

JESUS THE STREAMS OF LIVING WATER

John 7:1-44

Key Verse: 7:38

"Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."

Chapter 7 is a continuation of chapter 5, in which Jesus healed a man who had been an invalid for 38 years. Out of his messianic compassion, Jesus healed an invalid man. Then the people of the world responded in various ways. Some responses were good. But most of them were very unpleasant. The author John seems to have gathered together the main arguments against the Messiahship of Jesus. This is the reason Jesus testifies about himself that he came from God and is going back to God. People in this chapter seem to be mostly mundane men who know nothing about the spiritual world and that they are their own kinds of thirsty souls. Jesus tells them that he is the streams of living water. The setting of today's narrative is the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus declares that he is the streams of living water (38). Let's think about what it means that "Jesus is the streams of living water."

I. My time has not yet come (1-9)

First, Jesus' worldly brothers (1-5). After the event of healing a man who had been an invalid for 38 years, Jesus went around the Galilean district for a long time. It was because the Jews in Judea became jealous of Jesus' popularity since he had healed so many sick people. Especially after he healed the man who had been an invalid for 38 years, they wanted to kill him. They were religious leaders. But, in essence, they were political. They were hungry for political power.

The Feast of Tabernacles was one of the three great Feasts in the Jewish year, celebrating the completion of the harvest and commemorating God's grace to the Israelites during the time of their lives in the desert (Lev 23:33-43). As the Feast of Tabernacles was near, most people were stirred up with the party mood. Jesus' brothers were also excited by the party mood and said to Jesus, "You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world" (3,4). They hoped that Jesus would go up to Jerusalem and show off himself during the time of the Feast of Tabernacles so that he would be the most dominant figure in the world. By the same token his brothers would become very popular among people too. The brothers fancied that a large crowd of people would wave their hands, hailing them. They were hungry for men's praise. As people from all the towns and villages were going up to Jerusalem to enjoy the festivities, Jesus still looked as if he had no intention of going up to Jerusalem. The author said in verse 5, "For even his own brothers did not believe in him." They were Jesus' own brothers, but they did not see the spiritual side of Jesus. The author commented that they were men of unbelief. Men of unbelief are unspiritual people and they are godless people. They belong to the world, not to God.

Second, Jesus chose to please God (6-9). What did Jesus say to them?

Look at verse 6. "The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right." "My time" or "my hour" is one of the themes of John's gospel, aiming toward the time of climax through Jesus' crucifixion. In the case of verse 6, "My time" refers to the best opportunity to do something for God. Therefore "the right time for me" (6) means seeking the opportunity to please God. During the festive occasion, all the people of the country tried to please themselves or their wives, as we do at vacation time. But Jesus didn't try to please himself or his brothers. Because of this, Jesus could not make his brothers happy. All males were going up to Jerusalem to enjoy the festivities. It was tradition. However, Jesus was seeking the opportunity to please God, so he had to remain isolated, waiting for the right time to please God. When Jesus wanted to please God, he had to choose to please God. When Jesus chose to please God he had to live according to God's time schedule for him. Jesus is right. If we want to please everybody we only become spineless persons. Therefore we must please only God. Then we can please all people around us in the end.

Third, when Jesus wanted to please God he was hated by the world. Look at verse 7. "The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil." In order to please God, Jesus taught the word of God to the people. When sinful people heard his message their sins were revealed and their pride was hurt. Because of this, the people of the world hated Jesus unconditionally. So we should not be surprised if we are hated because of the name of Jesus. After saying this, Jesus sent his brothers ahead of him to the Feast, but he stayed all alone in Galilee (9).

