



Introduction: I grew up swimming and playing in the James River in VA. After moving out west and meeting and marrying Kerri, she took me to camp out with her family on the north fork of the CDA (). I was astonished, and still am frankly, that the rivers in Idaho were so crystal clear. I was also shocked that they were so cold.

In 2015 Environmental Protection Agency personnel, along with employees from Environmental Restoration LLC destroyed a Mining plug holding back 3m gallons of toxic slurry that filled the River, polluting it.  The disaster affected 3 states, and was declared a Federal Disaster Zone. A number of toxic metals and chemicals spilled into it.

Segue: Jesus promised to give us streams, rivers of living water? But in replacement for what? I want to suggest that our culture has 4 tributaries streaming into the heart. All of which are making our culture sick.

Stream 1: A Failed Worldview: Secularism: It is possible for us to hold in our hands, what just 10-12 yrs. Ago would have been considered Star Trek technology, and also hold a secularist worldview which is making their souls sick. Our culture is rotting from inside.

Stream 2: Institutional Immorality: When a culture no longer believes in God, no longer believes that every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of heavenly lights, when a culture fails to see that it is God who is the source, the standard of all morality—then that culture will replace what is good and call good evil.

Stream 3: Growing Doubt: Just a few short ago it was possible to say to an atheist “only about 5 percent of the country claims to be atheist or agnostic” and today that is more like 26%. **When a culture rejects God, calls good evil and evil good, it tends to experience a pervasive doubt—not just about God’s existence, but even whether there is a such thing as “truth”—objective truth in the world—that culture tends toward sickness.**

Stream 4: Vicious Cruelty: Pitiless, pernicious, remorseless cruelty at all levels of our society. **When a culture believes that there is no God who is the source, and no God to be accountable to in the end, and no real objective standard of morality, that culture will tend towards cruelty. People become objects that we use rather than image-bearing creation.** That is made all the worse by anonymous technologies which allow mean people to hide behind their youtube or twitter persona, spewing out their pernicious and viciously cruel attacks on others.

We are experiencing a high-tech culture that has benefited from the dazzling discoveries and achievements of science and engineering, and a culture threatening to collapse because there is no belief in God as the source of all good and the wellspring of all life. And these streams that are feeding into our collective soul—their poisoning us—making our culture sick.

So if you're sick of being sick, if a man or woman would say "I am tired of the empty, toxic streams of secularism, doubt, immorality and cruelty"—then that person should come to faith in Jesus. Here's what he offers in place of that:

John 7:37-39

³⁷ On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." ³⁹ 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.

You and I are faced, in the Christian life with a choice between two rivers—two sources for what we value, how we think and how we live. The river of the world's system, which is toxic to the soul. And the river of life—Jesus who is the water of life we need, and who gives us liberally the Holy Spirit to those who believe on him and ask.

Background: Jesus has returned now to Jerusalem for a holiday celebration.

Feast of Tabernacles: what they called the Feast of Sukkot. It is their fall festival held in September-October, a joyous, raucous celebration of the bountiful harvest, the abundance of God's provision.

The Water Ritual: The crowd camped out in make-shift lean-tos and wooden booths covered in Palm leaves, would gather each day to watch the Priests in a parade or processional, taking a large Golden Jar to the Pool of Siloam and the processional back to the Temple altar. There, they would pour a flask of wine on one side of the altar and pour out this golden jar filled with the water of Siloam on the other side. When the water was poured, the rabbinic literature states that the priests and rabbis present would raise a raucous sound of praise and some of them would jump and leap and sing for joy. The clamorous sound of spontaneous, joyous praise would reverberate throughout the temple courts. And usually those in attendance camping around Jerusalem—those present would join the rabbis in such a joyous event.

What were they celebrating with this water pouring ritual?

OT Background: Isaiah 12:3 says, "Therefore you will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation." And Isaiah 44:3 "For I will pour out 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." The Psalmist said, "As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God, my soul thirsts for God—for the Living God" (Psalms 42:1-2).

John's Theological Background: John has already told us that Jesus is the Logos—the Word of God who was with God—with God because he Was God—that divine Logos has inhabited a human life. The word he uses in John 1:14 is the religious term for "Tabernacle" The Word tabernacle in human flesh and dwelt for a while among us.

Here, John is explicit about what this is.

Main idea: Jesus gives the Holy Spirit to all who are thirsty, regardless of whether they were doubters, seekers, sympathetic wanderers, or enemies.

Let's follow the story that flanks this statement, before it and after it.

The Jn. 7

Now John makes two things clear in Ch. 7: (1) There is great controversy over Jesus' identity. (2) There is a simmering hatred toward Jesus by many religious leaders and their followers who are also embedded in the crowd.

We're going to look at 4 responses to Jesus at Tabernacles.

Response 1. Contempt due to familiarity—The Family.

The brothers mistook his motivations and urged him to follow a typical political path—become a public figure; a politician. **John 7:3-5** Jesus' brothers said to him, "Leave Galilee and go to Judea, so that your disciples there may see the works you do. ⁴ No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world." ⁵ For even his own brothers did not believe in him. They urged him to do this because: (1) they knew the works he was doing were legit and he had a real shot, (2) they did not believe he was the Messiah, and definitely not the unique Son of God.

Application: Don't make the mistake of domesticating Jesus into a "public figure" who was all about world peace and harmony. Jesus' Message is two things:

(1) **Self-referential.** His message is never some generic sermon about being a good, neighborly person, or some generic and amorphous "peace".

