

Teaching Points

Tonight we're going to examine a profound proclamation from the mouth of Christ as well as a varied response from those who heard Him.

First, the proclamation: ***"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."*** (John 7:37b-38)

These words call back to what we read back in chapter 4 when Jesus conversed with the Samaritan woman at the well. Remember, Jesus offered her living water that would forever quench her thirst. Here in chapter 7 we have Jesus offering this same living water to those in attendance at the feast. Notice 3 things:

1. This living water is a metaphor for the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

It's incredible that God put on flesh and walked among us in the person of the Son. It's equally incredible that God comes to live inside His people in the person of the Holy Spirit.

Think about the implications of this metaphor. Rivers of water imply an abundance. This points to the fullness of the Holy Spirit that believers experience. Also, notice how the water is said to be "living" water. This points to the active "flow" of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life. In other words, the Holy Spirit doesn't come to sleep in our hearts - He comes to fill us and animate us to do the will of God!

2. This offer is given to those who thirst, come, and believe.

Who will receive this wonderful gift of living water? Jesus says the only people who will experience this blessing are those who thirst and come to Him for drink. He's referring to spiritual thirst and spiritual drink. Those who long for God and His grace will be satisfied with this gift.

Furthermore, Jesus says that only those who believe in Him will receive the Holy Spirit. Being filled with the Holy Spirit is inseparably connected with belief in Jesus. Unbelievers cannot understand the things of the Spirit nor can they experience the life giving power of the Holy Spirit (John 14:17, 1 Corinthians 2:14).

Discussion Question: If unbelievers cannot understand the things of the Spirit nor experience His power, then how can anyone be filled with the Spirit? In other words, how can an unbeliever thirst, come, and believe?

Thoughts: *The answer is God's grace makes this happen! Dead sinners cannot create a longing for God in their own hearts. Only God can create faith in a person. So, part of our salvation is the gift of thirsting for God, coming to Christ,*

and believing in Jesus for salvation. Never forget, faith itself is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8). From start to finish, salvation is a work of sovereign grace.

3. As wonderful as these blessings are, they were not available at the time Jesus spoke about them.

Verse 39 contains an important reflection on Christ's offer. The indwelling of the Spirit that Jesus spoke about was something that would not occur until Pentecost (Acts 2). Let us not forget how blessed we are to live in these days of the New Covenant. God's Spirit lives in us and makes us His own temple!

Discussion Question: Why did Jesus have to be glorified before the Spirit would be given?

Thoughts: *Think about the Holy Spirit's role in man's salvation. He does many things - regeneration, illumination, and preservation - just to name a few. One of His primary functions is to point men to the finished work of Jesus on the cross. Many people rightly describe the work of the Spirit as the "spotlight" that points to the cross and resurrection of Jesus. Simply put, the crucifixion and resurrection needed to occur before the Spirit could fulfill this aspect of His work. Otherwise, there would be no finished work for Him to point men to.*

After this amazing promise from Jesus, the crowd was divided in their response.

1. Some were willing to identify Christ as the Messiah.

Some people spoke rightly concerning Jesus. They said: ***"Truly this is the Prophet."*** or ***"This is the Christ."***

2. Some were not willing to accept His claims.

Those who doubted expressed their hesitancy with questions like the one found in verses 41-42, ***"Will the Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?"***

As always, people had a divided reaction to Christ's claims. This is still true today! Some will hear and believe, while others will hear and refuse to believe. The division is never merely intellectual or social. The Bible says it always comes down to man's heart. Believers are those whose hearts have been softened by God (Ezekiel 36:26). It's absolutely essential for the Spirit to take away the heart of stone - otherwise we would never believe Christ's words.

Discussion Question: How would you answer the skeptics question in verse 41-42?

Thoughts: *Jesus was in fact born in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:1-6, Luke 2:4-7). He was also a direct descendant of King David (Matthew 1:1-17, Luke 3:23-38). Either these doubters were ignorant of the circumstances of Christ's birth or they were intentionally misrepresenting the facts. We can't know their hearts, but we can easily answer their question with the truth about Christ's life.*

Prayer Focus

Praise God for the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit! Also, thank Him for the power we have to walk in truth because of His Spirit.

Pray for those who are living in unbelief, that God will arouse thirst in their hearts, draw them to Himself through Christ, and create faith in them. Never underestimate the power of God's Spirit nor the reach of His grace.