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The Feast of Tabernacles (Part 2)



The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In "The Feast of Tabernacles (Part 2)," Steve Gregg uses biblical passages to examine the ways in which Jewish leaders attempted to arrest Jesus. Despite their efforts, Jesus continued to teach, even speaking of living water and other symbolic concepts. Gregg notes that different commentators have different opinions on the meaning of these passages, but ultimately the message was clear: the Jewish leaders were unable to stop Jesus from spreading his teachings.

Transcript

They're kind of tentative about some things. There are some things they wouldn't want to do and they hope God wouldn't say to do it. And they're not totally surrendered to the whole issue of whatever God says, that's what I want.

And until they are, they don't want to do the will of God badly enough to be worthy of his special revelation on the subject. But if a person is obsessed with pleasing God, with doing God's will, and there's always been some people like that. Some of them are not even yet Christians.

But the ones who are not yet and who really have this will be. They will be Christians. Because anyone who wants to do the Father's will, will know.

God will allow, will see to it that they know. That what Jesus said is true, that he did not speak on his own authority, but that he spoke words from God. In verse 18, he said, he who speaks from himself seeks his own glory.

But he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is true and no unrighteousness is in him. Now, what he's saying is that when people speak to promote their own reputations, you can't always be sure if they're telling the truth. They've got sort of a stake in you accepting them and liking them and promoting them.

If they're seeking their own glory and their own promotion, they're going to say only such things as are flattering about themselves. And therefore, they may not always tell the truth or the whole truth. And Jesus said, the person who speaks to glorify himself,

you know, speaks from himself, he seeks his own glory.

But the one who's seeking the glory of someone else, who's promoting someone else, that person's not, doesn't have a personal stake in it. He's just promoting someone else because he really believes in that other person. And therefore, he tells the truth.

And Jesus said, the one who comes to seeks the glory of the one who sent him, that person is true and no unrighteousness is in him. Now, Jesus says, did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law? Now, when he says none of you keeps the law, that is quite an indictment on the Jews. He said none of you keeps law.

He didn't say a lot of you don't. He said none of you keep the law. Now, he was probably meaning you here to mean his opponents, the ones who were the leaders who were trying to kill him.

They were not keeping the law, because they were seeking to kill him, as he said. Why do you seek to kill me? Now, Jesus had done no injustice. Jesus had done nothing worthy of death.

The Bible, the law, said not to murder, and yet they were murderous in intent. And he says, you know, you talk about being followers of Moses. You talk about the law, but you don't keep it yourself.

Now, the same persons were told that by Stephen, in Acts chapter 7. In fact, he may have gotten his this statement from Jesus. He says of the Sanhedrin, when he's speaking to them in Acts 7, verses 52 and 53, which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the just one, of whom you have now become the betrayers and murderers. Who have received the law by the direction of angels, and have not kept it.

Now, he's speaking in the presence of the Sanhedrin. There is a good possibility that Stephen is quoting Jesus, or paraphrasing Jesus here, because when he says, which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? Jesus, certainly, on a couple of occasions, pointed out that the Jews were guilty of, or their fathers were guilty of having persecuted and killed the prophets. But when it says that they foretold the coming of the just one, or the righteous one, in the passage in John before us, Jesus describes himself in just those terms.

He calls himself righteous, which is the same word in the Greek as just. There is no unrighteousness in him, he says of himself in verse 18. And yet he says, you seek to kill me.

Verse 19. You're trying to kill the person who has done nothing unjust. You're trying to kill the one who's done nothing worthy of death, who's done no crime.

Stephen brings that up. He says, the prophets foretold the coming of the just one, of whom you have become the betrayers and murderers. You have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it.

Jesus said, did not Moses give you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. They violate the law by trying to kill Jesus. That's what he's saying.

Now, the response in verse 20, I've already mentioned, it may be the response of the ignorant in the crowd, those who are not from the area, who've just come as pilgrims to the feast from faraway places, never heard of Jesus before this day. And they didn't know about the plot against his life. Therefore, they think he's just being paranoid.