II. Jesus testifies that he came from God (10-36)

First, Jesus' teaching is from God (10-17). After his brothers had left for the Feast, he went also, not publicly, but in secret (10). Even if Jesus went there in secret, there was widespread whispering about Jesus. Some said, "He is a good man." Others replied, "No, he deceives the people" (12,13). They needed to know who Jesus really was. Not until halfway through the Feast did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach (14). How did they respond? "The Jews were amazed and asked, 'How did this man get such learning without having studied?'" (15) Behind their amazement was the Jews' agony. They were all men of achievements in scholarship, as well as men in the hierarchy. They really wanted to amaze many people with their speech. But whenever they spoke, the people of the rank and file began to doze. But when Jesus spoke, the people were moved by his words (Mk 1:27) and were filled with mysterious joy, and they perceived that Jesus' teaching was from God.

Second, Jesus chose to do God's will. Read verse 17. "If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own." Here Jesus tells us that choice reveals one's inner motive. For example, by faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. In other words, he "chose" to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time" (Heb 11:24,25). This choice led him to grow up to be a shepherd for 600,000 Israelites.

Jesus chose to do God's will. It was the thorny path to the cross.

It was the path to a sacrificial life. It was the path to endless sufferings. But Jesus chose to obey God's will because he loved God. God's will for him was to die on the cross for the sins of the world. Still Jesus chose to do the will of God. As a result of choosing to do God's will he was crucified on the cross. On the cross Jesus was not sorry. Rather he prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Lk 23:34a). We have to think about whether we ever chose to do God's will.

Third, Jesus lived for the glory of God (18-20). Look at verse 18. "He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him." We know how people struggle so hard for their own future security, especially for their own honor. One of the greatest preachers recently wrote in his book, "I worked until now for my own success, but from now on I must work for the glory of God." He really surprised us. But Jesus worked from the beginning for the glory of God. This is the best testimony that Jesus is the Son of God from heaven.

Fourth, Jesus was persecuted because of his shepherd heart (21-24). In Jesus' time, people circumcised their beloved children for their good luck, even on the Sabbath, assuming that the law of circumcision was given by Moses. Actually, it didn't come from Moses but from the patriarchs (Gen 17:23). In this way, they broke the law of the Sabbath. They were contradictory. In reality, all men are contradictory. They say that Jefferson taught people to give freedom to slaves; but he kept 70 slaves at his home to work on his farm. The very Jews who broke the Sabbath law by circumcising their children condemned Jesus on the pretext that he had broken the Sabbath law by healing a man who had been an invalid for 38 years.

But Jesus was not breaking the Sabbath law; he was complying with the law of God with God's mercy by healing a man who had been an invalid for 38 years. Jesus knew that it was a Sabbath day. Jesus healed him by any means out of his shepherd heart. Because of his healing one pathetic person, Jesus was in danger of being killed. But Jesus did not mind. Jesus' shepherd heart was God's compassion toward sinners. Jesus is God who knows how to temper the law with the grace of God. Jesus' shepherd heart testifies that he is the Christ.

Fifth, Jesus testifies that he is the Christ (25-36). At that point some of the people of Jerusalem began to ask, "Isn't this the man they are trying to kill?...Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Christ?" (25,26) Some people wondered if the people in authority had really concluded that Jesus is the Christ. In their deep hearts they hoped that he was not the Christ, but a country evangelist from Galilee. On hearing their controversies Jesus testified about himself that he is the Christ. Why is he the Christ? It is because Jesus was sent by God to do the will of God; he was sent by God; Jesus knows God because he came from God. Read verses 28 and 29. "Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, 'Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, but I know him because I am from him and he sent me.'"

The unbelief of the Pharisees was astonishing. After hearing Jesus' testimony about himself they became even more unbelieving and tried to arrest Jesus. But they could not, because God did not allow them to do so. Look at verse 30. "At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his time had not yet come." This passage gives us the impression that darkness prevails in the world. But this is not the case. The historian Toynbee, inspired by the book of Job, saw a principle in human history in terms of "challenge and response." He saw that darkness is not an independent force. It can challenge the light only in the compass of God's sovereignty. Throughout the ages many people have said many controversial things about Jesus. Still, in every age there are many who confess that Jesus is the Christ, in the midst of unbelieving people. Read verse 31. "Still, many in the crowd put their faith in him. They said, 'When the Christ comes, will he do more miraculous signs than this man?'"

