

THE GREAT CLAIM OF JESUS

JOHN 07:37–39

Introduction

This is a picture of the great claim of Jesus. It is a picture that should cause every man to search his own response to Jesus.

- I. The setting: The day of the Feast (v. 37).
- II. The claims of Jesus (vv. 37-39).

I. *John 07:37 Feast of Tabernacles*

The Feast of Tabernacles was the most popular feast among the Jews. For that reason it was simply known as *The Festival* (1 Kng. 8:2). It was also called *The Feast of Ingathering* (Exo. 23:16) and *The Festival to the Lord* (Lev. 23:39). The Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated for seven days. Each Jewish family built a small stucco or tent-like structure in their yard or upon some other property they owned or secured for the occasion. Then they moved out of their home into the structure for the seven-day period. The Feast celebrated two significant events. Historically, it celebrated the day when Israel wandered about in the wilderness as strangers and pilgrims without a homeland. The purpose for moving into the stucco or tent-like structure was to keep before their minds the wilderness wanderings of their forefathers (Lev. 23:40-43). Secondly, the Feast was to be a period of thanksgiving for the completion of the harvest season and for the goodness of God in all of life (Exo. 23:16; Deu. 16:13, 16). The people were to give thanks for all that God had given them: all the fruit of the land that enriched life and made life possible.

The ceremony of the festival was most impressive and gives a dramatic picture of Christ's claims (Jn. 7:37-39). On each of the seven days, the people came to the temple and brought some fruit as an offering and a few palm and willow branches. The branches were used to form a roof over the altar. Then the priest took a golden pitcher and led the people in a procession down to the pool of Siloam where he filled the pitcher with water. During this march the people played the flute and sang the Hallel, which was Psalms 113-118.

It was on the return march that the significant drama took place.

- => As the pitcher of water passed through the Water Gate, the people repeated in unison: "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Isa. 12:3).
- => When the pitcher reached the altar, the water was poured out over the altar as an offering to God. While this was being done, the people waved palm branches and recited the words "O Lord, save us; O Lord, grant us success" (Psa. 118:25).

The idea of the procession was a dramatic way to thank God for rain, to offer prayer to God for more rain, and for a fruitful season in the coming year. It was a dramatic way for the people to acknowledge their need and dependence upon God for the rains, the water that gave them the fruit of the ground and the bounty of life. The last day of the Feast

was dramatic in particular, for the people repeated the processional seven times. Note a significant point: Scripture says the Feast of Tabernacles will be celebrated and fulfilled in the end time when our Lord returns. The Feast will apparently symbolize our joy, liberty, and victory through the wilderness experience of life and the glorious provision of God: the glorious provision of living eternally and worshipping and serving God throughout the universe (Zec. 14:16).

II. *John 07:37–39 The Claims of Jesus Christ*

It was on “the last and greatest day of the Feast,” the day when the people marched in the processional seven times, that Jesus made His phenomenal claim. Some imagine Jesus shouting His claim just as the people finished saying, “Grant us success” (Psa. 118:25).

Imagine the scene: Jesus did two unusual things. He *stood* (a teacher always sat in that day), and He *cried out* (ekrazen) shouting loudly. Both actions would startle and shock the people to attention. Picture thousands of voices praying to God for the living rains in the coming season, reciting: “grant us success,” and then piercing the air comes the thundering cry:

John 7:37-38 On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.”

Jesus made three phenomenal claims.

1. Jesus Christ is the source of life: He is the One who can quench the real thirst of man’s being, who can meet the desperate need of man for prosperity, the real fruit and bounty of life.
 - a. Men do thirst. They thirst for physical water and they thirst for spiritual life. Living water is the only water that will quench thirst. Men have two thirsts: a physical thirst and a spiritual thirst.

Psa 42:1 As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.

Zec 13:1 “On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity.”

Men know immediately how to quench their physical thirst, but their spiritual thirst is a different matter. Within their hearts men sense a thirst for...

