

As we read on in John and come to John 7:25-53, we need to be reminded that the events spoken of are taking place during the Feast of Booths.

The origin of the feast is described in Leviticus 23. Moses says, "You shall dwell in booths (or tabernacles) for seven days, and all that are native in Israel shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God."

God ordained that His people bring to mind in yearly feasts the great things He had done for them when He delivered them out of bondage in Egypt. God's purpose in bringing the people out of Egypt and through the wilderness was to show His power and His love for Israel, so that she would always cleave to Him and trust Him and obey Him. The feast of booths reminded the people of this trek through the wilderness and how God miraculously provided all their needs. One of the needs God had provided was water. In Exodus 17 Moses tells us how the people, soon after their escape from Egypt, moved south from the wilderness of Sin and camped at Rephidim. There was no water there so instead of trusting God who had split the sea for them, "the people thirsted there for water and murmured against Moses" (17:3). So Moses cried to the Lord, and God caused water to come out of a rock.

Now on the last great day of the feast of booths, Jesus stands up and cries, "If any one thirst let him come to me and drink." Whether the people at the feast grasped the full significance of this or not, we can see from our perspective on John's whole gospel that Jesus saw himself as the fulfillment of the Jewish feasts. He was the fulfillment in the sense that the saving power and grace of God which the Jews celebrated were now present and uniquely available in Jesus. The longing for God and for the arrival of his kingdom, kept alive by the recurring feasts, need not be a mere longing any more. God had now drawn near in his Son, and he offered his saving rule to all who would submit. The waiting was over. As Jesus said, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15). (By John Piper. ©2013 Desiring God Foundation. Website: desiringGod.org)

7:25 So some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill?"

7:26 Look, He is speaking publicly, and they are saying nothing to Him. The rulers do not really know that this is the Christ, do they?

7:27 However, we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from."

The next three smaller scenes (7:25-32; 32-36; 37-44) focus on if Jesus is really the Christ. The crowds wonder if the rulers had found out if Jesus was the Christ, but then they quickly dismiss the thought by saying that they know He is from Galilee and no one knows where the Christ is from. This was the thinking of one rabbinic school that taught that the Messiah would be born of flesh and blood, but that He would be totally unknown until He came to secure Israel's redemption. Micah 5:2, however, links

Messiah's birth to Bethlehem: "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity." The irony is that Jesus claims to have a heavenly origin which they denied, and the OT gives the place of His birth. The people in this crowd evidently ignored Micah 5:2, while others were quite sure that Messiah would come from Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1-6). It's no wonder the Jews had such a hard time deciding who Jesus was as it seems that they lacked a consistent consensus even among themselves in what it was they were looking for.

7:28 Then Jesus cried out in the temple, teaching and saying, "You both know Me and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know.

7:29 I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me."

Jesus had performed many miracles and He acknowledges that they knew something about Him, but they knew less than they thought. The real issue was not whether Jesus was born in Galilee or Judea, but if He had been divinely commissioned or not. Jesus claims to be on a mission, but they do not know the One who had sent Him. This comment had to have been overwhelmingly offensive to His listeners for the Jews prided themselves in knowing God, and knowing the law of God. Jesus had already said that they didn't understand the law which had pointed to Him. Now He says that they do not know God either.

Over and over in this gospel, Jesus makes it plain that if you reject Him you don't know God, honor God, love God, or have God as your Father.

- John 5:23: "Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him."
- John 5:42-43: "I know that you do not have the love of God within you. I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me."
- John 6:45: "Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me."
- John 8:19: "You know neither Me nor My Father. If you knew Me, you would know My Father also."
- John 8:42: "If God were your Father, you would love Me."

This is why the crowds wanted Him arrested in verse 30.

7:30 So they were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.

7:31 But many of the crowd believed in Him; and they were saying, "When the Christ comes, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?"

The most religious, the most privileged, the most well-taught people in the world, the people who had the Jewish Scriptures, did not know God; and it was because they did not know God that they wanted to kill Jesus.

Verses 30 and 31 picture the divisions that take place whenever human beings are confronted with Christ. Some wanted to seize Him. Others believed in Him, though with what seriousness and depth of belief we are not told (see 2:23-25- 6:60).

Throughout the gospel, Jesus' "hour" is the time of His passion and crucifixion. Though people may have murderous intent, their desires cannot come to fruition until the Father's timetable permits them. Jesus escaped because His hour had not yet come.

7:32 The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about Him, and the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to seize Him.