What do you mean? You know, who's trying to kill you? After all, even those who knew there was a plot on his life were marveling that he was openly preaching and no one's arresting him. The fact that no one was arresting him may have made many people think that there was no danger to him. And they said, what are you talking about? We're trying to kill you.

You know, we're just sitting here listening to you. Boy, are you ever paranoid? But it could also be that it's his opponents who answer and they're trying to they're trying to say that, you know, he's he's got them wrong. He's judging them wrongly.

They're not trying to kill him. Although they were and other people knew that to be true. They said that Jesus had a demon.

Later on in John chapter 8, they continued to say such things about him. They say, you know, later on they say, now we know you have a demon. Chapter 8, verse 48, for example.

They say the Jews answered and said, did we not say or do we not say rightly that you are a Samaritan and you have a demon? And then in chapter 8, verse 52, then the Jews said to him, now we know that you have a demon. Now they said that because Jesus said things that they thought were kind of crazy. They thought that no sane person would say those things.

And to say you have a demon would be a lot like saying you're crazy to someone today. There were a lot of people who had demons. As we know, Jesus was cast out demons all over the place.

Demon possession was a fairly common phenomenon. About as crazy as insanity is around here. In this school.

And this in our society. And therefore, you know, it's not like they were saying you need an exorcism. They're just saying you're nuts.

Now Jesus answers when they say that he's not that they're not seeking to kill him. Jesus doesn't refute them. He knows that they really are anyway, and he answered and said to them, I did one work and you all marvel.

Moses therefore gave you circumcision, not that it's from Moses, but from the fathers, and you circumcise a man on the sabbath. If a man therefore receives circumcision on the sabbath so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with me because I made the man completely whole on the sabbath? Referring to the layman that he healed the last time he'd been in Jerusalem. Now, the point he makes is this.

There is a hierarchy within the law, a hierarchy of values. There are times when some laws have to be sacrificed to in the interest of others. David eating the showbread was an example that Jesus gave on another occasion.

In Matthew chapter 12, he said that David ate the showbread to feed those who were with him. And he said you should know that that's okay because God says I'll have mercy and not sacrifice. In other words, to eat the showbread was a violation of a ceremonial law, but it was a minor matter.

It was not a big deal. Some things have to be sacrificed to other things. To show compassion and mercy on the hungry was a weightier matter of the law.

Likewise, the Jews themselves recognized that there were some weightier matters of the law. It was possible for the law of sabbath to come into conflict with the law of circumcision. Because the law of circumcision was that a Jewish male had to be circumcised on the eighth day of his life.

Well, clearly Jews are born every day of the week. That means that about one out of seven would have the eighth day of his life fall on a Saturday. One out of seven would fall, in other words, would be born on a Friday as opposed to any other day of the week.

And therefore, the eighth day of his life would be on a Saturday. That's a Sabbath. Now, circumcision is a work of sorts.

It's certainly as much of a work as Jesus was accused of doing when he healed the sick. When he simply told people pick up your bread and walk or when he just touched them or whatever and they got healed. He was accused of working on the Sabbath, certainly for a priest to take a knife and do surgery.

A minor surgery on the Sabbath was every bit as much a work. And yet the Jews knew that one of those things, either the necessity of circumcising on the eighth day or the necessity of doing no work on the Sabbath, one of those things had to be sacrificed to the other. Now what they had come up with, and Jesus doesn't fault them for this, he assumes they made the right decision, was that they decided to go ahead and circumcise on the eighth day, even if that happened to be a Sabbath day.

That means that Sabbath observance would have to be sacrificed in the interest of circumcising on the right time, right day of the child's life. Possibly because the eighth day of a person's life only happens once in a lifetime, whereas Sabbaths would happen all the time. Therefore, they'd be less unique, less important.

Whatever the rationale, it's clear that they would break Sabbath to circumcise. And Jesus says, now, you say, I broke Sabbath, and what I did was I made a man well. Now, if a priest can do minor surgery that doesn't have anything to do with the child's health or well-being on the Sabbath, can't I do a major surgery, as it were, a major healing that changes a man's entire life for the better? He was crippled and paralyzed all his life, and now he's able to walk.