- purpose
- meaning
- significance
- satisfaction
- fulfillment
- something that is missing
- something to fill the void, the emptiness and the loneliness
- deliverance from a sense of lostness
- freedom from undue anxiety, stress and pressure

Men have a problem, however. They usually misunderstand the spiritual thirst and try to quench it with the stagnant waters of the flesh and of this world. The result is poison and death.

=> The stagnant waters of the flesh and sinful nature are such things as lust, immorality, drunkenness, indulgence, and pride.

=> The stagnant waters of the world are such things as the love of money, cars, houses, lands, clothes, extravagant living, position, and power.

The stagnant waters of the flesh and the world never quench a man's thirst. They are like salt water; they only make a man crave for more and more.

Jer 2:13 My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

b. Jesus Christ claims to be the source, that is, the Water that can quench man's thirst and give the fruit and bounty man so desperately needs in his life. He claims that He can do what water does. Water does at least three things. It cleanses or purifies; it refreshes; and it revitalizes or energizes.

=> He can cleanse and purify.

Eph 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

=> He can refresh.

Isa 28:12 To whom he said, "This is the resting place, let the weary rest"; and, "This is the place of repose" — but they would not listen.

Acts 3:19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

=> He can revitalize and energize.

Mat 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

2. Jesus Christ is the source of abundant life. Rivers of living water can flow out from a person. An abundance of life can be experienced (see *Jesus Christ, Life*, Jn. 1:4; *Jesus Christ, Purpose of Life*, Jn. 10:10).

Mat 5:6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."

John 4:14 "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."

Rev. 7:16 Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat.

John 10:10 "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

Rev 22:17 *The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.*

- a. The death of Jesus Christ (His having been struck for the sins of the world) is the source of the living water. Out of His death (because He died) He was able to arise, and by arising He was able to conquer sin and death and to bring forth eternal life in all of its abundance. Note: the Word of God to Moses was a picture of the living water that was to come from Christ after He was struck. (see Isa. 53:4.)

Exo 17:6 *"I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. (see Num. 20:11)*

- b. Living water comes only through "believing in Christ." (See *Saving Faith*, Jn. 2:24.)

John 6:35 *Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty."*

3. Jesus Christ is the source of the Holy Spirit. Rivers of living water refer to the Holy Spirit. This is a crucial verse, for it is the only place "living waters" is defined. When Jesus spoke of giving "living water", He meant He would give the Holy Spirit to a person. The presence of the Holy Spirit, of course, meant the experience of abundant and eternal life.

Note: it is only the person who believes in Christ who receives the Holy Spirit. Belief in Him is essential. Christ is the Giver of the Spirit.

Note several facts about the living water.

- 1) The living water comes from Christ. He and He alone is its source.

John 7:37 *On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink."*

Rev 21:6 *He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life."*

- 2) The living water keeps a man from ever thirsting again. His inner thirst is gone forever. It is quenched and fully satisfied.

Zec 13:1 *"On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity."*

Isa 58:11 *The Lord will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.*

- 3) The living water is "a spring of water" placed "in" the man. The well is not placed outside the man, not placed anywhere out in the world, not in his home. It is placed "in" him.

John 7:38-39 “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

- 4) The living water springs up and continues to spring up and bubble, flowing on and on. It is ever in motion.

Isa 12:3 With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

- 5) The living water springs up into eternal life. It will never end.

Rev 7:17 “For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” (See Eze. 47:1-12).

Rev 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

Gal 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Eph 5:9 For the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth. ■

JOHN 07:39 HOLY SPIRIT

What does the statement mean, “the [Holy] Spirit had not been given”? It does not mean the Spirit was not active in the Old Testament. He was very active (Gen. 1:2; 6:3; Job. 26:13; 33:4; Psa. 51:11; 139:7; Eze. 3:24, 27; Hag. 2:5). It seems to mean that the Holy Spirit was not *fully present* until after the death and glorification of Christ. He was not present...

