

Text: John 7:37-52

Title: "Believe because Jesus promised the Holy Spirit"

Time: 11/3/2024 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: In recent days one of the candidates asking to become our President next Tuesday heard some in her crowd cry out, "Jesus is Lord." In response, she told these audience members that they were at the wrong rally. Sadly, she was right about that.

Crying out is something that our Lord does in our passage on the great last day of the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem (v. 37). Some felt He was at the wrong Feast. Jesus both *stood and cried out*, and the grammar tells us that it was the standing and observing all that was going on that resulted in the crying out. Edersheim describes the scene well:

"It was on that day, after the priest had returned from Siloam with his golden pitcher, and for the last time poured its contents to the base of the altar; after the 'Hallel' had been sung to the sound of the flute, the people responding and worshipping as the priests three times drew the threefold blasts from their silver trumpets—just when the interest of the people had been raised to its highest pitch, that, from amidst the mass of worshippers, who were waving towards the altar quite a forest of leafy branches as the last words of Ps. 118 were chanted—a voice was raised which resounded through the Temple, startled the multitude, and carried fear and hatred to the hearts of their leaders" (*The Temple: Its Ministry and Services*, 222-223).

Jesus interprets this water ceremony in His cry. One commentator suggested that this part of the tradition may have been traceable to the act of Samuel at the great Ebenezer

revival of Israel in 1 Sam. 7:6, "And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the Lord. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh." This repentant pouring of water happened just prior to God's deliverance from the Philistines.

We do not really know the origin of the water ceremony at the Feast of Tabernacles, but we do know what its symbolism had come to mean to the Jews of Jesus's day: "In Messianic times the Nabhi, [the] 'prophet,' . . . of the Divine, should not be one or another select individual, but that He would pour out on all His handmaidens and servants of His Holy Spirit, and thus the moral wilderness of this world be changed into a fruitful garden" (Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 3.4.161).

Perhaps thinking of the great celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles and Ezra's prayer of confession in Nehemiah 8-9, the Apostle John brings together the themes of manna, water, and the gift of the Holy Spirit as he concludes chapters 6 and 7 of his Gospel. Neh. 9:20, "Thou gavest also thy good Spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst." John wants us to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life in His name, because Jesus is this manna and because He is the One who promises this water, which is the Holy Spirit. We must believe because Jesus promised the Holy Spirit this way. We will see two simple things about this promise from our passage.

I. Jesus's promised New Testament revelation (vv. 37-39).

Illustration: Water is a great blessing with many uses in our lives. We drink it when we are thirsty. We wash in it when

we are dirty. We can use it to generate electricity and to produce hydraulic power. Whether ice, steam, or liquid, the many different uses of water are a great blessing to us.

Application: The Holy Spirit can do many things. John tells us that Jesus used water to illustrate the blessing of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives in two different ways. The first way you may remember from Jesus's discussion with the woman at the well of Sychar in John 4. There Jesus told the Samaritan woman of a water that, once tasted, would allow her to never thirst again: "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

You may remember the happy outcome that, not only this woman, but many others in her village took this drink, received eternal life, and never thirsted again. This is the Holy Spirit's power of regeneration, His work of giving new eternal life to a formally spiritually dead sinner. It is a blessed work of salvation available to every thirsty sinner who has ever lived, to those who lived prior to Christ, during His life, or after Him like us. It can be yours this morning if you believe that Jesus is your Savior from your sin.

In our passage this morning, Jesus offers the crowded temple courtyard this blessing (v. 37), but then He also offers them a different work of the Spirit (v. 38). John explains that this second work of the Spirit had not yet happened, because Jesus was not yet glorified (v. 39).

As John writes he can remember back to the day when Jesus was glorified. In John's Gospel, Jesus's glorification begins by His being lifted up on the cross to die for our sins, continues in His glorious bodily resurrection from the

tomb three days later, and then finishes with His ascension to the right hand of the Father. This is how the Father answered Jesus's prayer of John 17:5, "And now, O Father, glorify thou Me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

John could also remember that, after Jesus was glorified this way, he and his 119 fellow-disciples experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. They were given new revelatory sign gifts in fulfillment of this second promise about the Holy Spirit in John 7. This was a new work of the same water in fulfillment of Old Testament Scriptures like Joel 2, where God promised to pour out His Spirit on all flesh. On the Day of Pentecost, when that outpouring happened, Peter quotes Joel 2 and tells Jerusalem, "this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16).

With this promise fulfilled, God's people would now have inerrant, verbally inspired, New Testament truth in addition to their Old Testaments. It would tell them of the significance of the person and work of Jesus Christ, and it would instruct His people about His plans for a new ministry to the nations through His local churches. This new truth came piecemeal at first, through the revelatory gifts of various believers, and then it was perfected in the authorship of New Testament Scriptures, after the completion of which the partial revelations passed away (1 Cor. 13:10).

