

That You May Continue to Believe...



AN EXPOSITION OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Streams of Living Water John 7:1-53

^{ESV} **John 7:1**...After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. ² Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand. ³ So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. ⁴ For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." ⁵ For not even his brothers believed in him.

Jesus had experienced especially vicious opposition in Judea. Now when I use the word Judea I mean the province that contained Jerusalem. In case it gets confusing to you, it might be helpful to think of Judea and Galilee as large counties or perhaps something more like small states separated from each other by only a few miles. Galilee was to the north and Judea to the south. The Judeans thought of themselves as cosmopolitan, devout and educated and they thought of the Galileans as uneducated, unsophisticated hayseeds. They mocked the Galileans for their lack of education and even for the way they talked. (Cf. ^{NIV} **Matthew 26:73**)

Now, I don't want you to get the wrong idea. It wasn't that Galilee was conflict free. By chapter seven, he was beginning to face opposition even in Galilee. Still, Galilee was His home turf and He decided that He would spend more time in Galilee because of the dreadful opposition He faced in Judea.

His brothers didn't like the idea. They wanted Jesus to go up to Jerusalem and show the crowds there even more of His miracles. They particularly wanted Him to go at the Feast of Tabernacles. Now, there are a couple of reasons for that.

First, Tabernacles was *the* feast of the year. It was far and away the most beloved feast of Jesus' day. It was more popular than Passover; it was more popular than Pentecost. Part of the reason for that had to do with the time of the year it occurred. It occurred in either September/October and was in one respect, a celebration of God's bountiful harvest. It was sort of like our Thanksgiving.

Passover, on the other hand, occurred early in the spring when sea travel was especially dangerous.

Pentecost occurred during the hottest part of the summer thus making it something like a Texas Fourth of July feast.

The Feast of Tabernacles was different. It occurred after the break in the heat, after the harvest and at a time when sea travel was as safe as it ever got in the ancient world. As a result, people came from all over the ancient world to attend Tabernacles. They came from Greece and Italy, from Spain and from Africa. They came from Egypt, from Asia Minor and from Babylon. Jews from all over the

world came and paid their tithes and rejoiced in God's goodness and then went back out into the world. But we'll talk more about that and the symbolism associated with the celebratory rituals of the feast a little later on.

One thing you ought to notice is the logic that His brothers used to urge Him to go up to Jerusalem. They presented to Him a logical, intelligently argued reason for going. John recorded them saying, **"You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world."**

Do you get their thinking? **"You really ought to go up to Jerusalem. It would be really beneficial for you to go up and get the recognition you deserve. After all, you can't expect to become a national figure here in Galilee."** It was, of course, disingenuous on their part. They weren't really interested in His well being at all. In some respects their request was similar to Satan's temptation. **"Go up and be all that you can be."**

But, He had already rejected the idea of being made a king. He was going to show Himself to the world but not in the manner that either the world or His brothers expected. You will remember that John has made it a point to remind that Jesus knew what was in men, even His own brothers: James, Joseph, Simon and Judas (^{NIV} **Matthew 13:55**). John gives in verse 5, their underlying basis for wanting Him to present Himself.

^{ESV} **John 7:5**...For not even his brothers believed in him.

Now, it's not entirely clear to me why they failed to believe in him. They had seen His miracles. They knew what He could do. Obviously, they knew His wonderful character. Still, they did not believe that He was the ground and source of eternal life. It is because of that that I am not exactly sure how His presenting Himself in Jerusalem would help them. Maybe they thought it would bring them notoriety or even financial reward. Anyway, Jesus was not fooled by their request. Look how He answers them in verse 6.

^{ESV} **John 7:6...**Jesus said to them, "**My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. ⁷ The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. ⁸ You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come.**"

You remember from an earlier chapter that Jesus only did what the Father willed Him to do. He had no intention of being pushed into action by his brothers. He wasn't interested in satisfying their wish for notoriety. He lived only to please the Father. So he waited, and then in verse nine he acted,

^{ESV} **John 7:9...**After saying this, he remained in Galilee. ¹⁰ But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private. ¹¹ The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, "**Where is he?**" ¹² And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, "**He is a good man,**" others said, "**No, he is leading the people astray.**" ¹³ Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him.