- in all His fullness
- in the lives of believers all the time
- in equipping believers with permanent spiritual gifts

These three things certainly happened after the glorification of Christ.

=> He entered the world in all His fullness at Pentecost. (See *Pentecost, Coming of the Holy Spirit*, Acts 2:1-4.)

=> He entered the lives of believers at conversion, and their bodies became “the temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 6:19).

=> He equips believers with spiritual gifts that are permanent (1 Cor. 12:1f). □

ACTS 02:01–04 PENTECOST, COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The disciples had been deliberately prepared for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Throughout the Bible the revelation of the Spirit had been step by step, that is, progressive. Prophecy shows this clearly.

1. Joel prophesied, “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people....” (Joel 2:28-29).
2. John the Baptist said, “I baptize with water, but He shall baptize with [en, in] the Holy Spirit” (Mt. 3:11; Lk. 3:16).
3. In the early part of Jesus’ ministry, He had said that believers were to be “born again...[by] the Spirit” (Jn. 3:3- 4; see 1 Jn. 5:1).
4. During His ministry, Jesus taught that men were to receive the Holy Spirit by prayer (Lk. 11:13).
5. In the Upper Room, Jesus identified the Holy Spirit as a Person (Jn. 14:15-26), and He outlined the work of the Spirit with both unbelievers and believers (Jn. 16:7-15). Significantly, He revealed that He was praying to the Father for the Comforter to come and abide with the disciples (Jn. 14:16-17).
6. After His resurrection from the dead, Jesus appeared to His disciples in the Upper Room. There He symbolically breathed on them, saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (Jn. 20:22). But He insisted they not begin their ministry until they experienced the Spirit actually coming upon them with power (Lk. 24:49; Acts 1:8).
7. Right before Jesus was to ascend into heaven, He said, “John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:5).
8. Then, ten days after Jesus’ ascension and after much prayer, the Holy Spirit came upon and filled the whole body of believers at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4).

There are two events of the Holy Spirit’s coming that seem to hold historical significance. These two particular events are very, very special to the church, for both Jewish and Gentile believers were clearly seen to be in God’s historical plan. Both Jew and Gentile were baptized by the Holy Spirit, that is, placed into the body of Christ, His Church.

1. At Pentecost: the disciples were “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:4).
 - a. This was in fulfilment of the prophecy by Joel. The Spirit was *poured out* upon the believers (Acts 2:16).
 - b. This was in fulfilment of the prophecies by Jesus and John. The Spirit *baptized*, that is, immersed the believers with His own presence (Acts 1:5; 10:44-48; see 11:15-16, esp. 16).

2. At Cornelius' house: the Holy Spirit "came on", had been "poured out", and was "received" by the Gentile believers (Acts 10:44-47).
 - a. Peter said to the Jews who came with him, "They have received the Holy Spirit *just as we have.*" (Acts 10:47).
 - b. Peter reported the event to the Jerusalem Church: "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'" (Acts 11:15-16)
 - c. Peter used the experience to support Paul before the great Jerusalem Council:
Acts 15:8 God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us.

In all three instances the idea conveyed is that of an event just like *their own* experience. It is as though Peter pointed to a Gentile Pentecost or at least an extension of Pentecost in Acts 2 to include the Gentiles.

Note two other facts:

1. At Pentecost, the account uses the word *filled*, not *baptized*.
2. At Cornelius' house, the account says the Holy Spirit *came on*, had been *poured out*, and *received*. But in reporting the experience to the Jerusalem Church, Peter used the word *baptized*. He said the Gentile believers were "baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 11:16) "as he had come on us at the beginning" (Acts 11:15). This clearly says that although the word *baptized* is not used in the Pentecost experience, the disciples were baptized or immersed with the Spirit's presence at Pentecost. The words *filled*, *received*, *poured*, *baptized*, and *came on* are all used interchangeably to describe the Spirit's presence coming into a believer's life. (If believers would heed this, it would eliminate many of the arguments that arise over terminology.)

