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EXPOSITORY SERMON

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THE ABUNDANT LIFE

FOUNDATIONS OF THE ABUNDANT LIFE.

SCRIPTURE READING – John 7:37-39.

INTRODUCTION

Here was Jesus stepping into the midst of the Jewish feast and crying out with a loud voice, "If any one is thirsty let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within Him." His words constitute both an open invitation and a Divine promise. They are words that catch our attention because they are spoken by the Son of God and they address a fundamental need in the heart of man. The invitation He gives at the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, fulfills what it is celebrating. During the Feast, water is poured out in the temple on the altar, in remembrance of the way God supplied water to the nation during their wilderness journey, and it anticipated the day when the waters of Spirit would be poured out on God's people. Two basic truths come to light in this verse. The first is that Jesus **pinpoints a deep thirst or longing in the soul of man.** His words underline this, "if

anyone is thirsty....." Jesus assumes that there is a thirst in the soul of man and there is a reason for it. Created in the image of God, man was made for God, and when he severed his relationship with God by sinning, there was created in him a vacuum that nothing or no one but God could fill. Down through the ages, man has tried to fill that void with the stuff of the earth and has come up empty. He is still on a quest to satisfy the thirst in his soul, but is feverishly seeking for it in the wrong places. And Jesus steps up to plate and speaks to that need, "If you are thirsty come to me and drink." I am the answer to that void in your life. The waters I will give you are both living and satisfying.

The second basic truth is that **Jesus proclaims Himself to be the answer to the emptiness and thirst within.** "If anyone is thirsty let him come to ME and drink..." He claims to be the remedy to the deep dissatisfaction in the soul of man. So in this short announcement we have set before us, the basic need in man which is described as thirst, and the fundamental answer to that need, the Lord Jesus Christ. **Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, if you drink of the water I shall give you, you will never thirst again. John 4:13.**

What is important In John 7:37-39 is that the Lord Jesus does not stop at simply satisfying the thirst in man, for He goes on to say, "...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." Jesus takes his invitation beyond the simple satisfaction of the deep need in man, to the overflow of the life of the Holy Spirit from within. This is one of the superlatives that Jesus uses to describe the extent and activity of the Spirit of God within us. The life that God gives to us is not simply adequate; it is abundant for it moves beyond mediocrity to overflow. On another occasion Jesus said I have come that you might have life and have it **more abundantly.** When God gives us His Holy Spirit, He fills us to over flow. The provision of God is not just to satisfy our inner thirst, but to fill our lives with abundance of His life and in such a way that it flows through us like streams of living water. We receive the blessing of God to be a blessing to others. The life that is promised us is the more abundant life. It is

important that we understand what the foundations of the abundant life are. The overflow of the life of God through each life will find its source in the Holy Spirit. We cannot afford to neglect or diminish the importance of the work of the Spirit in our lives. The issue of the fullness of the Spirit must be settled in our hearts, before we move on to other things. The streams of living water refer directly to the Holy Spirit and His effective activity in the life. A personal possession of the Holy Spirit will result in a flow from within us in a healing and redemptive way.

Oswald Chambers wrote that "when we receive the Holy Spirit, we receive the quickening life from the ascended Lord. "This, in itself, is a compelling reason to insure that we are filled with the living waters of the Spirit of God.