You say that you can do one on the Sabbath and I can't do the other? And this is what Jesus continually does with them. He catches them on their own terms. He finds things where they've done in principle the same thing they're accusing him or his disciples of doing, and points out that actually what he's doing is more justified than what they did.

And that's what he's saying here. Now, one thing I would point out here is that circumcision was considered to be more binding than the Sabbath. At least that's how the Jews understood it, and Jesus didn't fault them for it.

Jesus didn't suggest, boy, you guys got this all wrong. You should have sacrificed the issue of an eighth-day circumcision rather than break the Sabbath. He did not find fault with them for making the choice they did between Sabbath keeping and circumcision.

He allowed that they did something legitimate in sacrificing Sabbath observance for the keeping of the circumcision law, which would suggest that circumcision was a matter of greater importance than Sabbath keeping. Now, the reason I bring this up, of course, is because I know of no religious groups that argue that today Christians should be circumcised. I don't know of any denomination, I don't know of any movement or even any cult that requires Christians to be circumcised.

But I know of some that require them to keep Sabbath. Now, the reason no one requires circumcision is because circumcision is very clearly stated in the Bible to be part of the old system that isn't necessary anymore. But if that which is clearly passe, that circumcision, was in fact more binding than Sabbath keeping was, then how can one argue that Sabbath keeping, which was the less important of the two, still has to be kept when the more important of the two does not? I lose you or you follow that argument? Jesus and his critics all seem to agree unanimously that circumcision was more important than Sabbath keeping.

Well, if circumcision is no longer necessary, how could anyone argue that Sabbath keeping is, if circumcision was in fact important enough to preempt Sabbath keeping whenever there was a conflict between the two? Well, Jesus finally says in verse 24, Do

not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment, or just judgment. In other words, don't make shallow appraisals. Make appraisals on the basis of justice and righteousness.

Now, why did he say that? Because they were accusing him of doing wrong because he healed on the Sabbath. He says, you're not even thinking deeply. You're thinking very shallow.

You guys break Sabbath all the time for lesser things than that. You're not judging righteously. You're not looking at the effects of what I'm doing and giving them their proper judgment.

You're judging on the basis of shallow considerations, like whether I did something on the Sabbath or not. But if you think more carefully, think more deeply, and look at the issues of justice and righteousness, you'll see that I'm not at fault here. Then some of them from Jerusalem said, Is this not he whom they seek to kill? Look, he speaks boldly, and they say nothing to him.

Do the rulers know indeed that this is truly the Christ? Now, that is an interesting thing. Jesus was speaking openly, and the rulers did want to arrest him, and yet initially they didn't. I think we could deduce it's because they were stunned.

They were probably stunned by his bravado and by his brazenness that he'd just come right out, knowing that there was a price on his head, just come out in public and teach like that. Now, he did have the crowds around him. It might have been a very difficult thing politically for the people to come and just take him, haul him off, when in fact the people were captivated with him.

However, things got so bad in the eyes of the Jewish leaders, with people saying, Well, maybe this is the Christ, that they actually did make a move to arrest him. It says in verse 30, then they sought to take him, but no one laid a hand on him because his hour had not yet come. We're not quite there yet.

But at first, even though they wanted to take him, they were apparently paralyzed with indecision about what to do when he came out publicly and spoke boldly, kind of caught them by surprise that he wouldn't be continuing to hide. And no doubt the crowds were not favorable toward his arrest, and so they didn't know what to do initially here. That says in verse 27, however, we know where this man is from, but when the Christ comes, no one knows where he's from.

Of course, as I pointed out earlier, this reflects two misunderstandings on their part. One was the misunderstanding that they thought they knew where he was from. They thought he was from Galilee, but he's really from Bethlehem.

They didn't know that. The second misunderstanding is they thought the Messiah would

come out of nowhere and no one would know where he's from. Obviously, there were some that knew better than that.

Verse 28, Then Jesus cried out as he taught in the temple, saying, You both know me and know where I'm from? And I have come down. I have not come from myself, excuse me, but he who sent me is true whom you do not know. But I know him, for I am from him, and he sent me.