Verses 32-36 form the second section that focuses on whether Jesus is the Christ. There was technically only one chief priest, but evidently either those who had once held the position retained the title, or the title may have extended to others (some suggest it may be used of the principal priests who held higher positions). Those who had been plotting against Jesus now sent the temple guard to arrest Him.

7:33 Therefore Jesus said, "For a little while longer I am with you, then I go to Him who sent Me.

7:34 You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come."

Jesus hears the official warrant for His arrest and "therefore" speaks of His imminent departure. The Jews were intent on getting rid of Jesus, and their wish would come true shortly. The festival that Jesus was attending was in September/October; six months later He would be crucified. However, Jesus was unconcerned over their plot, for His departure simply signaled His return to the One who had sent Him. The verb "to go away" will appear again in John 13:3, where in the context of the hour, Jesus says that He is going to God (Brown I, 318).

Verse 34 is difficult to understand since Jesus says that the Jews will be seeking Him after He goes to the Father. They wouldn't be seeking to seize Him any more once He had died, so in what sense would they be seeking Him? Some see this as meaning that they will seek Him for help at the judgment, but then it will be too late to find Him (Beasley – Murray, 112). Others think that Jesus is saying that even after He is gone they will continue searching for Messiah and the eternal life that He offers (Jn. 5:39), but they will not find what they are looking for since they have rejected the only Messiah there is. With Jesus gone, their opportunity to hear more of the salvation they need is gone as well. The following verses support this interpretation.

John 8

21 Then He said again to them, "I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come."

22 So the Jews were saying, "Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come '?"

23 And He was saying to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world.

24 Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."

Jesus' death is set in contrast to His enemies' death. In death Jesus will go to be with the Father. Those who seek to kill Jesus will want to go to the Father as well, but they cannot, for their unbelief will prevent them from doing so. They will die in their sins unless they believe in Jesus.

Amos 8:11-12: "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord GOD, "When I will send a famine on the land, not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of the LORD. People will stagger from sea to sea and from the north even to the east; they will go to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, but they will not find it."

Proverbs 1:24-31 are the words of "wisdom," but they shed some light on the idea that men, once they have rejected God, will be prevented from finding what they seek.

Proverbs 1

24 "Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention;

25 And you neglected all my counsel and did not want my reproof;

26 I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes,

27 When your dread comes like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you.

28 Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but they will not find me,

29 Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD.

30 They would not accept my counsel, they spurned all my reproof.

31 So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way and be satiated with their own devices.

Whatever Jesus is saying, it is clear that in the end Jesus will be secure with the Father and they will be able to do nothing to stop Him or harm Him. He would be removed to a place beyond the reach of His prosecutors. "If His opponents had such difficulty in arresting Him before His hour had come, they would have even less chance of finding Him once He had returned to the Father" (Bruce, 180).

But also notice that Jesus is not just speaking of the future; He said, "where I am, you cannot come." "It is not merely where He will be that they cannot come, but where He is now, that is, in the bosom of the Father" (Jn. 1:18; Temple quoted by Morris, 417, n. 63). As He spoke, He was in perfect union with the Father in a place where no man can touch.

As we read Jesus' words after the facts had taken place, it is a little easier to understand what He is saying, but to the people who were hearing Him directly, His words were hidden.

"In other words, you may try to arrest Me but I will choose where I go, when I go, and who will follow. You can't take Me early. You won't keep Me here when I choose to leave. And you can't follow Me later. Your plans with Me are futile. I have come to do My Father's will, not yours. And it will be done. Exactly on time. And in the way He has designed it" (Piper).

7:35 The Jews then said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find Him? He is not intending to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks, is He?"

7:36 What is this statement that He said, 'You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come '?"

The Jews can't imagine where Jesus could go where they cannot find Him. They think of the hypothetical possibility of Jesus going to the Jews who had been dispersed among the nations and lived outside of Israel. Of course, it was the Jews dispersed throughout the Roman Empire that the early church set its focus on reaching.

His statement, "You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come" not only puzzled them, it made them uneasy. Was there some meaning that eluded them? It was clear that if they continued on the road that they had chosen, they would be left out of whatever it was that Jesus was talking about.

7:37 Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.