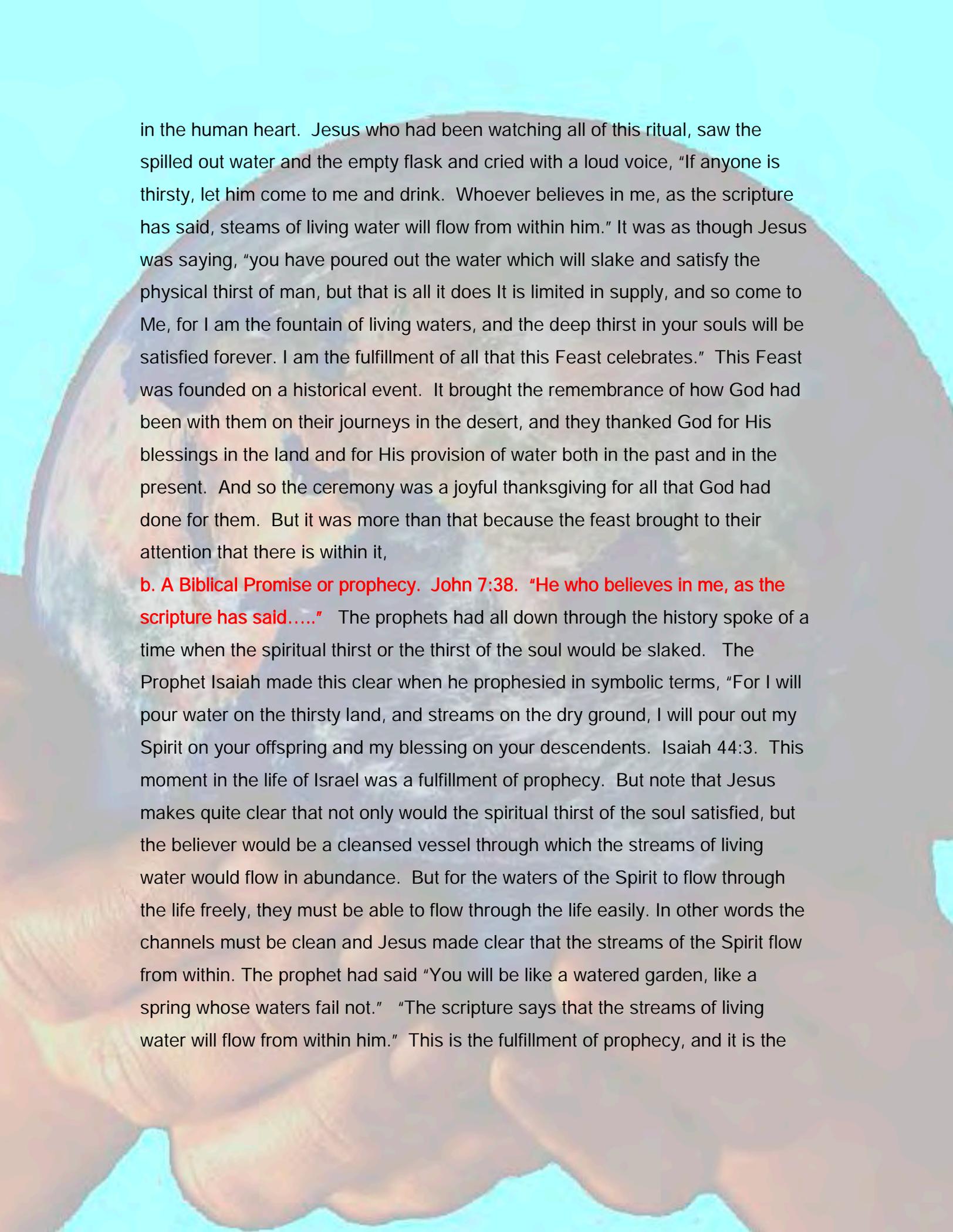
Now these words have great significance because they were spoken by Jesus. To find out the significance of their meaning, we must examine what Jesus meant by them. And to do this we are driven back to,

