

# OpenTheo

## John 7:32 - 7:53



### Gospel of John - Steve Gregg

In this passage, Steve Gregg discusses the people's divided opinions of Jesus during his time, with some believing he was good while others saw him as a deceiver. Gregg also talks about how the prophecy of the Messiah's arrival had created high expectations among the people. He then delves into Jesus' announcement during the last day of the feast, where he speaks about spiritual hunger and thirst, and how those who seek fulfillment in God can be filled through the Holy Spirit. Gregg notes the importance of understanding scripture and encourages his audience to seek a thirst for God, rather than settling for spiritual complacency.

### Transcript

We are now going to turn back to John chapter 7, a chapter that we got more than halfway through last time. We got up through verse 31. The setting of this chapter is one of the feasts of Israel.

This one is the Feast of Tabernacles. So many times when Jesus is in Jerusalem for a feast, we're reading about a Passover, but this is a different one of the three feasts that Jewish men were expected to come to Jerusalem for. Jesus was there at the Feast of Tabernacles, though he came a little late, and he didn't appear publicly until the middle of the feast, because at this point in time, it was only six months before his crucifixion, exactly to the day, six months before.

The Feast of Tabernacles happened six months to the day before the Feast of Passover, and the next Passover was when he was crucified. So we're now looking at the last six months of his life, and opposition to Christ has escalated among the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem to the point that the people who live there know that there's a plot against Jesus. Just the Jerusalemites know this.

We can see that in verse 25. Then some of them from Jerusalem said, Is this not he whom they seek to kill? And yet, because it was a festival that was attended by Jews from all over the world, there were some there who didn't know about Jesus. There were outsiders who had just come for that feast, and they didn't know about the plot against

Jesus.

They didn't know the local intrigues and local politics and so forth. And so when Jesus actually said in verse 19, Why do you seek to kill me? Some of them answered in verse 20, You have a demon. Who's seeking to kill you? So it's obvious that not everybody was in possession of the same amount of savvy as to what was going on.

But everybody knew that Jesus was controversial. It says in verse 13, However, no one spoke openly of him for fear of the Jews. Now, there were different opinions about him.

We see in verse 43, There was a division among the people because of him. Obviously, one of the divisions is that some people knew and some didn't know that there was a death warrant out for him. But another difference of opinion we saw was in verse 12.

In the middle of verse 12, it says, Some said, He's good. Others said, No, on the contrary, He deceives the people. So people had exactly opposite opinions of him, looking at the same data.

The miracles Jesus did, the healings and so forth, the feeding of the multitudes, this seemed like something that would mark him as a good man. But others felt like these things were only a device to convince people that he was good, but was in fact a deceiver seeking to lead them away from the God of Israel and from the law of Moses. And so some people felt he was a very dangerous man.

Others felt like he was a good man. And there was even some, there were some who thought he might be the Messiah. Now, we might think, well, of course they'd think that, because, I mean, he is.

But this was something that was a question mark in everybody's head whenever somebody raised his head above the level of mediocrity and seemed to get attention. Everyone wondered, is this the Messiah? Because the Messiah was expected. Not only had he been expected for hundreds of years, but he was especially expected right around that time.

Because, of course, Daniel's prophecy of the 70 weeks had run its course, and so they had reason to expect the Messiah based on that. Also, Jacob had prophesied in Genesis chapter 49, in verse 10, that the scepter would not depart from Judah until Shiloh would come. That is, the Messiah, the one to whom it belongs, is what that means.

And so the scepter had departed from Judah just prior to the birth of Jesus, when Herod the Great had become the king of the Jews. And he was not of the tribe of Judah by any means. He was not even fully Jewish.

And when Herod came to power, some of the rabbis are said to have moaned and lamented, saying, woe unto us, for the scepter has departed from Judah, and Shiloh has

not yet come. According to the prophecy of Jacob, Shiloh, the Messiah, would come when the scepter would depart from Judah. And so there were developments that made many people feel they were living in the age of the Messiah, just as there are things today that make people believe that we're living in the age of the Second Coming.

Things transpiring in the world political scene, especially things happening in Israel, have convinced many people that we're living in the last times. Because there are things that they believe are supposed to happen around that time, and they think we're seeing them happen. Now obviously, people have anticipated the Second Coming for a very long time, and interpreted the signs of their own times to be the signs of the end times, and have been wrong through the centuries as they've made these predictions.

Likewise, the Jews anticipating the First Coming of the Messiah had been wrong many times before also. There have been many false messiahs. But especially at this particular time, when everybody's expectation was up, it seemed, based upon the prophecies, that this was the general time the Messiah should appear.

Besides that, there was this old man named Simeon, around the time that Jesus was born, that had a reputation of being a man to whom the Holy Spirit had spoken, and said that he would not die before he had seen the Messiah. Not everybody knew about Simeon, but he's a well-known figure in the temple, and so that must have made people prick up their ears, to say, well, the Holy Spirit told this man he's not going to die before the Messiah comes. We must be living in the last generation.

And then, of course, the wise men came into town with great show, around the time Jesus had been born, and said, where is he who's born King of the Jews? For we've seen his star in the east, and we've come to worship him. This also got a lot of attention. In fact, all of Jerusalem was terrified, because they knew that Herod was going to react to that negatively.

But, you see, there had been many things, both that the ancient prophets had said, and that more recent things had happened, especially around the time that Jesus was born, that made people think this is the time of the Messiah. But, when John the Baptist appeared, the first question they asked him, are you the Messiah? And he said, no. Now, they have not really asked Jesus if he's the Messiah, although later they did.

At a time later than this, they said, how long will you keep us in suspense? Are you the Messiah or not? Tell us plainly. And Jesus dodged the question. Jesus actually never made a public declaration that he was the Messiah out in the streets to the people.

He expected people to put that together, to get it. Even John the Baptist asked Jesus directly, are you the Messiah? When John was in prison, he sent messengers to Jesus. His actual words were, are you the one who is to come, or do we look for another? And Jesus didn't even give him a direct answer.

He says, well, go tell John what you see. The blind have their sight restored, the lame walk, the lepers are healed, the gospel is preached to the poor, and he said, tell John, blessed is he who is not stumbled by me. In other words, it may well be that I'm not doing what you think the Messiah is supposed to do, but hang in there.

Trust me, I know what I'm doing. Don't stumble because of me. Keep the faith, John.