Then they sought to take him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come. And many of the people believed in it and said, When the Christ comes, will he do more signs than these which this man has done? Now, some were beginning to think, sort of hint around that maybe he is the Christ. They don't say, Is this the Christ or this is the Christ? They say, When the Christ comes, will he do more than this man has done? Implying that if the answer is no, then maybe all the things that this man has done is enough to make us think that he qualifies as the Christ.

This made the leaders particularly uncomfortable to hear people saying things like that. So in verse 32, the Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring these things concerning him, and the Pharisees and the chief priests, that would be the Sanhedrin in general, sent officers to take him. Now, these officers were not Romans.

These officers were Levites. There was a temple guard, according to Josephus and other records of the time, of prestigious Levites. It was a privilege.

In fact, the captain of the temple guard was a very high-ranking Levite priest, and a group of Levites were there to keep the order in the temple. And so apparently the Sanhedrin dispatched these Levite guards out to arrest Jesus, but we hear nothing about them until verse 45, when the officers came to the chief priests and the Pharisees, who said to them, Why haven't you brought him? Now, in between verse 32 and verse 45, we have mostly Jesus talking, and it was his talking, the way he did, that caused these guards to hold off and not arrest him. Now, it's possible that in verse 30, when it says, Then they sought to take him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come, that might be a summary statement of what is given in greater detail in verse 32 and verse 45.

In other words, it may be summarizing that they sent the guards, and the guards didn't arrest him. Or it may be a case that they sought some other way first to arrest him and found it not easy, and so they then dispatched the temple guards. Different approaches have been taken to that, but it hardly makes any difference.

The fact is, there was now an overt attempt being made to capture him, and yet it did not succeed at this point. Then Jesus said to them, verse 33, I shall be with you a little while longer, and then I will go to him who sent me. You will seek me, and you will 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, by Greeks here, they probably don't mean Gentiles. They probably mean the Grecian Jews, the Hellenists.

It would be unthinkable that any Jew would go and talk to actual Gentiles, but there were a lot of Hellenistic Jews living in the dispersion, in the diaspora, whom he might go to, and then of course those whose businesses and duties were around Jerusalem wouldn't be able to follow him there. And so I think maybe that's what he's talking about. By the way, in the next chapter, in chapter 8, he said in verse 21, I'm going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin.

Where I go, you cannot come. He said the same thing in their response in verse 22, John 8, 22. So the Jews said, will he kill himself? Because he says, where I go, you cannot come.

So they weren't quite sure what he was talking about. Of course, we know what he was talking about. He was talking about dying.

He was talking about ascending into heaven and going where they would not come, because they weren't going to go to heaven. But they had different theories. One theory was that he was going to go out of the country to the diaspora and teach the Grecian Jews there.

Another theory was that he was talking about suicide. Verse 36. What is this thing that he said, you will seek me and not find me, and where I am you cannot come.

On the last day, the 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.

Now this statement is somewhat perplexing, because Jesus said in verse 38, he who believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. It is generally understood that the statement, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water, is what Jesus is referring to when he says, as the scripture has said. Now the only scripture he could be referring to is the Old Testament scripture.

But where in the Old Testament do you find a statement like this, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water? It's also open to question as to out of whose heart? If he's paraphrasing or semi-quoting some scripture, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water, does that mean out of the Messiah's heart or out of the believer's heart? It could be taken either way. But the problem is trying to identify where in the scriptures he's

referring to. What Old Testament scripture does he have in mind? Well, there really isn't any Old Testament scripture that says these words.

Scholars have suggested various possibilities. You'll notice in the margin here, for instance, Isaiah 12, 3 is given. It's very commonly given.

It says, therefore you shall with joy draw water from the wells of salvation. But that's not exactly the same thing Jesus is saying, not even very close to it. With joy you shall draw water from the wells of salvation.

That doesn't say out of your innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. In fact, living water would be probably the functional term here. Jesus had used the term earlier in talking to the woman at the well.

And that's in John chapter 4. And we can probably assume safely that he had the same concept in mind when he used it here. It says, for example, in John 4.14, whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst, but the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life. Just prior to that, he said in verse 10, if you knew the gift of God and who it is that says to you, give me a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.