7:38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"

7:39 But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Verse 37 begins the last section that asks if Jesus is the Messiah and marks the last and greatest day of the festival. "Every day during Tabernacles, priests marched in solemn procession from the pool of Siloam to the temple and poured out water at the base of the altar. The seventh day of the festival, the last day proper (Lev. 23:34; 41-42), was marked by a special water-pouring rite and lights ceremony. This was followed by the sacred assembly on the eighth day, which was set apart for sacrifices, the joyful dismantling of the booths (Lev. 23:36), and repeated singing of the Hallel (Ps. 113-118). Hence by the first century, many Jews had come to think of the Festival of Tabernacles as an eight day event" (Kostenberger, 240).

Note on The Feast of Tabernacles: The following is primarily edited material from Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Book IV*, 156 ff.; comments by other authors have been noted.

Leviticus 23 describes the Feast of Booths:

39 On exactly the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the crops of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD for seven days, with a rest on the first day and a rest on the eighth day.

40 Now on the first day you shall take for yourselves the foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days.

41 You shall thus celebrate it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month.

42 You shall live in booths for seven days; all the native-born in Israel shall live in booths,

43 so that your generations may know that I had the sons of Israel live in booths when I brought them out from the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

44 So Moses declared to the sons of Israel the appointed times of the LORD.

- The Feast of Tabernacles lasted for seven days with an eighth day for a festive anticipation of God's promise to pour out spiritual "rains" in the Messianic Age (Carson, 322). In general, the worship was the same every day (described below) though the number of bulls offered for sacrifice decreased day by day from 13 on the first day to 7 on the last day.
- It was calculated that no fewer than 446 priests and corresponding number of Levites were needed for its sacrificial worship.
- According to tradition, the first two days and the last day were considered Sabbaths (days of rest) though normal activities could ensue on the days in-between.
- The people were to live in shelters made of branches to remind them of how they had to once live in tents when they had come out of Egypt (Wenham, Leviticus).

Each feast day followed the same general pattern:

- In the morning the people would leave their shelters, dressed in festive clothing.
- Each male made a *lulabh* (literally meaning "branch") consisting of a palm frond sandwiched between a myrtle and willow branch. These were tied together and carried in his right hand. In his left hand he carried a citrus fruit branch with the fruit or flowers on it (called the etrog) because Leviticus 23:40 also mentions "beautiful trees" (literally "trees of ornament" – Keil and Delitzsch, 448). According to the Pharisees carrying these branches fulfilled the requirement of Lev. 23:40. The *lulabh* symbolized the stages of the wilderness journey marked by the different kinds of vegetation (Morris, 421) and the citrus symbolized the good produce given to the people by God. The Sadducees disagreed with this interpretation and saw the branches of Leviticus 23:40 as being the materials from which the booths were to be made. Nevertheless, the Pharisees' view prevailed among the people.
- The people would then divide into three groups. Some would remain at the temple as the morning sacrifice was being prepared, some would go below Jerusalem and cut willow branches and then return and amidst the blasts of the priests' trumpets, they would adorn the altar with the tops of the branches bent over forming a leafy canopy over it (Morris, 420). The third group would form a procession and to the sound of music follow a priest who carried a golden pitcher from the Temple to the pool of Siloam.

The pool was made by King Hezekiah so that the city would have water to drink in the event that foreign powers should try to lay siege to the city (II Chron.33:30; II Ki. 20:20; Neh. 2:14). The water originated from a spring outside the city that was diverted by conduit so that it bubbled up within the city walls by the Fountain Gate (in the south-eastern part of the city). This explains the origin of the name Siloam which means “sent” – the water was “sent” by conduit from the spring to the city.