And yet the things he pointed out, the blind seeing, the lame walking, and the poor having the gospel preached are all things that the Old Testament associated with the Messianic age. In Isaiah 35, it said that in the Messianic age, the tongue of the dumb shall speak, and the ears of the deaf shall hear, and the eyes of the blind shall see, and the lame shall leap. Those were things Jesus said, go tell John this is happening.

In Isaiah 61, it said that the gospel would be preached to the poor. Jesus said, go tell John the poor have the gospel preached to them. In other words, he didn't come out and say, yes, I'm the Messiah.

He just said, tell John what you see and let him draw his own conclusions. Jesus is always reticent about saying here's the Messiah. Almost always.

We know that in chapter 4 of John he had told one person and that was the woman at the well. But as far as we know, that's the only person that he volunteered that information to directly. But there were people questioning this.

And in verse 25 of this chapter, some had said, is this not he whom they seek to kill? But look, he speaks boldly and they say nothing to him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is truly the Messiah? The word Christ is the word Messiah. So they're wondering, you know, have they revoked their death warrant? Have they decided that they were wrong? Have they come to recognize that he's the Messiah in fact? That's what people are asking.

And in the last verse we read, it says in verse 31, many of the people believed in him and said when the Messiah comes, will he do more signs than these which this man has done? Now they're believing he was the Messiah because they figured can't expect more than this from the Messiah when he comes. And after all, they were expecting the Messiah and so they were putting it together and deciding some of them were believing that he was the Messiah. Now, it says in verse 30, which we read last time, they sought to take him, but no one laid a hand on him because his hour had not yet come.

And an example of that specific attempt that failed attempt is given to us in verse 32, which is new material for us tonight. The Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring these things concerning him. And the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him.

Now we're not immediately told how that turned out. We go back now to Jesus and another specimen of his teaching on this occasion before we hear how that assignment

turned out for those officers. Now these officers, by the way, would not be Roman soldiers.

They are sent by the Pharisees and by the chief priests and therefore they would be Jewish officers. They would be temple guard. There was a group of Levites who were especially set aside to do police work in the temple.

Basically, they're like bouncers and security guards and things like that. You know, they had the metal detectors and all that stuff. And so they were like the temple police.

They were Jewish. They were Levites, in fact. And some of them were sent armed to pick up Jesus and bring him in alive so they could kill him.

Then Jesus said to them, now whether this means to the crowd or to the guards when they showed up, we don't know. In that movie that was made from the Gospel of John, it's kind of interesting because it tells how the chief priests and Pharisees sent the guards and it shows the guards coming and then Jesus meets them at the door. They knock on his door and he opens the door and he says, I will not be with you long.

And he's talking to them. I don't know if that's how we're to picture this, that he says this to the guards or if he's saying to the Jews in general, the same people that he was speaking to before. It's not always very clear in these statements who the audience is.

In any case, we find that they don't immediately arrest him. Jesus said to them, I shall be with you a little while longer and then I will go to him who sent me. You will seek me and not find me and where I am, you cannot come.

Then the Jews said among themselves, where does he intend to go that we shall not find him? Does he intend to go to the dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? Now this is, remember, this chapter contains a lot of instances where people are at cross thinking. They have different opinions of what Jesus says. Some think he means one thing and then some people think another.

And here when Jesus says I'm going away and you won't be able to follow me, the opinion that is expressed by many is that maybe he's going to leave the country. Maybe he's going to go to the diaspora, to the Jews who live out among the Greeks and teach them. Now teach the Greeks might be a reference to the Hellenistic Jews because sometimes in the New Testament the Hellenistic Jews, that is the Jews who had adopted Greek language and culture and who generally lived outside of Israel, who lived in the diaspora, they were sometimes referred to as Greeks or Hellenists in the New Testament.

But other times, of course, real Greeks or at least Gentiles. Gentiles all spoke Greek unless they were barbarians. By the way, if you know the word barbarian and wonder how that's used in the Bible, a barbarian to the Roman world, a barbarian was someone

who had never learned the Greek language.

So 330 years before to the time of Christ, the Macedonian conqueror, Alexander the Great, had conquered the entire Mediterranean world including Israel and what later was the Roman Empire too. But it was the Grecian Empire under Alexander and he enforced the imposition of the Greek language as the lingua franca, the official language of the entire empire. So for generations before the time of Christ, everyone in the Mediterranean world had been forced to learn to speak Greek.

So everyone knew Greek, but not everyone adopted the Greek culture. Many of the Jews resisted that. But some, especially those who lived out in the diaspora spread out outside of Israel, many of them had adopted not only Greek language but also Greek culture.

But there were some who had never been conquered by Alexander on the farther reaches outside the empire in the north, the Ostrogoths and the Visigoths and the Huns and the Saxons and people who had never really come under Greek or Roman rule and they didn't speak Greek and they were called barbarians. A barbarian was somebody who didn't speak Greek because he hadn't been conquered by Alexander or by the Roman Empire. And so although the Pax Romana was essentially prevailing in the Mediterranean world at this time, the Romans had conquered everyone around the lake there, around the sea, there were still people further out to the north and to the west of Rome that had never been conquered.

And frankly, Rome was still waging war with those people. There were still skirmishes between the Romans and the barbarians at this time. But when they say, will he go out to the diaspora who live among the Greeks and teach the Greeks, they might be saying he's going to go teach our Jewish Hellenized brethren.

Or they might have meant this in a much more shocking way, shocking from their point of view, that is he going to go teach the Gentiles, which would be unheard of. The Gentiles were a lesser breed without the law. And they just weren't sure that Jesus was so loyal to the law of Moses that he wouldn't do that.

Jesus was sometimes thought to be kind of at odds with the law of Moses. They thought maybe he's so compromised he plans to even go out into the Gentile world and just teach Gentiles. Wouldn't put it past him.

Now in recording this, we have an example of what's sometimes called the Johannine irony. Johannine is a word that means pertaining to John. And the Johannine irony comes up a number of times in this passage because he reports that one of the things people were speculating about is maybe he'll go out and even teach the Gentiles.

Of course at the time John wrote this, everybody knew that the gospel had in fact gone

out to the Gentiles. In fact, John's readers were Gentiles. And yet it would seem shocking at the time when this suggestion was made.

Could it be that he'd do something as outlandish as go out and teach the Greeks? And of course the readers of this afterwards would say, well that's exactly right. What's so outlandish about that? But you know, again people having different opinions. There's another time in Acts 8 in verse 22 when Jesus had said that he was going to go where they couldn't follow him.

