

Women's Bible Study – Fall 2011
Who Do YOU Say I AM? A Study of the
Names and Character of Christ
November 2, 2011
He Is Living Water
John 7:37-44
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I grew up on a 120 acre farm in Kentucky. As a child, I spent hours roaming the fields, walking among the cattle and picking daisies by the hand full. Years later, while planning our wedding, I discovered daisies were expensive; but in my childhood world they were nearly as plentiful as grass.

A summer afternoon adventure was a walk in the fields. The distance from our front yard to the first field was about half a mile. Along the way was a pond where I would often stop and eat my snack. Once I entered through the second pasture gate there was a spectacular view into the valley and surrounding area. Most of it was farm land, dotted with trees, corn, and cattle, but on the left hand side was a large forest. It held all kinds of treasures, among them a crude tree house.

As the woods curved around the hillside they sloped downward to a magnificent stream. You could hear the sound of the rushing water yards away. This stream was among my favorite toys as a child. It was a balance beam which my 70 year old great aunt and I would traverse. It was a food source from which we would gather mint. It was a wash basin to remove sticky residue following a picnic lunch. It was a source of entertainment. My aunt would drive her brother's golf cart through the stream if we wanted to do a long adventure. That is, until we got it stuck one day. It was a place of contemplation and solace. After my aunt died I spent time sitting on a rock shelf that was part of a little waterfall. It was a wonderful beautiful place.

Water in Culture

In our culture water is a symbol and source of all of these things (beauty, food, cleansing, entertainment, solace); but in a place like the Middle East water meant life and survival. If you take a look at the relief maps of the Middle East you will see very little water in the middle of the land masses. This is especially noticeable if you compare it to the state of Minnesota. Notice all the bodies of water shown on the map. Water in the land Jesus walked was very scarce.

Water is one of those timeless word pictures discussed early in our series. In ancient and modern times water is significant to life. While we in this country have ready

access to clean and convenient water, it takes only a broken water line or a malfunctioning well to remind us of our critical daily need for water.

Water in Scripture

Water is mentioned often in the Bible, from the very beginning in Genesis to the very end in Revelation, and a vast number of places in between. It was present and often prominent in key moments of Biblical History: Creation, The Flood, Crossing the Red Sea, Worship, Miracles, the Baptism of Christ, the Crucifixion, The New Jerusalem, and Heaven. It is a timeless word picture and it is woven into our Biblical past, present, and future.

Living Water

Our focal passage specifically addresses Living Water. Living Water is water that flows, for example, in a river or a stream. The contrast is stagnant or unmoving water such as that in a pond, cistern or well.¹

I have often wondered about the difference between a well and a cistern because I have heard the words used interchangeably. I did a little reading and learned that a well is a hole that is dug or drilled to tap into a source of water underground. A cistern is an underground basin that stores rainwater for household use. Cisterns are usually lined to keep out contaminants. They also need a covering to protect the water from impurities.

This distinction aids our understanding of Jeremiah 2:13 where God says, "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water." Not only have the people forsaken God and His provision of clean, pure, fresh, life giving water, they as a replacement have dug their own cisterns. Cisterns even under the best possible construction and care are inferior substitutes, but these cisterns are of such poor quality they don't even hold water.

Another example of Living Water in scripture is in Zechariah 14:8 which describes Jesus' return to earth. When he sets His foot on the Mount of Olives we read, "On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half of it east to the Dead Sea and half of it

¹ Boice, James Montgomery. The Gospel of John: Volume 1 The Coming of the Light. Baker Books. Grand Rapids, MI 1985. page 279

west to the Mediterranean Sea, in summer and in winter". The presence of that living water will change those two bodies of water. Finally in Revelation we read, " For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water.' . ."(Revelation 7:17)

Context

The Feast

Our passage for study is John 7:37-44. While you are turning to it in your Bibles, let's review the context. This event took place during the Feast of Tabernacles (also known as the Feast of Booths or Ingathering). On our modern day calendars it would take place in mid October². The Feast of Tabernacles was a celebration of God's provision for the Jews during their journey through the desert to the promised land.³

The Feast lasted for eight days.⁴ There were prescribed elements included as part of the celebration. For example, each day the priests, accompanied by the worshippers, went outside and walked to the southern border of the city to the Gihon Spring which flowed into the Pool of Siloam.