So he says, I will give you living water if you ask. He also says, that water that I give will become a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life. Presumably a fountain within that person.

That person will become a spring of this living water. Now in John 4, there's not any evidence of what that water is, although in John 7.39, we're told, this he spoke of the Holy Spirit. So the Holy Spirit, which was not yet given until Jesus' resurrection, was the living water of which he spoke.

He told the woman at the well that the person who believes in him, that water will become a fountain springing up from that person. Therefore, when Jesus says in John 7.38, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water, sounds very much like what he said to the woman at the well, out of you will flow a fountain of water. So the river of living water is apparently coming out of the person, the believer.

Now, there is really only one passage in the Old Testament that comes very close to being worded like this. And, it is in my opinion, the passage Jesus is alluding to. If you look over at Zechariah chapter 14, which some have described, myself included, as one of the hardest chapters in the Bible to interpret.

Zechariah 14 has tremendous difficulties in its interpretation, largely due to its apocalyptic style and its apparent symbolism. But it says in Zechariah 14.8, In that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea. In both summer and winter it shall occur, and

the Lord shall be king over all the earth.

In that day it shall be, the Lord is one and his name one. Now, this passage means what? I mean, what's it talking about? Well, it says that living waters will flow from Jerusalem. Let's keep that thought in mind.

What do we have there? Living waters. They will flow from Jerusalem. Look over at Joel chapter 3. Another of the minor prophets, a little earlier than Zechariah.

Joel chapter 3 and verse 18 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, presumably in Jerusalem, and water the valley of the Acacias. Now, there's strong reason to believe this passage is symbolic.

Talks about the mountains dripping with wine, the hills flowing with milk. Ordinarily wine comes from grapes, not mountains, and milk comes from cows, not hills. And I think it's basically saying something equally symbolic with the statements that are frequently made about Israel being a land of milk and honey.

A land flowing with milk and honey. Basically, it's talking about prosperity and something good. But it says a fountain.

Joel 3.18 says, A fountain shall flow from the house of the Lord. Now, is that the same thing Zechariah's talking about? Zechariah says, rivers, it says living waters will flow from Jerusalem. Here it says, A fountain shall flow from the house of the Lord, which is presumably in Jerusalem.

Look at one other Old Testament passage. Ezekiel chapter 37. Another very, very symbolic section of scripture.

Ezekiel 47. 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.

And we can go on, but we don't need to. It goes on to describe this river getting deeper and deeper. It's called a river.

A little further down. In verse 5. Again, he measured 1,000. It was a river that I could not cross.

So this is a river flowing from under the threshold of the house of the Lord in Jerusalem to the east. So if you put it together, Ezekiel predicts or he sees a river flowing from under the threshold of the house of the Lord. Joel says, a fountain shall flow from the house of the Lord.

And Zechariah says, living waters will flow from Jerusalem. Jesus said, out of the

believer's belly shall flow rivers of living water. How is that to be understood? Well, the easiest way to understand it for me would be to say that Jesus is saying that the believers in him are the new Jerusalem.

And the prophecies that living waters will flow out of Jerusalem are talking about this messianic blessing of the Holy Spirit flowing out through the new Jerusalem, which is the believing community. In favor of this approach, I would turn you to something else John wrote. Remember, John wrote these words of Jesus in John 7. He also wrote Revelation, chapter 22.

In Revelation chapter 22, verse 1, and he showed me a pure river of water of life clear as crystal proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb and in the middle of its street and on the either side of the river was a tree of life and so forth and so on. Now, where is this? Well, it's in the new Jerusalem. If you look at the previous chapter, which gives the context, Revelation 21, 9 says, Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, Come and I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife.

Now, the Lamb is Jesus. Who's the Lamb's bride? The church. Okay.

Now, it says in verse 10, And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God and so forth. Now, he said, I'm going to show you the bride, the Lamb's wife, and he showed him what? the new Jerusalem, which is symbolic of the church. In Revelation 22, 1, from this new Jerusalem flows a river of the water of life.

Now, this certainly connects with Zechariah where he said, From Jerusalem living waters will flow. There can be no doubt that Revelation 22, 1 is sort of an amplification on that. From Jerusalem living waters will flow, Zechariah said.

