

The Gospel of John

7:37-53

Welcome back to this week's study in the book of John.
As with this study and all bible studies, remember to pray before you start.

✠ **John 7:37-39** *On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

As we have been studying chapter seven the last few weeks, we know that this was during the feast of tabernacles. The purpose of this feast was to celebrate the provision and the goodness of God during the Wilderness Wanderings when God brought His people out of slavery in Egypt, and they thanked God for His immediate provision of the bounty of the Land, which they had just harvested. So it was part Harvest Festival and part religious ceremony.

The religious ceremony began in the morning when the people assembled in the Court of the Temple, and there the Priests would lead them out to the Pool of Siloam where he would dip a huge golden pitcher into the pool and take up water. As he did, the people would chant Isaiah 12:3,

✠ **Isaiah 12:3** *Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.*

Then they would march back to the Temple singing the Hallel Psalms, which are Psalms 113-118. When they got back to the temple, the priest would take the pitcher of water and pour it over the alter as the people cried out, "Give thanks to the Lord, give thanks to the Lord, give thanks to the Lord." This is the way that everyday started during the Feast of Tabernacles, except the last day of the feast, which was the eighth day.

John tells us that the eighth day was the Great Day of the feast; it was the High Holy Day. It was here that you received the final blessing and it was here that you got to see the closing ceremonies.

The thing was, this had just turned into a religious ceremony for the people. I think of the celebration of Purim, which just happened last week. This was a celebration to remind the children of Israel when God delivered them from the hand of Haman (you can read all about it in the book or Esther). But now the celebration has turned more into a drunken party, instead of thanks for what the Lord did.

Here during the feast of tabernacles, it turned into something they just did, because it was the thing to do. Throughout the study here in chapter seven, we read of Jesus teaching the people not to put their faith and hope in earthly things. Part of the celebration was just that, their thankfulness for the material things they had received.

Now it's not wrong to have material things, we just shouldn't put our hope and faith in them and we should thank the Lord everyday for His provisions.

But then came the religious aspect of the feast, which we read about what happened at the beginning of this week's study. But the thing is that the people were not satisfied spiritually, maybe religiously but not spiritually.

So what's the difference?

When you are religious, you try to get to God by your own works, and your own way. Religion always keeps you empty and searching for more. Religion is also self-seeking causing a person to seek self-satisfaction in a religion. You never reach God nor do you have a relationship with God in religion. Only a relationship like a boss and a worker would have, since religion is based upon works.

On the other hand, when you are satisfied spiritually, there is no longing for more, because you know you have all you need. There is no desire to work to please God, but rather you work in thankfulness for what God has already done. Any work that is done is not to get closer to God, but rather to help bring others to the Lord with no ulterior motives.

Spirituality is like a relationship between a parent and a child; the child does because he or she loves their parent, because they know their parent loves them, not to earn their love.

Sad to say a lot of churches are works oriented. Jesus has a warning for these types of churches.

† **Rev 2:1-7** *"To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: 'I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you repent. But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.'"*

This is something I personally have to be cautious of, doing these studies for almost four years now; sometimes it can be a hassle to do them. When that happens I know I am not doing them out of love, but more out of works. At times like these I need to stop and repent and remember why the Lord has gifted me to teach. Sometimes it will be days before I start a study because I am not spiritually in tune or ready to teach. But God is faithful and every week these studies are done by His will and not my own.

I am so grateful to the Lord for using me to teach and grateful that there are those out there who are hungry for God's word, or need to be ministered to through these teachings. I pray that none of my teachings or devotionals will ever be out of works or because I think I have to do them, but rather out of love for the Lord and those who read them.

But churches and people do get so caught up in works, that they will get so busy that the word is not spoken or is watered down because people are so busy with other things. Also if you are so busy with doing for the Lord, that you find you have less time to pray and/or read God's word, then you are doing works of yourself and not from God. God would not keep you so busy that you would not have time for Him.