Jesus held back in the shadows. Now we must not think He was disguised or anything like that. It wasn't Jesus' looks that gave Him away. It was His words. He was holding back. Still, they were looking for Him and their opinions were all over the place. The thing that is clear is that whatever the people actually thought or believed about Him was held in check by fear of the Jews. Look at verse 14...

^{ESV} **John 7:14...**About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. ¹⁵ The Jews therefore marveled, saying, "**How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?**"

Now the Feast of Tabernacles was eight days long. The first two days were treated like Sabbath days and the so were the last two. But the middle three days were only half-days, at least in terms of public obligation. During that time people milled about and caught up on fellowship and instruction and even gossip. The text says that about halfway through the feast, Jesus revealed His presence there. He went up into the temple area, probably into Solomon's porch or the Court of Women, and began to instruct the people. The Judeans were amazed by Jesus ability and wisdom. Remember, I told you earlier that the Judeans in particular regarding the Galileans as hayseeds or bumpkins. As far as the Judeans were concerned, there was only one kind of education and only one place to receive it. To them the only education that mattered was a theological education. Which, of course, is true. To them the only place to receive such an education was in one of the rabbinical schools in Jerusalem. Which, of course, was not true.

When they heard Jesus, he amazed them. They were amazed that He was so...so bright. They were amazed that He possessed such insight and wisdom in the Scripture. They were even more amazed that He was a Galilean and had not been educated in any traditional, theological sense.¹ He responded to their amazement in verse 16.

^{ESV} **John 7:16...**So Jesus answered them, "**My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.** ¹⁷ **If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.** ¹⁸ **The**

one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.
¹⁹ Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?"

Bishop Westcott writes:

The marvel was that Jesus showed Himself familiar with the literary methods of the time, which were supposed to be confined to the scholars of the popular teachers. He did this even though He had never studied in any of the great rabbinical schools (mh. memaqhkw,j). Christ was in the eyes of the Jews a merely self-taught enthusiast. They marveled at His success, but they did not agree to His claims. The Lord's reply met the difficulty of the questioners. His teaching was not self-originated but derived from a divine Master; infinitely greater than the popular Rabbis. And it had a twofold attestation—an inward criterion and an outward criterion; the first from its essential character, and the second from the character of Him who delivered it. Anyone who was in harmony with the will of God could not but recognize the source of the teaching.²

I love that and I love Christ's answer to His objectors. I think it is interesting that He was not willing to simply answer their question. He did say that He was taught not as they were but at the very knee of God. But He went beyond that and added that last little line that line that incensed them so much. **"Why are you trying to kill Me?"** It is clear that He was trying to provoke their thinking. Now many of the pilgrims there in Jerusalem for Tabernacles would have had absolutely no idea what Jesus was talking about. Still, Jesus included them with the Judeans and the Pharisees because they followed Pharisaic teaching and their bidding³. Notice, how the crowd Pharisees and pilgrims alike responded to the charge that they were trying to kill Him.

^{ESV} **John 7:20...**The crowd answered, **"You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?"**

But Jesus didn't let up. Instead He went right to the heart of their anger towards Him

^{ESV} **John 7:21**...Jesus answered them, "I did one work, and you all marvel at it. ²² Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. ²³ If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well? ²⁴ Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."

Now the one miracle He was talking about was the healing of the man at the Pool of Bethesda. He didn't mean that He had only done one miracle altogether. He meant that He had only done one miracle in their presence in Jerusalem. We know that He is talking about the man at the Pool of Bethesda because He also talked about the issue of which they accused Him⁴. He talked about breaking the Sabbath.

Now, I want you to be sure that you get His logic. It is absolutely inscrutable here. His logic is this. **"Alright, you are committed to the keeping the Sabbath. You are committed to keeping the Sabbath except for one thing only. You don't mind breaking the Sabbath if a child is born and the eighth day happens to come along on the Sabbath. When that happens, you go ahead and circumcise the child because you see the benefit of the sign of the covenant. But here's how I want you to think. You will break the Sabbath if it means cutting or hurting a little boy. What I did was better. I didn't cut or hurt anybody. I simply made someone well that had been sick for thirty-eight years. Come on, use you brain in a spiritual way."**

His logic was inscrutable and some of the crowds gathered there in the temple began to hear His words and ask the very questions that the Pharisees were afraid of.

