowd, this was a significant opportunity to share about God's plan through him for eternal life.

EXPLANATION // ...believe Jesus is the Christ...

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 7:37-39

In the passage, JESUS is clearly the significant *person* involved. ETERNAL LIFE is clearly the most significant *provision* being offered. The HOLY SPIRIT is clearly the most powerful *promise* being anticipated.

Does the passage remind you of other times Jesus used water to symbolize, or illustrate salvation? (The woman at the well in John 4)

Four words are going to define what a person needs in order to possess this living water? Can you name them? (Thirst, come, drink, believe. He certainly would not come and drink if he did not believe.)

Jesus resorted to His common method and used the familiar and common to illustrate the unfamiliar and uncommon. It is the parable method. They understood about the qualities of water, the limitations of water, and the essential value of water. He did this before. In John 4:10 Jesus answered the Samaritan woman, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him *and he would have given you living water.*" John 4:14 continues, "but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him *will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.*"

The Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated with certain festival rituals. One was a solemn procession each day from the temple to the Gihon Spring. A priest filled a gold pitcher with water while the choir sang Isaiah 12:3 which says, "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." Then they returned to the altar and poured out the water. This ritual reminded them of the water from the rock during the wilderness wanderings (Num. 20:8–11; Ps. 78:15–16). It also spoke prophetically of the coming days of Messiah. Notice Zechariah 14:8, 16-18,

On that day *living waters* shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea It shall continue in summer as in winter. . . Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths. And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be no rain on them. And if the family of Egypt does not go up and present themselves, then on them there shall be no rain; there shall be the plague with which the LORD afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths.

The Feast's seventh and last day was its greatest (cf. Lev. 23:36).

Jesus stood, in contrast with the Rabbis' usual position of being seated while teaching. He spoke in a loud voice (cf. John 1:15; 7:28; 12:44), which was a way of introducing a solemn announcement. His offer, come to Me and drink, was an offer of salvation (cf. 4:14; 6:53–56).

Jesus communicates that streams of living water will flow from within one who believes in him. That is, he will have a *continual* source of *satisfaction*, which will *sustain* life continually. (cf. 4:14). When Jesus added, "As the Scripture has said," He did not identify the Old Testament passage(s) He had in mind. But He may have thought of Psalm 78:15–16 (He split rocks in the wilderness and gave them drink abundant as from the deep. He made streams come out of the rock and caused waters to flow down like rivers) and Zechariah 14:8 (cf. Ezek. 47:1–11; Rev. 22:1–2).

John explained that the “living water” (v. 38) was the *coming gift of the Holy Spirit*. The Spirit within a believer satisfies his need of God, and provides him with regeneration, guidance, and empowerment. In the earliest Greek manuscripts, the words, “Up to that time the Spirit had not been given,” are simply, “for there was not yet Spirit.” This cannot be taken in an absolute sense since the Spirit had actively worked among people in the Old Testament era. Jesus referred to the special baptizing, sealing, and indwelling work of the Spirit in the Church Age, which would start on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:5, 8). Jesus said He would “send the Spirit” to His followers (John 15:26; 16:7). “The Spirit had not [yet] been given” to indwell believers permanently (cf. Ps. 51:11). That happened after Jesus was glorified, that is, after His death, resurrection, and Ascension. (“Glorified,” “glory,” and “glorify” are used frequently in John’s Gospel (John 7:39; 11:4; 12:16, 23, 28; 13:31–32; 14:13; 15:8; 16:14; 17:1, 4–5, 10).)¹

FOR THOSE WHO HAVE ALREADY MADE THE DECISION ABOUT RECEIVING HIS OFFER OF ETERNAL LIFE, *HIS TEACHING ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE NEXT MOST POWERFUL TRUTH TO CONSIDER.*

He had to be glorified by and through His death, burial and resurrection before He could confer upon them the full blessing of redemption by the Holy Spirit. At the Father’s right hand, He made good the promise of the Father. For Luke 24:49 says, “*I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.*”