1. THE PAST OR THE HISTORY BEHIND THIS GREAT TRUTH. John 7:37-39. The celebration of the feast was rooted in the past. As the Jews looked back on their history, they rejoiced in the way God had blessed them on their journey in the wilderness on their way to Canaan. In some of the contemporary church, tradition is regarded as irrelevant, and as a result its importance is diminished and often discarded. Furthermore the history of the church is often relegated to the archives of antiquity as an encumbrance. While it is true that there some issues which are not compatible with the present age, and are not relevant to the modern church, much is lost by throwing out the proverbial "baby with the bath water." To do this is both shortsighted and dangerous, and reveals an incredible lack of wisdom. While the church does not live in that past, one of the reasons it exists is that its roots go deep into the richness of lessons learned in the building of the church. The foundations laid by the church in its history will give strength and stability to the church of today as she seeks to wrestle with the challenges of a technological society and the pop culture. While there is ecclesiastical scaffolding which will inevitably fall away as time moves on. There are foundations of truth and God given wisdom which have been hammered out on

the anvil of the churches struggle down through the ages. To these truths to which the church must tenaciously hold, and on which she must resolutely stand. Failure to do this will be destructive to the church. While we must not cling desperately to the past, it can speak relevantly and effectively to the modern church and give direction to move effectively into the future.

On the last and greatest day of the Feast Jesus stood and said....." The Feast of Tabernacles was the scene for this announcement. What message does it convey? This feast was an integral part of the Jewish calendar. It celebrated.

a. A Historical Event. John 7: 37-39. We will not go into the many details of this feast; suffice it to say that its celebration fell on about the 15th of October. It commenced five days after the Day of the atonement (Leviticus 23:34. Deuteronomy 16:13). It lasted seven days. Some say that an eighth day was added. The Jews lived in huts during this feast, the walls of which were made of fronds and branches, and was to be constructed in such a way, that they would give protection from the weather but not shut out the sun. They were built to commemorate how the Israelites lived in tents in the wilderness on their journey to Canaan. There was one particular ceremony that took place every day. Water was taken from the pool of Siloam, and a procession moved from the pool to the Temple and the water was poured out on the altar. This was the most joyful of ceremonies. It was accompanied by the dancing, singing and chanting of the Levitical Choir of 15 Psalms, the songs of ascents in Psalms 120-134, it was accompanied by musical instruments. While the water was being poured out, the people would recite Isaiah 12:3, "with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." This ceremony was a vivid thanksgiving for God's good gift of water and a memory of the waters which sprang from the rock when they traveled through the wilderness. After the priest had poured the water on the altar he stood there with empty flask. The water gone! The supply limited! This water spilled out on the altar was temporary. But it spoke of the living waters of salvation which would never run dry, and which would satisfy the deep soul thirst



in the human heart. Jesus who had been watching all of this ritual, saw the spilled out water and the empty flask and cried with 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." It was as though Jesus was saying, "you have poured out the water which will slake and satisfy the physical thirst of man, but that is all it does It is limited in supply, and so come to Me, for I am the fountain of living waters, and the deep thirst in your souls will be satisfied forever. I am the fulfillment of all that this Feast celebrates." This Feast was founded on a historical event. It brought the remembrance of how God had been with them on their journeys in the desert, and they thanked God for His blessings in the land and for His provision of water both in the past and in the present. And so the ceremony was a joyful thanksgiving for all that God had done for them. But it was more than that because the feast brought to their attention that there is within it,

b. A Biblical Promise or prophecy. John 7:38. "He who believes in me, as the scripture has said....." The prophets had all down through the history spoke of a time when the spiritual thirst or the thirst of the soul would be slaked. The Prophet Isaiah made this clear when he prophesied in symbolic terms, "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 descendents. Isaiah 44:3. This moment in the life of Israel was a fulfillment of prophecy. But note that Jesus makes quite clear that not only would the spiritual thirst of the soul satisfied, but the believer would be a cleansed vessel through which the streams of living water would flow in abundance. But for the waters of the Spirit to flow through the life freely, they must be able to flow through the life easily. In other words the channels must be clean and Jesus made clear that the streams of the Spirit flow from within. The prophet had said "You will be like a watered garden, like a spring whose waters fail not." "The scripture says that the streams of living water will flow from within him." This is the fulfillment of prophecy, and it is the

Biblical foundation for this great truth. This truth is rooted and promised in the history of God's people. Secondly will you note?

