

**Personal Evangelism in Biblical Perspective:
iShare—Encounters with Jesus in John's Gospel –
Another Encounter in the Temple, II**

John 7:37-52

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July 22, 2012 – Morning Sermon

This is our third and final study of the temple encounter. I'm going to start by reading from John 7. Hear the Word of the Lord. It's the truth. John 7:37-39 says

[37] On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. [38] Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" (Then John inspired by the Holy Spirit put in verse 39.) [39] Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

I'd like to give you a very brief review. We have been looking at encounters of Jesus and have been learning how to share the Gospel through this series of iShare. We have seen these encounters all through the Gospel of John and we've kind of parked here which is the second time Jesus has come to the temple that is recorded by John. The first time was at the Passover when He cleansed it and now we're at the second time. In this text we are at the temple during the Feast of Booths or the Feast of Tabernacles and it's the last day which is called the great day.

We started this before the feast began when His brothers, motivated by unbelief, came to Him and said "Instead of shrouding Your glory, coming in humiliation, go exalt Yourself. Go where the people are and do Your miracles there." Their unbelief is rooted in self exaltation and relentless pursuit of praise on themselves and they cast it upon Jesus in their advice. We are told that their advice was motivated by their unbelief. Jesus does go up to this feast and arrives in the middle of this feast. When He gets there He doesn't do miracles but He begins to teach and all kinds of things are happening.

In the middle of the feast while He is teaching there is a mixed report out there. It said that some believed, some were trying to kill Him, and some were saying "He claims to be teaching like the Christ and if He's not the Christ how come our officials haven't come and arrested Him and put Him in prison. Maybe they think He is the Christ." Then others said "He can't be the Christ because He came from Galilee and when the Messiah comes we won't know where He comes from." Then there was another group that said "Look at all the miracles He has done. How can a Messiah do more than what He's already done? He must be the Messiah." So there is this confusion. When the Jewish people (the ruling and political leaders) heard they took an arrest warrant out and they sent the police to go arrest Him.

When they arrived Jesus said "Do you want to know where I come from? I come from heaven. I know God and He has sent Me. I know Him. I've come from Him and He has sent Me." Then as they are trying to arrest Him, He kind of has a double meaning when He says this; "You seek Me but you won't find Me and where I am, you can't come." In other words, He is telling them His hour hasn't come and you won't be bringing it to an end here. You may want to kill Me now but My hour has not yet come. He is even going beyond that when He says "I have descended and I will only be with you a short time. Then I will ascend and when I ascend if you die in your sins..."

Before I say this remember what Jesus said to all of us. He said "If you seek Me you will find Me and I go to prepare a place for you so that where I am there you may be also." Now He turns to them and says "When I go if you die in your sin you will seek Me and you will not find Me." There is no grace on the other side of death. It is appointed unto men once to die and then judgment. On that day you will seek and you won't find Me and where I am you cannot come to Me. It is a fixed irrevocable judgment of God for all of eternity for those who have not come to Him.

Now as they have tried to arrest Him and in the midst of all of this chaos and confusion, they get to the last day of the feast. This is a climax here. The Feast of Booths had been commanded of the Lord, from the Lord through Moses in the Pentateuch. You will find this in Numbers 8 and Leviticus 23. It is designed as a seven day feast in the seventh month, beginning on the third day and it celebrates God's goodness and harvest, but it exists because of one event in the life of God's people and two occurrences in that event. The event was God liberating them from Egypt, the bondage of slavery and bringing them through the wilderness thus in the Feast of Booth (Tabernacles) you leave your house and you build for yourselves these little arbor tents. I can imagine how a kid may have been so excited to sleep outside their house in these lean-tos and perhaps mom and dad weren't all excited about it but that's what they did. So they were remembering that God has provided shelter to bring them through the wilderness.