^{ESV} **John 7:25...Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, "Is not this the man whom they seek to kill? ²⁶ And here he is, speaking openly, and they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ? ²⁷ But we know where this man comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from."**

Part, of the crowd was apparently swayed by Jesus and by His response to the Pharisees. They could not understand why the Pharisees hated Him so or why they weren't trying to stop Him since they hated Him so. Of course, they were mystified by the fact that they knew as much about Jesus as they did. There was a popular idea that the Messiah would be a mystery man like Melchizedek. They believed he would be an unknown entity from an unknown place. They couldn't understand how Jesus could be the Messiah especially since they knew where He was from. Westcott writes:

According to a Jewish saying (Sanhedrin, 97a) "**Three things were to come wholly unexpected: Messiah, a blessing (a god-send) and a scorpion.**" According to another tradition, Messiah would not even know his own mission until Elijah anointed him.⁵

Still, I want you to think about the irony of that. Was He from Galilee? No, He was not from Galilee in the sense that they were arguing. He was from Bethlehem. But even then, He was not really from Bethlehem. You see that had it wrong on several levels. Now what is interesting is that Jesus could have put much of their concern to rest. He could have just said, "**Look, if you go back and check the tax roles you will find out that I was born in Bethlehem.**" But He

never did that. In fact, if anything, He did just the opposite. He kept focusing on the fact that He had come down from heaven. They were concerned about which town He was from and He was trying to get them to see that He didn't just come out of Galilee but that He actually came out of eternity.

^{ESV} **John 7:28**...So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, "**You know me, and you know where I come from? But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know.**" ²⁹ **I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me.**" ³⁰ So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come.

Now there are two things that you ought to notice. First, they can't seize Him and it doesn't say why other than that it was not His time. It is that phrase "**not His time**" that refers us back to the discussion that He had with His brothers at the beginning of the section. It does that even or especially because the two verses use two different words. There He said,

^{ESV} **John 7:6**...Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here.

In this verse the word for time is *καίρòς* and it means something like "**appointed time or scheduled time**". We might use *καίρòς* when we say something like, "**It's time for supper.**" There the emphasis is not on the hour and minutes but on the appropriateness of the moment. In John 7:30, however, John uses the word *ώρα* (hour) and in John it especially refers to the hour of Jesus' crucifixion and the exaltation bound up with it (7:30, 8:20, 12:12, 12:27, 13:1, 17:1).⁶ The point is that Jesus could not be taken until the "**time**" God had sovereignly appointed. Now look at verse 31.

^{ESV} **John 7:31**...Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, "When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?"

The crowds were asking the right question and the way their question is structured demands a "no" answer. The logic is like this, "**Now this may or may not be the Christ. However, you don't you think it is possible that someone else is going to come along and do more miracles than this man, do you?**" Now one commentator, D.A. Carson, makes the point that faith based on signs in the gospels is not a very strong faith and is generally discouraged in John (2:11, 2:23, 4:48) but it is better than nothing (10:38)⁷. Anyway their faith or perhaps the questions they asked based on what Jesus said caught the ear of the Pharisees.

^{ESV} **John 7:32**...The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him.

Now, notice John the consummate storyteller makes that statement and then returns to Jesus and even builds suspense with the words Jesus says.

^{ESV} **John 7:33**... Jesus then said, "**I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me.** ³⁴ **You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come.**"

Such a statement leaves the reader wondering are they going to arrest Him in the next verse? It is deeply ironic. What do you think He was talking about? Of course, it left the crowd who heard it with a different question.

^{ESV} **John 7:35**... The Jews said to one another, "**Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks?** ³⁶ **What does he mean by saying, 'You will seek me and you will not find me,' and, 'Where I am you cannot come?'**"

Now there are a couple of possibilities here. They may have been wondering if Jesus was going to go out from Israel and teach Greek-speaking Jews. Such Jews were called the Diaspora, which meant something like **“the scattered”**. Or the question may have been wondering if He was going out among the Greek-speaking Jews to teach Gentiles. This too is ironic because that is ultimately what happened. It wasn't Jesus that did so however. It was His disciples that took the message to the Gentile world and they received it in a way that the Jews did not.

^{ESV} **John 7:37**...On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"

Now finally, we get to the great climax of the chapter. But before I speak to that I really do need to finally talk about the Feast of Tabernacles.