In actually verse 21 if you look at John 8, 21 Jesus said to them again, I'm going away and you will seek me and you will die in your sins. Where I go you cannot come. Essentially the same prediction that he made in chapter 7 in verse 34.

But again they were speculating, what does he mean? And they said in verse 22, it says the Jew said, will he kill himself? Because he says, where I go you cannot come. So they had no idea what it was he was predicting. He's going to go somewhere where they can't go.

Is he going to go among the Gentiles? Is he going to kill himself? What's he going to do? And so John in this section of the book is basically underscoring how many different opinions were in circulation about Jesus from people who didn't understand what he was saying. So verse 36 here, what is this thing that he said, you will seek me and not find me and where I am you cannot come. And so this question was going on.

Now the guards remember had been sent out to arrest him. But he's still at large at this point. And as the feast week came to an end, actually the eighth day of the feast, which is called the great day, the last day of the week of tabernacles was the great day of the feast.

It says in verse 37, 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. Then the commentary of the author is, 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.

Now, this statement was made on the last day, the great day of the feast. To my knowledge, to my knowledge, this is the only time recorded in scripture where Jesus was in a crowd and the attention was not all on him and he shouted out something to the crowd like a street preacher. You know, like someone standing on a street corner shouting out a message.

A lot of times people who preach on the streets picture that they're doing the same thing that Jesus and the apostles did. You know, he was an open air preacher. He preached in the open air.

Yes, he did preach in the open air, but generally speaking, he only preached in the open air when the people, you know, came to him wanting to hear from him. We never see Jesus going out in the streets and just saying, hey everybody, pay attention here, I got something I want to say to you people. He never intruded into the space of passers-by and said, hey, wait a minute, I got something I want to tell you.

He was not a street preacher in that sense. He was somebody who often spent time trying to get away from the crowds, but they followed him, they anticipated his movements, they met him where he was going, and they were there looking for him to heal and to teach them. So, he would.

And he did that on hillsides, he did that in homes, he did that in synagogues. And he did it in the streets if that's where people apprehended him. But he didn't go to them and say, listen, I've got something I want to say, can I have your attention please? And in that sense, he was not like a modern street preacher because modern street preachers go out there to people who are, generally speaking, not the least bit interested in what they have to say, and find it offensive and intrusive and annoying.

I know because I've been places like in San Francisco where there's a lot of street preachers in other cities, L.A., and these preachers are out there, bless their hearts, they're out there screaming on the street corner, waving their Bible and trying to shout loud enough above the sound of the traffic so people who are on the other side of the street can hear what they're saying. And people are going by, they're just not at all interested in what they have to say. Jesus never did that.

The apostles didn't do that. Every time we find them preaching, whether it's outdoors or indoors, it's to a crowd that came to hear them. A crowd that was gathered either because it was the synagogue service or a crowd that wanted to see the healings and they came to hear his healings, or he was a phenomenon so they came out to hear him because he was kind of a celebrity.

But the point is, he didn't get in their face. They got in his face so he exploited the situation and taught them. He took charge of every situation he was ever in.

This, however, is an exception. As far as I know, it's the only exception in the Bible. There may be others I'm forgetting, but I've thought about this for many years because I used to quite admire street preachers for their courage and their chutzpah and their willingness to go out there and have everyone spit on them and curse them and ignore them and so forth.

Boy, there's some dedicated men and women out there preaching like that. But as time went by, I began to think, is that really what Jesus did? Is that really what the apostles did? Or is this like something else? And I realized that these people in many cases were turning people off to the gospel, making them think of Christians and the gospel as



something to avoid, something annoying. That's not what Jesus and the apostles did.

People came wanting to hear him. So anyway, this one exception, Jesus stands up at the last day of the feast and makes an announcement. It's a short one, but it looks like they're not paying attention to him at the moment until he stands up and surprises them with this announcement.

Now, the announcement is, if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. And he says, and out of his heart, he that believes in me, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water. So he talks about drinking.

He talks about thirst. And he talks about living water pouring out of the hearts of those who believe in him. Now, this statement was particularly timely, as any Jewish person who had observed tabernacles would know.

The ceremonies associated with the Feast of Tabernacles were well in place at least 200 years before 70 AD. They ended in 70 AD when the temple was destroyed and Jerusalem was destroyed. There's never been really a Feast of Tabernacles since then, except for some modern times, some people do still now that Jerusalem's occupied by Jews again.

Some people do go there, even Christians go and keep the Feast of Tabernacles there now. But for almost 2,000 years, the Feast of Tabernacles didn't exist because the temple didn't exist. But before 70 AD, it is documented that at least 200 years, if not more, these ceremonies that I'm about to describe were in place for the Feast of Tabernacles, and therefore, they were practiced in Jesus' time.

And one of the many ceremonies associated with that week was that each of the first seven days of the eight-day feast, each morning of the first seven days, a priest led a procession from the temple to the Pool of Siloam. The Pool of Siloam was in Jerusalem. There's a water source there, the only actually water source indigenous in the city.

And he would take a golden pitcher and he'd draw water out of the Pool of Siloam and then carry it back to the temple and pour it into a funnel on the west side of the altar. And this water-pouring ceremony happened every morning for the first seven days, but not the eighth day. On the eighth day, they didn't do that.

There was a notable absence of water on the eighth day. And instead, the priest would, on the eighth day, offer a prayer for rain, for God to send rain for the crops of the next year. Because, of course, the Feast of Tabernacles occurred at the harvest time of all the fruits and the grains had been harvested earlier in the summer.

So they were now enjoying the harvest for the year and the vintage, but the priest would then pray for the coming season and the rain and all that. So it was on this eighth day, the one day that they didn't have the water-pouring ceremony, that Jesus stood up and said, Is anyone thirsty? Anyone missing the water here? Well, if you're thirsty, come to

Me. I've got water.

I've got water for you. And anyone who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. Actually, belly is the King James heart in the New King James.

Now that's an interesting statement. He said, as the Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from the heart of the one who believes in Me. Now, where did it say that in the Scriptures? And remember, when Jesus said Scriptures, He had to mean the Old Testament.

There was no New Testament. The New Testament, not one book of the New Testament had been written yet. And so, He was talking about the Old Testament Scriptures.