(2) **Confrontational:** The Peace Jesus brings is available to everyone who is willing to become afflicted by conviction over their sin. Jesus means to expose the world's actions as wicked and evil in the site of God and deserving of everlasting condemnation. And the religious structures, the political systems that are intent on maintaining the status quo—*do not like Jesus.*

Let's not make the mistake that his James, Joses, Jude, and Simon did. **Let's not imagine a tamed Messiah who is a smarmy sycophant, sucking up to every voting demographic in order to curry favor and win votes.** Jesus isn't a politician, he is the Sovereign Lord from eternity past. And his Word on humanity is the decisive Word on humanity. Regardless of what we think, believe, or want. If Jesus praises you for not being "far from the Kingdom of God" then you're on the right track—but if Jesus says "your hearts are evil" then brother, your heart is evil.

Response 2. Unsettled belief due to controversy—The Jerusalem Crowd. The Jerusalem and Judea crowds are divided in their opinion of Jesus (7:12).

Summary: 7:12-13 “Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, “He is a good man.” Others replied, “No, he deceives the people.”¹³ But no one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the leaders.

7:25-27 “At that point some of the people of Jerusalem began to ask, “Isn’t this the man they are trying to kill?²⁶ Here he is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying a word to him. Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Messiah?²⁷ But we know where this man is from; when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from.”

30-31 At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come.³¹ Still, many in the crowd believed in him. They said, “When the Messiah comes, will he perform more signs than this man?”

40-41 “On hearing his words, some of the people said, “Surely this man is the Prophet.”⁴¹ Others said, “He is the Messiah.” Still others asked, “How can the Messiah come from Galilee?⁴² Does not Scripture say that the Messiah will come from David’s descendants and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?”⁴³ Thus the people were divided **because of Jesus.**⁴⁴ Some wanted to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him.

There are honest seekers in the crowd. There are many who really want to get to the bottom of it and to know the truth. But their belief is unsettled. The text give us a bit of whiplash in that the sympathizers with Jesus are going back and forth—between belief and doubt.

There are hard-headed skeptics in the crowd. Incurable skepticism looks for any and every reason not to believe and not to follow. This kind of skepticism is doubt looking for an excuse to reject the message.

No amount of miracles, arguments and evidence will ever be enough for the one who has chosen to respond with a cold and calloused heart.

Response 3. Unbelief due to Jesus as a rival authority—The Religious Leaders. and thus perceived as a threat to status quo religion.

- (7:1, 25) They were looking for a loophole or a pretext to kill him
- (7:7) They hated him
- (7:23) They charged him with blasphemy
- (7:32) They tried to arrest him
- Priests and Pharisees verbally lash the temple Guards: 7:45-46 “Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and the Pharisees, who asked them, “Why didn’t you bring him in?”⁴⁶ “No one ever spoke the way this man does,” the guards replied. Essentially the Pharisees and Priests grill their own Temple Guards for being temporarily under the spell of Jesus of Nazareth: “We sent you there to arrest him not to fawn over him. Why didn’t you bring him back in chains” and the Temple Guards are like, “Because, um... he’s awesome!”
- They revile the crowds for following him (7:51).

Application: Every time I make a decision that is contrary to God’s Word it is always because I reject his authority to tell me what’s what. Every time. No exceptions.

Jesus is a rival authority to every other thing we might trust in that runs contrary to his Word and his Sovereign rule over my life.

Response 4. Unfinished conviction; faith in progress—Nicodemus. Nicodemus is in progress. Nicodemus is working it out. He's not quite there Don't write him off yet.

⁵⁰ Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier and who was one of their own number, asked, ⁵¹ "Does our law condemn a man without first hearing him to find out what he has been doing?"

⁵² They replied, "Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee."

He is clearly sympathetic to Jesus' claims, but he hasn't gotten a close enough look.

- He challenged the injustice of wanting to arrest and kill Jesus without a trial (7:50-51).
- He is verbally lashed by his own order as ignorant that a prophet does not come out of Galilee. This is not in the OT but was part of their oral tradition.

A sympathetic and seeking heart is ultimately rewarded.

Jn. 19:39 "He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds."

Here we see, along with Joseph of Arimathea, that Nicodemus is squarely in the believer's camp.

You may be here today and frankly, you're a sympathetic wanderer.

What do we learn here about our own response and the response of loved ones?

1. Just because a person doubts today doesn't mean they'll never come around. Look at James. Initially, of course he doubted Jesus was a Messiah. Familiarity is a difficult thing to look past. But eventually James becomes the leader of the Jerusalem church.

2. Just because a person is an enemy of Christ today doesn't mean they always will be. Look at the priests and the Pharisees. Acts 6:7 "So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of **priests** became obedient to the faith."

3. Just because a person hasn't made up their mind yet doesn't mean God is done with them. The Spirit is working on them, bringing them step by step, one ray of light and revelation at a time.

Doubters, Seekers, Sympathizers, and Enemies. All can become “thirsty” for the Spirit, regardless of where they are right now. Never write them off.

Illus. Drinking Here’s what I’ve learned, a man dying of thirst will drink anything. And our culture is dying of thirst for the true and living water, and yet they are drinking anything and everything else—making them sick and weary souls.

But our invitation is to come and drink from the one who is God’s water of life—the one who satisfies and fills and pours out on us the Holy Spirit.