To understand what Jesus says in 7:37-38 and later in chapter 8, you must have an intimate knowledge of the workings of the Feast of Tabernacles. In Jesus' time this was the feast **“especially sacred and important to the Hebrews”** (Josephus *Ant.* 8.4.1). The importance of Tabernacles can *even* be seen back further than that. For example, the dedication of Solomon's Temple took place at Tabernacles (1 Kings 8:2), and that made the connection between Tabernacles and Temple especially close.⁸

During the Feast of the Tabernacles, (also called Booths) the Israelites, even those that had houses in Jerusalem, camped out in makeshift houses called “tabernacles”. They were kind of like tents except that they were made out of leafy tree branches. Those that went up to Jerusalem for the feast camped out in

the open areas around Jerusalem and stayed in the makeshift dwellings. Those that lived in the city usually built their “**tabernacles**” upon the roofs of their houses or in the open courtyards of their homes. All Israelites were required to sleep in them for a week. They were uncomfortable and they were small and cramped. Still every Israelite was to do so. It was to be a reminder of their wilderness wanderings and how the Lord delivered them into the land in which they no longer dwelled in temporary houses.

^{ESV} Leviticus 23:34... "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, On the fifteenth day of this seventh month and for seven days is the Feast of Booths to the LORD. ³⁵ On the first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall not do any ordinary work. ³⁶ For seven days you shall present food offerings to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall hold a holy convocation and present a food offering to the LORD. It is a solemn assembly; you shall not do any ordinary work. ³⁷ "These are the appointed feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim as times of holy convocation, for presenting to the LORD food offerings, burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its proper day, ³⁸ besides the LORD's Sabbaths and besides your gifts and besides all your vow offerings and besides all your freewill offerings, which you give to the LORD. ³⁹ "On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD seven days. On the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest. ⁴⁰ And you shall take on the first day the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. ⁴¹ You shall celebrate it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It is a statute forever throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. ⁴² You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All native Israelites shall dwell in booths, ⁴³ that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God."

Just as a side note, that is probably what Peter had in mind at the Transfiguration. He uses the same word σκηνη.

^{ESV} **Luke 9:33**...And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, **"Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah"--not knowing what he said.**

Keeping that in mind, it was probably not the fact that Peter wanted to build **"tabernacles"** or **"shelters"** that was so goofy. He was a Jew and no self-respecting Jew would have wanted to build a temple for men, not even Elijah and Moses. The goofiness may have come from the fact that he wanted to build booths for two men who had been dead a long time, one for 1400 and the other for 800 years.

All during the Feast of Tabernacles, participants waved leafy branches called *lulabs* which was really something like a fan made out of fronds from a palm tree sandwiched between two other kinds of tree branches. They were designed to be light and wavy. During the ceremonies, the participants, and there would have been thousands, would sing and shout and wave their *lulabs*. The *lulabs* were symbolic of the bounty of the land that God had given the Jews. Also the participants carried in their left hands something called a citron (which basically is a large citrus fruit like a lemon)⁹. It also indicated the bounty of the land that God had given them.

Beyond the booths, the *lulabs* and the citrons, however, there were two elements of the Feast of Tabernacles that were particularly beautiful. One element, and we'll talk about this more next week, was that they lit up the temple all night during the Feast of Tabernacles. They used four giant menorahs and they lit thousands of candles that caused the temple to glow all night long. During the night, they played music all night long and men and women danced all during

the night at the temple to express their gratitude to the Lord for His deliverance and for His guidance. The light was symbolic in two ways. First, it brought to mind the fiery cloud that led the Israelites through their wilderness wanderings. Secondly, it demonstrated that Israel ought to be a light to the nations, a candle upon a hill calling out for the nations to come and worship the living God. But we'll talk, as I said, a lot more about that next week.

Now, a moment ago I said that the Feast of the Tabernacles contained two particularly beautiful elements. The first one I have already described. The second involved water. Each day of the feasts one of the temple priests would lead a procession of thousands out of the temple down through crowded streets other steps of the Pool of Siloam.

The Pool of Siloam had been built by King Hezekiah hundreds of years earlier. Essentially, it was a large pool that connected the city with a spring on the outskirts of Jerusalem. The spring was channeled under the wall to the Pool of Siloam through a tunnel carved out of solid rock. The Pool was inside the wall of the city and the idea was that having the pool connected to a spring outside the city would mean that they would never have to worry about being cut off from a fresh supply of water during a siege.