Revelation says, proceeding from the throne of God, there's a river of the water of life. Water of life is like living waters. So, John is basically interpreting Zechariah, and he's saying this Jerusalem from which the living waters flow in Zechariah 14, 8, is really the new Jerusalem, the Lamb's wife, the church.

These living waters, the spiritual blessings of the Holy Spirit, they flow from the church, from the new Jerusalem. Now, look at what Jesus said again here. In John 7, 38, he who believes in me, who's that? The church.

People who believe in Jesus. As the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. Well, he's not quoting any scripture, but he's certainly alluding strongly to one.

If he means that the believers are the new Jerusalem, which is what Revelation teaches,

then the scripture he's referring to is probably Zechariah 14, 8, which says out of Jerusalem living waters will flow. Well, Jesus said, just like the scripture says, if you believe in me out of your heart living waters will flow. Rivers of living water.

You are the new Jerusalem. Now, I bring all this up and belabor it as I have, because it is quite a good example. There are many others, but it's quite a good example of the way in which Jesus and the apostles spiritualized Old Testament stuff.

As a matter of fact, the passages we looked at in the Old Testament a moment ago, Ezekiel 47, Joel 3, 18, and Zechariah 14, 8. I just gave you those scriptures a moment ago. We looked at them. They are all taken by dispensationalists as literal.

They believe they're literal and that they're descriptive of the kingdom age, which they identify as the future millennium. Jesus, however, apparently took them spiritually and so did John, as the book of Revelation would indicate. And there's strong reasons to, let's face it.

All of them fall into highly symbolic passages. The idea of the mountains dripping with wine and the hills flowing with milk and that kind of stuff. And that the river flows from the house of God and waters the valley of the Acacias in Joel 3, 18.

The valley of the Acacias is in Moab. That's across the Jordan River from Jerusalem. How could a literal river flow across another literal river? Roads can intersect like that, but rivers can't.

Rivers can merge, but they can't cross each other. And that's what would have to be the case if we took a literal, non-figurative approach to Joel 3, 18. Because this river that flows from Jerusalem waters the valley of the Acacias in Moab.

The reason we know that's in Moab is because it says so in the book of Joshua. So, you know, all the evidence from within the passages that we're looking at symbolism here. And the symbolism is this.

That if anyone is thirsty for God, if anyone's thirsty for the water of life, for the Holy Spirit, they can come to Jesus and drink all they wish. This invitation is repeated again in Revelation in the very closing of the book. Which shows that the book of Revelation is thinking, when it talks about the river of life and so forth, it is thinking about this promise of Jesus in John chapter 7. Because it says in Revelation 22, 17, Revelation 22, verse 17, 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.

Now notice, if anyone thirsts, let him come. That's the invitation. That's what Jesus said in John 7, 37.

If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Now, who is saying this? According to Revelation 22, 17, the Spirit and the bride both say this. The Spirit appealed to the sinners to come to Jesus.

The bride, the church, appeals to sinners to come and drink of this water of life. The invitation was given by Jesus first, but after Jesus left, the gospel, the Revelation says now the Spirit and the bride are doing the inviting. Same invitation, though.

Come if you're thirsty and drink of the water of life. I suspect that when people have been prayed for to receive the Holy Spirit and have not apparently received the Holy Spirit, and there are cases like that, some of them, I've really marveled at, you know, praying for people to receive the Spirit, and there's not the slightest evidence at that time or later that anything has changed in their life. I wonder sometimes if it's they failed to meet this particular condition, thirst.

If anyone thirsts, let him come and drink. And he that believes in me, as the scripture said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water, which means the Holy Spirit. It seems to me that the Holy Spirit is given to those who crave Him.

And if there's sort of a lackluster, half-hearted interest, perhaps that's not worthy of God bestowing something as precious and valuable as the Holy Spirit in power on somebody for. Now verse 40, therefore many, I should say this about verses 37 through 39, commentators always say it, so I might as well. There was a ritual in the Feast of Tabernacles that involved the pouring out of water.

