

# Decision Time

## John 7

### Pastor Guy Gray

#### The Inescapable Controversy Concerning Christ

As the Gospel of John moves forward, the themes of conflict and controversy grow more and more intense. In chapter seven the controversy is coming to a crisis point. Everyone is drawn in – Jesus’ own brothers, the religious authorities, the common people, even the soldiers who are sent to arrest Jesus. It seems that everybody has an opinion about Jesus. This story is a perfect reflection of the impact of the Gospel throughout time. The story is exactly the same today... everybody has an opinion about Jesus. The issue just won’t go away. Some people despise Jesus and Christian faith. They view it as beyond nonsense—a vast deception that is poisoning minds... others want to “domesticate” Jesus. They see Jesus and Christian faith as a generally positive influence in our society—it’s all fine just as long as you don’t go overboard in your enthusiasm or your religious truth claims. Then there are those who are fully committed followers of Jesus Christ, who worship Him and confess Him openly and without shame. This is the inescapable controversy that always surrounds Jesus Christ. Those who love and follow Jesus must always be ready to live with this type of controversy.

#### The Invitation and Promise of Jesus

The action in John 7 takes place during the Feast of Tabernacles. This feast was a commemoration of the time that Israel spent camped out in the wilderness during the days of the Exodus. During the feast they actually constructed little outdoor shelters and basically “camped out” for a week. The feast took place in late September, which means it came at the end of the dry season. This is why the feast also became a time of celebrating God’s provision of water for His people. In the wilderness God had provided water miraculously in their time of need. At the high point of this feast, on the final day, the priest would fill a golden pitcher with water as the choir chanted Isaiah 12:3: “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” The water was then carried back up the hill to the “Water Gate,” followed by great crowds of people. The priest would go to the temple, climb the steps and pour the water over the alter while the crowd circled him and sang Psalms.

This was the setting in which Jesus stood up and boldly called out his invitation to the people:

*"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." 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. **John 7:37-39***

This is the amazing invitation and promise of Jesus. In the midst of all the controversy and conflict, Jesus reaches out with a direct personal invitation for each of us. Controversy won’t go away. Intellectual arguments and religious debates will rage on. In the meantime Jesus is calling your name. Jesus wants to fill your life. And John reminds us that all of this was fulfilled through the Resurrection victory of Jesus. So even in John 7 He is pointing us once again to how the story ends!

#### Decision Time

What we are left with at the end of this chapter is a personal decision. How will we each respond? Will we be “for”, “against”, or try to remain “neutral”, when it comes to Jesus Christ? Will we be open and unashamed about our faith? Or will we keep quiet for fear of the opinions of others? This is the way of the Gospel: it relentlessly pushes us to make our decision about Jesus. This too is the grace of God. Jesus loves us enough to keep pressing on our hearts and minds... calling us to a life of true faith and sincere following. The time is now for each of us to take our stand in faith for Christ! As we do, we will find the sweetness and power of living water at the deepest part our lives.