Other than these two events Acts records only four other times that the Holy Spirit came upon believers.

1. A little prayer band in Jerusalem was "filled" with the Holy Spirit (see Acts 4:8).
2. The Samaritans (half-Jews, half-Gentiles) "received the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:15-17).
3. Paul was "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:17).
4. The disciples of John experienced "the Holy Spirit came on them" (Acts 19:6).

One other fact is important. Other than Pentecost and Cornelius' house, the word *baptize* is used in connection with the Holy Spirit only once in the rest of the New Testament. That one reference is 1 Cor. 12:13: "For we were all baptized by one

Spirit into one body.” That is, the Holy Spirit takes all believers and baptizes or immerses, places, and positions them into the body of Christ — into the church, the universal church.

In conclusion, what does all this mean?

1. When a man grasps the gospel and believes, really believes, the Holy Spirit enters his life. He *comes upon, falls upon, pours, fills, baptizes* (immerses) Himself into the life of the believer. This is a personal *experience*. This act of the Spirit takes place in the life of the believer. The believer *experiences* the Spirit coming into his life. The believer receives the Spirit *experientially*.
2. When a man grasps the gospel and believes, really believes, the Holy Spirit takes him and *baptizes* or immerses, and places him into the body of Christ, which is God’s Church. The believer does not feel or experience this act. It is an act of God that takes place in heaven. The believer is *counted* as a child of God. He is *counted* as a member of the body, of the church. This is a *position*, not an experience, which the believer feels. It happens once-for-all. The believer is adopted as a child of God — irrevocably. It is an eternal *position*, an eternal sonship. The believer becomes a member of God’s Church — positionally (1 Cor. 12:13).
3. After a man is saved, he is to be filled and kept on being “filled with the Spirit” — day by day (Eph. 5:18; see Jn. 14:21, the word “manifest”). The early believers were continually filled (Acts 4:8, 31). □

JOHN 01:04 “IN CHRIST WAS LIFE”

“In Him was life, and that life was the light of men.” John 01:04

The simple statement “in Christ was life” means at least three things.

1. Life is the quality and essence, the energy and power, the force and principle of being. Christ is life; He is..
 - the very quality of life
 - the very energy of life
 - the very force of life
 - the very essence of life
 - the very power of life
 - the very principle of lifeWithout Christ, there would be no life whatsoever. Life is in Him, within His very being. All things exist and have their being (life) in Him.
2. Life is purpose, meaning, and significance of being. Christ is life; He is..
 - the very purpose of life.
 - the very meaning of life.
 - the very significance of life.

3. Life is perfection. Life is all that a man must be and possess in order to live perfectly. This is what is meant by life. Life is completeness of being, absolute satisfaction, the fullness of all good, and the possession of all good things. Life is perfect love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).

Whatever life is and all that life is, is all in Jesus Christ. Even the legitimate cravings of man that are sometimes entangled with evil — such as power, fame and wealth — are all included in the life given by Jesus Christ. Those who partake of His life shall reign forever as kings and priests (Lk. 16:10-12). This is the very thing that is distinctive about life — it is eternal. It lasts forever and it is rewarding. It will eventually exalt the believer to the highest life and place and position. (Rev. 21:1f.)

Jesus Christ is the source of life: He is the way to life, and He is the truth of life. He is the very substance of life, its very being and energy (Jn. 5:26; 1 Jn. 1:2). □

JOHN 10:10 LIFE IN JESUS CHRIST

*“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” **John 10:10***

Life is one of the great words of the Scriptures. The word *life* (*zoe*) and the verb *to live* or *to have life* (*zen*) have a depth of meaning.