Then there were two occurrences. One was feeding them. He fed them with manna, called the bread of heaven, in the wilderness. Back in John 6 Jesus said "I am the Bread of Heaven." The manna was pointing to Him. A second occurrence happened. They not only needed something to eat but they needed something to drink. In the wilderness there was Meribah. The rock gives forth an unending stream of water and they drink from it. So the Feast of Tabernacles (Booths) celebrated the nourishment of God's provision, anticipating the Bread of Heaven and the water from the rock. They would celebrate all week and they would get to the last day, the climax moment and priests would go to the pool of Siloam and with a grand processional they would march through the streets of Jerusalem. They arrive at the temple and come to the altar of burnt offering. There with golden pitchers they would pour the water out on the altar of burnt offering.

It is at that moment that Jesus speaks. It is at the moment that they pour the water, anticipating the water of life, the bread of heaven that Jesus comes. Notice what He does according to John 7:37. He does three things to bring the climax day to a climax event to a climax moment. One He stands. Rabbis when they taught didn't stand they sat. When Jesus did the Sermon on the Mount He sat down and thousands gathered around Him but He didn't this time. Secondly, He proclaimed loudly with His voice. So not only did He use His posture but His voice. It says He cried out which means He shouted. Then thirdly, He brought attention because of what He said united to the event. As they are pouring that water He said "If anyone is thirsty let him come to Me and from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water just as the Scriptures have said."

The moment has arrived – chaos, confusion, assassins, questions, curious, debates. Everything is going on around Him and He speaks to all of them at that moment, standing and shouting, "If anyone is thirsty let him come to Me and drink." Has He given this message before in our study of this series? He told this same thing to the woman at the well. He told her "If you drink of this water you'll never get thirsty again." What He whispered to her at the well He shouted at the temple. Now what is it that He is saying? Let's walk our way through this last day at the great feast. I want to give you five things that this simple sermon has. It's a short sermon with five points.

The first point is He gives a necessary condition which is if anyone is thirsty. You won't come and drink of Him unless you're thirsty.

The second point is He gives a universal invitation which is if anyone is thirsty let him personally come to Me and drink. This is personal. There is no group plan here. Anyone can come. Who are there? There are soldiers, priests, arresting policemen, etc. So if anyone is thirsty here is the invitation – Come to Me and drink.

The third point is an astounding promise that is when you drink of Me from your innermost being, not simply you'll bathe in a river or drink from a river, but from your heart will flow rivers, not trickles, not cups, but rivers of life.

Fourthly, He gives a pointed reminder. This is nothing new but it's all over the Old Testament. He said in the text "As the Scripture said..." It wasn't that He just came up with a new message. I am the fulfillment of the message that is through the Scriptures. I'm trying to reign in here because all of those Old Testament passages are so rich that talk about this. There is Ezekiel 47 where there is this temple and from that temple comes a trickle of water, where He is standing then making this statement. This trickle of water goes to the ankles then the knees then the waist and then you can't ford across it. It has fish of every kind and brings healing to everywhere it goes. It turns the wilderness into a garden and it even takes the Dead Sea and fills it with freshness like the Great Sea (the Mediterranean Sea). It changes everything everywhere it goes. It flows from the temple, becomes a river and everywhere it goes it changes everything.

Then there is Joel 2 where there was a prophecy in that day where the Spirit of God would be poured out. Then there is the text that is the occasion for it that talks about Meribah, the rock with the water in Exodus. Jesus is the rock and the water that flowed from the rock. This is so rich and we could on and on and on looking at Old Testament passage after Old Testament passage. I want to go on and on but I won't. I do want to look at three passages that are in one book that Jesus is referring to here at the temple at this moment. I want to look at this marvelous, prophetic book of Isaiah that is pointing to the Messiah with all of its riches and what Jesus is referring to when He said at the temple "This is what the Scriptures said." He is just telling them what the Scriptures said. "If anyone is thirsty let him come and drink and from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water."

So where are Jesus' Old Testament texts? Isaiah 12. The evidence is that when they poured the water from the pitchers at the pool of Siloam on the altar of the burnt offering Isaiah 12:3 is the verse the priest would quote. Isaiah 12:1-3 says

[1] You will say in that day: "I will give thanks to you, O LORD, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away, that you might comfort me. [2] "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation." [3] With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

It is the flowing of praise that will come from your heart because they drank from that well of salvation that wells up within them. You will draw water from the wells of salvation and in that day you will begin to give thanks and praise to God.

