

Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles

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[0 : 0 0] John's Gospel chapter 7 and we're looking on page 946 and we're looking at verses 37 to 39 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. He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.

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.

Now I mentioned that earlier today we were looking at the Feast of Tabernacles. And this evening we're going to follow on in that theme, but with Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles.

John 7, 37 to 39. This is an interesting reference because it puts Jesus in the context of the Feast of Tabernacles, as it was given to the Israelites and as they kept it going down through the centuries. We will of course focus on Jesus' invitation to the thirsty to come to him and to drink. But we're going to recognize the context and the opportunity that Jesus used when the city of Jerusalem was thronged with pilgrims.

[2 : 1 0] Just as a wee aside and by way of introduction, I remember quite a few years ago now, the first time I went to Israel and to Jerusalem itself, it was at Tabernacles.

And the city was absolutely staffed full of Jewish people who had come from all over the world to be in Jerusalem at the festival of Tabernacles.

And there were people literally from all parts of the world who were Jewish and they were there for that occasion. And the picture here, and we have to remember it, is that on that last day, that great day of the Feast, the Feast of Tabernacles, when Jesus stood and cried out, he cried out to multitudes who had come there from all the parts of the Roman Empire where they were scattered and indeed from further afield.

they'd come in to this great pilgrim feast at this time of year, at what is our autumn time of year. And they were there for that occasion.

And we were reading, you recall, in Leviticus 23, verses 33 to 34, about the festival, the Feast of Tabernacles.

[3 : 3 4] It was the last of the three great prescribed feasts in Israel where the people were to come in from all the earths and pears to Jerusalem.

And so Jesus was there and he was using that opportunity to speak to people and to focus attention on himself as the one who satisfies the longing and the thirsty soul.

And we ought to bear in mind that Jesus was there on that occasion knowing full well that the authorities were after him, that they were determined to get him and to kill him.

Yet he was there. And he was there to use the goings-on at the Feast of Tabernacles to focus on himself and to focus on his ability, as we've said, to satisfy the deepest needs and the longings of the human soul.

And so let's draw near, as it were, and listen to him speaking to our own hearts, speaking to us maybe for the first time, or speaking to us afresh.

[4 : 5 1] And we're to listen to him and we're to say to him, like the songwriter, Master, Master, speak. Thy servant hearth, waiting for thy gracious word, longing for thy voice that cheereth.

Master, let it now be heard. And may we have that attitude that we're listening to Jesus. Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

And may it be that he will indeed meet with us in our souls and enliven us in his grace and his goodness. I want to think about three things.

First of all, the thirst referred to. If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. But before we get into that specifically, I want just to remind you of the context here.

Some of us know this, but it will do us no harm to remind ourselves of it. The context, as we've said, is tabernacles. It's the last day, the great day.

[6 : 06] It was called Hoshana, Hoshana, Robah, in the Jewish way of putting it. The great Hosanna. And the background here is that the priests went down in a procession to the pool of Siloam from Jerusalem, from the inner city, the old city, down to the pool of Siloam and they drew out a golden pitcher of water and they carried it all the way back up to the temple and to the altar at the temple and then they poured that water out down the side of the temple, of the altar rather.

We don't actually know when exactly this practice had its beginning. But it was going on before Jesus came into this world and before he began his ministry.

It was begun in Second Temple times but we don't know precisely when. But there is agreement between Jewish and Christian authorities that on each of the seven days of the festival water was brought in that way I've just described from the pool of Siloam and it was brought up by the priests and there was a great procession, a joyous procession of the people and then they poured out this water from the golden pitcher into a bowl by the altar.

There are different views on what exactly this meant. Some understand that it symbolized the need to pray for the rain and therefore for fruitful seasons from the Lord himself.

If you know anything about the land of Israel you know that the soil is such that it's very dependent on rain or it becomes parched and dry and desert-like.

[8 : 07] And if you know a little bit about modern Israel you'll know that for example in Jerusalem at the hotels the vegetation is lovely the flowers the shrubs but if you look a little closer you discover that all these things are irrigated carefully by tubing with holes at the strategic places.

And certain times of the day the irrigation systems are turned on and that's why everything is so wonderfully green because most of the time it's really hot there.