He says, whoever believes in Me, just like it says in the Scriptures, meaning what we call the Old Testament, rivers of living water will flow out of the heart of him who believes in Me. Now, where does it say anything like that in the Old Testament? In fact, you don't have that exact statement anywhere in the Old Testament. And many commentators will turn your attention to Isaiah chapter 12 and verse 3. Where it says, in Isaiah it says, therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

Now, that statement might have been a good Scripture to quote with reference to the drawing of the water out of the pool of Siloam and taking it into the temple to pour it. Jesus said, as the Scriptures said, you shall draw water from the wells of salvation. But Jesus didn't say that.

He said, as the Scriptures said, out of their heart shall flow rivers of living water. So where in the Old Testament do we find a reference to living water flowing out of anyone's heart? Well, the closest verbal similarity to that is in Zechariah 14. And not surprisingly, on the first day of the tabernacle ceremony, the liturgical reading from the Old Testament was Zechariah 14.

And so, although this was the eighth day of the feast, just eight days earlier, the priest had read Zechariah 14 to the people. And in Zechariah chapter 14, and Zechariah of course is almost the last book in the Old Testament, it's next to the last, it says in Zechariah 14.8, and in that day it shall be that living water shall flow. That's what Jesus said.

Out of their heart shall flow rivers of living water. This is the only Old Testament passage that uses the term living water. And Jesus used that.

And he said, as the Scriptures said, out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water. But it actually says here, living water shall flow from Jerusalem. But you see, to Jesus and later to the apostles, Jerusalem in the Old Testament is a reference to the church.

Now, that was not the way the Jews looked at it, and that's not even the way the dispensationalists today will acknowledge. They say, no, Jerusalem is Jerusalem, and the church is the church, and never the twain shall meet. However, they don't agree with Jesus or the apostles, who continually referred to the church as Jerusalem, and so did the prophets.

Of course, the prophets didn't use the word church, and so that becomes a matter of dispute as to whether any reference to Zion or Jerusalem, interchangeable terms in the Old Testament, is in fact a reference to the church. Here's an example where it's hard to see it otherwise. In Isaiah chapter 28, verse 16, Isaiah 28, verse 16, says, Therefore thus says the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion, and again, Zion was the name of the mountain that Jerusalem was sitting on, and therefore the prophets, and even the New Testament, continually uses the word Zion and Jerusalem interchangeably.

Behold, I lay in Zion, or in Jerusalem, a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation, whoever believes will not act hastily. Now, anyone have any idea how the New Testament writers understood that prophecy? They quoted it frequently. The stone was whom? Jesus.

Jesus was the stone, and he was what? The foundation. Of what? Of the church. But what does it say here? The foundation of Zion.

God lays in Zion a foundation stone, which the New Testament writers always identify with Jesus, the foundation of the church. Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Jesus is the foundation of the church, and therefore that stone, which is the foundation of Zion, is Jesus, the foundation of the spiritual Zion.

Let me just take you for a moment over to Hebrews chapter 12. There are a large number of passages we could look at, but that gives too far afield of our intentions here. But in Hebrews chapter 12, writing to Jewish Christians who were apparently tempted to defect and go back to Judaism from Christ, the writer says in verse 18, For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and a tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the words should not be spoken to them anymore.

This is a reference to Mount Sinai when the law was given. When there was an earthquake and shaking and darkness and tempest and clouds and the sound of a trumpet and terrifying spectacle, the Israelites said to Moses, Don't let God speak to us anymore. You go talk to God and then you come tell us what he says.

That's what he's referring to. He's saying you believers in Christ, you haven't come to Mount Sinai. You've come to a different mountain than that.

You've not come to the old covenant in Mount Sinai and the law. You've come to something superior to that. He says it in verse 22, But you have come to Mount Zion.

What does he mean by that? To the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven. Okay, so we have come to what? We've come to the general assembly and church of the firstborn of Christ. He's the firstborn.

So we have come to the church of Christ, which is here identified as Zion, the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem. This is the church. As far as the art of Hebrews, we have come to the church.

We've come to the spiritual Zion. We've come to the heavenly Jerusalem. And though I could multiply the passages, both in the Old and the New Testament that illustrate this, just suffice it to say that the early Christians who remember what Jesus did, after his resurrection, he opened their understanding so that what? So that they could understand the scriptures.

It says that in Luke 24, actually. Luke 24, verses 44 and 45. It says that Jesus opened their understanding after his resurrection of the apostles so that they could understand the scriptures.

So they understood the Old Testament scriptures differently than the rabbis did, differently than natural man would. They saw what only could be revealed through the gift that Christ gave them of understanding the scriptures. And they saw references to Jerusalem and Zion as being about the church.

So they said, we are in Zion. We have come to Mount Zion. We have come to the heavenly Jerusalem.

Now, with that in mind, how would they understand Zechariah 14? In that day it shall come that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem. Well, if Jerusalem is seen as the church, or the believers in Christ, then is it not the case that the scripture says that out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living waters? The only passage in the Bible that actually mentions living waters, says that they shall flow out from Jerusalem, a term that the New Testament Christians understood to mean the church, from the believers. Jesus said, if you believe in me, it will be like the scripture says, out of your belly, out of your heart shall flow rivers of living water.

And it just so happens that this passage in Zechariah 14 had been read as the official reading on the first day of this particular feast. So Jesus could say, as the scripture has said, namely the scripture you heard at the beginning of this week, read by the priest about the living waters. Anyone who believes in me, like that scripture says, living waters will flow out of them.

Now also his statement, if anyone thirsts, let him come unto me and drink. Resembles an invitation that was found in Isaiah. Isaiah chapter 55, 1. Where God has said, ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters.

And you who have no money, come buy and eat. Yes, come buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money on what is not bread and your wages on what does not satisfy? And so this appeal is made by God to those who are spiritually thirsty.

He says, everyone who thirsts, come and buy and drink and eat these things. Now this, we're not talking about physical food. We're talking about that which really satisfies.

And Jesus is echoing this invitation. If anyone thirsts, let him, ho, everyone who thirsts, come and drink, come to me. By the way, this is also the last invitation that we have recorded from Jesus in the book of Revelation.

In Revelation chapter 22, verse 17. It says, and the spirit and the bride say, come. And let him who hears say, come.

And let him who thirsts, come. And whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. In John 7, it's the living water.