Isaiah 55 is another passage. Isaiah 55:1a says *[1a] "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! You*

don't have any money? Don't worry. It's here. The water is free. Do you know why? It's because it's already paid for at the cross. The water is free. It's refreshing, overflowing, satisfying and paid for. There is one other passage in Isaiah 58. Here is the effect from drinking from the water. What happens to those who drink? Isaiah 58:11 says [11] *And the LORD will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden* (bringing forth produce for the Lord), *like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail*. From your innermost being will flow rivers of living water. There are many passages that can multiply that text but I've just given you three.

Here is a fifth point from this text. This doesn't come from what Jesus said but the fifth thing from the text is an apostolic explanation. Let's look back in John. After Jesus says this John decides to expound, or explain more of this inspired by the Holy Spirit. John 7:39 says [39] *Now this he (Jesus) said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified*. What an intriguing statement. I'll try to give some clarity here. What happens after this? John 7:40-52 says

[40] When they heard these words, some of the people said, "This really is the Prophet." [41] Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Is the Christ to come from Galilee? [42] Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" [43] So there was a division among the people over him. (There is always a division over Him between those who believe and those who do not.) [44] Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him. [45] The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why did you not bring him?" [46] The officers answered, "No one ever spoke like this man!" [47] The Pharisees answered them, "Have you also been deceived? [48] Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him? [49] But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed." (One commentator said there couldn't have been anyone more arrogant than the Pharisees.) [50] Nicodemus (a Pharisee of the Sanhedrin), who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, [51] "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?" [52] They replied, "Are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee."

How about a place called Capernaum, the village of Nahum and they don't know what they think they know, even as they are arrogantly looking down on everyone else. By the way, Nicodemus is on his way. The woman at the well is converted in about fifteen minutes. Nicodemus is in process and now he steps up. I don't think he is yet converted but he steps up and there is a division over what Jesus spoke about here in the temple. Now what are the implications for us

who have been called to share the Gospel? I want to give you three of them and I want to do it by way of questions.

The first one is thirsty? Drinking? Are you thirsty? Are you drinking? The condition is if anyone thirsts, let Him come to Me and drink. Everybody is thirsty.

Everybody is drinking. The question is what, where and who? I know you are drinking because I know you are thirsty. I know I'm drinking because I know I'm thirsty. You are made in the image of God. God made you thirsty in your soul for Him but in sin and rebellion we go to the cesspools of life to drink instead of to Him. So instead of from our innermost being a river of life, from our innermost being flows death and despair when we assuage our thirst by drinking from the wrong place.

One of these days last week I stood in front of this beautiful panoramic view and I just stood there just drinking it in. We are made in the image of God and this is why I utterly hate atheistic darwinianism. You are not an animal. You have not grown up with a chance collision of molecular mutations. You have been made in the image of God. He made you physically and spiritually, two threads woven into one cloth. When He made you physically He made you thirsty for water to come through your mouth. Spiritually, He made you thirsty for God to come through your soul. Physically I get thirsty. I need water and the only way I can take it in is through my mouth. That is the way God made me. God also made me in His image spiritually. I have a soul that thirsts for God. I was made spiritually thirsty and the way that I drink of God is in my soul.

There are multiple texts I could point out here but I'll just take you to Psalm 42. If you get a chance this Psalm is a great Psalm to start your day off with. It's a rich Psalm. Psalm 42:1-2 says *[1] As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. [2] My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?* That is how God made us. He made us in His image spiritually thirsting and through and by the soul He has given us we drink of the living God. To picture this you look at it in this picture of the deer. When the deer gets to the water it pants. It doesn't get through a teaspoon or cup but it literally breathes it up. I haven't actually seen a deer do that but I've seen other animals do that like dogs. Drinking for them is panting. They are just breathing it up within them. That's how God made your soul, but I don't know what you're panting for. I don't know what you're breathing up, but you do, don't you?