2. THE PERSON OR THE AUTHORITY UPON WHICH THIS GREAT TRUTH RESTS. John 7:37-43.

The authority of the truth does not rest on the Jewish religion or tradition. It does not rest solely on the prophetic word or the word of Divine promise. There is an authority that supercedes all of this. It is the authority of Jesus Himself. It is He who makes this claim. His words are astounding. "If anyone is thirsty "let him come to **ME** an drink.....he who believes in **ME**.....streams of living water will flow from within him." Note that He brings Himself into the center of this dramatic moment. These are powerful words designed to point people to Himself as the fountain of life. There was an authority in this man Jesus that resulted in a reaction from the people who speculated as to who He was. They clearly saw Him as a;

a. Distinctive Man. John 7:16-17, 37-43. He certainly was different from any other man they knew but the people were puzzled as to who He was. The words of Jesus made a great impact on the people. They reacted in different ways to the claims of His teachings. Note here in verse 40, "On hearing His words, some of the people said, surely this man is a prophet." These words could only be the words of one who was called by God. This was the extent of their opinion of Him. They could not seem to conceive of Him of being anything more than a prophet. They did not go beyond that thought. But they felt that there was something distinctive about him. This was not the first time they had labeled him as a prophet. Jesus on one occasion asked his disciples as to whom people thought He was. Some said John the Baptist, others said Elijah and still others say Jeremiah or one of the prophets. (See Matthew 16:13-14). There were no doubt some of the traits of the prophets in Jesus. His strong message of repentance reminded them of John the Baptist. The fire of his anger as He drove out the desecrators of the temple brought to remembrance the passionate fiery spirit of the Prophet Elijah. They thought of Jeremiah the weeping prophet when Jesus wept over Jerusalem, "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! How often I would have

gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks, but you refused." As He ministered to the people they saw in Him the characteristics of a prophet, but it is clear there was more to Him than that. There was a mystery about this man Jesus. They did not seem to be able to settle on who He was. They told the chief priests and Pharisees "No one ever spoke the way this man does." Matthew records that He spoke as one having authority, but there were some, who went a little further in their impression of Him said the He was the Christ. And so they were disturbed and divided because of Him. Some wanted to seize Him, but the scriptures tell us that "no one laid a hand on Him." This was their response to Him because there was something different about Him. He certainly was different than anyone they knew. He was distinctive because He was,

b. Divine Person – The God Man. John 7:37-43. This man was so different that some of the people believed that He was the promised Messiah. Jesus in this passage of scripture gave indications that He was Divine. There are three statements that confirm this.

i. The Words that He spoke were the Words of God. John 7:16-17. Jesus said, "my teaching is not my own. It comes from Him who sent me. If anyone who chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God, or whether I speak them on my own." Bruce Milne points out that "Jesus clarifies the source of His learning by referring them 'to Him who sent me'" Jesus claims Divine authority for the words He spoke. Milne continues "His identity with the Father gives Him access to the Father's knowledge." Jesus Himself said on another occasion said "My Father and are one." He affirmed and confirmed His deity and so when He spoke, He spoke the words of God. The second statement that confirms that He is Divine is found in verses 16-17th

ii. Jesus said that He had been sent by God. John 7:16. "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me." John 3:16 informs us that "God so loved the world the He gave His one and only Son....." It is Jesus who was sent by the Father, therefore the teaching of Jesus comes from Him. He spoke the words of God because He is God. John had already confirmed and declared the

Jesus was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.....”

John 1:1. John the Baptist declared with conviction concerning Jesus “I have seen and testify that this is the Son of God.” John 1: 34. John said this at the beginning of Christ’s ministry.

