

John 7:37-52

II. Jesus Reveals Himself to the World (1:19-12:50)

L. The Fourth Discourse – The Bread of Life (6:22-71)

M. Trouble at Tabernacles, Part One (7:1-36)

Trouble at Tabernacles, Part Two (7:37-52)

We pick up in v. 37 where we left off last week: Jesus is in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, and He is once again at odds with the Pharisees. At the beginning of John 7, Jesus held off on going up to Jerusalem right away. In v. 14, they were in the middle of the feast. Now, in v. 37, it is *the last day, that great day of the feast* (cf. Lev 23:36). Jesus begins with a statement reminiscent of what we read in John 4, speaking of living water.¹

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.

Yet, John goes on to immediately clarify that Jesus said this *concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive* (v. 39). Here, the Holy Spirit's ministry is seen as a cleansing, purifying, refreshing *river of living water*. This helps shed some light on Jesus' remarks to Nicodemus in John 3:5, that *one must be born of water and the Spirit*. The Holy Spirit's work is essential in the life of one who would believe, and its His ministry that would set apart the age of the Church to come from the age of Israel that they were now in.

John goes on to mention, however, that the Holy Spirit isn't yet active in that way. Writing decades after these events happened, John looks back and says that *the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified* (v. 39). It was the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 in which the Holy Spirit was given. The Feast of Pentecost was intended to help the Israelites remember the giving of the Mosaic Law upon their exodus out of Egypt, which occurred fifty days after the tenth plague of Passover. Fifty days after Jesus' death, which occurred on Passover, God would once again institute something new and different among His people. This time, instead of giving the Mosaic Law to the Israelites, He now gave His Holy Spirit to the Church. This is what Jesus had in mind when He spoke concerning the Spirit.

With that teaching, the crowd once again was stirred up. While Jesus evidently left for the Mount of Olives, some wondered if He was *the Prophet* (cf. Deut 18:15); others, *the Christ*. A third group questioned Him altogether, seeing that Jesus came *out of Galilee*, and not *from the town of Bethlehem*, where Scripture had told them He would (cf. Micah 5:2). Yet, unbeknownst to them, Jesus was born in Bethlehem (cf. Luke 2:3-7; 15). He fulfilled that prophecy!

All of this division caused further back-and-forth. While *some of them wanted to take them, no one laid hands on Him* (v. 44). The Pharisees asked the officers why they didn't detain Him. The officers, shrug their shoulders and lift up their hands, *No man ever spoke like this Man* (v. 46)! "What do you want us to do about it? This isn't your run-of-the-mill Man! It's new territory!"

¹It seems there is some connection between the Feast of Tabernacles and rain (cf. Zech 14:16-19). Traditionally, the priests would pour water out on the first seven days of the Feast, symbolizing the adequate rainfall necessary for crops to grow. Such water would not be poured out on the eighth day. On this particular eighth day, however, Jesus is going to talk about pouring out some water of His own.

The Pharisees responded, questioning whether or not the officers have now been duped. After all, have they seen any of the Pharisees fall in line behind Jesus? They are the ones that (supposedly) know the Law. They are the religious leaders! If the Pharisees weren't identifying Jesus as the Messiah, neither should the masses! But, in reality, it shows that the truth of Jesus' claims were believed even by those who weren't of the religious class, and those claims should continue to be believed by everyone today! Nevertheless, Nicodemus – the same Nicodemus of John 3 – asks the Pharisees in v. 51:

Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?

Nicodemus has been present. He's been around. He's actually talked with Jesus and asked questions of Him in an inquisitive way. Trying to interject in a wise way, he asks his fellow Pharisees whether or not they've actually taken the time to know who Jesus is and what He teaches, or whether or not they've already issued a summary judgment on His person and work. But they stick with their assessment that Jesus is from Galilee and, therefore, can't be the Messiah.