Keeping all this in mind and the fact that the Jews were filled religiously but not spiritually, let's read Jesus' words again.

 **John 7:37-39** *On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

Have you been thirsty lately? I'm not talking about physical thirst where a nice cold glass of milk or ice water is what you need, but rather have you felt spiritually dry lately?

Do you read God's word and get nothing out of it?

Do you pray and when you do, do you feel like you are just saying the same thing over and over when you are talking to the Lord?

Maybe you are doing work in the church, but you just feel like you are spinning your wheels and getting nowhere?

Possibly, you may see yourself slowly getting back into things of this world you thought you never would go back to?

Have you asked the Lord to fill you with the Holy Spirit today or everyday?

Why should we have to?

Very simply as pastor Chuck Smith puts it, "because we leak" or because we should be pouring into others.

The Lord gave me an example of this that you could use in a home group or church setting.

Say you have a ball with a small hole in it. So you would take a pump and fill the ball with air, as someone else holds the ball and covers the hole.

Now take this ball and start squeezing it so the air slowly comes out, as you do have the air start hitting the person next to you as you hand them the ball, this person would do the same thing as they pass it on and so on. Eventually the ball will go flat again so the next person would need to pump it up again.

Now as this ball has been passed throughout the whole church, one thing to notice is that every person received some of the air that was used to fill the ball. Also someone has held the ball covering the hole as it is refilled each time.

It's the same way when we are filled with the Holy Spirit. We have hands laid upon us and we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

† **Acts 8:17** *Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.*

As we pass on the gifts that are given to us, the Holy Spirit that we are filled with affects each person we come in contact with. In turn they go to some one who also feels the effect of the Holy Spirit as He has touched their lives.

† **1 Cor 14:12 (NLT)** *Since you are so eager to have spiritual gifts, ask God for those that will be of real help to the whole church.*

Eventually we get empty (in a sense) and need a refreshing or filling of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Just like the example with the ball, it never totally loses all it's air, just the amount gets to the point that it no longer affects someone else.

This is when we become spiritually dry. We still have the Holy Spirit in our lives, but it seems it's just enough to sustain our salvation, but not affect those around us.

† **1 Cor 3:14-16** *If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*

So here the Jews were filled with religion, but spiritually they were dry.

† **Matt 23:27** *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.*

They had all the looks of religion by taking part in the feast of tabernacles, but inside they were dead spiritually. That's why Jesus said: *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."*

God is not pleased with rituals, but rather with the heart.

Do you go to church because you feel you have to, or because you get to?

One of my favorites saying I heard at a worship conference was *"It's not I got to serve the Lord, but I get to serve the Lord"*

Religion says you **got to** serve God by doing.

Relationship says you are excited because you **get to** serve the Lord.

Remember when Jesus washed the feet of the disciples and what He said afterwards?

† ***John 13:12-17 So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."***

I don't think Jesus was thinking, "Oh man, now I have to wash their stinky feet", No I think Jesus was excited, because He knew He was teaching them to be just like Him. What we would call a disgrace, Jesus called an honor, because He did it out of love and not necessity.

John goes on to tell us what Jesus meant:

✠ ***But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.***

So when did this actually happen? When Jesus rose from the dead.

† ***John 20:19-23 Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."***

But the people may have known what Jesus was talking about as we read on.

✠ **John 7:40-44** *Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, "Truly this is the Prophet." Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Will the Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" So there was a division among the people because of Him. Now some of them wanted to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him.*

Remember in previous studies we learned that when they referred to Jesus as the prophet it was the one Moses taught about. Some also thought that Jesus was the Christ, which is the same thing, they just didn't understand this.

So this all started an argument, because some thought this was the prophet, because Jesus came from Galilee and not Bethlehem. But others may have known that Jesus came from Bethlehem and therefore thought this was the Christ.

But we know that both are right, because Jesus was born in Bethlehem

✠ **Matt 2:1** *Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem,*

and raised in Galilee.