The third statement that confirms that He is Divine is because He is,

iii. The Fulfillment of Prophecy. John 7:37-39. He claims to be the source of living waters that is able to satisfy the deepest longings in the soul of man, thus fulfilling the meaning of the celebration of this feast. The types and figures of the Old Testament all point to Him as the appointed and anointed Messiah. He is the focal point of the prophetic word. The Feast of Tabernacles with its water pouring ceremony set the scene for Jesus to make His great announcement. Some say that the feast went on for seven days in which the water was poured out in the temple on the altar. Others say that an eighth day was added and on that day there was no pouring of the water. There was simply silence, an indication that the prophecy concerning the outpouring of the waters of the Spirit was yet to take place. The silence of the eighth day indicated that the prophecy had not yet been fulfilled, and that the world was still waiting for the source of living waters to arrive. **It was into that silence that Jesus the Son of God stepped and His voice clearly broke the silence of the ages, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me.” Not to the river Jordan or the pool of Siloam, but to ME said Jesus. Only He as God could assume that position.** They would not find the answer to their soul’s deepest longing or thirst in the Jewish law or in the Jewish religion. They would only find it in a relationship with a person. Jesus said so, “if you are thirsty come to me.” Jesus assumed that He is the source of the living waters of the Spirit. **Only The Son of God could make that assumption.** He is the Divine source of rivers of living water. No prophet ever made that claim. Jesus was the fulfillment of all that the Feast of Tabernacles represented. Jesus is the authority on which the great truth rests because he is the fulfillment of the prophecy and promise of God.. Finally this great truth rests on.

3. A PROVISION WHICH IS THE FOUNDATION OF ABUNDANT LIVING.

John 7:37-39. John makes an interesting and enlightening comment in verse 39. "By this He meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not been glorified."

The scriptures tell us that **Jesus stood** to make this announcement. In that culture when a teacher taught he always sat. But in this arena Jesus stood. That is the posture of someone who is about to make an important announcement. It is the position of a herald. The importance of this announcement lay in the truth that it was not based on someone's writings or opinions; It was based on who He is. He speaks with the authority of the God-Man. The law had been given – the feasts had been established, **but now** the Son of God stands as the fulfillment of all that had been prophesied in the Old Testament. The symbolism had become substance, promise had become fulfillment, and hope and expectation of the years had become reality, for the Son of God clearly declares, "If anyone is thirsty let Him come to me and drink." In another place He confirmed this truth in the words "he that drinks of the water I shall give him shall never thirst again."

John 4:14. But Jesus in verse John 7:39 is not simply talking about the satisfaction He brings to the soul; He is talking about the overflow which comes from the infilling of the Holy Spirit. Hence the words that streams of living water will flow from the inner being of a person.

This is the inheritance of the child of God. He explains what He means by this.

"By this He meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were later to receive. Up to that point the Spirit had not been given because Jesus had not been glorified." John is saying that it is the glorified Christ who is the source and fountain of the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Oswald Chambers warns "that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is not an experience apart from Jesus Christ: it is the evidence of the ascended Christ." But what does John mean by the glorified Christ? If you study the New Testament you will discover that there are three fundamental ingredients in this idea of the glorification of Jesus. First it refers, **a. The Crucifixion of Jesus. John 7:39.** Jesus throws light on what the glorification of Jesus in John 12:23-24, 32-35 means. Jesus Himself, facing the

