

# John 7:37-39

- Believe in Christ and become a fountain of life! -

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## Introduction

- ❖ Do you long for true love? Do you long for righteousness and mercy? Do you long for personal knowledge of God? Believe in Jesus Christ and rivers of living water will flow from within them.
  - Streams of living water:
    - Streams of love.
    - Streams of wise words and acts.
    - Streams of grace, forgiveness (Lk 7:36-50; Jn 8:1-11).
    - Streams of righteousness and mercy (Mt 5:6, 7).
    - Streams of personal knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ (Jn 17:3).
  - This is needed in the desert of this world:
    - A world in need of love.
    - A world full of foolishness and blindness.
    - A world guided by revenge and often so unmerciful.
    - A world lacking of personal knowledge of God.
  
- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap with other sermon outlines taken from the Gospel of John. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a “stand-alone”. You can also fit this outline into a series of sermons.

## Context

- ❖ An overview of John 7:

John 7:1-9	The Feast of Tabernacles is near.
John 7:10-13	Jesus goes up to the festival.
John 7:14-36	Jesus is teaching during the festival week. The people ask themselves: "Is he the Christ?"
John 7:37-39	Jesus' call on the last day of the festival week.
John 7:40-44	The reaction of the people.
John 7:45-52	The report of the temple guards to the chief priests and Pharisees.

❖ A short overview of the Gospel of John:

John 1:1-18	The prologue.
John 1:19-1:52	The witness of John and the call of the first disciples.
John 2:1-4:54	The signs of Jesus. The first sign at Kana (Jn 2:1-12). The second sign at Kana (Jn 4:43-54).
John 5:1-11:57	The beginning of the persecution of Jesus by the Jewish leaders and looking for a way to kill him: "So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him" (Jn 5:16). "Jesus went around in Galilee. He did not want to go about in Judea because the Jewish leaders there were looking for a way to kill him" (Jn 7:1). "So from that day on they plotted to take his life" (Jn 11:53).
John 12:1-19:42	The final week: The six days before Pesach (12:1). The Last Supper; the betrayal; the trials, the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ.
John 20:1-31	The resurrection and appearances.
John 21:1-25	The third appearance after his resurrection.

- ❖ John 7:37-39 is part of a period of increasing tension between the Jews and Jesus, which will culminate in the betrayal, condemnation, crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ.

## Form and structure

- ❖ John 7:37-39

Time and location of action: (verse 37a)	On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice,
Call and promise: (verse 37.b, 38)	“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.”
Explanation by John (1): (verse 39)	By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.
Extended explanation (2):	Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

## Technical and hermeneutical notes and theological background

### God’s ‘tenting’ in Israel

- ❖ With regard to John 7, John 1:14 is important: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”
  - John 1:14 refers to the Old Testament:
    - Made (his) dwelling = “σκηνώω”: *live, settle, take up residence* (perhaps an expression of continuity with God’s ‘tenting’ in Israel) **Jn 1:14**.<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ There are numerous references to the first five books of the Old Testament = Moses:
  - The law and Moses (Ex 20:1-17; especially the Book of Deuteronomy; Jn 1:17; 7:19).
  - The prophet and Moses (Deut 18:15; Jn 1:45).
  - The snake in the desert, Moses, and the crucifixion of Christ (Num 21:7-9; Jn 3:14-15).
  - The bread from heaven and Moses (Ex 16:4-8; Jn 6:32).
  - The circumcision and Moses (Gen 17:10–14; Jn 7:22-23).
  - Moses and Jesus (Jn 1:17-18; Jn 9:29).

<sup>1</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 929).

- ❖ During the wandering through the desert, there were two moments when water came out of the rock to give life again to a thirsty people (Ex 17:6 and Num 20:11).
  - The apostle Paul made the following theological statement: “They all ate the same spiritual food (the manna) and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ” (1 Cor 10:3, 4).