The Pool of Siloam is the pool to which Jesus sends the blind man in chapter 9 which Lorie talked about a few weeks ago. At this pool they filled Golden Pitchers with water⁵ while a choir chanted Isaiah 12:3 "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation."⁶ Then they carried the water back up the hill to the "Water Gate" followed by the crowds carrying tree branches in their right hands (a reminder of the desert booths) and a citrus branches in their left hands (a reminder of the harvest).⁷

When the procession arrived back at the temple, the priests would climb the altar stairs and pour water on the altar while the crowd circled and continued singing. On the seventh day, this procession took place seven times (to commemorate the seven times the people marched around the city of Jericho before the walls came tumbling down and they captured the city). This ceremony was to remind them of all of God's

² biblestudytools.com Bakers Evangelical Dictionary

³ Life Application Bible Commentary: John. Series Editor Grant Osbourne, Ph.D. Tyndale House Publishers. Wheaton, IL. 1993. page 161.

⁴ Originally it lasted seven days, but by the time of Jesus an eighth day had been added.

Barclay, William. The Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of John. Westminster Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. 1975. page 248.

⁵ Boice, James Montgomery. The Gospel of John: Volume 2: Christ and Judaism. The Coming of the Light. Baker Books. Grand Rapids, MI 1985. page 586.

⁶ Burge, Gary M. The NIV Application Commentary: John. Zondervan. Grand Rapids, MI 2000. page 226-227.

⁷ Burge, Gary M. The NIV Application Commentary: John. Zondervan. Grand Rapids, MI 2000. page 226-227.

provisions, especially water, during the 40 years in the wilderness. This was the context in which Jesus spoke.

Passage: John 7:37-39

³⁷On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. ³⁸Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." ³⁹By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

The Invitation

Let's look first at the invitation. At this historic, religious and national commemoration, Jesus stands and shouts, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink." Can you imagine what that scene would have been like?

Jesus calls attention to the literal word picture of water and its importance to physical life. Then he builds on the current religious remembrance of God's provision of water during the exodus and expands it to the spiritual realm. Finally, he directs them to the source of this living water, himself.

There must surely have been whispers in the audience of worshippers and religious leaders. This was a Grand Invitation and it is thrown open to all.

The Promise

The Invitation is followed by a Promise. Jesus said, "Whoever believes in me . . . rivers of living water will flow from within them." Rivers of living water were rare in the Middle East. Biblical Patriarchs like Jacob had to dig wells to locate water. To possess a source of living water that could be accessed at any time was an invaluable resource.

Sometimes in order to understand a passage like we have to research historical, cultural, and religious contexts, as well as study what the Bible has told us elsewhere about the topic. However, in this case we don't have to do that. We are told right in

the text what the passage means: By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.

The Holy Spirit

The promise is the gift of the Holy Spirit. Juli gave us some great instruction and illustrations about the Holy Spirit last week. Let's review and further evaluate how we use this gift in our lives. Within the Gospel of John we have numerous instances of Jesus speaking about the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

In John 14:16, Jesus says, **And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever--¹⁷the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.**

In John 14:25,26 Jesus says, **²⁵ "All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.**

In John 16:8-11,13 Jesus says, **⁸"When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; ¹⁰in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; ¹¹and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. . . . ¹³But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.**

In Romans 8:26 we learn that, **²⁶In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.**

Ministry of the Holy Spirit

From these passages we learn that the ministry of the Holy Spirit includes being our: Constant Companion, Guide, Teacher, and Counselor. The Holy Spirit also reminds us of the Words of Jesus, Convicts us of our sin, reveals God's righteousness, announces God's judgment on the World, brings insight regarding future events, helps us in our weakness, provides spiritual gifts, provides fruits of the spirit, and intercedes for us.