I mention that simply to make the point that there were they were dependent upon the Lord to give them fruitful seasons. And some think that this pouring out of the golden pitcher each day of the festival the seven days and then the great day the last day was an indication of their appreciation for God's provision and a reminder to them that they needed to pray.

I think there's a lot more to it than that because it's interesting and instructive to notice that each day when they had carried the water up the priest had carried it up and poured it out the throng cried out from the psalm we were singing in Psalm 118 and they recited the words of verse 25 O Lord O Lord save now we beseech you O Lord send now prosperity save now and it seems to me that although it was right for them to think about God providing rain and fruitful seasons the heart of the matter had far more to do with their longing for Messiah to come with spiritual provision for them to slake their spiritual thirst and this seems to me to be far more in keeping with the psalm that we're quoting from

Psalm 118 speaks about the stone that the builders rejected and it speaks about the one who came in the purpose of God to save the people and so it seems to me that that they were really asking the Lord to come and save them and send spiritual prosperity to them in other words bring the Messiah and at the festival of tabernacles at this interesting happening each day culminating with the great Hosanna on the eighth day in our text they were longing for the coming of the Messiah to satisfy their spiritual needs to slake their spiritual thirst it's not many weeks ago we were thinking at the prayer meeting on something similar to this like as the deer pants for the water brooks so my soul pants for you

[11 : 41] O God my soul thirsts for God for the living God we sing it in Psalm 63 at the beginning there Lordy my God I'll early seek my soul that thirst for thee my flesh longs in a dry parched land wherein no waters be there is that felt need of a slaking of our spiritual thirst by the Lord himself I remember years ago when it is years ago when I was in school our music teacher was always finding interesting songs and poems put to song and one comes to mind here that the heathen poet had the thirst that from the soul doth rise doth ask a drink divine and might I off Job's nectar sip

I would not ask for wine the emphasis in it is that the longing soul is thirsting for God albeit the heathen poet was on the false gods but you see the point man longs in his heart to have his spiritual needs met he is a spiritual being man has eternity and the eternal in his heart and he can't get away from that he can try as much as he likes and one would dare to say that the most sophisticated atheist who tries all the harder to disprove God is simply proving that he's got a spiritual side to his being and he's suppressing the risings of his need man has eternity and the eternal in his heart that ever before him no matter how much he tries to suppress it or turns to

idolatry or falsehood or immorality or the love of pleasure in all its forms man has that basic yearning in his soul his soul longs to be satisfied and

God has put that longing there God has put the longing in his heart whatever he says about it he may deny it he may deny it furiously it may be the beggar on the streets of Calcutta or now Great Britain or the billionaire in his super palace but from the beggar to the billionaire he may deny that he has spiritual needs but they keep rising up within him and he yearning and to all who will admit their thirsting their longing Jesus says if anyone thirst let him come to me and drink and that brings us to the second thing the remedy for this thirst

Jesus is saying in effect if you feel thirsty in your soul then come to me and the problem will be solved come to me and drink and you can see from the verses that to come to Jesus is verse 38 to believe in him to receive him by faith it's interesting that in the chapter before this John 6 Jesus declared himself to the Jews as the bread of life but he also says that whosoever believes in him will never ever thirst and so to believe in Christ is vital it's acknowledging that we thirst for him it's acknowledging that we have a longing in our soul that we need satisfied and Jesus is the remedy for that thirst and he says if you are thirsting like that then believe in me come to me and believe in me and the problem will be dealt with he shall never thirst now

I think it's important for us at this point to remind ourselves that Jesus asks us to do this it's no small matter to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ it's no simple matter I remember once reading somewhere that we are called upon by Jesus simply to believe but believing on him is no simple thing and I like that I remember a story from years ago about actually it was an FP minister Robert Sinclair and he was he was actually talking to a Chinese girl a student and she had been told to simply believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and she would be saved she would know eternal life and it was as simple as that and he said in typical

[17:28] FP minister style ah but he said my dear there's a lot more to believing than simply believing in other words we need to know what we believe we need to know what we believe if you think about it when you when you you get an invitation to to open a new bank account you need to know what you're doing don't you you need to know the terms and conditions and if you're wise you read the terms and conditions if you're not so wise you don't and then you're caught out later on you're stunned for something you should have read about it's important to know what we believe even in opening a bank account if we're being invited to some great event we need to know about it we believe yes I believe I'll accept that invitation but we need to know what we're actually getting into

