

Rivers of Living Water

John 7:25-52

The crowd had accused the Lord Jesus Christ of having a demon. And yet he had not been arrested during the feast. Some of the people began to wonder if perhaps the authorities knew more about him than they were letting on. Perhaps it was possible that he really was the Messiah. That would have explained why the authorities had done nothing.

But the very people who see conspiracy in all sorts of things often are too smart for themselves. They seemed to have had a presupposition that when the Christ, that is the Messiah, came no one would know where he had come from. This opinion seems a bit strange in the light of the assertion by the prophet Micah that a “ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days” would come forth from Bethlehem. (Micah 5:1-2) “We know where this man comes from,” they reasoned, so clearly he could not be the Christ!

The Lord responded to their opinion by an indirect reference to his heavenly origin. They then wanted to arrest him but were unable to, as “his hour had not yet come.” Many had rejected him but some believed, so there was a division among the people as to his true identity.

When the Pharisees, and the chief priests, tried to arrest him, the Lord told them that he was to stay a while longer, but eventually would go away to a place where they could not come. Again, speculation began.

Perhaps he meant to go to the Jews of the Dispersion (those who lived in the Gentile world). Perhaps he even meant to teach the Gentiles. But the Lord was referring to his mission to die on the cross, and in that way to return to heaven as the victorious Son of Man. He would suffer in the place of sinners, and he would be raised from the dead. He would ascend to heaven to rule and reign until all his enemies were subdued.

It was at this time that the Lord called on the thirsty to come to him and drink. He had already taught that anyone who fed on his flesh and drank his blood would abide in him. (John 6:56)

Now he introduces a similar figure of speech but with a difference. He called on the thirsty to come and drink by faith. “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” The Lord seems to be referring to Proverbs 18:4, *The words of a man’s mouth are deep waters; the fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook.* John tells us that Jesus was talking about a work of the Spirit which those who believe on him would experience. Faith in Christ would bring about a continuing work of God’s Spirit which would be rich in the word of God. That living water would touch many people, not just the one person who comes to Christ. We drink of Christ and then, by the power of the Spirit, we are used by God to be a blessing to others through evangelism and service. Rivers of living water flow out from us to them.

Paul, the apostle speaks in the same way of faith in Christ. *For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.* (I Corinthians 12:13)

Notice that Paul uses the same terminology as the Lord. *We drink* of the Spirit. By faith we drink of Christ and this means that we are baptized by the Holy Spirit. There

are those who construct a supposed “baptism of the Spirit” which they teach is a second work of grace subsequent to salvation. That cannot be the case. It is faith in Christ that we exercise. That faith brings us to him as savior, and it is the work of God on our behalf which places us into the church, the body of Christ. Every believer has been baptized by the Holy Spirit. And, we in turn become a blessing to those around us. To the lost we are a witness to the saving grace of God in Christ. To the saved we are a conduit of God’s love and an encouragement to continued service.

The teaching of the Lord carried the very authority of God. Officers who had been sent to arrest him said, “No one ever spoke like this man.” Many came to believe that perhaps he was the “prophet” who was to come. Many others opposed him. And, there was a general confusion as to his origin and identity. Nicodemus, who had come to him by night, reminded the opponents of the Lord that their own law did not make such judgements without first giving a man a hearing. What is your understanding of who Jesus is?