### Verse 37

- ❖ Festival = “ἑορτή”: **a day or series of days marked by a periodic celebration or observance, festival, celebration.**<sup>2</sup>
  - Refers to the third of the three great feasts, the pilgrimage times of Passover (1; with unleavened bread), Weeks (2) and Tabernacles (3). It is also known as “The feast of Jahweh” (Lev 23:39), and was the most important and best attended of the pilgrimages to the sanctuary. In recognition of this importance, both within the Old Testament (Ezek 45:25) and the New Testament it was sometimes called simply “the feast.”<sup>3</sup>
  - “σκηνοπηγία”
    - “The Lord said to Moses, ‘Say to the Israelites: ‘On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the Lord’s Festival of Tabernacles begins, and it lasts for seven days. The first day is a sacred assembly; do no regular work. For seven days present food offerings to the Lord, and on the eighth day hold a sacred assembly and present a food offering to the Lord. It is the closing special assembly; do no regular work” (Lev 23:33-36).
    - Particularly with the Gospel of John, knowledge of the calendar of Jewish Festivals helps determine the chronology of Jesus’ mission.<sup>4</sup>

### Verse 38

- ❖ Believes in me = “πιστεύω” : **2. to entrust oneself to an entity in complete confidence, believe (in), trust,** with the implication of total commitment to the one who is trusted. In the Bible God and Christ are objects of this type of faith that relies on their power and nearness to help, in addition to being convinced that their revelations or disclosures are true.<sup>5</sup>
- ❖ Water = “ὕδωρ”: **2. transcendent life-giving medium, water.**<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 335).

<sup>3</sup> Wise, M. *Feasts*. In: Green, J. (Ed.) (1992, p. 237).

<sup>4</sup> Idem (p. 240).

<sup>5</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 817).

<sup>6</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 1024).

- Water symbolizes life, cleansing, refreshment and renewal. It is no surprise that water also symbolizes the Holy Spirit.<sup>7</sup>
  - “For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants” (Isa 44.3; see also Ezek 36:25-26).
  - The Spirit has been “poured” out (Joel 2:38,39; Acts 2:17; 10:45).
- Jesus might use the imagery of two ceremonies of the Feast of Tabernacles: the outpouring of water from the well of Siloam and the ceremony of the illumination of the woman’s court.<sup>8</sup>

Verse 39

- ❖ Glorified = “δοξάζω”: 1. **to influence one’s opinion about another so as to enhance the latter’s reputation, praise, honor, extol.**<sup>9</sup>
  2. **to cause to have splendid greatness, clothe in splendor, glorify**, of the glory that comes in the next life (Acts 3:13; Rom 8:30; **Jn 7:39; 12:16, 23, 28; 13:31, 32; 17:1, 5, 10**). It is a favorite term in the Gospel of John, **in which the whole life of Jesus is depicted as a glorifying of the Son by the Father (Jn 8:54; 12:28; 13:31; 17:1, 4), and, at the same time, of the Father by the Son (Jn 13:31f; 14:13; 17:1)**. The glorifying of the Son is brought about by the miracles which the Father has him perform (**Jn 11:4**), through the working of the Paraclete (**Jn 16:14**) and through ‘his own’ (**Jn 17:10**), who also glorify the Father (**Jn 15:8**).<sup>10</sup>
    - Glory = “δόξα”: 3. **honor as enhancement or recognition of status or performance, fame, recognition, renown, honor, prestige.**<sup>11</sup>

The Holy Spirit and the Gospel of John

- ❖ The comment of John regarding the gift of the Holy Spirit must be understood within the context of the gospel itself.

<b>Jesus and the Spirit</b>	
Jn 1:32-33	Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. (...)”

<sup>7</sup> Burge, G.M. *Water*. In: Green, J. (Ed.). (1992, p. 869-870).

<sup>8</sup> Souvay, C. (1912). *The Feast of Tabernacles*. In: The Catholic Encyclopedia. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Retrieved November 12, 2016 from New Advent: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14425a.htm>

<sup>9</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 258).