In Revelation, it's the water of life. But it's anyone who thirsts, let him come and take freely of the water. Now, John tells us in John 7, 39, when Jesus spoke of this living water, he was talking about the Holy Spirit.

He says, this he spoke concerning the spirit whom those believing in him should receive. For the Holy Spirit was not yet given. Because Jesus was not yet glorified.

So Jesus was saying that the believers in him would be filled with and overflowing with this living water which is the Holy Spirit. Now, why overflowing with it? What's the purpose of that? Why not just fill me up, Lord? I lift my cup, Lord. Fill me up.

Well, why does it have to spill out? Well, there's a reason for that, obviously. If you look at Joel, Hosea Joel, famous. Joel chapter 3 and verse 18 in the poetic language of the prophet.

It says, and it will come to pass in that day that the mountains shall drip with new wine. The hills shall flow with milk. And all the brooks of Judah shall be flooded with water.

A fountain shall flow from the house of the Lord. And water the valley of Acacias. Now, a fountain shall flow from the house of the Lord.

We are the house of God. The church is the house of God. A fountain will flow from the house of God and water the valley of the Acacias.

Now, the imagery here is of a river flowing out of Jerusalem. And watering a portion of land that in the book of Joshua is identified as being in Moab. Now, the interesting thing is that Moab was across the Jordan River from Jerusalem.

This is picturing a river that crosses like an intersection across another river. This river flowing out of Jerusalem flows across the Jordan and onto the land of Moab to water that area. Which is weird because a river can't cross a river.

It's physically impossible. You can't have two rivers flowing and intersect and keep flowing. It just becomes a marsh or something.

Or they have to end up going together somewhere. But you see, this is supernatural. This is not talking about a literal river.

This is talking about something spiritual. Notice it says, I mean, it's obvious it's not literal because it's no more literal than the mountains dripping with wine or the hills flowing with milk. That doesn't really literally, that's not really what happens.

There's not wine dripping from the mountains and flowing with milk and so forth. And it says the brooks will be flooded with water. Look over at Ezekiel just before Daniel.

In Ezekiel chapter 47 and verse 1. It says, Then he brought me back to the door of the temple and there was water flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east. That's very much the same as what Joel said. Joel said it earlier.

Joel was an earlier prophet than Ezekiel. But Joel in Joel 3.18 said, Water shall flow from the house of the Lord to water the valleys of the Acacias. Now we have water flowing from the house of the Lord again.

Same thing, not again, it's the same event. Description of the same phenomenon. There was water flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east.

For the front of the temple faced east and the water was flowing from under the right side of the temple south of the altar. And then of course he's told to go and measure the depth of it and the supernatural phenomenon is identified by the fact that the water is shallow near the temple but as you get further out it's deeper and deeper and deeper. So that the quantity of water is increasing further from the source.

Now water really can't do that unless you have other springs feeding into it somewhere. But the idea is this is a supernatural flow. And as it continues and moves out it gets deeper and deeper and the volume of water is like Jesus multiplied loaves and fishes.

The water is being multiplied supernaturally too. But all of these passages, Joel 3.18, Ezekiel 47.1, Zechariah 14.8, all of these talk about water flowing from Jerusalem. For what? To water the pagan lands.

This is, Jesus said, it's like what the scripture has said. This living water is going to flow out of the believers in me. And John said, he's talking about the Holy Spirit there.

The Holy Spirit would be given eventually when Jesus would be glorified the Holy Spirit would be given and the result would be living waters. The Holy Spirit would flow, not only fill but flow through. The disciples flow out to water the world with spiritual blessing from the Spirit of God.

There's another verse I'd like you to look at in the Old Testament, Isaiah 32. Now I don't know how long it's been since you read Isaiah but if you've read recently you may remember that there's a recurring theme in Isaiah that keeps coming up in different places. It usually is represented as God bringing forth water in the wilderness and turning the wilderness into a flowering region or to a fruitful field or to a lush forest.

The idea is repeated in many different ways in Isaiah. It's probably at least six or eight times in the book in different places. It talks about God sending water in the desert and the result of the desert being watered is that which had been a wasteland becomes full of flowers or full of fruitfulness or full of trees like Lebanon's forests.

A very common recurring theme in Isaiah. Of course it's not literal, it's spiritual. And we can see that from this particular passage in Isaiah 32 and verse 15.

He says, until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field and the fruitful field is counted as a forest. Now there's the imagery of the wilderness becoming like a fruitful field in a forest but it's not this time water that's poured out, it's the Spirit being poured out. Clearly this statement makes it clear that in the other passages in Isaiah where it speaks of water, it's talking about the Spirit just as Jesus is.

When he talks about living water will flow out and this he spoke of the Holy Spirit. So also Isaiah spoke of water gushing forth in the dry place in the wilderness and as a result the barren land becomes fruitful. But this is the Spirit, this is not literal water and this is not literal desert nor is it literal fruitfulness.

It's talking about people, people's souls being watered, dry, fruitless people being filled with the Spirit and then bearing fruit, the fruit of the Spirit. Let me show you what Jeremiah said. In Jeremiah 31 verse 12, Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion.

This too I believe to be a prophecy about the church for reasons I cannot get into right now. Streaming to the goodness of the Lord for wheat and new wine and oil for the young of the flock and the herd. Notice, and their souls shall be like a well-watered garden and they shall sorrow no more at all.

This imagery that Isaiah has of the wilderness becoming a fruitful garden, a garden spot,

a fruitful field. He says, yeah, it's their souls that's going to be like a watered garden. When people come to Christ, they come to Zion, they come to the church, they come to the body of Christ, they come into the kingdom of God.

The Spirit of God is given because Christ has been glorified and when the Holy Spirit is given, He is given as not only a deposit but as a spring of living water flowing out to water the souls that are fruitless and make them like a watered garden to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit and also to water the dry land elsewhere till He pours out water on the dry world. So these images in the Old Testament depict a time of Christ coming, His first coming, obviously Jesus is applying this to His present time not to a second coming. And the Spirit being poured out as He was on Pentecost and flowing forth from the believers as the living waters flow from Jerusalem in the prophecies, so even as the Scripture has said, out of the believers shall flow rivers of living water, which is the Holy Spirit.

Now, when Jesus was talking to the woman at the well, He also mentioned the living waters and He said, He that drinks the water that I shall give shall never thirst, but that water shall become a spring of water springing up into everlasting life. In other words, not only would you not be thirsty because you are satisfied and full with the living water, but that water will spring up from you. It will be not just a well, but a geyser.