- The priest would fill the pitcher with water and the procession would head back to the Temple, timing it so that they would arrive at the exact moment that the pieces of meat were being placed on the altar. A threefold blast of the priests’ trumpet would welcome the returning party as they entered through the water gate (which obtained its name from this ceremony) on the south side of the inner court and passed straight through into the temple courts. (Though the water-rites are not found in the OT, their roots date back at least a couple of hundred years before Christ, and perhaps earlier- I Sam. 7:6; Carson, 322).
- The priest with the water then went to the altar and was joined by another priest carrying wine for a drink offering. The two priests then ascended up to the altar and simultaneously poured the liquids into silver funnels that directed the liquid to the base of the altar (these elements symbolized the blessings of God for His mercies and in giving rain– Morris, 420). The people shouted for the priests to raise their hands higher to ensure that the entire contents were poured out.
- Immediately after the pouring the Hallel (Ps. 113-118) was chanted in a response fashion; the Levites would read a line and the people repeated it. This was accompanied by a flute. After the first line, each line was read and the people simply responded with Hallelujah (Praise the Lord!). In the last Psalm the people also repeated verse 25 (Save now, I pray, O LORD; O LORD, I pray, send now prosperity) and then the last line (Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; For His lovingkindness is everlasting). As they repeated these lines the men and boys shook the *lulabh* toward the altar.
- Two significant passages of Scripture were associated with this feast: Zechariah 14:16-17 which was read on the first day, and Isaiah 12:3. Zechariah 14 was tied to thankfulness for the blessing of rain and the involvement of the nations in the Feast of Booths in a future messianic setting. The entering of the water gate was explicitly tied to Isaiah 12:3 which says, “Therefore you will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation” (Beasley – Murray, 113). The water pouring ceremony is interpreted as a foretaste of the rivers of living water foreseen by Ezekiel (47:1-9) and Zechariah (14:1). Also, in these traditions the water miracle in the wilderness (Exo. 17:1-7; Num. 20:8-13) is in turn a forerunner of the water-rite of the Feast of tabernacles (Carson, 322). Furthermore, the rite is linked to the living water flowing from Jerusalem when the kingdom comes (Isa 12:3; Ezek. 47:1-7; Zech. 14:8; Beasley- Murray, 114).

Jesus’ words, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water'" are to be understood with this background.

It is impossible to know when Jesus spoke His words at the feast, as the words “on the last day of the feast” are ambiguous. This could be the last day of the festival proper (which would be the seventh day) or it could be the eighth day during the closing ceremonies. Some see Jesus speaking on the eighth day after all the ceremonies were completed. If this were the case then Jesus’ claim would be all the more impressive for no water was poured out on that day (Morris, 422); furthermore, it shows that “as the water and the light of the Tabernacle’s rites pass into memory, year after year, His claim to provide living water and light for the world is continuously valid” (Beasley-Murray, 321). But Edersheim’s speculation is also interesting as he places it on the seventh day. He says, “The forthpouring of the water

was immediately followed by the chanting of the Hallel (Ps. 113-118). But after that there must have been a short pause to prepare for the festive sacrifices. It was then immediately after the symbolic act of water-pouring, immediately after the people had responded by repeating those lines from Psalm 118 – given thanks, and prayed that Jehovah would send salvation and prosperity, and had shaken their *lulabh* towards the altar, thus ‘praising with heart, and mouth and hands’, and then silence had fallen upon them – that there rose, so loud as to be heard throughout the temple, the voice of Jesus. He interrupted not the services, for they had for the moment ceased: He interpreted and He fulfilled them” (Edersheim, IV, 160). Whichever day it was, associations with the water of the feast could not be ignored and the importance of what Jesus was offering could be understood.

Everything in the Old Testament had pointed forward to a time of fulfillment. Jesus is that fulfillment. . . the tabernacle in the wilderness and the temple after that were the places where the people met and worshiped God. John shows Jesus now as a replacement and fulfillment of both of these. John 1:14, "The Word became flesh and tented (or tabernacled) among us." And in 2:19 Jesus says (referring to his own body, but also alluding to the Jerusalem temple), "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." We no longer meet God at the tabernacle or the temple. We meet Him in Jesus.

Another example of how Jesus fulfills the Old Testament is John 3:14, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life." Whatever health and hope and salvation was offered in the Old Testament through ceremonies and symbols and sacrifices are now offered through the death of Jesus Christ. They were all a foreshadowing of what was to come; now Jesus is here, and the shadows are swallowed up in his light.

In John 6 the Jews ask Jesus for a sign like Moses gave to Israel in the wilderness, namely, the miraculous manna (6:30). Jesus answers, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven . . . I am the bread of life; He who comes to me shall not hunger" (6:32, 35). Again, Jesus fulfills the Old Testament by offering in himself all the sustenance, and more, that was ever had by God's grace in the Old Testament era.

