

# The Rivers of Living Water – *John 7:25-52*

**Introduction** – In this passage we find ourselves at the tail end of the eight-day Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, culminating in the last great day of the feast (v37). Jesus had openly taught in the temple (v14) but all of the diverse contingents of people are still struggling with who He is and what to do with Him. Such struggles continue to this day. Now it is true that there are deep mysteries surrounding the teachings of the prophets regarding the Messiah, His reign, and our need for a Savior. On the other hand, Jesus' message is pretty simple: Are you thirsty? Come and drink. Our problem is not so much the complexity of the Truth, but instead our willful decision to remain blind in our obstinate refusal to confess Jesus as Lord.

**Obstinate Blindness** (vv25-36) – Jesus had openly taught in the temple (vv16-24) and yet the authorities had not yet arrested Him (they were seeking to kill Him – v1, 19). This caused some to wonder if the rulers had determined that Jesus was in fact the Christ (v26). Their misreading of the law and prophecies had led them to believe that the Messiah would come suddenly out of nowhere (v27). But they knew where Christ was from (Galilee). Actually, they had that mixed up as well, and Jesus both questions their supposed facts (“*you think you know where I am from?*”) and clearly states where His origin is (“*I am from Him, and He sent Me*”). This claim of authority from the Father irks the religious leaders who seek to take Him while many others believed in Him due to His words and miracles (vv30-31).

**“No One Laid A Hand on Him”** – and John tells us why, “*because his hour had not yet come*” (v30). The Pharisees and chief priests sent their temple officers to take Him. Instead, these officers (and to the religious leaders) Jesus gave this terrible warning ending with, “*where I am you cannot come*” (v34), a warning laced with the promise of Christ's ascension to the right hand of God. Refusing to try to understand (“*there are none so blind as those who will not see*” – ancient proverb), they guess that He will leave them and go to the unclean places of the Dispersion among the Greeks (vv35-36). This may be a bit of irony in John's Gospel who was ministering in Ephesus.

In the midst of this confusion, Jesus was in no danger for His hour had not yet come. This shows us plainly that all of our Lord's sufferings were undergone voluntarily (Ryle). He went to the cross, not because He could not escape it, but of His own willingness to obey the Father. They could no more arrest Christ at that time than they could stop the sun from shining (Pink). “*There are many plans in a man's heart; nevertheless, the Lord's counsel – that will stand*” (Prov 19:21). We are given similar words of courage and faith in Psalm 91:1-2, 6-7; they are words for us.

**Willfully Ignorant** (vv40-52) – After Jesus' declaration and invitation (vv37-39, we will consider in a moment) the arrogance and confusion continue, first over where Jesus actually came from (vv40-42) and their inability to lay hands on Him (vv43-44). The officers return to the chief priests without Jesus saying only they had never heard anyone speak like Him (vv45-46). They spew at those Levitical officers that they are as ignorant as the unlearned crowd, damned just like them (vv47-48), as the irony of John's gospel persists. Nicodemus shows up again, attempting to calm the dispute among them with words of measured caution (vv50-51) and is immediately shamed and cancelled as well (v52).

In 2 Pet 3:5, Peter speaks of some who are “*willfully ignorant*” (KJV), an apt expression. This is a spiritual disease painfully common among fallen men. They pretend to not understand so that they do not have to believe what is pressed upon them. They do not believe what they do not want to believe (Rom 1:21, Psalm 53:1). They cannot believe what will cost them too much to believe.

**A Voice Crying Out Above the Fray** (vv37-39) – Seven days of ceremonies, teachings, singing the Hallel Psalms (113-118), and feasting, culminated in the final offering of water and wine poured out on the altar before the LORD. Having camped in booths they remembered God's faithful care of them in the wilderness, of water from the rock in their thirst, and of deliverance into the Promised Land. They prayed for rain for the next season and longed for the coming Messiah, recalling Isaiah's promise, “*With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation*” (Isaiah 12:3, 44:3, 55:1). Everyone knew there was more than physical water being prayed for, more than physical thirst longing to be quenched. “*He speaks of that intense longing for Himself which only the Spirit of God can create in the soul. If a poor sinner is convicted of his pollution and desires cleansing, if he is weighted down with the awful burden of conscious guilt and desires pardon, if he is fully aware of his weakness and impotency and longs for strength and deliverance, if he is filled with fears and distrust and craves for peace and rest,—then, says Christ, let him “come unto me”*” (Pink). Coming to Jesus is a simple act of faith.

Imagine that Feast of Booths party again, or your favorite week-long vacation. As it comes to an end, Jesus is not chastising your pleasure. He is calling to you and saying, “I have so much more – the life-giving satisfaction, joy, relief, and pleasure that I give is life, real life, eternal and everlasting life.” To receive this, you must come. Come to Jesus. How hard is that? One must drop one’s willful ignorance, and obstinate blindness.

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