I remember once years ago talking to someone who wanted to join a particular group and what was being asked for was just just come in and then we'll tell you what it's about that's a precarious way of doing a thing you need to know what you're getting into and so believing on the Lord Jesus Christ is about knowing what we believe we believe in him but we believe things about him that are vital we acknowledge him as the divine redeemer as the one who came from the realms of glory who became man for us he is divine and human in one and the same person he is the savior we learn about what it means he is the savior what does he save us from we were talking just before we come in about man as a sinner fallen the story of Adam and Eve and their fall into disobedience and sin is no small thing it takes us back to the beginning of human history but it tells us why we are wrong from the start we inherit from our first parents that capacity to choose the wrong rather than the right to go astray rather than easily follow the lord to disbelieve rather than to believe and those of us who are honest with ourselves some of us have come a hard road to the savior to believe in him because we disobeyed and we rebelled we resisted the truth we were taught and we discovered by God's goodness and grace what it was really to believe on him and to see him as the mighty to save as the one who can satisfy our souls because he alone is capable of doing that all that is predicated of God can be predicated of the lord Jesus Christ he is the eternal son of God who became man to save us if we'll have him Paul goes as far as to say no one calls Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit and he means that when we believe in Jesus when we come to him when we trust him as our savior we're trusting him as the eternal who became man for our salvation and there's no negotiation on that there is no other and you see in in him and from him we draw this spiritual water as it were it's a symbol of the Holy Spirit as we shall see you remember how the prophet Isaiah says looking forward to Messiah's day Isaiah 12 that little chapter therefore he says with joy in that day therefore with joy you shall draw waters from the wells of salvation and it's a clear reference to Jesus and it was to the woman at the well of Samaria who had come when nobody else

was there to draw water it was to her jesus said at jacob's well everyone who drinks from this well will thirst again but everyone who comes to me and drinks will never thirst again but will have in them the water of life and you see we're to identify with these sayings we're to experience them in ourselves we're to know that he is the remedy for our thirst that's why little songs that we've picked up on the way are precious to us I heard the voice of jesus say come into me and drink and we we we came to him I came to jesus and I drank of that life-giving stream my thirst was quenched my soul revived and now I live in him and we've also come to know this curious thing that that although at one level we never thirst again at another level we thirst having drank of that spiritual fountain that is in jesus we long for more he he quenches our thirst and yet he makes us thirst yet again we turn and filled to him again and that is the experience that we're to come to know and know again and again he who believes in me is he who comes to me and drinks and the last thing therefore we want to consider is the result of drinking at fountain jesus the result of drinking at fountain jesus verses 38 and 39 he who believes in me as the scripture has said out of his heart will flow rivers of living water 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 let's look at the first bit of it and as far as we can see jesus is saying in effect those who believe receive the holy spirit in his power there is a great inflow of new spiritual life and power the holy spirit comes in that way there is an interesting reference in isaiah 44 and verse 7 i will pour water on him who is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground i will i will pour out my spirit on you and upon your children and the explanation that john gives here of what this is about is about the holy spirit coming he spoke verse 39 jesus spoke concerning the spirit whom those believing in him would receive now it's important to notice what is being said here and what's not being said and we'll take the negative first john is not saying here that that believers in the lord jesus christ never received the holy spirit until after jesus returned to heaven some people think that and it completely misses the mark as to what's being said they say that the holy spirit the ruach hadronai never came until after pentecost until after jesus went into heaven you can't study the hebrew bible and believe that you can't really although it happens i remember once giving an address on the work of the holy spirit in the old testament and there was a jewish believing lady in the company there were a few but this one in particular and i i tried to honestly and thoroughly and clearly open up the references where the spirit of god worked in the old testament and how he worked in believers and how he worked in people who were officially given jobs to do who were not believers and when i finished we were having a cup of tea and i knew this lady and i knew her background she's from south africa and she said at the end of course she said i don't believe that the holy spirit was given until pentecost and there were one or two there with us and they were agog that she could still think that but she had simply closed her mind you can't honestly look at the old testament data on the spirit of god on the spirit of god at work in people not just the great people but the people of god and say he was not given therefore when we look at what john says here for the holy spirit was not yet given because jesus was not yet glorified we have to really understand what he is not saying and what he is saying and he is not saying that the holy spirit didn't work in the old testament ages and in the old testament believers he is not saying that at all jesus taught the rabbi that what he lacked was the ministry of the holy spirit rabbi nicodemus except a man is born from above he cannot experience the kingdom of god and if there is one thing i would urge upon you if you just keep feeling that you are not there yet then maybe that very problem is what nicodemus had you lack the power of the spirit of god in your life except a man is born from above by the spirit of god he cannot experience it he can come pretty close but he can't experience the power of the kingdom of heaven in his life and the disciples and the believers who were waiting for and longing for the coming of messiah it was through the spirit that they longed and hoped therefore what we have to say when we ask well what is john saying here the holy spirit was not yet given because jesus was not yet glorified we have to just simply recognize that there was a yet to be side of the ministry of the spirit there was a ministry there was a good ministry but there was a yet to be side a more exciting side to his ministry that only came beyond the death and the rising again of jesus and his going back up into heaven what we call his glorification you remember those of us who were at the prayer meeting on first evening you remember when we were thinking about jesus teaching on the secret things and the revealed things it was in the upper room in jerusalem and he said you have to wait here until the promised spirit comes in other words they were to wait for that pentecostal outpouring that great outpouring of the spirit to equip them and to instruct them in the things of jesus in a new way in a deeper way in a fuller way and that was something that was not

