

John 7:37-39 ³⁷ On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." ³⁹ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Into the Dead World Jesus Sends the Living Spirit

When I was in Seminary a certain Professor gave me an impossible assignment. Compare the book of Hebrews with the book of Leviticus and discuss how Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament ceremonial law. Such an assignment would of course take years and stacks of paper. Because of this I began my paper by explaining that the symbolism of the sacrifices was obvious and so I would skip those and focus on some of the more obscure points.

In a sense John does the opposite, he gives us the words that Jesus says and on what day of which feast Jesus says them. John undoubtedly knows two things: One that any Jew who hears what Jesus says and on what day he says will need no further explanation. He will undoubtedly grasp the full significance. Two any gentile will have no idea of the significance. Now John doesn't have stacks of paper on which to write a detailed analysis of the full significance of the feast and Jesus' words in relation to them. So for the sake of the gentile he skips right to the main point with a single sentence. Namely that Jesus spoke here of the promise of the giving of the Holy Spirit.

Now "I don't want you to be ignorant" (Paul uses this phrase five times in his letters). And since we have a little time we out to learn the significance of the events of this festival, the words of Jesus and what they have to do with the giving of the Holy Spirit.

1. The feast of tabernacles was a feast the commemorated the wanderings in the wilderness. "If anyone thirsts . . ."

The feast that Jesus is attending is the feast of tabernacles. Or we ought to call it the feast of tents. Obviously it was a festival that the Lord meant to be a reminder of the time when Israel wandered in the dry arid wilderness living in tents.

And so Jesus begins by saying, "If anyone thirsts"

With these words Jesus was asking the Jews there in Jerusalem and us today as well to recognize that we are still wandering in a dry barren wilderness. Their physical wandering may have been a thing of the past. But spiritually we are all still living in a desert without water. That is to say we are dead in our sins.

A couple weeks ago I happened across one of the most appalling foolish books I have ever seen. The basic claim of this book is that the 20th century is one of the least violent and most peaceful centuries in the history of the world. This book was supposedly written by a Professor of history at an Ivy League school. This claim is so blatantly false, it's one of those things you have to laugh about to keep from crying. With two world wars, Hitler, Stalin, and Mao Zedong the list of brutality, violence, and hatred is beyond calculation.

But this is the narrative that the humanists so desperately want to believe that they simply demand that it is so against all the evidence of History. Namely that man is basically good and that we can and will build a peaceful utopia upon this earth. In order to prop up this fantasy they blame anger and violence on anything they can, usually religion, rather than admit the truth which scripture so clearly teaches, "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth."

I have often thought that man would be better off if he built monuments to our greatest evils rather than what we imagine to be our greatest triumphs, Aushwitz, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Pearl Harbor, Wounded Knee Creek etc. Monuments that don't say look at what they did, but monuments that say look at what we did.

Into this desert wilderness in which we wander Jesus cries out, "If anyone thirsts." If anyone hungers and thirsts for righteousness, If anyone thirsts for peace, If anyone thirsts for truth. Do you wish to be cleansed of your sin? Do you wish to quit wandering in death and sin and live in Christ. "Come to me," says Christ, "and I will give you living water."

2. The water from the rock is the water of life which is Christ "Come to me and drink"

Against the backdrop of the wandering in the wilderness, when Jesus says, "I will give you living water" one can hardly fail to make a connection to the water from the rock, which the Lord gave to the children of Israel through Moses.

Indeed one integral part of the Festival of Tents was the "Ceremony of the Out Pouring of Water." According to Edersheim every morning of the Festival, the crowds would separate into three groups, one group would go with a priest down to the pool of Siloam. There the priest would draw a large pitcher of water which he would take back to temple. This pitcher of water would be poured into a funnel and from there mix with the wine and the burnt offering. This was such an integral and important part of the festival that the entire festival was often referred to as the "House of Outpouring."

It was no doubt soon after this very pouring out of the water that Jesus cried out offering the true living water. By saying this Jesus was drawing a direct connection between himself and Moses. Claiming that just as Moses gave them water in the wilderness so now he would give them the greater spiritual living

water in the wilderness of sin. And so we see that the Jews who heard him immediately make this connection, some saying Christ is the prophet whom Moses foretold, others saying He is the Christ.

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**3. The Ceremony of the Outpouring was to be a Symbol of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit
“Living water”**

Now here is where we get to how this all connects to the Holy Spirit. Because the Rabbi’s knew and taught that this “Ceremony of Outpouring” was a symbol of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. As it was foretold:

Isaiah 44:3 - For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, And floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, And My blessing on your offspring;

This is no doubt the scriptural verse to which Jesus is referring.

And so both of these scriptures, the words of Isaiah and of Jesus, are fulfilled. For the Apostles they were fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, for us they are fulfilled on the day of our baptism, when we everyone of us received the Holy Spirit.

Now of course there are many who try to argue that the Holy Spirit is not given in the waters of baptism, but instead the baptism of the Holy Spirit is separate from a water baptism. But they argue in this way because they do not know or understand that Jewish ceremonies which the Lord used as the basis for the sacraments He gave to His church.

I doubt that any first century Jew upon receiving baptism would have failed to connected it to this very ceremony, ie the outpouring of water during the feast of tents. In this ceremony you had the pouring of water during the burnt offering (which symbolized the forgiveness of sins) and was known and taught to be a symbol of the outpouring of the holy spirit.

This is exactly what the Apostles teach us happens in baptism. Our sins or forgiven and we receive the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:38–39: “And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And therefore what the ceremony of outpouring only symbolized, you have received in the waters of baptism.

**4. The Feast of Tents was also a symbol of the Word of God going out from Jerusalem to the heathen
“rivers flowing out . . . “**

The festival of tents was to be a reminder to the Israelites of their time in the wilderness but it was also a festival of harvest thanksgiving. As such the festival was also seen as symbolizing the harvest of the gentiles foretold in the Old Testament, when God would bring the heathen nations to faith. During this festival the temple was well light, the trumpets were sounded every morning in special processions, and we already talked about the pouring of the water. All of these things were seen to symbolize the Word of God going out from Jerusalem to the nations and gathering in the heathen to Jehovah.

So Jesus says, “from your hearts will flow rivers of living water.” Where is this water flowing to? It is flowing out to the people around you that they may also be called to be the people of God.

For this is the very purpose of the Holy Spirit.

Some people are confused as to why John and others say that the Holy Spirit had not yet been given thinking it means that no one had received the Holy Spirit. This is obviously not true since as we read it was given even at the time of Moses. Scripture simply means that before this time it was given in a limited way, only to some and only for the benefit of the Israelites. Now it will be given fully to all and for the benefit of every tribe, tongue and nation

Others are confused as to the purpose of the giving of the Holy Spirit thinking that those who have the Holy Spirit must speak in tongues, do miracles, and in general dance around making fools of themselves. But the purpose of the Spirit could not be clearer in this passage and many others, that is to give living water to all nations on earth, or to say it again to preach the Gospel.

The Holy Spirit is given to all so that all might hear the wonderful message that even though we are sinners who deserve only God’s wrath and judgment, nevertheless Jesus died for our sins. In other words “any who thirst may receive from Christ the water of life,” as Jesus himself said.

AMEN

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.