* To their question, "Is Jesus the Christ?" Jesus gives a clear answer that he is the Christ. Why is he the Christ? Because Jesus came from God and because Jesus was sent by God to save men from their sins. "The one who sent him" or "he who sent me" or "he sent me" are repeated five times (16,18, 28,29,33). First, this repetition manifests God's world salvation purpose. God in his great mercy, sent his one and only Son to the world to save men from their sins. Therefore, Jesus is the one who was sent by God. Jesus is the one who was promised to come as the Savior of the world. Second, this repetition answers the question, "Is Jesus the Christ?" Suppose Jesus came from Casablanca. Then he cannot lead us to God but to Casablanca, where there are many kinds of entertainment. When we believe that Jesus came from God we can believe that Jesus is the Christ who saves us from our sins. Also, we can believe that he can bring us back to the Kingdom of God (29,33). When we believe that Jesus came from God we can be changed into spiritual men. Third, this repetition ascertains that Jesus is God from heaven.

Sixth, Jesus' prediction of his ascension (33,34). Read verses 33,34. "Jesus said, 'I am with you for only a short time, and then I go to the one who sent me. You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come.'" In these verses Jesus implied his death, resurrection and ascension. Then the Jews were puzzled and said to one another, "Is he going to Greece to teach [the Jewish](#) Greeks?" They questioned among themselves and said, "What did he mean when he said, 'You will look for me, but you will not find me,' and 'Where I am, you cannot come'?" (36) Even when the Jews heard directly from Jesus they could not understand that Jesus is the Son of God and that he will be the judge after his ascension. They were unbelieving. As much as they were unspiritual, they were sick and tired. These unbelieving people could not see the glory of God in Jesus.

III. Jesus the streams of living water (37-44)

Finally it was the last day and the greatest day of the Feast (37,38). Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." The Feast came at the end of the year, at harvest time when the fruit of much labor was gathered in. Every male was supposed to appear (Dt 16:16). At the Feast, each Israelite lived in tent booths for seven days. This

reminded them of the time of the Exodus. They lived in tent booths as they had wandered in the wilderness (Lev 23:43). There were two main events on the last day of the Feast. First was the sacrifice offering ceremony. Second was the water-pouring ceremony. All people at the Feast wanted to enjoy watching the water-pouring ceremony. This reminded them of the time when water gushed from the rock and quenched the thirsty souls of their forefathers in the wilderness (Ex 17:6). At this ceremony, they remembered God's grace of quenching the thirst of their forefathers. And they rejoiced. In allegory, the "Rock" is compared to Jesus, and the water to the Holy Spirit.

At this point, Jesus taught them what their real problem was. They were hungry and thirsty even though they drank and ate a lot during the time of festivities. Indeed, they were hungry and thirsty souls. Look at verse 39. "By 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." In this verse John explains that they did not believe in God so they had no Spirit of God. When they had no Spirit of God they became physical men who were thirsty souls. The Jews' problem was that they had no streams of living water in them. When they had no streams of living water they were thirsty in their souls, though they drank so much during the time of festivities.

What was people's response? On hearing his words, some of the people said, "Surely this man is the Prophet" (40). Others said, "He is the Christ" (41a). The same is true with us. When we believe that Jesus is the one who was sent by God we can believe that Jesus is the Christ. When we believe in Jesus the Holy Spirit comes upon us. When the Holy Spirit comes upon us we can experience that the streams of living water are flowing in our souls.

At this time we must ask ourselves, "Why am I thirsty even though I drink so much?" Thirsty souls are as pitiful as deer in the desert; they are panting for streams of living water. The streams of living water is Jesus Christ. There is true satisfaction to those who have Jesus, the streams of living water.