And so, this is what Jesus describes as here, He is even more explicit. To the woman at the well, He said it would be a spring springing up. Here it is a spring springing up and flowing out like a river out of the believers.

Now, when we think of this phenomenon predicted and then we think of how it is fulfilled in the life of the believer, we might say, well, is that really how I would describe the church today? Do I see the living water pouring forth and watering the world and turning the world into a spiritual garden spot? Well, in some measure, no doubt. I mean, the world missions are in some measure accomplishing this. But we certainly have a lot of Christians in this country and I don't see that happening necessarily here as I frankly have seen it at an earlier time in my life.

There seem to be waxing and waning of these kinds of phenomena. But more importantly perhaps to each of us is, is that happening in my life? Am I a believer? Am I finding living waters flowing out from me and having that impact? Am I myself finding my soul like a water garden? I'm producing the fruit of the Spirit and my influence in the world, the Holy Spirit is just moving through my gifts and through my life and watering a thirsty world. Are the people around me being fed? Is their thirst being quenched by Christ? Is the Holy Spirit using me to transform the environment that I am in spiritually? And of course many of us would have to say, I don't think I could necessarily describe myself that way.

And some of that may not be our fault because there are definitely seasons of revival where this happens abundantly and then there are seasons when the revival seems to



be lifted and you have to crank it. It's like the Israelites in Egypt, they had to draw water out of the mouth with foot pumps it says. They drew water and watered their crops with their feet.

That is they had a foot pump that they used to bring water out of the river to irrigate because it was dry times. There are dry times during which spirituality has to be worked at in a sense. When there is no revival going on, you have to faithfully keep following Jesus, keep seeking, keep knocking, keep asking because for some reason there are just times when it's more difficult to really minister.

It's difficult to get people saved. It's difficult to get people filled with the Spirit at certain times. Other times revival comes, people get saved hardly with any effort at all.

The Holy Spirit is just moving. People get saved, people get filled with the Spirit, people get healed, miracles are happening, there is revival at times but not other times. But the point is we need to have as it were personally something like a continuous revival.

And as we are filled with the Holy Spirit, it should be that at least in some measure we are having impact. In times of revival it should be a significant and dramatic impact. Other times it may be lesser but there should still be something coming from us.

The Holy Spirit is still with us. He never departs from us. And if we are walking in the Spirit, if we are as Paul put it to Timothy, stirring up the gift that is in you by the laying of hands, stirring it up, you know, continually, you know, if I find myself getting dry, if I find myself getting lukewarm, that I, you know, get back on track with seeking God and, you know, seeking to maintain, as Paul said, be being filled with the Holy Spirit.

But you know what, I've known people, a lot of people, who were prayed for to be filled with the Holy Spirit and they didn't sense that there was any change at all in their life. And I have to say in some cases I didn't see any change in their life either and I thought that is so strange. Because when I got filled with the Spirit my life was just dramatically changed and it has never been the same since.

I can't understand why some people seek and ask to be filled with the Spirit but they don't testify to any change in their life, nor is there one visible. And there is no particular evidence that the Spirit of God is using them in any way. And I don't know what to think.

But one thing that crossed my mind comes from this very passage. Because Jesus, in beginning His statement, said, If anyone thirsts, let him come and drink. And I have known people who don't necessarily seem to have a raging thirst for more of God, a raging thirst for the fullness of the Holy Spirit, a raging thirst to be used of God.

They'd like to, it sounds good to them. You know, if God's into it, they're into it. But they could take it or leave it.

And people like that, you know, sometimes they get prayed for to be filled with the Spirit and I never see any change. And I wonder sometimes if maybe one of the prerequisites is what Jesus Himself said. You have to be thirsty.

There are people who are not thirsty for God. And they might get hands laid on them, they might be prayed for, but they're just not thirsty for God and they never get a drink. They never get filled.

So, in my opinion, this may be one of the prerequisites, there may be others, for being filled with the Spirit. But I would say that as I read these words of Jesus, I have to ask myself, Lord, is that a description of me? If it's not, then I'm not satisfied because I'm thirsty. You see, your thirst has got to be satisfied.

And if it's not happening, if God's not using you, if you don't see a spiritual impact in some way on people's lives, it might be minimal, but if it's something, if you don't see that, then you shouldn't be satisfied. And a lot of times people who don't have any spiritual experience at all, they've said a sinner's prayer, they've gotten baptized, they've been in the church all their life, maybe they've even had hands laid on them, maybe they've even faked tongues. But the point is, they've just never had any spiritual impact.

There's been no evidence of the life of God moving through them. People like that may need to ask, well, you know, am I taking for granted something to be there that isn't there? Am I assuming that because I jumped through the hoops, I got filled with the Spirit? But what if you were never thirsty for God in the first place? Jumping through hoops without that thirst might be something that prevents it from ever occurring. Jesus stated that as the first condition.

If anyone's thirsty, let him come to me and drink. And some people seem to be quite satisfied not to be thirsty. I was asked a question by Louise here the other night, I guess it was last night, why is it that some people don't seem to care about God? Some people just live their lives quite happy without God.

And I don't know the answer. I can't imagine why that is. I can't imagine why anyone who knows about God and believes He exists would not make that knowledge all-defining of their reality, all-consuming.

You know, why anyone could believe there's a God and not thirst after God. Now, if someone didn't believe there's a God, that would explain why they don't thirst after God, because they don't believe He's there. But people, 97% of Americans say they believe there's a God.

But how much thirst do you see? Not very much. How much thirst do you see in the church? Well, let me just put it this way. Even in a big church, where there's thousands

of people who come on Sunday mornings, how many people come to the prayer meetings? In fact, how many churches even still have prayer meetings, because they're so poorly attended? Where's the thirst for God there, even in a religious crowd? Now, many of you know a thirst for God, you have a thirst for God, and that's one reason that you're not satisfied to stay home on a night like this, if you can be with other Christians and study the Bible together.

But we know that thirst is not always present. And why is it they're not? And I think maybe one reason is because, one reason you wouldn't be thirsty is the same reason that mothers don't let their children eat candy before dinner. It's because it'll spoil your appetite.

Even eating wholesome food just before dinner will spoil your appetite. It says in Proverbs, a full soul loathes a honeycomb, but every bitter thing is sweet to the hungry. If you've got hunger, then everything tastes good.