✠ **Mark 1:9** *It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan.*

Also there were those who were sent to arrest Jesus, but scripture says that no one did at this time. Why would they want to arrest Jesus?

We find out in the next verses.

✠ **John 7:45-53** *Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why have you not brought Him?" The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man!" Then the Pharisees answered them, "Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him? But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed." Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them, "Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?" They answered and said to him, "Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee."*

And everyone went to his own house.

The chief priest and Pharisees were the ones who wanted Jesus arrested. When they were asked why they didn't bring in Jesus, all they could say was: ***"No man ever spoke like this Man!"***

This made these religious leaders mad, because they thought their words were the authority, but here comes this lowly carpenter out of Galilee comes and puts them all to shame with His words of life.

So they answer them with: ***Then the Pharisees answered them, "Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him? But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed."***

People are so quick to think that we are deceived by the bible and this religion called, Christianity. But they just don't know the scriptures and that it says.

- † ***Luke 10:21 (NLT) Then Jesus was filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit and said, "O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding the truth from those who think themselves so wise and clever, and for revealing it to the childlike. Yes, Father, it pleased you to do it this way."***
- † ***Prov 12:15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise.***
- † ***Prov 26:12 Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.***
- † ***Isaiah 5:21 Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, And prudent in their own sight!***
- † ***1 Cor 3:18-21 Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their own craftiness"; and again, "The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours.***

The chief priests and Pharisees were wise in their own eyes, but Jesus showed the world how ignorant they were, because they followed their own man made laws and used these as an excuse not to follow God's laws, or they added to God's laws with their own laws, which in turn voided out what God was saying in the first place.

- † ***Matt 23:13, 23, 27-28 But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.***

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

† **Matt 15:3-9 (NLT)** *Jesus replied, "And why do you, by your traditions, violate the direct commandments of God? For instance, God says, 'Honor your father and mother,' and 'Anyone who speaks evil of father or mother must be put to death.' But you say, 'You don't need to honor your parents by caring for their needs if you give the money to God instead.' And so, by your own tradition, you nullify the direct commandment of God. You hypocrites! Isaiah was prophesying about you when he said, 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far away. Their worship is a farce, for they replace God's commands with their own man-made teachings.' "*

† **Isaiah 29:13-14** *Therefore the LORD said: "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me, And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men, Therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work Among this people, A marvelous work and a wonder; For the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, And the understanding of their prudent men shall be hidden."*

Can you say WOW!

Now who would really want to mess with God? Not me!

Unfortunately, these chief priests and Pharisees thought they could.

Except for one, Nicodemus.

☩ *Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them, "Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?"*

Remember Nicodemus; this was the same Nicodemus who went to Jesus at night back in chapter 3 when Jesus spoke to Him of being Born Again.

For Nicodemus to say such a thing was a bold statement, because it could have gotten him thrown out of the temple, and he would have lost his status as priest, a ruler and a teacher of the Jews.

But still he boldly spoke up in defense of Jesus, but not just Jesus but also all men, because Nicodemus was right, we are so quick to judge someone without even getting to know them.

✠ *They answered and said to him, "Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee."*

OK Nick, are you really a prophet?
Have you also come out of Galilee?
Are you buddy buddies with this Jesus?
Whose side are you on, Jesus', or ours?

When we get to the end of John we find out whose side Nicodemus is on and it's not theirs.

When man put in the verses and chapters, sometimes I have to wonder why they broke some of it up the way they did, because you could really end the story at verse 51 here in chapter 7, or end it at verse 1 in chapter 8.
Either way we will just end this week's study with: *And everyone went to his own house.*

Well that's it for this week and we made it through another chapter. Next week we will read of a ridiculous thing these leaders did, by bringing a woman caught in adultery, but it seems they forgot something; the man.

May God richly bless you in His love, grace and mercy and may you always remember that it's not I **got to** serve the Lord but rather I **get to** serve the Lord.