Different commentators have different opinions as to how it went. In fact, one commentator says that every day for that week they would draw water from the pool of Siloam and in a ritual procession take it and pour it out, I forget where, at the altar or somewhere like that, and offer up prayers to God about sending down the living water or something like that. One commentator says they did that ritual every day that week except the last day of the feast.

Another commentator says they did it only on the last day of the feast, which means that apparently from the writings of the rabbis and Josephus the ritual is not all that clear. But there is some ancient authority to say that there was a ritual associated with the day of, with the Feast of Tabernacles that involved taking water from the pool of Siloam and ritually pouring it out, accompanied by certain prayers that were offered. It was just a yearly ritual.

Now whether they did it every day except the last day of the feast or just did the last day of the feast, really in either case, it was on that last day of the feast that Jesus said this. If this was the only day they poured out the water, as some say, then perhaps he gave this utterance even while the water pouring ceremony was in progress. As they were pouring out this water and praying to God, Jesus would stand up and say, if anyone

thirsts, let him come to me and drink, and out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

Contrarywise, if this was a ritual that was done every day except the last day of the week, then it may have been the omission of that ritual, being the last day of the week which had been done every day previous in the week, that led Jesus to say this. In any case, it is hardly ever spoken about this passage without pointing this out, that there was a ritual of water pouring associated with the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, which many people believe gave the milieu and the backdrop for Jesus' statement here about living water. Verse 40, therefore many from the crowd when they heard this saying said, truly this is the prophet, obviously referring to the prophet that Moses said would come.

In Deuteronomy 18.15, he said, the Lord your God will raise up another prophet like me. That's what they mean. This is that prophet.

Others said this is the Christ, which means obviously they didn't associate the prophet and the Christ as the same individual. Although in the New Testament, we later learn that both figures are references to Christ. He was the prophet like unto Moses.

He was also the Christ. That was not clear to the Jews. Therefore, some were calling him the prophet, some were calling him the Christ, and some objected to his being referred to as the Christ because they thought he was from Galilee, since he'd grown up there.

And they say, has not the scripture said that Christ comes from the seed of David, from the town of Bethlehem where David was? And the irony is, of course, John doesn't even tell us, although he knows that Jesus was in fact born in Bethlehem. By the way, John doesn't give any birth narratives of Jesus and nowhere makes reference to the fact that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Some would suggest that John therefore may not have known of this, but that can hardly be the case.

The fact that John records this objection without answering it means that he assumes his readers know the answer to it. Otherwise, he'd be letting what would be a formidable objection to Jesus being the Messiah. He'd be leaving it, he'd be letting it stand unchallenged.

He says, these people said he can't be the Messiah because he's from Galilee, and the Messiah according to scripture has come from Bethlehem. Well, this is true, and John leaves it unanswered because he assumes his readers know it. Otherwise, he would have to make some kind of answer to this.

He'd say, well, you know, Jesus, you know, he was from Bethlehem, actually. But, that goes without saying, even though John hasn't said it in his gospel, it has been mentioned in Luke and Matthew. And so there was a division among the people because of him.

Now, we take the last segment. We move away from the discussion of the mixture of

opinion among the people and move to the opinion of the Jewish leaders. Now, some of them wanted to take him, but no one laid hands on him.

That, of course, we saw already was said back in verse 30. So, this is probably a second time that they tried, but didn't do it. But back in 32, back in verse 32, they had sent out guards to arrest him, and now those guards returned.

The officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees who said to them, why have you not brought him? Here, they've been gone for probably days since that whole event in verses 37 through 39 intervened, which appears to be on another day of the feast than the day earlier that he was talking. The officers come back without him, and they answered, no man ever spoke like this man. Now, whether that means, you know, no one has held the attention of the people and had the popular support with his words as this man has, and therefore we simply couldn't do it, the people were too much on his side, or whether it means that these Levites themselves were impressed that this man was more than an ordinary man.

And the latter seems to be the case. We can't be sure, but certainly the Pharisees took it as if the guards were themselves acknowledging that Jesus was special. And probably they were.

Whatever it was, the way Jesus spoke caused them to not move forward and arrest him. Maybe they themselves were taken by him. And the Pharisees suggest that very fact.

