

### Jesus Teaches about the Holy Spirit

#### John 7:37-39

John 7:37-39 - *“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. <sup>38</sup> He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” <sup>39</sup> 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.”*

#### Background Notes

The Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem was the setting for these verses. The background for this feast is in Leviticus 23:33-36: *“Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the LORD. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it. For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it.’”*

The Feast of Tabernacles commemorated the 40 years of God led and cared for the Israelites as they traveled through the wilderness to the Promised Land. This festival lasted for seven days, a whole week, and then on the eighth day there was a concluding solemn assembly. These verses took place on the last day of the feast.

Jewish sources tell us that for the seven consecutive days of the Feast, the priest went down to the Pool of Siloam. He filled a golden pitcher with water, carried it up to the Temple area and poured it out by the altar of burnt offering. This was a reminder of the way God miraculously provided water for the children of Israel in the wilderness.

On the eighth day he did not bring water from the pool to the Temple, because the eighth day represented Israel entering the Promised Land, when God no longer had to provide water as He had in the wilderness. This day represented a new beginning.

In addition, the eighth day looked forward to the future blessing when the Messiah would come.

On the eighth day the Lord stood up in the Temple area and boldly 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” (v37-38).*

When the Lord said, *“As the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water,”* He probably was not thinking of any one Scripture in particular. He was covering the general tenor of Old Testament Scriptures in reference to life-giving water. Let me read a few of these Scriptures from the prophecy of Isaiah:

*“The poor and needy seek water, but there is none, their tongues fail for thirst. I, the LORD, will hear them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open rivers in desolate heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water” (Isaiah 41:17-18).*

*“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” (Isaiah 44:3).*

*“The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones. You shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail” (Isaiah 58:11).*

The Lord probably had these (and many other) Old Testament Scriptures in mind when He said, *“As the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”* Our doctrinal points are about the Holy Spirit.

## **Doctrinal/Teaching Points**

### **1. The Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost.**

*“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” (v39).*

What did John mean when he said that the Holy Spirit was “not yet given”? He certainly didn’t mean that the Holy Spirit didn’t exist! The Holy Spirit is a Person of the Godhead, so the Holy Spirit is eternal. He has always been in existence.

And John certainly didn’t mean that the Holy Spirit had not yet been active in the lives of believers. The Holy Spirit was very active in Old Testament times, coming upon different individuals on various occasions. However, the Holy Spirit did not yet permanently indwell individual believers, and He did not yet indwell the Church. That is what John meant by *“the Holy Spirit was not yet given.”*

The Holy Spirit would not be given until the Lord was glorified - resurrected and ascended to Heaven. In John 16:7 the Lord Jesus said, *“Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.”* And John 7:39: *“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.”*

The Holy Spirit was given to the Church at Pentecost (Acts 2). Since the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit has indwelled the Church, which is the body of Christ, and the Holy Spirit has indwelled the individual believers that make up the Church. The Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost.

### **2. The Holy Spirit indwells every believer.**

The Lord Jesus said, *“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.”*

1 Corinthians 6:19 says, “*Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?*”

And Ephesians 1:13 tell us, “*In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.*”

The Holy Spirit **indwells** every believer. But every believer may not be **filled** with the Spirit. Believers are filled with the Spirit as they **walk** after and with the Spirit. But the Holy Spirit indwells **every** believer.

### 3. The Holy Spirit brings continuous blessing.

“Continuous blessing” is what the phrase “*rivers of living water*” is all about. Not a pond of living water, not a small pool of living water, but continuous fresh, clear, rivers of blessing overflowing from our lives to others! **Rivers** of living water!