Anyway, the priest led the multitude down to the Pool of Siloam where he dipped a golden pitcher into the pool and withdrew two or three pints of water. He would then lead the procession back to the temple and he and the crowd would march around the altar once and then he would climb the steps of the altar and pour the water into a silver funnel that ran out at the base of the altar. At the

same time another priest would pour a pitcher of wine into another funnel on top of the altar that also ran out at the base of the altar.

When they finished the people would sing the Great Hallel, which was made up of Psalm 113-118. The priest would sing out the first line of each of the six psalms and the people would repeat it. After every other line they would shout out as a group **“Hallelujah.”** Of course, as they did they would wave their *lulabs* with immense joy.

They repeated this for seven days. The first day of the feast they offered 13 bullocks. The second day they offered 12. The third day they offered eleven and so on down to the last day when they offered only seven¹⁰. Now here was the significance. If you add the total number of bullocks offered, it added up to seventy. The Jews believed they were offering one bullock for each nation of the world.

In addition, the water being poured out was symbolic of how the Lord gave them water to drink in the wilderness from a rock that followed them around and the point that Zechariah and other prophets made in the prophecies was that that water would flow out of the temple out to all the nations of the world.¹¹

Listen to how Zechariah puts it.

^{ESV} **Zechariah 14:8**...On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea. It shall continue in summer as in winter. ⁹ And the LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day the LORD will be one and his name one.

Anyway, like I said they repeated the water ceremony for seven days in a row. On the last day of the feast, the great day of the feast, they did one thing different. They marched around the altar seven times before the priest went up the steps of the altar to pour out his golden pitcher. The crowd seeing the burnt offering and the water exuding from the base of the altar waved their *lulabs* and answered back responsively as the priests led them through the Great Hallel.

They finished up hearing and repeating these words...

^{ESV} **Psalm 118:1**...Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever! ² Let Israel say, "His steadfast love endures forever."

⁶ The LORD is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? ⁷ The LORD is on my side as my helper; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me. ⁸ It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man.

¹⁴ The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.

¹⁶ the right hand of the LORD exalts, the right hand of the LORD does valiantly!"

¹⁹ Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD. ²⁰ This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it. ²¹ I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. ²² The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. ²³ This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. ²⁴ This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. ²⁵ Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success! ²⁶ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD! We bless you from the house of the LORD.

Right there, there would have been a brief pause in the worship as the priests prepared additional sacrifices. It was right then during that pause that most scholars think it happened. Right then as the joyous crowd looked toward the

altar, right then there rose up behind them a strong and noble voice like the sound of many waters, like the roar of young lion saying,

^{ESV} **John 7:37**...On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ **Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'**"

And you see brothers and sisters, He would have been saying in that, "**Now in Me is all this that you love so dearly is fulfilled. It is true that a rock followed your fathers around in the desert. I am that rock. Come to Me and I will give you water that lasts.**"

Alfred Edersheim, the great Jewish Christian and commentator wrote this:

It was then, immediately after the symbolic rite of water-pouring, immediately after the people had responded by repeating those lines from Psalm 118 - given thanks, and prayed that Jehovah would send salvation and prosperity, and had shaken their *Lulabh* towards the altar, thus praising 'with heart, and mouth, and hands,' and then silence had fallen upon them - that there rose, so loud as to be heard throughout the Temple, the Voice of Jesus. He interrupted not the services, for they had for the moment ceased: He interpreted, and He fulfilled them.¹²

Of course, they knew that Jesus was talking about the Holy Spirit. The whole ceremony was geared to illustrate the glorious coming of the Holy Spirit. But just in case the reader might miss it look at what John says in verse 39.

^{ESV} **John 7:39**...Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. ⁴⁰ When they heard these words, some of the people said, "**This really is the Prophet.**"

Notice, He is not a prophet. He is *the* prophet. Still they could not get Galilee out of their minds.

^{ESV} **John 7:41**...Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "**Is the Christ to come from Galilee? ⁴² Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?**"
⁴³ So there was a division among the people over him. ⁴⁴ Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

Finally in verse 45, those temple guards made it back to the Pharisees. There is something almost comedic about their response.

^{ESV} **John 7:45**...The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "**Why did you not bring him?**" ⁴⁶ The officers answered, "**No one ever spoke like this man!**"

Their response was not a response borne out of faith. Also you have to remember that these were not Roman thugs. These men were Levites trained in the Scripture and granted the high honor of guarding the temple of God. They would have struggled to take Jesus because of the words that came from Jesus' mouth. Let me say one thing about the NIV translation here. I think it ought emphasize man, which it does not. Literally it was, "**No man ever spoke like this.**" And, of course, they were right. Jesus was the God-Man, the holy, blameless, matchless wisdom of God come down from heaven to reveal the salvation of God to the world.