<sup>10</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 258).

<sup>11</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000, p. 257).

	The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is <b>he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.</b>
	<b>Jesus, Nicodemus and the Spirit</b>
Jn 3:5, 6 (, 8)	I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he <b>is born of water and the Spirit.</b> Flesh gives birth to flesh, but <b>the Spirit gives birth to spirit.</b>
	<b>Comment of John (the Baptist?) on the person and work of Christ</b>
Jn 3:34	For the one whom God has sent speaks the <b>words of God</b> , for God gives the <b>Spirit</b> without limit.
	<b>Jesus, the Samaritan woman at the well, and the Spirit</b>
Jn 4:23-24	Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in <b>spirit</b> and <b>truth</b> , for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in <b>spirit</b> and in <b>truth</b> .
	<b>Jesus' discourse (chapter 6)</b>
Jn 6:63	The <b>Spirit gives life</b> ; the flesh counts for nothing. The <b>words</b> I have spoken to you <b>are spirit and they are life.</b>
	<b>Comment of John on the words of Jesus spoken at the Feast of Tabernacles</b>
Jn 7:39	By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the <b>Spirit</b> had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.
	<b>Jesus and the Spirit</b>
Jn 14:17	the <b>Spirit of truth</b> . The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.
Jn 14:26	But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.
Jn 15:26	When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the <b>Spirit of truth</b> who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.
Jn 16:13	But when he, the <b>Spirit of truth</b> , comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.
Jn 16:15	All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the <b>Spirit</b> will take from what is mine and make it known to you.
	<b>After the resurrection</b>

Jn 20:22	And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."
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The Glory of Christ and the Gospel of John

	<b>The disciples and the glory of Jesus, which is the glory of God</b>
Jn 1:18	The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.  (See also John 2:11.)
	<b>God glorifies the Son</b>
Jn 8:54	If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me.
	<b>The glory of God, and the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ</b>
Jn 11:4	This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it. (See also John 11:40.)
Jn 12:16	At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him. (Compare John 7:39.)
Jn 12:28	"Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again." (See also John 13:31, 32; John 17: 1, 4, 5.)
	<b>The Holy Spirit and the glory of Jesus</b>
Jn 16:14	He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.
	<b>The disciples and all believers will share in the glory of Christ</b>
Jn 17:22	I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one.
Jn 17:24	"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

- ❖ To share in the glory of Christ and in the glory of God means to live in communion with the Father and the Son through the Holy Spirit.

## Exposition

### Verse 37

- ❖ “On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice.”
  - It is the Feast of Tabernacles. It was the greatest of the feasts in Israel and at the final day many people would be gathered in the temple precincts to be joyful and receive the blessing. Jesus might refer to a symbolic act of pouring out of water by the priests. But John didn’t state this explicitly.
    - Did John presuppose that his readers were familiar with this symbolic act? Most readers who lived after the destruction of the temple 69 CE were probably not familiar with this ritual of “pouring out of the water from the well of Siloam.”
- ❖ “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.”
  - Matthew 11:28: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”
  - Matthew 5:6: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”

### Verse 38

- ❖ “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.”
  - “Believes in me” = to entrust oneself to Jesus Christ in complete confidence, *believe (in), trust*, with the implication of total commitment to Christ.
    - “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’” (Jn 14:6).
  - When Jesus spoke with the Samaritan woman at the well (Jn 4), he used similar words: “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (Jn 4:13, 14).
    - The Samaritan woman witnessed to the citizens of her home-town, after Jesus revealed himself as the promised Messiah to her. Streams of living water flowed from within her.
    - Compare the following passages:

The Samaritan Women at the Well	The People at the Temple
The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain	Still, many in the crowd put their faith in him. They said, “When the Christ comes, will he do more miraculous

everything to us” (Jn 4:25).	signs than this man?” (Jn 7:31).
A spring of water welling up to eternal life (Jn 4:14).	Streams of living water will flow from within him (Jn 7:38).