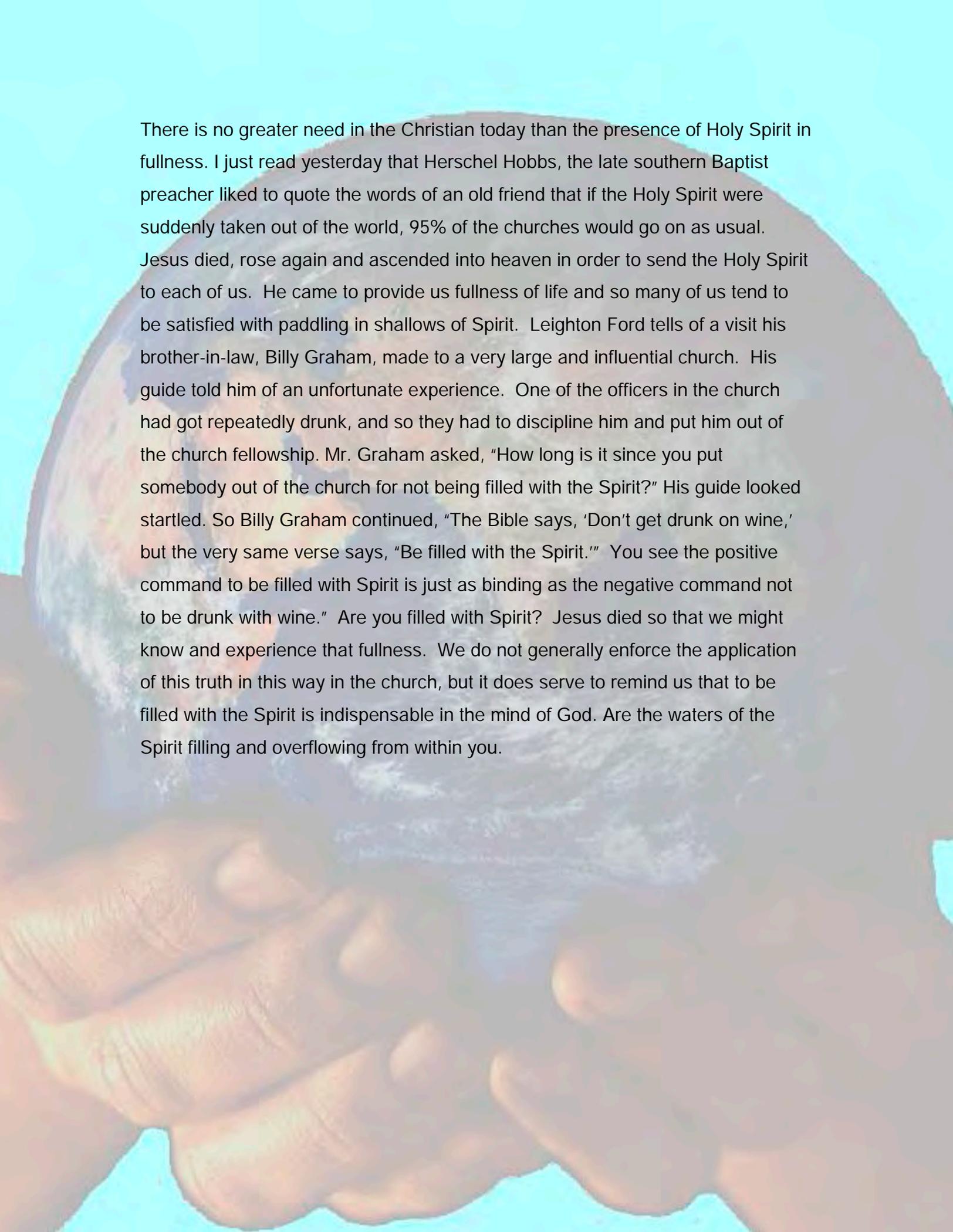
death of the Cross said "The hour is come for the Son of Man to be glorified." I tell you the truth unless a kernel of wheat falls into the ground and it dies it only remains a single seed. But if it dies it produces many seeds. I when I am lifted up from the earth will draw men to myself. He said this to show what kind of death He was going to die." (John 12: 32-33.) To the human mind the idea of the cross as the glorification of Jesus is inconceivable. It does not fit because the Cross was the most despicable humiliation and degradation inflicted on a person. It was the execution of a criminal. How then can the crucifixion of Jesus be His glorification? But the New Testament teaches that what men consider being foolish and weak, God uses to display His power, accomplish His purposes and glorify His Holy Name. In God's mind the Cross was not the end of the road, it was the gateway to life. The Cross was not the instrument of weakness, for when God touched it; it became the instrument of power and redemption. By the Cross He shook the foundations of hell and in the power of the Cross He creates a church against which the gates of hell cannot prevail. And from the Cross rings the message that salvation has been purchased for all. The Cross was evidence of the mighty power of God in deliberate, decisive and dynamic action against evil. Before the living waters of the Spirit could flow in blessing and in power, sin had to be dealt with on the basis of death of Jesus Christ, for "without the shedding of Blood there is no forgiveness of sins." The Blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. Sin was dealt with on the basis of the shed Blood of Jesus. There could be no outpouring of the Holy Spirit until there was an outpouring of the precious Blood of Christ. The Cross opened the floodgates of Pentecost. John said it "The Spirit had not yet been given since Jesus had not yet been glorified in His crucifixion." But another factor in His glorification was,

b. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ. John 7:39. The resurrection of Jesus was God's signal and seal of approval on what Jesus did on the Cross. It gives the atoning death of Jesus its power to save. It opened the gates to new life and promise life eternal. It gives birth to a living hope. Stanley Jones wrote that before Jesus rose from the dead, over the portals of death was written 'Nothing

Beyond,' after He arose it had to be written 'everything beyond.' Paul wrote that "Christ died our sins and rose again for our justification." He enlarges on this in Romans 6:4. ".....just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father; we too may live a new life." It is because He lives that we shall live also. Christ is glorified in His resurrection. Because Jesus died and rose again, the Holy Spirit was released to the church. The third factor in the glorification of Jesus is,

c. The Ascension of Jesus Christ. John 7:39. The writer in his letter to the Hebrews 1:3 wrote, ".....after He (Jesus) had provided purification for sins He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in Heaven." The phrase "He sat down," is the expression of completion, achievement and victory. The sacrificial atoning death of Jesus on the Cross had been completed, and He had been exalted to the highest place in heaven as our eternal high priest. No other priest sat down in the Jewish worship ritual. The priest of the Temple ministered standing indicating that their ministry and priesthood were provisional, temporary and one of preparation for the eternal ministry of the Lord Christ as our High Priest who would sit at the right Hand of God. Christ's own ministry was part of the preparation for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Until Jesus sat down at the right Hand of God, there could be no outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The descent of the Holy Spirit was dependent on the ascent of Jesus. Jesus Himself said "it is expedient for you that I go away, for if go not away the Comforter will not come to you. But if I depart I will send him to you." And the Scriptures tell us that "when Jesus sat down at the Right Hand of the Sovereignty in heaven, He fulfilled his promise to send the Holy Spirit." We read in the Acts of the Apostles 2:33 that Jesus, exalted to the right Hand of God He has received from the Father, the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear." On the day of Pentecost we read that the Holy Spirit came in power and in abundance, and they were all filled with His Holy Presence. It was not until Jesus Christ was glorified in His crucifixion, resurrection and ascension that the Holy Spirit came.

Conclusion



There is no greater need in the Christian today than the presence of Holy Spirit in fullness. I just read yesterday that Herschel Hobbs, the late southern Baptist preacher liked to quote the words of an old friend that if the Holy Spirit were suddenly taken out of the world, 95% of the churches would go on as usual. Jesus died, rose again and ascended into heaven in order to send the Holy Spirit to each of us. He came to provide us fullness of life and so many of us tend to be satisfied with paddling in shallows of Spirit. Leighton Ford tells of a visit his brother-in-law, Billy Graham, made to a very large and influential church. His guide told him of an unfortunate experience. One of the officers in the church had got repeatedly drunk, and so they had to discipline him and put him out of the church fellowship. Mr. Graham asked, "How long is it since you put somebody out of the church for not being filled with the Spirit?" His guide looked startled. So Billy Graham continued, "The Bible says, 'Don't get drunk on wine,' but the very same verse says, "Be filled with the Spirit.'" You see the positive command to be filled with Spirit is just as binding as the negative command not to be drunk with wine." Are you filled with Spirit? Jesus died so that we might know and experience that fullness. We do not generally enforce the application of this truth in this way in the church, but it does serve to remind us that to be filled with the Spirit is indispensable in the mind of God. Are the waters of the Spirit filling and overflowing from within you.