1. Life is the energy, the force, the power of being.
2. Life is the opposite of perishing. It is deliverance from condemnation and death. It is the stopping or cessation of deterioration, decay, and corruption (Jn. 3:16; 5:24, 29; 10:28).
3. Life is *eternal* (*aionios*). It is forever. It is the very life of God Himself (Jn. 17:3). However, eternal life does not refer just to duration. Living forever would be a curse for some persons. The idea of eternal life is also quality, a certain kind of life, a life that consistently knows love, joy, peace, power, and responsibility (Jn. 10:10).
4. Life is satisfaction (Jn. 6:35).
5. Life is security and enjoyment (Jn. 10:10).
6. Life is found only in God. God is the source and author of life, and it is God who has appointed Jesus Christ to bring life to man. Jesus Christ gives the very life of God Himself (Jn. 5:26; 6:27, 40; 10:28; 17:23).
7. Life has now been revealed. It has been unveiled and is clearly seen in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ shows man what life is (Jn. 1:4-5; 5:26; 1 Jn. 1:2).

8. Life only comes to a man by believing in Jesus Christ. A man outside Jesus Christ only exists. He merely has the existence of an animal. Real life is found only in God. This is to be expected and it is logically true, for God is the creator of life. As the creator of life, He alone knows what life really is and what it is supposed to be (Jn. 3:36; 5:24; 6:47). This is the reason He sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world: to show men what life is. When a person looks at Jesus Christ, he sees exactly what life is, exactly what it involves (Gal. 5:22-23):

=> love	=> patience	=> faithfulness
=> joy	=> kindness	=> gentleness
=> peace	=> goodness	=> self-control □

JOHN 02:24 SAVING FAITH: BELIEVE, COMMIT, ENTRUST

The word commit or entrust is the very same word “believe” (see Jn. 2:23). This gives an excellent picture of *saving faith*, of what *genuine faith* is — of the kind of faith that really saves a person.

1. Saving faith is not head knowledge, not just a mental conviction and intellectual assent. It is not just *believing the fact* that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world. It is not just believing history, that Jesus Christ lived upon earth as the Saviour just as A J Abdul Kalam lived upon earth as the President of India. It is not just believing the words and claims of Jesus in the same way that a person would believe the words of Abdul Kalam.
2. Saving faith is believing in Jesus, *who* and *what* He is, that He is the *Saviour* and *Lord* of life. It is a man giving and turning his life over to Jesus. It is a man casting himself upon Jesus as Saviour and Lord.
3. Saving faith is commitment — the commitment of a man’s total being and life to Jesus Christ. It is a man’s commitment of all he *is and has* to Jesus. It gives Jesus everything; therefore, it involves all of a man’s affairs. The man trusts Jesus to take care of his past (sins), his present (welfare), and his future (destiny). He entrusts his whole life, being, and possessions into Jesus’ hands. He lays himself upon Jesus’ keeping, confiding in Him about his daily necessities and acknowledging Him in all the ways of life. He follows Jesus in every area and in every detail of life, seeking His instructions and leaving his welfare up to Him. It is simply commitment of a man’s whole being, all he is and has, to Jesus.

There are three steps involved in faith, steps that are clearly seen in this passage.

1. There is the step of *seeing* (Jn. 2:23) or *hearing* (Rom. 10:16). A man must be willing to listen to the message of Christ, the revelation of truth.

2. There is the step of *mental assent*. A man must agree that the message is true, that the facts of the case are thus and so. But this is not enough. Mere agreement does not lead to action. Many a person knows that something is true, but he does not change his behaviour to match his knowledge. For example, a man knows that eating too much harms his body, but he may continue to eat too much. He agrees to the truth and knows the truth, but he does nothing about it. A person may believe and know that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world and yet do nothing about it, never make a decision to follow Christ. This man still does not have faith, not the kind of faith that the Bible talks about.
3. There is the step of *commitment*. When the New Testament speaks of faith, it speaks of *commitment*, a *personal commitment to the truth*. A man hears the truth and agrees that it is true and does something about it. He commits (entrusts) and yields his life to the truth. The truth becomes a part of his very being, a part of his behaviour and life. □