If you're full, nothing sounds good. And many people are simply full of something other than God. They've thirsted for something else, and they've sought something else, and they've not sought first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and therefore it hasn't been added to them.

Jesus said, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness' sake, they will be satisfied. But people who don't hunger and thirst for righteousness' sake, probably because their hunger and thirst is directed toward other things, and they're getting a measure, enough satisfaction to dull their appetite for God. They've got something else distracting them.

And so the hunger they would normally feel toward God is kind of, the edge is taken off by amusement, by things, by whatever. There's so many things to distract us now. And if a person says, I don't understand why I'm not hungry and for God anymore.

Ask yourself, well, what is filling that void then? There's a void in everyone that's filled by something. If it's not God, it's going to be something else. What is it? Entertainment? What is it? Something.

And there are some people who just aren't going to be satisfied with anything less than God Himself. Others, maybe unbeknownst to them, have become so attached to and distracted by other things that fill that primeval emptiness that there's no edge to their hunger for God. There's not something to be examined in oneself.

Verse 40, Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, Truly, this is the prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. Now, notice the prophet we've mentioned before is from Deuteronomy 18, the prophet that Moses said would come.

And it's clear here, as it is in chapter 1 of John, that to the Jews, the prophet and the

Christ were not the same person. They asked John the Baptist, Are you the Christ? He said, No. They said, Are you the prophet then? No.

And here, some say he's the prophet, others say he's not the prophet, he's Christ. Now, the Christians may have been the first to come up with the understanding that the Christ and the prophet are the same one, because they certainly did. They saw that Jesus was the fulfillment of Moses' prediction of another prophet like Him coming, and that He's also the fulfillment of all the Messianic prophecies.

And the Christians took it for granted from day one that Jesus was both that prophet and the Messiah. But the Jews apparently didn't have that opinion. So, is He the Messiah, or is He the prophet, or is He something else? And some said, Well, He's the Messiah, but there was another reaction to that suggestion in verse 41.

They say, Will the Christ or the Messiah come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David, from the town of Bethlehem where David was? So, there was a division among the people because of Him. This is another example of Johannine irony. He reports people saying, Well, He can't be the Christ because the Christ has to come from Bethlehem.

Now, John doesn't even correct it. Certainly, John knows that Jesus was in fact born in Bethlehem, and he expects his readers probably mostly to know that too. But he reports that the main objection some people had against Jesus being the Messiah was that the Messiah had to be born in Bethlehem.

And John doesn't say, And by the way, Jesus was born in Bethlehem. He just leaves that unsaid. He leaves it as sort of a, it's almost kind of an inside joke almost that we all know, these people, little did they know what we all know.

He was born in Bethlehem. But John just kind of reports that and yet says nothing more about it. By the way, John in his Gospels nowhere mentions Jesus' birth or His birth in Bethlehem.

That's mentioned in Matthew and Luke only. But it's clear that John must certainly have known Jesus was born in Bethlehem and even affirms it almost by giving this objection without answering it. Because if John did not know that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and he reported an objection to Jesus being the Christ that the Messiah must be born in Bethlehem, John would be reporting an objection that would be unanswerable.

I mean, he'd be raising doubts about his own thesis that Jesus is the Christ by even quoting this objection unless John of course knew and he expects his readers to know that's in fact where Jesus was from. So there was a division among them again. Now some of them wanted to take Him but no one laid hands on Him which reminds us, oh yeah, someone had been sent out to arrest Him now that you mention it.

What happened to them? Now we have the sequel, verse 45. Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees who said to them, Why have you not brought Him? They sent these guys out in verse 32 and we've heard nothing about them in the meantime. Apparently several days have gone by because we've now come to the end of the feast in verse 37 which sounds like it's later than the days in verse 32.

So they've been gone a while and they come back empty handed and those who sent them say, Why have you not brought Him? And the officers answered, No man ever spoke like this man. You know what I marvel about this? Is that you find actually some policemen who have integrity and they don't follow orders if they think they're bad orders. I sometimes wonder, you know, if orders were given in this country to the military or to the police to go out and arrest the Christians and haul them into, you know, put them in camps or whatever like some people think will happen.

I wonder how many of the officers think, but that's just wrong. I'm not going to do that and defy the orders given to them. These guys, they said, when they heard Jesus they said, Arresting Him? That's just wrong.

He's not bad. He talks like nobody talked. And when He says no man ever spoke like this man, they're implying that maybe He's not a mere man.

He doesn't talk like any man talks. He talks maybe more like God talks. Maybe He's not just a man.

We couldn't arrest Him no matter what our orders were because He's not like anyone we've ever encountered before. He doesn't talk like men talk. They were impressed by His words, obviously.

Then the Pharisees answered the soldiers, Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers of the Pharisees believed in Him? But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed. Now this is a little ironic too because they say, Have any of the rulers of the Jews believed in Him? As if the answer is no. It's these uneducated crowds.

They don't know the Scriptures. They can be deceived into thinking He's Messiah. You soldiers, you seem to be in the same boat with the crowds.

You're deceived too. But those of us who know the Scriptures, those of us who are the rulers of the Jews, none of us believe in Him, do they? And look what happens next. Nicodemus, Nicodemus was not only a ruler of the Jews, he was a member of the Sanhedrin, he was a Pharisee, he was an educator.

In fact, he had the reputation of being the teacher of Israel. He was one of the most respected teachers in Israel at that time. And they say, Have any of the rulers of the Jews, the Pharisees, believed in Him? And here's a Pharisee that speaks up who's also a ruler and a teacher.

And he says, perhaps too sheepishly, He said, Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he's doing? Now he didn't say, I believe in Him. But he at least raises an objection to the injustice of their condemning Jesus. He says, Now I'm an expert at the law like you guys aren't.

It seems to me like our law doesn't allow us to condemn people without a trial until we hear what He has to say for Himself. And we know what He's really doing. We don't just decide we don't like Him, regardless of what He's doing.

We just don't like Him, so we're going to condemn Him. You have to hear Him out. He's got to have a fair trial.

He's got to be able to answer for Himself. Why are you already condemning Him without a trial? And they didn't like being challenged, especially by Nicodemus, because it raised serious questions about their objection they just raised. They just made a point.

You know, maybe lots of people think He's the Christ, but the scholars don't. Well, Nicodemus is a scholar. But, you know, it's interesting what they're assuming there.