The Response: John 7:40-44

The crowd has a variety of responses to the words of Jesus. Let's read them in John 7, beginning in verse 40, ⁴⁰On hearing his words, some of the people said, "Surely this man is the Prophet." ⁴¹Others said, "He is the Messiah." Still others asked, "How can the Messiah come from Galilee?" ⁴²Does not Scripture say that the Messiah will come from David's descendants and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?" ⁴³Thus the people were divided because of Jesus. ⁴⁴Some wanted to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him. There were three basic responses to Jesus. Two thousand years later the responses of people are primarily the same.

Response #1: He is a Prophet

A prophet literally meant one who spoke the words of God. Jesus definitely did that, but the intent of this response falls short of acknowledging Jesus as the Son of God. The modern day phraseology is something like, "Jesus was a good teacher and a moral person". This response allows people to acknowledge the unique words and actions of Jesus, but avoids the fact that he said he was the Son of God. An example of this is in John 7:12: Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, "He is a good man."

In John 7:52: They replied, "Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee. Obviously, the people and their leaders were not very serious in their examination of the facts of this case. Jesus was in fact born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:4-11). Given the circumstances surrounding his mother's pregnancy and his birth there surely were plenty of people who knew that. Additionally, several of their prophets were from the region of Galilee⁸.

Response #2: He is a deceiver, a blasphemer worthy of death.

This response is in complete opposition to Response #1 because someone cannot be a good moral person if he is a liar and deceiver. You don't see this response too vividly in our main study passage, but the sentiment is all over the book of John.

Let's look at just the verses from the chapter we are studying. John 7:1 ¹After this, Jesus went around in Galilee. He did not want to go about in Judea because the Jewish leaders there were looking for a way to kill him. John 7:25 ²⁵At that point some of the people of Jerusalem began to ask, "Isn't this the man they are trying to kill? The response of some then and now is that Jesus is an impostor, he is not who he says he is. This was the response that ultimately led to Jesus' Death on the Cross.

Response #3: He is the Messiah

⁸ Life Application Bible Commentary: John. Series Editor Grant Osbourne, Ph.D. Tyndale House Publishers. Wheaton, IL. 1993. page 165. (Jonah 2 Kings 14:25 and Elijah 1 Kings 17:1).

He is who he said he was. Juli quoted last week verses from Genesis to Revelation giving evidence after evidence that Jesus is the Son of God. He can't just be a good teacher or a prophet. He said he was the Son of God, he would be a liar if he were not. Jesus fulfilled prophecy after prophecy, the evidence is overwhelming and some of the people realized this truth.

What is Our Response to the Invitation?

The Invitation is simple. Jesus says, "Come". He doesn't say come to a particular church, or understand every word of the Bible, or debate the great theological truths, or bring the writings of the ancient church fathers, or clean up your life first. He says, "Come to Me".

All through this series each week we hear an invitation from Christ. Timeless word pictures are used to help us see Him from many different angles. He is the Good Shepherd. He is the Light of the World. He is the Bread of Life. He is One with the Father. He is Living Water.

The Invitation is still open and has been for 2,000 years. One day the invitation will close, either at the moment of our death where we will be permitted to accept the consequences of the choice we have made or at the end of time. Your opinion of Jesus does not change who He is or His Future; but your opinion of Him determines who you are and your future.

What is our Response to the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is a tremendous asset in our Christian lives, but like any gift it can be ignored, disregarded, or underutilized. We can grieve the Holy Spirit with our disobedience. We can reject His counsel. We can refuse to learn the lessons he teaches. We can simply ignore His presence in our lives. Sometimes we do this through ignorance, sometimes it is a willful choice; either way it is foolish behavior.

The Holy Spirit is a gift to those who have accepted Jesus' invitation. The Holy Spirit is present with us always and is an incredible source of power, comfort, insight, and courage; but we must be willing students.

- Do we recognize the voice of the Spirit when He reminds us of the Words of Jesus? (We need to be reading and studying the Bible to recognize the reminder).

- Do we ask Him for counsel in the difficult places of our lives with our marriages, our children, our finances, our health, and our future?
- Do we ask forgiveness and seek to change when He convicts us of sin?
- Have we taken the time to discover our spiritual gifts and then to actively use them?
- Are we seeing the fruits of the spirit in our lives?
- Do we allow Him to direct us to those who need to hear the invitation of Jesus?