Here is what you know when you're sharing the Gospel. Everybody that you meet is thirsty and everybody that you meet is drinking. The question is what and they won't drink of Christ until you bring the Good News. There is a fountain welling up within you, overflowing from you. Come, the Fountain came for you. Come to Him and drink. You don't have the challenge of making people thirsty or making people drink. They are thirsty and they are drinking. You have the privilege to bring them the free purchased water that satisfies to overflowing.

That is what you and I have the extraordinary privilege to do. By the way, I know today that all who are reading this are thirsty and all of you are drinking but I don't know where and what.

Briarwood exists not to make people thirsty, not to make people drink. They are thirsty and they are drinking. Are job is to bring to the world Christ, the River of Life. That's what we're called to do. There is a negative. We can't let that river get polluted with false teaching but there is a river flowing to us and from us into this world. I have the enormous privilege to bring that but I also have to ask myself is it not flowing from me because I'm not drinking of it? Let me meddle just for a moment. Where are you drinking? You will know by what is coming out of you. Just this past week you saw what was coming out of a man who went on a rampage at a movie theater and killed twelve people and wounded 58. It will be amazing what is uncovered from that incident. A young man was thirsty and drinking and a river of death came out instead of life.

We go to computers and drink from websites. We go to good gifts like our families and marriages and we think that they are the river of life, instead of coming to Christ who is the River of Life and drinking of Him. I wonder if we do. Do we arise in the morning, not out of rote responsibility to check off your quiet time moment but do we arise and open His Word and drink? The gathered worship of God's people, is that something you just work into your schedule because there is nothing else too important that day? Do we pant for the Lord? Lord, I long to appear before You. Where two or three are gathered together in His Name, there He is. Lord, I long to drink of You. I'm not trying to rain on your parade of hobbies because I have hobbies too. If you want to know about the 54th Massachusetts and the 15th Alabama I can tell you, but are they hobbies or have they become fountains?

We take games, recreation, computers, technology, jobs or anything and everything and put it in place of the Lord and out of our thirst we keep going there and drinking and drinking. It's never enough because it can't satisfy but from us will flow despair, death, cynicism and we'll be absolutely overwhelmed with our futility of life. But when you come to Christ and drink of Him there is a fountain and it does satisfy. He overflows so that where we go a River of Life comes.

The second takeaway is what does it mean to drink of Christ? Let's go back to John 7. We don't have to guess what it means. This passage opens it up for us. John 7:37-38 says [37] *On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. [38] Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"* To drink is to believe in Him. To believe in Him is to drink. When you come to Christ you don't believe about Him mentally or for an emotional experience or to make a decision. When you come to Christ it is a whole soul, personal commitment to Christ that you're not believing about Him but you're believing in Him. You pant for Him. He is not a piece of your life or apart of your

life. He is your life. He is not the priority of life. He is your life and He gives you your priorities in life. You believe in Him. You long for Him. You embrace Him. It is a whole soul believing. In other words, to drink is to believe and to believe is to drink.

When you jog a bit and sweat is coming, give me the water. Get me the water! I want to drink it. In life you're thirsty. To drink of Christ is to believe in Him. To believe in Him is to drink of Him. So if I'm drinking of Christ what is the evidence or how do I know? You'll know by two reasons. One you'll find satisfaction in Him. Two you will become the source of living water for others as He flows through you. Jesus doesn't just work from the outside but the inside, from your heart will flow rivers of living water. When you move into people's life you bring the refreshment of Good News that Jesus Christ loves sinners and saves sinners by grace. He takes you where you are but never leaves you where you are. He grows you by grace. He will never leave you nor forsake you.