only given to believing jews but as would soon become apparent to gentiles as well and the result of this says jesus that believers in me experiencing the power of the spirit in their lives will be a blessing to other people look what he says verse 38 out of his heart will flow rivers of living water in other words as surely as there is an inflow to our hearts of the spirit of god when we believe in the lord jesus christ there will be that outflow to others the bible says he who is watered that is from heaven waters others what we receive we receive not to hoard but to give out we are to be a blessing to others the unspeakable gift of christ's spirit will constrain us as believers to live christ centred lives and we'll want others to know we'll want others to come with us we tease a little about our visiting student that he's got a great way of bringing others along but it's true and it keeps before us the reminder of what we should be like we want others to come with us we want others to listen to the message of jesus that they may come into its power that they may be transformed by it that they in turn might give out to others see what jesus says he who believes in me this is the result my friends of drinking at fountain jesus he who believes in me as the scripture said out of his heart will flow rivers of living waters this he spoke concerning the spirit whom those believing would receive and beyond the pentecostal outpouring the spirit is poured forth and that holy spirit as surely as he comes into our lives as we believe on the lord jesus christ he comes in he flows in as it were in order that the blessing may flow out to other people too there's a wee saying

[34 : 31] in john benyon's writings there was a man the world thought quite mad the more he gave away the more he had and it's interesting and we were reading in acts four deliberately barnabas is called the son of encouragement barnabas son of encouragement it's interesting that barnabas was a wealthy levite from cyprus and he sold land and he laid the proceeds at the apostles feet there was an indication here of that whole attitude of giving out as surely as the lord had given that inflow of the spirit divine and it's important therefore I think as we think about what drinking of christ means and what what becoming partakers of god's spirit means is that as surely as there is an inflow there must be an outflow look what he says out of his heart will flow rivers of living water and may that be true of us may we see it increasingly that as the spirit works in us as we have a spirit filled life we want to be a channel of spiritual blessing to other people to family and friends and to the world around us we are at our best when we function in this way let the world think we're quite mad

I'm sure I told you that it was said of dr. kennedy john kennedy of dingwall they thought he was a bit mad he gave away so much well I leave it with you to judge we are at our best when we function in this way and the more we give out of our spiritual riches too the more we experience the inflow of the divine spirit's ministry to ourselves let's make it therefore our business to seek more of this in our lives by listening to and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ on that last day the great Hosanna day of the feast of tabernacles Jesus stood and cried out if anyone thirsts let him come to me and drink he who believes in me as the scripture has said out of his heart will flow rivers of living water this he spoke concerning the spirit whom those believing in him would receive amen hence your healing and sharing their heart in amen