What is Our Response to Others?

Jesus says that living water will flow from within us. The water is to have influence not just on us but on others. I have been reading a fascinating book called *Branded*: by Tim Sinclair. The premise of the book is reexamining the way that we share our faith in our culture. He illustrates his point with a story about two electronics stores, I have changed the names to protect the guilty.

“If you purchased a television, camcorder, or piece of audio equipment in the late '90s or early 2000s, you likely waked into either Store B or Store C. . . . The differences between the two stores were stark. Store B was the young, hip, fun store where the music blared, the lights gleamed, and the employees looked the part. The stage was set perfectly, except for one, glaring problem. Store B employees were clueless. If you could find one.

Catching up with one of these elusive, blue-shirted creatures usually required traveling to the deep recesses of the store . . . on your tiptoes . . . and surprising them in the middle of a courtship ritual with a female member of the blue-shirt kingdom. . . . After the effects of your blow dart wore off, the conversation usually went something like this:

You: “I have a question about the televisions.”
 Employee: “They’re over there.”
 You: “I know, but I need to know which ones have s-video inputs.”
 Employee: “What’s an s-video input?”
 You: “Never mind.”

Across the street at Store C, it was the complete opposite. Everything about the place felt stodgy. Comparatively speaking, the stores were quiet, dim, and staffed by guys with master’s degrees in computer science. At Store C there was never any fear of having to hunt for someone to help you. Within seconds of walking through the automatic doors, a commission-hungry, tie-wearing employee was breathing down your neck asking a series of scripted questions.

Those conversations usually sounded this way:

Employee: "Hi! Welcome to Store C. Is there anything I can help you find today?"

You: "I have a question about the televisions."

Employee: "Rear projection, LCD, plasma, or tube?"

You: "I just need to know which ones have s-video inputs."

Employee: "Most people mistakenly think that s-video stands for super-video, but it doesn't. There's actually a 4-pin mini-DIN connector as well as a 7-pin locking dub connector. Then, on s-video patch bays, you'll find dual Y and C BNC connectors . . ."

You: (fighting off a sudden headache): "Never mind."

Essentially, you were forced to pick your poison. You either wandered aimlessly for twenty minutes looking for mediocre help at Store B, or army crawled your way through Store C hoping to avoid the enemy combatants."

At this point the author gives us the sting to this little illustration he says, "It's unfortunate, but Christians tend to fall into these same sales categories. We're either complacent and clueless about those around us who are searching for Jesus, or we're so excited about some sort of heavenly commission check that we can't help but smother anyone who walks by with hyper-spiritual church speak. . . ."⁹ We need to think about how we come across to others because Christ has entrusted us as his ambassadors authorized to extend the invitation and the promise to all who will listen.

Many of you have probably seen the various interviews and articles surrounding the release of the Steve Jobs Biography by Walter Isaacson. One article in particular caught my attention. While we don't want to idolize the leaders in our culture we would do well to learn something from their lives.

Jobs was known to be a Buddhist and a spiritual person. Isaacson says, "I remember sitting in his backyard in his garden one day and he started talking about God. He said, 'Sometimes I believe in God, sometimes I don't. I think it's 50-50 maybe. But ever since I've had cancer, I've been thinking about it more. And I find myself believing a bit more. I kind of -- maybe it's 'cause I want to believe in an afterlife. That when you die, it doesn't just all disappear. The wisdom you've accumulated. Somehow it lives on."¹⁰

There are people in our world at all income and social levels who need Christ. We need to step up and issue the invitation. While you may never have had access to Steve Jobs, someone did. You have access to people in your own circles that are looking for

⁹ Branded: Sharing Jesus with a Consumer Culture by Tim Sinclair. 2011 published by Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI

¹⁰ www.cnn.com Brandon Griggs. Biographer: Mortality motivated Steve Jobs. October 24, 2011

Christ. How sad for a lost person to be surrounded by complacent Christians who were unwilling to let the gift of living waters flow from them.

Revelation 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

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