- This is not a known quotation from the Old Testament, although some passages express the same thought. “The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life” (Prov 10:11; 13:14; 16:22).
- There is another solution. Streams of living water are connected with the dwelling of God and Lamb (Christ) and his throne (Rev 22:1). Revelation 21 and 22 remind of Ezekiel 47:1-12. In this chapter, the prophet Ezekiel “saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar” (Ezek 47:1).
- Finally John 17 must be mentioned. In his prayer, before he was betrayed and taken captive, Jesus referred to his godly glory (Jn 17: 1, 4, 5, 10, 22 and 24).
  - “Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began” (Jn 17:3-5).
    - Both utterances, “streams of living water will flow from within him” and “the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (Jn 4:13,14), refer to the witness and the representation of Christ by the believers in order that someone else comes to faith in Jesus Christ and will know God and his Son:

“those who will believe in me through their (disciples, apostles) message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one” (Jn 17:20-22).

### Verse 39

#### ❖ “By this he meant the Spirit,”

- “whom those who believed in him were later to receive.” After the resurrection of Christ we read: “And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’” (Jn 20:22; Ac 2:1-13).
  - “When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.” **Up to that time the Spirit had not been given,**”

- ❖ “since Jesus had not yet been glorified.” The resurrection of Christ epitomizes the glorification of Christ by the Father (Jn 17:1-5). His glorification is at the same time the vindication and justification of the Son.
  - “My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me” (Jn 8:54).
  - He is the Son of Man (Jn 12:23; Dan 7:13, 14).
- After the glorification of Christ, his disciples will fully understand the Old Testament in relation to Jesus.
- Although the Spirit was present and at work before Christ, he is fully revealed and given after the resurrection of Christ. Only after the resurrection the disciples and the church could understand the Old Testament as it is fulfilled in Christ Jesus (Mt 5:17).
- The Old Testament speaks of the promised Christ. The New Testament reveals Christ.

## Application

- ❖ The focus should be upon the call of Jesus and its relation to the feast of the Tabernacles, and the Exodus.
  - Some attention can be given to the final verse in which John connects the gift of the Spirit to the full revelation of Jesus the Christ, the Son of God and his glory.
- ❖ Jesus issues a strong call to come to him!
  - The church, preacher, evangelist, the Christian, must urgently call people to belief in Christ.
- ❖ The great feasts of Israel were all instituted during the wandering through the desert after the exodus from Egypt.
  - The Feast of the Tabernacles referred to the period of more than forty years during which Israel lived in tents.
  - There were two moments when water came out of the rock to give life to a thirsty people (Ex 17:6 and Num 20:11). And the apostle Paul made the following theological statement: “They all ate the same spiritual food (the manna) and drank the same spiritual drink; **for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ**” (1 Cor 10:3, 4).
- ❖ To believe in Christ means: **to entrust oneself to Jesus Christ in complete confidence, believe (in), trust**, with the implication of total commitment to Christ in life and death.
  - “Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption” (1 Cor 1:30).
- ❖ “**streams of living water will flow from within him**” = witness of the risen Christ, not only by words and proclaiming the gospel, but also to live according to the gospel:
  - “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you” (Jn 15:9-12).
  - Streams of living water:

- Streams of love.
- Streams of wisdom.
- Streams of grace, forgiveness (Lk 7:36-50; Jn 8:1-11).
- Streams of righteousness and mercy (Mt 5:6, 7).
- Streams of personal knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ (Jn 17:3).
- This is needed in the desert of this world:
  - A world in need of love.
  - A world full of foolishness and blindness.
  - A world full of injustice and corruption.
  - A world so often guided by revenge and unmerciful.
  - A world lacking of personal knowledge of God.
- ❖ This is made possible, after Jesus has fully revealed himself as the Messiah, the Christ, promised by God in the Old Testament, showing his glory in the crucifixion and resurrection.

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