The Pharisees responded to the guards in hateful and bitter language.

^{ESV} **John 7:47...**The Pharisees answered them, "**Have you also been deceived?** ⁴⁸ **Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him?** ⁴⁹ **But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed.**"

Now, there are two things you ought to note here. First, they call the crowd an "accursed mob." The rabbis of that day looked down on common people. They often referred to them "**am ha'ares**"¹³, which meant something like "**people of the land.**"¹⁴ It was a contemptuous title. Rabbis often mocked and chided the stupidity of the people. Of course, the people as uneducated as they were knew that the rabbis viewed them contemptuously and they often felt the same way about the rabbis.¹⁵ I read one quote this week which I have lost that came from a famous rabbi and said something like this, "**The rabbis despise the people. No wonder then that before I became a rabbi I used to like to beat rabbis.**"¹⁶

Of course that is pretty extreme but there was tension. The other thing that I want to point out is that the Pharisees may not have known the answer to their own question. They asked, "**Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him?**" They think they know the answer and they think the answer is no. So John has Nicodemus respond to them not necessarily as a believing man, which I think he later becomes, but as a fair man.

^{ESV} **John 7:50...** Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, ⁵¹ "**Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?**"

You will remember that Nicodemus had already encountered this uncultured, uneducated Galilean personally. You will remember that Jesus pretty much

cleaned his clock spiritually. So he wanted to be more careful.¹⁷ Still they reply even to him, the great teacher of Israel, in a contemptuous manner.

^{ESV} **John 7:52...**They replied, "**Are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee.**"

I might one final comment regarding even this conclusion. There were at least two prophets that came out of Galilee. You will know both of their names. One you will know particularly well. One was Nahum and the other was Jonah.

^{ESV} **John 7:53...**They went each to his own house,

Now what is the point of all this? We've been making the point that John was written to encourage early first century Jewish Christian to keep the faith. We have been arguing that John was trying to demonstrate to them that Jesus was not only better than the synagogue but that He was the fulfillment of all that the Old Testament anticipated. He was better than Jacob, better than Moses. He was better than the temple, better than the ceremonial law. He was the fruition and apex of all the Holy Scripture promised. He was the fulfillment of the hope of all the faithful who had gone before. He was and is worthy of faith and of trust.

Of course, the lesson for us is much simpler and I think from this chapter is extremely simple. Jesus is the source and comfort of all who put their trust in Him. He will sustain us with His blessed spirit and that will bear exude forth from us to give life-giving hope to those around us. So, even when we become disappointed that our spiritual expectations have not been met or even when we are unable to answer the objections of unbelievers let us cleave to Him. Out of Him flow rivers of living water. Let us come and drink to our heart's content.

¹ Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 262. "Jesus' teaching produced critical amazement and bewilderment among those who heard him in the temple, not astonishment over his knowledge (as in Lk. 4:20), but offense (cf. 3:7; 4:27; 5:28; 7:21). How could this man, who had never received the appropriate training, act as one instructed in the Scriptures? Moreover, the fact that he chose to teach in the undoubtedly reinforced this mood."

² B.F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1954), 118.

³ Morris, 361. Morris quotes Bernard who writes: "This is a lifelike touch. It was not the people but the Jews who had begun the plot; the people knew nothing of it."

⁴ *Ibid*, 361.

⁵ Westcott, 120.

⁶ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 171. "The reason Jesus gives for the distance he maintains between his mother and himself must be viewed in the light of the cross. *My time has not yet come*, he says: the word 'time', literally 'hour' (*hora*), constantly refers to his death on the cross and the exaltation bound up with it (7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1), or the consequences deriving from it (5:28–29), so it would be unnatural to take it in any other way here. But how could that have been a response to Mary? And what could the reader be expected to understand from so enigmatic a reference?"