So when we hear Jesus cry out at the Feast of Booths, "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink," we understand him to mean, "If you are thirsty for God, if you are longing for the consolation of Israel (Luke 2:25), if you are eagerly looking for the kingdom of God (Luke 23:51), for deliverance from sin and oppression, then no longer look back to the days of old, and don't look forward to the future—look to me. In me all the past is summed up, and in me the future hope has arrived. If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink." O, how important it is for us to know who it is from whom we drink! All the drinking in the world will not satisfy us if we do not see the historical magnitude of Jesus Christ our fountainhead. The water he gives tastes bland to many people because he has not been seen in his true biblical proportions: as the one who dominates all of history, summing up in himself all the grace and power of God manifest in previous ages, and embodying in the present the hope of future glory. All of history exists for the sake of Jesus; God

shapes it all for his glory. (By John Piper. ©2013 Desiring God Foundation. Website: desiringGod.org; also see Carson 326 ff. for a similar discussion)

It is hard to find a passage that Jesus could be referring to in verse 38 when He says, "as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water,'" but there are a number of references where the Holy Spirit is likened to water, or water is illustrating spiritual blessing. Rather than a specific passage, it is more probable that Jesus is simply referring to a common thought found in the prophets.

Isaiah 44:3 For I will pour out water on the thirsty land And streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring, And My blessing on your descendants;

Isaiah 55:1 "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

Isaiah 58:11 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, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.

Joel 2:28 And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.

Ezekiel 36

25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

26 Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

28 You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

Nehemiah 9:20 You gave Your good Spirit to instruct them, Your manna You did not withhold from their mouth, And You gave them water for their thirst.

John 7:39 makes it clear that the waters are a reference to the Holy Spirit who Jesus gives after His glorification. They spring up within the believer (also Jn. 4:13-14).

Notice that the cross is referred to in terms of glory, not of shame. John sees the cross and glory as one (Morris, 427).

7:40 Some of the people therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, "This certainly is the Prophet."

7:41 Others were saying, "This is the Christ." Still others were saying, "Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He?"

7:42 Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?"

7:43 So a division occurred in the crowd because of Him.

7:44 Some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

Some in the crowd thought that Jesus was the prophet of Deuteronomy 18:15-18 who Moses had predicted will come. Others were saying that Jesus was the Messiah (the Christ). Still others doubted; they thought Jesus was from Galilee and Messiah was supposed to come from Bethlehem (I Sam. 20:6; II Sam. 7:12ff.; Psa. 89:3 ff.; Mic. 5:2, etc. -- the expected answer to their question in verse 41 is "no."). Thus, a great division arose. Some wanted to seize Him, but no one laid a hand on Him.

As John writes he is aware of the great irony. He knows that His readers who are reading His gospel some 60 years after Jesus had died and risen from the dead knew that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and was fulfilling prophetic expectations while the crowd remained in ignorance.

7:45 The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, "Why did you not bring Him?"

7:46 The officers answered, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks."

The officers were Levites, trained in the Scripture, and exposed to the teachings of many who had disrupted things in the Temple courts. This makes their comment quite remarkable for a number of reasons. First, they were among the group labeled as Jesus' enemies who wanted to kill Him. Second, they didn't pass the blame to others in their failure to arrest Jesus, they merely spoke of the power of Jesus' words; they would have known that this could have led to rebuke or disciplinary action. Third, they recognized something different about Jesus; they were so impressed with what He said that they couldn't obey their orders to arrest Him.

7:47 The Pharisees then answered them, "You have not also been led astray, have you?"

7:48 No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he?"

7:49 But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed."

The Sanhedrin's response is anger. They ask the officers if their intelligence has been lowered to that of the crowd who they considered to be totally ignorant (v. 49). The question of verse 48 assumes that only the masses of people could possibly be led astray - none of the Pharisees had fallen for His tricks.

7:50 Nicodemus (he who came to Him before, being one of them) said to them,

7:51 "Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?"

The way that John introduces Nicodemus is dramatic. Nicodemus had just heard that those of the crowd are accursed since they don't know the law, so he appeals to the others as one of them and on the basis

of the law. He offers a plea for fairness, but does so in a way that is personally noncommittal. It appears that though Nicodemus came to Jesus' defense, he did so not as one professing to believe in what Jesus had said, but as one who obviously knew what the officers had experienced (Jn. 3).

7:52 They answered him, "You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee."

The Sanhedrin is in no mood for legal niceties. They assumed that no prophet comes from Galilee, and in a sarcastic manner ask if Nicodemus had. They are angry and critical, but not careful. They challenge Nicodemus to show them if any prophets had come from Galilee – forgetting that Jonah had come from there. The NIV gives a good meaning to the text: "Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee."

Applications by John Piper (By John Piper. ©2013 Desiring God Foundation. Website: desiringGod.org):

Most people, I think, would like their heart to be like a deep mountain spring overflowing in rivers of living water. Even before we have a clear idea of what this image is referring to, we yearn for it because it seems to imply fullness and completeness to the point of overflowing. It implies sweet coolness and refreshment. It implies moisture and growth and life. But Jesus is not merely a poet evoking emotions by images. He is that, but much more.

