

Daily Bible Study Commentary by Pastor Steve

We're excited to have you digging deeper into the Word. The best way to use this study guide is to read the Bible verse(s) first, then Pastor Steve's commentary. God bless you.

John 7:35-36

vs35-36: The religious leaders did not understand this statement, particularly the words, "Where I am you cannot come." They thought Jesus might be threatening to escape their jurisdiction by leaving Israel. There were sizeable Jewish communities in most of the major cities in that part of the world, and they thought He might take His disciples and go to one or more of them and conduct His ministry there. Alexandria (Egypt) or Damascus (Syria) would be likely possibilities. By using the word "Greeks" they did not mean the Gentiles who live in Greece. The Jews who lived in Israel used this term to identify Jews from other lands (Jn 12:20-21; Ac 6:1; 9:29; 15:21). A sample of how widespread the Jewish community was can be found in the list of those listening on the Day of Pentecost (Ac 2:9-11). However as John's gospel progresses, we are not left to wonder about the true meaning of Jesus' statement. He explains that He is talking about heaven (Jn 13:33, 36; 14:1-3).

John 7:37

v37: John now takes us forward to "the last day, the great [one]of the feast" (literal), so that we can listen to Jesus as He uses another Old Testament symbol to reveal His identity as the Messiah. The last, or seventh, day of the Feast of Booths was, and is, called "Hoshanah Rabba" which means "great praise." Each day during this festival a priest walked from the temple down to the Pool of Siloam at the south end of the "City of David." The source of that water was the ancient spring of Gihon (1Ki 1:33; 2Ch 32:30; 33:14). It was a distance of about one-half mile, and as he walked, a joyous procession accompanied him. The priest carried a golden pitcher able to contain about two pints of water, and after dipping it into the pool he carried it back to the temple. When he arrived, rams horns and silver trumpets were sounded, and the priest took the water to the great altar of burnt offering and poured it out before the Lord (Sources for information on the Feast of Booths: Alfred Edersheim, The Temple, Eerdmans, reprint 1988, pp277-282; Israel Ariel, Chaim Richman, Carta's Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, the Temple Institute and Carta, Jerusalem, 2005, pp175-199; Ron Cantrell, The Feasts of the Lord: Rehearsals for the End, Bridges for Peace, Tulsa, OK, third printing 2002, pp74-81; William W. Francis, Celebrate the Feasts: The Christian Heritage of the Sacred Jewish Festivals, Salvation Army National Publications, 1998, pp89-97; Celebration: The Book of Jewish Festivals, Naomi Black, consulting ed., Jonathan David Publishers, Inc., 1989, pp32-53).

John 7:37

v37 (continued): The Feast of Booths comes at the end of the dry season. No rain normally falls for six or seven months, so by the end of the summer the springs begin to dry up, the cisterns are empty and the water that's left has gone bad. By pouring out that pitcher of water onto the altar, the priest was symbolizing three things: 1) it reminded everyone that God provided water in the desert during the Exodus (Ex 17:1-7; Nu 20:11); 2) it was a prayer for rain at the end of the dry season (Dt 11:8-17); but 3) it was also a prophetic symbol of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which the Messiah would bring at the end of the age (Ps 42:1-2; Isa 11:9; 12:3, 55:1; 58:11; Eze 36:27; 37:14; Joel 2:28-29; Zec 14:16-18).

John 7:38

v38: Psalm 118 was chanted during this ceremony, and it may have been at the moment when all the voices died down that Jesus stood to His feet and cried out in a loud voice: "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, out of his belly will flow rivers of living water" (literal). His voice must have startled the worshippers and outraged the religious leaders. Ordinarily the temple guard would have immediately arrested anyone who dared to interrupt the services, but they along with everyone else were profoundly moved by His words (Jn 7:40-47).

John 7:38-39

v38 (continued): Jesus used symbolic language to tell the assembly that He was their Messiah. By coming to Him in faith a person could receive the promised indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Just as the Gihon spring provided water for thirsty people all year round, those who believed in Him would receive a constant supply of God's presence because the Holy Spirit Himself would take up residence inside them. **v39:** John explains that what Jesus was promising that day was not salvation but a miraculous encounter with the Holy Spirit which John himself had received, along with thousands of others, after Jesus was resurrected and ascended into heaven ("glorified"). John is telling us, his readers, that the promise Jesus spoke on the last day of the Feast of Booths is now available to us because Jesus has been glorified. So we can have what John himself had: God's Spirit dwelling within us in such abundance that there will be more than enough to refresh others.

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John 7:40-44

vs40-42: Jesus' invitation provoked debate, not ridicule. There must have been a strong presence of God confirming His words because the discussion that erupted afterwards was about whether or not Jesus was the "Prophet" promised by Moses (Dt 18:15-19) or whether or not He was the promised Messiah (2Sa 7:12-17). No one suggested He was crazy. They understood the spiritual meaning behind His claim, and many thought it was true. Those who argued that He was not the Messiah did so because they wrongly assumed that He had been born in Nazareth rather than Bethlehem (Mt 2:1-12; Lk 2:1-7). In light of the prophecy in Micah (Mic 5:2), they concluded He could not be the Messiah. **vs43-44:** As the debate about Him raged, the crowd divided into hostile factions. Some became so angry they tried to push forward and seize Jesus, but John says, "No one laid (threw) his hands upon Him" (literal). One possible explanation is that those who did believe in Him stepped in their way and blocked them. Another possibility is that God placed a fear of Him in their hearts.

John 7:45-46

vs45-46: The temple guard had been sent by the chief priests and leaders of the Pharisees to arrest Jesus (v32), but the guards also fell under the influence of His words and returned empty handed. The leaders were shocked and asked, "Why did you not bring Him?" Apparently at least some of the Sanhedrin (Israel's highest religious court) had assembled and were waiting, so they could question Jesus when He arrived. Obviously they hoped to find grounds to jail Him or worse. The guards replied that Jesus was far too credible to arrest. They had not encountered a crazy fanatic or a fool spouting religious nonsense. Something was happening in that temple courtyard that rose above the level of a disturbance. They said, "Never did a man speak as this man speaks" (literal). In other words, "That situation demands respect. Jesus has all the marks of a genuine prophet, and we felt it was inappropriate to interrupt Him. We too were spiritually moved when we listened to Him" (paraphrase). To say such a thing under those circumstances took great courage. They were questioning the wisdom of their assignment and suggesting that the leaders inquire further before they act.

John 7:47

v47: It was the Pharisees rather than the high priests who responded to these comments. During that season of Israel's history (from 174 B.C. onward) the high priesthood was granted to certain people by whatever foreign emperors ruled them at the time (David A. Hubbard, New Bible Dictionary, Third Edition, I. Howard Marshall, ed., Inter-Varsity Press, 1996, p958). It was no longer a sacred office held for life and then passed on to one's son. Bribery and submission to Rome had become the pathway to that position (Alfred Edersheim, The Temple, Eerdmans, reprint 1988, p94). So the household of Annas that controlled the high priesthood during Jesus' ministry were not people who cared one way or another about what the Bible said concerning the Messiah. Their interest in Jesus was purely political. They saw Him as a threat. If His influence continued to increase He could jeopardize their position. But the Pharisees did care about the Bible. In their minds they were rejecting Jesus on biblical grounds. It isn't that they didn't want the Messiah to come, they didn't think Jesus could be the Messiah because they thought He had been born in Nazareth (v52).