Since Pentecost, this water of New Testament truth has flowed out of the belly of those first century believers to all flesh, including to you and me. It came from their belly, their core, their gut, not from the imagination of their minds. It was received by them from the Holy Spirit, not invented by them, and it has flowed through them to us, so that it would change our belly, our core, our gut, and so

that we might pass it on to others, unchanged and uncorrupted by the imagination of our minds.

Our gut passes it along so that men and women would believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life in His name. They must believe because Jesus is the One who promised this new work of the Holy Spirit, the gift of New Testament revelation.

Does it flow through us? Has it changed our belly, our core being? Are we studying it that we might pass it on? Or do we still have the belly of an enemy of Christ? (Phil. 3:18-19).

II. The promise was true, but disbelieved (vv. 40-52).

Application: After Jesus's crying out, those who heard him were shell-shocked. They do not know how to respond for one simple reason: "Never man spake like this man" (v. 46).

Illustration: C. S. Lewis spoke about the shock of Jesus Christ in one of his BBC wartime broadcasts he was invited to give between 1942 and 1944. This one he titled, "The Shocking Alternative." Here is how he describes the shock of Jesus Christ: "Then comes the real shock. Among these Jews there suddenly turns up a man who goes about talking as if He was God. He claims to forgive sins. He says He has always existed. He says He is coming to judge the world at the end of time. . .

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and says the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic – on a level with the man who says he is a

poached egg – or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to” (*Mere Christianity*, 51-52).

Application: After Jesus cries out, a division occurs among the people (v. 43). Some still said what C. S. Lewis warned we must not say (vv. 40-43). None of these are falling at Jesus’s feet and confessing Him to be their Lord and God, though “never man spake like this man.” Will we? The Sanhedrin wanted Him dead (vv. 44-49). Although the Sanhedrin had a more consistent position (as Lewis points out), theirs was the greatest error possible. Will it be ours?

These leaders justify their hatred for Christ with their sense of superiority as Judean Jews over Galileans (v. 52). They insult their colleague Nicodemus by asking him if he was Galilean. Their attitude was similar to our current President’s reference to the supporters of his political opponent as “garbage.” The Sanhedrin thought the Galileans were “garbage,” because they were unlearned in the law (v. 49).

Edersheim: “So far did [Pharisaical contempt for the Galileans] go, that it would refuse, not only all family connection and friendly intercourse, but even the bread of charity, to the unlettered; nay, that, in theory at least, it would have regarded their murder as no sin, and even cut them off from the hope of the Resurrection” (3.4.162). This prideful contempt for their fellow countrymen caused these elites to fail to remember that Jonah and Nahum were from Galilee (Carson, 332). Matthew’s Gospel answers this falsehood

directly with his quotation of Isaiah 9 in Matthew 4 (vv. 12-17). On both sides of this divide, Jesus's true promise to send the Holy Spirit was disbelieved.

Conclusion: Caught in the middle of another divide, we find Nicodemus (vv. 50-52). John says two things about him: (1) he had come to Jesus by night in chapter 3, and (2) he was one of them (the Sanhedrin, v. 50). We do not find him fallen down at Christ's feet calling Him Lord and God, but we do find him trying to find some middle ground between the hatred of the Sanhedrin and worshipping Christ.

He asks about the lawful way to condemn a man (v. 51). Perhaps he thought of passages like Deut. 1:16, "And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him." Nicodemus has a point, but the Council rebuffs his weak attempt to introduce some fairness into the proceedings. Not wanting to be thought of as an unlearned Galilean, Nicodemus backs off, preserving his seat on the Sanhedrin.

Edersheim laments Nicodemus's tepid defense of Christ: "Once more Nicodemus was left alone, as every one [*sic.*] who has dared and yet not dared for Christ is after all such bootless compromises; alone – with sore heart, stricken conscience, and a great longing" (3.4.163).

Have you ever come away from a failed attempt to witness or stand for Christ with a sore heart, stricken conscience, and a great longing that you could have a do-over? I have been in that compromised position before. Perhaps you have too. Family members, friends, fellow students, teachers, fellow employees, and customers can boldly show their hateful unbelief and indifference against Christ, choosing to

ignore the Holy Spirit's New Testament revelation and to disbelieve Jesus's true promise. Our response must be bold, not fearful and tepid. Nicodemus shows us that a response like his is unnoticeably better than the opposition of those who wanted to kill the Lord. Nicodemus should have fallen at Jesus's feet confessing Him as Lord and God. Instead, he sat back down in silence with the Council.

C.S. Lewis: "You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

John intended: "Believe that Jesus is Lord and God, because He promised the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit came."

"A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction—the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*