To answer the second question first, rhetoric would call this sort of reference an internal prolepsis, a reference to a theme that will be developed later or to an event that will occur later in the narrative. Such device captures the reader's interest and asks questions: What does 'hour' mean? When does this 'hour' come? By whetting the reader's curiosity it encourages more thoughtful reading; moreover the book becomes deeper and more complex when it is read the second, third and subsequent times. Anticipating the development of the theme, then, we note that the 'hour' of Jesus' death, resurrection and exaltation to glory is in the first part of this Gospel constantly said to be 'not yet', until the arrival of the Gentiles (12:20ff.). From that point on, with Jesus on the way to death, the hour is said to have arrived (13:1; 17:1)."

⁷ *Ibid*, 319.

⁸ Brown, 326ff. Much of the material in this section is adapted from Brown and Alfred Edersheim.

⁹ Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews Book VIII, Chapter 13*. As to Alexander, his own people were seditious against him; for at a festival which was then celebrated, when he stood upon the altar, and was going to sacrifice, the nation rose upon him, and pelted him with citrons [which they then had in their hands, because] the law of the Jews required that at the feast of tabernacles every one should have branches of the palm tree and citron tree; which thing we have elsewhere related. They also reviled him, as derived from a captive, and so unworthy of his dignity and of sacrificing. At this he was in a rage, and slew of them about six thousand.

¹⁰ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-1954), vol. 2, 23.

¹¹ C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 348-349. Dodd understates the idea by saying an allusion is probable. It is not probable; it is certain. "It is probable that the dialogues themselves contain deliberate allusions to the ritual of the festival and the ideas associated with it. One of the most distinctive ceremonies of the Feast of Tabernacles was that of libations of water. The water was drawn in solemn form from the Siloam reservoir, conveyed to the temple, and poured over the altar of burnt offering. This took place on each of the seven days of the Feast (and, according to inferior authorities, on the extra eighth day also). It was associated with prayers for rain, and may have been the survival of a primitive rain-making ceremony, since the festival was celebrated about the time when the first rains of autumn might be expected. However that may be, the idea of the satisfaction of the need for water in order to live recurs in rabbinic discussions of the festival and its meaning, and water is made to symbolize various spiritual blessings."

¹² Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Chapter 7. In The Last, The Great Day Of The Feast') Taken from an internet version.

¹³ William Fairweather, *The Background of the Gospels* (London: T&T Clark, 1920), 193. Fairweather has a great section on "the people of the land." My copy is Klock & Klock reprint.

¹⁴ Carson, 331. "The label had originally been applied to the entire nation of Israel (e.g. Ezk. 22:29), but came in time to refer to the common people against the leaders (Je. 1:18), and then to the mixed population that lived in Samaria and Judea during the exile, in distinction from the blood Jews who returned after the exile (Ezr. 10:2, 11). Amongst the rabbis 'the people of the land' always refers to the people who do not know the law, i.e. the Law of Moses both as it is found in the Hebrew Scriptures and as it was thought to be preserved in oral tradition; and if they do not know it, they cannot keep it. Since the law is the law of God, people of the land' are characterized by both ignorance and impiety."

¹⁵ F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel & Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1983), 185. "The disparaging judgment pronounced on the crowd expresses a characteristic attitude of many Pharisees towards the common people. The common people 'the people of the land', as they called them — simply could not be expected to master the details of the oral law, the 'tradition of the elders', and therefore they were always liable to infringe it. Even the liberal Rabbi Hillel, of the generation before Christ, summed up this attitude when he said, No member of the common people is pious'. From the Pharisees' point of view, the common people could easily be misled by any plausible teacher, because of their shocking ignorance of the true interpretation of the law."

¹⁶ C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to John: An Introduction with Notes and Commentary on the Greek Text*, (London: S.P.C.K, 1967), 274. Still Barrett gets awfully close to the same sentiment. "A passage which shows both that the dislike was returned by the (*am ha'arets*) and also that the gulf

between the two classes was not impassable is *Pesahim* 49b: R. Aqiba said of himself: "When I was an (*am ha'arets*) I used to say, "I wish I had one of those scholars, and I would bite him like an ass." His disciples said, "You mean like a dog." He replied, "An ass's bite breaks the bone; a dog's does not.""

¹⁷ Paul D. Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 81. "Have any of the rulers believed in him, or any of the Pharisees?" As a matter of fact, a man who is both ruler and Pharisee, though he has not yet openly believed in Jesus, has expressed his private awe before him; and just to make sure we do not forget, the author ushers Nicodemus back onto the stage two verses later to speak a cautious word in Jesus' defense. The result is that 7:45–48 constitute one of the most genuinely comical scenes in the New Testament."