Because the Holy Spirit is connected with the new divine life of a believer, the Holy Spirit can provide continuous blessing. And because of the Holy Spirit, abundant blessing is available not only to every believer, but to others surrounding the believer. “*Out of [the believer’s] innermost being will flow rivers of living water.*”

At this point you might be thinking, “But I’m a Christian, and I haven’t experienced these continuous blessings - and I don’t think anyone around me has experienced any blessing because of me.” If that’s the case, let me mention two things:

#### - You can stop the flow!

If you are a Christian, the Holy Spirit lives in you. The source of the rivers of living waters is there - but you can **stop the flow**. Galatians 5 indicates that it’s possible to “*live by the Spirit,*” but it is also possible to live to “*gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*” If you are allowing the desires of your sinful nature to govern your life, the rivers of living water will be blocked. Sin will clog the flow of living water. The blessings of the Spirit will not be able to flow out of your innermost being.

#### - You can’t overflow unless you’re filled with the Spirit.

By “filled with the Spirit,” I don’t mean a special spiritual experience that is subsequent to salvation. No. To be “filled with the Spirit” means to be submissive to the Holy Spirit in every area of your life, so the Holy Spirit is able to fill every area of your life with His presence.

This submission to the Spirit should be **continuous** in the believer’s life. Ephesians 5:18 is not a suggestion - it’s a command! We are to be **continually** filled with the Spirit. But let’s face it - we don’t allow the Holy Spirit to continually be present in every area of our lives. We must admit that we don’t continually submit to the Holy Spirit in **every area** of our lives. If we are not filled with the Holy Spirit, the river of living water cannot overflow from our lives and flow out to others as blessing. **We must be filled with the Holy Spirit before we can overflow!**

The blessings of the rivers of living water are available for every Christian. The Holy Spirit brings continuous blessing.

## Practical Applications

### 1. Have you done the one thing that you must do to become a Christian?

What is the one thing you must do to become a Christian? It's not going to church, and it's not doing the best you can, and it's not giving money to the poor, etc., etc. All of those things are good, but they don't make you a Christian, and they won't get you into Heaven.

The one thing that you must do to become a Christian is found in verse 37: *"Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.'"* You must come to Jesus Christ and "drink"! He didn't say give to the poor, or come to the church, or take the sacraments, or come to something else. No! Jesus said, **"Come to Me"!**

And notice, that's not all He said - He said come to Me **and drink!** What does that mean? It means to trust in Jesus Christ as your only means of salvation from your sin. Suppose you were dying of thirst, and you were offered water. If you didn't drink the water, you would die. The one thing you must do to live physically is to drink that water. And the one thing that you must do to live spiritually is **come to Jesus Christ and drink!**

Are you spiritually thirsty? To quench your spiritual thirst, you must come to Jesus Christ and drink. Others can't drink for you. You must drink for yourself! Have you done the one thing that you must do to become a Christian?

### 2. Let's look for opportunities to practice situational evangelism.

What is "situational" evangelism? Well, you know what "relationship" evangelism is, right? You take the time to build a relationship with someone, and thus you "earn the right to be heard." Then you share Christ with them. In situational evangelism you take advantage of the **situation** you're in to witness for Christ.

In this passage, the Lord was doing situational evangelism. He used the context or situation of the carrying of water from the Pool of Siloam to the altar in the Temple area. The Lord used that situation to talk about water – spiritual thirst, and rivers of living water.

The Lord practiced "situational" evangelism when He met with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well in John 4. In that situation He also used to the topic of water – water from a well - to teach about living water.

I once was on a flight where the take-off was particularly rough. As the plane was bucking down the runway, the woman sitting next to me turned to me and said, "I always get so nervous when these planes take off!" Well, I realized that this might be an opportunity to witness so I prayed a short prayer for direction, and then I said something like this to her: "You know, it really depends on whether I'm putting my ultimate trust in the plane or not." I just left the statement there. Once the plane was airborne and had leveled off, the woman turned to me and said, "By the way, what did you mean by that statement?" I had the opportunity to go from there and share Christ with her! That was "situational evangelism."

Let's look for opportunities to practice situational evangelism!