They say, are you also deceived? Then they get really frantic. If the temple guard themselves can't be relied on to see their point against Jesus, what's left? You know, how in the world could they possibly get? So they begin talking frantically and irrationally, as we shall see. They say, have any of the rulers of the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd that does not know the laws are cursed.

Now, they're suggesting that none of the rulers of the Pharisees have believed in Jesus. And John brings this up as an irony. Nicodemus, who last time we heard of him, was described as a ruler of the Jews and a Pharisee.

Nicodemus speaks up in favor of Jesus in a rather non-committal way. It's he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them. He said to them, does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing? Now, Nicodemus doesn't come out and say, yeah, I know of a ruler of the Jews and of the Pharisees that believe in him, me.

Although that is the case, because we know that Nicodemus did come to be a believer, because he and Joseph of Arimathea jointly collected the body of Jesus and gave him a decent burial. And we're told that Joseph and Nicodemus did not agree with the Sanhedrin in their condemnation of Jesus. We're told that in chapter 19 of John.

We don't have time for that to look there now, but Nicodemus is mentioned three times.

In chapter 3 of John, he comes to Jesus by night. In this case, he speaks up in Jesus' favor.

And then in chapter 19, he comes to Pilate with Joseph of Arimathea and requests permission to bury Jesus and receives that permission. But here, although Nicodemus had become a believer, he doesn't say so in so many terms. I mean, let's face it.

His companions were speaking in a rather intimidating way. They say, have any of the rulers of the Pharisees believed in him? It's this crowd that doesn't know the law who's accursed. They believe in him, you know.

In other words, they're saying our opinion is that anybody who would believe in him must not know the law and must not be a high-ranking scholar and leader in Judaism. Now here, Nicodemus is just that. He's a high-ranking scholar.

He's the teacher of Israel, as Jesus referred to him. And yet, he believes him, but he's kind of meek about it. And he says, well, he just makes an appeal for sanity here.

He says, listen, isn't it kind of a principle in law, ours included, that you don't condemn a man before he's had a trial? Don't you listen to his testimony first? Doesn't he get to face his accusers and speak for himself before we condemn him? Now, what he was saying was true of Roman law and true of Jewish law. And so, Josephus was not saying, he was not making something up as some kind of an innovative defense for Jesus. He wasn't saying, well, listen, give the guy a break.

You know, maybe he's real. He's just pointing out that you guys are kind of getting, you're getting away from your own principles. You guys are the ones who are supposed to be enforcing the law, and yet our law forbids doing what you're doing.

You're condemning him, and we haven't even had him on trial. We tried to arrest him, but he didn't come, and so he hasn't had a trial yet. Now, just this much sanity from Nicodemus has caused him, did I say something other than Nicodemus? Sometimes, there's been times when I've been talking about Nicodemus, I say Josephus.

Did I say that earlier, a moment ago? Some say yes, some say no. Okay. I saw some smiles, so I thought, I must have made that mistake back there.

I know myself to do that from time to time. But yeah, when I'm talking about Nicodemus, it's happened before that I've said Josephus for some reason. Okay.

Nicodemus, you know, he just inserts a little bit of calmness and sanity to the situation and a little bit of common sense, but they can't tolerate this. They turn on him like a pack of dogs, and they answered and said to him, Are you also from Galilee? Being from Galilee would be a really low blow. Search and look, for no prophet arises from Galilee.

Here, they're being very irrational, because Elijah was from Galilee, Jonah was from Galilee, Amos and Hosea were from Galilee. These were Galilean prophets. Elisha was from Galilee, and so they're really not being truthful.

They're just grasping at straws. They're so frustrated by their inability to make any progress against Jesus. Even their own guards won't arrest him.

Even Nicodemus, one of their leaders, is now talking sensibly about him. You know, what next? They have to resort to lies and fabrications. Of course, prophets had arisen from Galilee, but they're trying to say, since no prophet has, which isn't true, certainly the Messiah can't.

Therefore, Jesus can't be the Messiah, because as they believed, he was from Galilee. And so we see in this chapter a division. There was a division among the people because of him.

That's an understatement. There was that division even among the leaders of the Jews, because people like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were even...