That is what you were made for. Our forbearers got it right when they did the first catechism question. We are thirsty for life, for joy and for eternity. Eternity is in the heart of man. Every time I ask someone "Do you think there is a heaven?" they say "Yes", why? Ecclesiastes says eternity is in the heart of the man. The first catechism question says what is the chief end of man? Why did God make us? He made us to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever. One preacher said the more you enjoy Him the more you'll glorify Him and the more you glorify Him the more you'll enjoy Him. When you drink of Him He'll flow from you so that don't live to eat but you eat to live for Christ. Whether you eat or drink or whatsoever you do, you do all for the glory of God. Life is not my job, my home, my vacation but those are pieces of life. Christ is my life and those things I use for Him because I enjoy Him forever. The River of Life will never stop flowing. This is the evidence.

The third takeaway is what exactly has Christ promised to those who solely drink, enjoy and embrace Him? He has promised you that evidence and He now defines it. The Living Water is the Holy Spirit. John 7:39 says *[39] Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.* What were they before they believed in Him? What was their spiritual condition? They were dead in their sins. That means they had to be born again. The Holy Spirit has already worked on them, right? The Holy Spirit is all over the Old Testament – the Prophets, Moses, the seventy, David who said 'take not thy Holy Spirit from me.' We know the Holy Spirit has been there and been working. He does work inside out.

So what is He talking about in verse 39? He is talking about a very special ministry of the Holy Spirit. It will not happen and cannot happen until Christ is glorified. He will not be glorified until He has been resurrected. He will not be resurrected until He has died on the cross for our sins. When His hour comes

then He'll go back to the Father. When He goes back to the Father, crucified for our sins, risen in triumph, ascended and enthroned in glory, now in a way not known before He pours forth His Holy Spirit. II Corinthians 3:17 says *[17] Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.* So when He pours forth the Spirit, the enthroned Christ who is at the right hand of the Father, is now in you because the Spirit is in you. When the Holy Spirit is in you, you have the sealing present power of the risen triumphant Christ in your life.

The Holy Spirit working in the Old Testament brought salvation in anticipation of what Christ would do and now from Pentecost on the Holy Spirit is poured out bearing witness in your soul, the presence of the risen Christ. You walk in the triumphant of Christ, in the newness of life and the resurrection power of Christ who has been poured out from you because He has risen, been enthroned and glorified. You have Him within you and that One who is working in you, the Holy Spirit, has brought Christ to you and now Christ is in you, the Hope of glory, in a way never known before.

So what will happen to you? Here is Jesus who goes into this temple. In the days of Haggai they said "Oh my goodness, this temple is not like Solomon's temple" and Haggai says "Listen, I know you think this is a small temple and not like Solomon's but let me tell you that this temple will have greater glory than Solomon's. Don't despise the day of small things. This temple will bring greater glory than in the days of Solomon." When did that happen? It happened in John 7:37 when Jesus, the Word tempted among us and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. When Jesus went into that temple His glory filled it and a river of life that turned the world upside down began to flow that day for all who would come and drink.

When you come and drink, do you not know that you are a temple of the Holy Spirit? A trickle starts when you're converted and then it becomes a river. Wherever you go in your family, your neighborhoods, your classrooms, your teams, your jobs and everywhere, you bring the River of Life and you become a fisher of men. So today you don't have to go make anyone thirsty or anyone drink but you bring to them the River of Life flowing to you and from you and invite them to drink of Christ who satisfies and will overflow to them.

Before I close in prayer, have you drunk of Him? Please don't leave with the subtle deceit of Satan, drinking from the cesspools of this world. Come and drink of Christ. Sexual immorality will not be your life. Sexual perversion will not be your life. Power, control, consumption, consuming, love of money, will not be your life. If anyone drinks of Christ He'll come in. I think of them sitting there that day at the temple with soldiers, assassins, curious people, debaters etc. Anyone can drink. If you have come to Christ take Him to anyone and everyone and invite all of them to come and drink of Him. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. I ask O God that You would speak in and through our hearts this day. O how we long from our soul to drink deeply forever from Christ, who not only satisfies by giving us life, having purchased the water of life at the cross, but will overflow from us into life that many yet might drink. God, I ask You to allow us at Briarwood to be an instrument from which this river of life flows and allow us to never allow it to be polluted. Allow us to send that water but first I pray that all who are reading this are drinking of Christ deeply, panting, embracing Him. We will give you praise, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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