Commentator F.B. Meyer puts it this way,

“Thus [spoke] He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive. During his earthly life, our Lord supplied so far as possible what each disciple needed by his personal care and oversight. He knew each sheep by name; anticipated by prayerful sympathy the temptations of each; and sought to supply the need of each out of his royal bounty. But even then, as external presence, He was not able to meet and satisfy the inner restlessness and craving of their hearts. How much less could He do it for them, or for us, when He became invisible and exalted to the right hand of Power. But his lack is more than compensated for by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus ascended, He receive of the father the promise of the Holy Spirit. And then a new era broke on the world. Before the Ascension, the Spirit of God had rested upon men, fitting them for service; thenceforth He was to be in them. This is the glory of our present dispensation, the crown of redemption, the climax of our Savior’s work. “He abideth with you and shall be in you” [John 14:16, 17].

In regeneration the Holy Spirit does literally indwell the believer. His life may be stunted, dwarfed, repressed, as plants in a sickly atmosphere, and as streams choked with the debris brought down from the hills; but it can never again be lost. “He abides forever.” But what does He bring save the life of Jesus? These two are identical. When we are

¹ Edwin A. Blum, “John,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 301–302.

strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man, Christ dwells in our hearts by faith. If the Spirit of Christ be in us, Christ Himself is in us. They are one.

Why did Jesus not just get in on the celebration and keep his mouth shut?

HE HAD A MAJOR BURDEN THAT INVOLVED

- 1) His obedience to His father.**
- 2) His concern for the eternal welfare of souls.**
- 3) His concern for people who were being superficially religious without have real substance to their faith. It was all outward without a personal relationship to God.**

Would what Jesus said describe your experience of Salvation? Can you recount how you “thirsted,” you “came,” and you “drank?”

Have you had a steady stream of assurance and evidence that your salvation experience was real? Have you had to deal with doubts about your salvation?

APPLICATION // ...have life in His name.

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

It is a very searching question to ask of our own experience whether there is evidence of “living water” flowing out from our hearts. Are you comfortable with what you understand about the Holy Spirit really being alive and active in you? Does your experience confirm in your heart that He really is alive and active in your daily experience?

Ephesians 5:18 commands us to be “filled with the Holy Spirit.” Do you question “How to be filled with the Holy Spirit?” In your view, how does one become filled with the Spirit?

PRAYER

Close in prayer, asking God to press this truth that was studied.

COMMENTARY / RESOURCES

Put Resources that could benefit the teacher: videos, podcasts, sermons, etc.

VERSE BY VERSE COMMENTARY

7:37. HIS DRAMATIC PRONOUNCEMENT.

The offer was URGENT, “stood and with a loud voice spoke”

The offer was COMPREHENSIVE. “If anyone”

The offer was ESSENTIAL. “Thirst.”

The offer was SIMPLE. “come and drink”

The offer was OPTIONAL, “whoever believes in me.”

The offer was OF LASTING benefits.

7:38. “Rivers of living water.” The first crisis after leaving Egypt and getting through the Red Sea was when their water supply was exhausted and they were quite certain they were going to die. Moses was to blame and God was to blame. They concluded that God did this to let them die out in the desert. Notice Exodus 15:22-25 and its connection to our passage:

Then Moses made Israel set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah. And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” And he cried to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a log, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet. There the LORD made for them a statute and a rule, and there he tested them.

7:38 – Further connections with water and Spirit.

- John 4:10 - Jesus answered her, “If you knew *the gift of God* and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you *living water*.”
- John 4:14 - but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him *will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life*.”
- 1 Corinthians 12:13 - For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and *we were all given the one Spirit to drink*.

- Revelation 21:6 - He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. *To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.*
- Revelation 22:1 - Then the *angel showed me the river of the water of life,* as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.
- Revelation 22:2 - down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.
- Revelation 22:17 - The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.