These very evocative words refer to something real, something that would be true even if we laughed it to scorn or if we ceased to exist. The words are not meant to make us feel good because of their beauty and their associations. They are meant to put us in touch with something solid and powerful and living outside ourselves. Jesus is offering a very desirable experience, but he is offering it only as the result of some real, personal dealings between us and him. And he is no mere image; he is as real today as he was then, as real and personal as the person next to you in the pew. No experience is of any value whatever if it doesn't have to do with this real and living Jesus. Our experience is essential, but it will slip through our fingers and disappear if we focus on the experience instead of on Jesus. So in thinking about this text we must talk about our experience, but it will be all in vain if Jesus doesn't shine through as distinct and powerful and beautiful over all.

1) Three Things Implied in Thirsting

Verse 37: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink." It seems to me that there are three wonderful things implied in the words "if anyone thirst."

First is that the gift of the water is free. The condition you must meet is need. "If anyone thirst." That's the condition. And the action you must take is to drink. Receive the gift. There is no thought here of earning or meriting. Anyone. Anyone who knows his own thirst is invited.

Second, the human soul has thirst. We know he is not talking about physical thirst. That's clear. But what he is saying is that the soul has something like physical thirst. When you go without water your body gets thirsty. And the soul, when it goes without God, gets thirsty. Your body was made to live on water. Your soul was made to live on God. This is the most important thing to know about yourself. You were made to live on God. You have a soul, a spirit. There is a you that is more than a body. And that you, if it does not drink from the greatness and wisdom and power and goodness and justice and holiness and love of God, will die of thirst.

Third, implied in the word “thirst” is that what Jesus offers is satisfying. The aim of all theology, all study, all biblical learning, all preaching is to spread the satisfying banquet for you to eat with joy, and to protect the kitchen from poison. The aim of cooking is eating. The aim of digging wells and clearing springs is drinking. Everything Jesus came to do and teach is aimed at providing the soul with food and drink that satisfy forever.

That’s what I see in the word “thirst.” The water is free. The soul has a thirst. And Jesus aims to satisfy the soul forever.

2) Three Observations About Coming to Jesus to Drink

Verses 37–38: “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” Three observations:

First, Jesus is what we drink. “Come to me and drink.” Jesus doesn’t just *have* what our souls need; he is what our souls need. Recall John 6:35, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.” He *is* the bread of life. He *is* the living water. Our souls were made for Jesus. The ache in our hearts is at root an ache for Jesus. This is how the soul lives on God. It lives on Jesus.

Second, the soul can drink. It can swallow. He is speaking spiritually, not materially, when he says, “Come to me and drink.” This drinking is not something you do with your mouth and your throat. You do it with your soul. You do it spiritually. You were made to do this. You are not a mere animal. You were made for this—coming, not physically, but spiritually, to Jesus, and drinking, swallowing the water for your soul that he is.

Third, this coming and drinking are what it means to believe on Jesus. Verses 37–38: “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me . . .” That last phrase is another way of saying come and drink. Coming and drinking Jesus is what happens when we believe. It’s what *believe* means.

We saw it in the parallel structure of John 6:35: “I am the bread of life; whoever *comes* to me shall not hunger, and whoever *believes* in me shall never thirst.” Believing on Jesus is coming to him to eat and drink for our soul’s deepest satisfaction. So be done forever with the sad notion that saving faith—that believing on Jesus—is a mere decision to believe facts. No. It is a coming to him as a feast. A treasure. A banquet. A spring in the desert when we are dying of thirst. This is what the apostle John meant when he connected believing on Jesus and receiving Jesus in John 1:12. Believing is receiving him as water, food, life for the soul.

So those three things: Jesus is the water we need, the soul does the drinking, and that is what believing means—coming to Jesus to drink for our soul’s satisfaction.

3) The Rivers That Flow from the Soul

Verse 38: “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” Literally, it says, *out of his belly*. But the point is our inner being, call it belly, heart, soul, spirit. What does this mean?

It means that when you come to Jesus to drink, you don’t just get a single drink, but you get spring, a fountain, a well. You get Jesus. Rivers of water will flow because a River-Maker is in you. That’s the point. You will never have to search again for a source of satisfaction for your soul. Every river that needs to flow for the joy of your soul will flow from Jesus. When you come to him, you get him. And he never leaves.