They're assuming that if it really was true, then the trained, professional, religious scholars would see it. And isn't that how many people reason? I know I did when I was younger. I was raised in a church, and I would read the Gospels.

I would read the Sermon on the Mount, and I'd see stuff that I'd never... Jesus saying something, I'd never seen any Christian do it. And it would cross my... I remember very distinctly, many times, something would cross my mind and think, well, maybe as Christians we're supposed to be doing what Jesus said here. Then I'd think, nah.

If that was what it meant, all these older religious people who've been Christians all their lives, they'd know. They'd be doing it, you know. No, it must not be what I'm thinking, because I'm not qualified.

And all the people who are, you know, the pastor and the mature Christians, they're not seeing it the way I'm thinking, so I must not be right. If it was true, certainly the scholars would see it. And that's how I felt many times about other issues as I was an adult, studying the Scripture myself and seeing things differently than what I've been taught, and even different than all the commentators I'd read had said at that point.

I'd say, well, I can't be right, because it's like certainly the scholars would know it. I can think of several issues right now that I now am convinced of, but when I first thought of them, I thought, no, I can't be right about that. There's no way I can be right, because no one says that.

None of the commentators say it, none of the translators say it that way. No preacher I've ever heard has ever said it. It must not be true.

Because have any of the scholars, have any of the religious leaders believed this? No. So it must not be true. And that was basically the assumption these guys were making.

They could just write Jesus off by saying, listen, none of the educated men believe in Him. Well, so that means it's not true. Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 11, 25? In Matthew 11, 25, Jesus said, I thank you, Father, that you've hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and you've revealed them to babes.

God has sometimes shown the truth to people who didn't have an education, because the people who had the education were hindered by their education from being open-minded. Babes, little babes, they don't know much, but they know they don't know much. They're full of questions, they're full of curiosity, they're always asking questions about everything.

They know they have everything to learn, and therefore they learn a lot. That's why little children learn language really fast, and adults don't. Because children are inquisitive, and their minds are like a sponge.

And they can learn and receive things at a much higher rate in a given period of time than an adult could do in the same length of time. Because adults already know it all, or at least so much, that they're not looking, they're not as curious. And so the more trained a person is, theologically, the more he's decided he knows.

And many times it's the wise and the prudent that things are hidden from, and they're revealed to babes. Many times the scholars, their very scholarship has hindered them from finding the truth. They're ever learning, but never coming to the knowledge of the truth, as Paul describes certain people.

And so Nicodemus actually challenges them and says, Well, it's possible. We haven't really heard him out yet. We shouldn't judge him and condemn him until we've heard him more.

And they answered and said to him, Are you also from Galilee? Like that was supposed to be like a super stinging insult. You're from Galilee? Here he was a high-born, pure-born, high-pedigreed Jew from Judea. Not one of those people from that compromised region of Galilee.

Remember in verse 41, some thought Jesus was the Christ, but said, Nah, can't be. He's from Galilee. Galilee just didn't have the prestige that was necessary to be a religious leader.

The Messiah certainly couldn't come from there. In fact, they even say to Nicodemus, Search and look. No prophet has arisen out of Galilee.

Well, so they say. But they should have searched and looked. You know, this is an

interesting thing because many prophets came out of Galilee.

Elijah was from Galilee. Elisha was from Galilee. Jonah was from Galilee.

Hosea was from Galilee. There were a lot of prophets in Galilee. In fact, Jezebel had killed as many of the Lord's prophets as she could find.

That was in Galilee. And a guy named Obadiah had found, what was it, a hundred of them? And hid them in a cave and was feeding them. Prophets in Galilee.

These people say, Search and look. No prophet ever arises out of Galilee. Well, it just shows how desperate people are when their thesis is threatened.

Note, they said, the scholars, the trained ones like us, they don't believe in Jesus. But they also don't know the facts. They even misrepresent the biblical history.

You'll never find a prophet coming out of Galilee. Well, if you had thought a little more about it, you'd realize that was not true. There were prophets in Galilee.

They're saying what they must say desperately. They're not making an effort to be truthful. They're making an effort to win an argument.

Even if they have to be a little forgetful of the facts. And this is often the reason why things are hidden from the wise and the prudent. Because they have their training.

They have their commitments. They've gone on record to teach certain things. They've taken a stand.

And their reputation is on it. And to change now would just be too painful or too embarrassing or too humiliating. So they defend their position even irrationally.

Even by misrepresenting facts to make up arguments that aren't real arguments. And that's what these men are doing. So we can see why Jesus spoke so harshly of these scribes and pharisees.

They were not honest men. They had an agenda. That was to discredit Jesus.

Why? He was a threat to them. So they resorted to dishonest arguments and lies and so forth to discredit him. But, you know, it's funny how John records all these misstatements that people make.

And he just leaves them unanswered. And that's the irony that he uses. He lets the reader realize that this is what they were saying, but it obviously isn't true.

I mean, it's ironic that they would say such things when, in fact, the truth is that their argument is fallacious more than they know or are thinking at the time. So this is the second time we've seen Nicodemus in this story. He'll appear one more time.



The first time is in John chapter 3 where he came to Jesus by night and was told about being born again. And we don't know how that interview turned out because the last thing that is recorded of Nicodemus' speech in that case was, how can these things be? And the rest was Jesus talking and we never hear of Nicodemus again until chapter 7 when he somewhat sheepishly kind of answers, speaks up against his companions to sort of defend Jesus. But the next time we will see him will be in chapter 19 when Jesus has been crucified.

And he and another member of the Sanhedrin who was a secret disciple, Joseph of Arimathea, together they go and take the body of Jesus and give him a decent burial. So it seems evident that Nicodemus had become a believer, though he was not very bold or outspoken about it. He could not let this absurd charge against Jesus go unanswered completely.

So he did speak up, he didn't remain silent. And of course he took much more of a bold stand after Jesus died and collected up his body and gave it a burial. A very unpopular thing for him to do since it was his group, the Sanhedrin, that had condemned Jesus to die.

And now he, kind of defying the decision of his own group that he belongs to, goes out and wants to give Jesus a decent burial to show his last respects to Jesus. Of course not expecting Jesus to rise. But so this is a, you know, we get a little bit of a character sketch of Nicodemus with very, very few appearances of the man in the story.

But he's not mentioned in any other book of the Bible than John. So all that we know about him is from this book. And this is the second of three times that we find something out about him.

And so that brings us to the end of the chapter.