

The Gospel of John

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Chapter Seven

John 7:1-2

After these things Jesus was walking in Galilee, for He was unwilling to walk in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him. (2) Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near.

Jesus left Judea for Galilee where He spent the next twelve months. John surely knew of the Galilean ministry of Jesus but chose not to elaborate on it as do the Synoptic Gospels. It is probably preferable to state that the Judeans were seeking to kill Him rather than the Jews since there were Jews in Galilee also. John now takes up the time of Jesus after His Galilean ministry but while He was still in Galilee.



The Feast of Booths or the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated in what is the second week of October in our calendar (Lev 23:34). It started five days after the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur and lasted for eight days (Lev 23:33-36; Deut 16:13-17). Each family lived in their own temporary shelter to celebrate the years of wandering before entering the Promised Land. People who had homes in the area would build their temporary dwelling either in their courtyard or on their roof. This feast was one of three that was required attendance by every Jewish male (Deut 16:16).

John 7:3-4

Therefore His brothers said to Him, "Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. (4) "For no one does anything

in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world."

We know by verse five below that the brothers of Jesus did not believe He was who He said that He was so their comments might be taken to be sarcastic. But they may have just been testing Him. He had already stated that the appointed time was fulfilled:

Luke 4:18-21 NASB "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, (19) TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD." (20) And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. (21) And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

They did not understand why He would continue to work in rather obscure environments especially with the festival in Jerusalem when so many people from all over the region would be there. He could then publically show Himself to be the Messiah.

John 7:5-8

*For not even His brothers were believing in Him. (6) So Jesus *said to them, "My time is not yet here, but your time is always opportune. (7) "The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil. (8) "Go up to the feast yourselves; I do not go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come."*

The Synoptic Gospels also give the indication that His brothers did not believe in Him. Only after His resurrection are His brothers found following Him: "These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers." (Acts 1:14 NASB) This change may have occurred because He appeared to His brother James: "then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles;" (1Cor 15:7 NASB) He makes a similar reply to His brothers as He did to His mother regarding His time here (John 2:4). Jesus was totally in submission to the plan of the Father but for those without such a submission any time was as good as another. Jesus said that the world cannot hate His brothers because they were still of the world. His statement about the world hating Him because He testifies that its deeds are evil are reminiscent of:

John 3:19-21 NASB "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. (20) "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. (21) "But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

The brothers were free to go to the festival whenever they wished for they were not under the direction of the Father. Jesus could not go until the Father told Him that it was time for Him to go. The word "yet" does not appear in many manuscripts but it is included in the oldest ones. Jesus also did not want to go to the festival with a contingent because His function as the Messiah was not what the Jews were expecting. His brothers wanted Him to show himself publically if He was who He claimed to be (verse 4 above).

John 7:9-11

Having said these things to them, He stayed in Galilee. (10) But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as if, in secret. (11) So the Jews were seeking Him at the feast and were saying, "Where is He?"

Jesus wanted to avoid any public display at this time for such was not the Father's timing for His mission. He did not go publicly as His brothers had suggested. The time for His public entry into Jerusalem would not come for another six months (John 12:12) so He left Galilee to never see it again before His death. It is likely that at least a few of His disciples went with Him but that is not stated by John. The Jews looking for Him would be members of the Sanhedrin. The reason the Jews were seeking Him was because they wanted to arrest Him (verse 1 above). They did not have the authority to arrest Him in Galilee where Herod Antipas was the ruler. But in Jerusalem they did have the executive power in Jewish affairs although the Roman governor could overrule them.

John 7:12-13

There was much grumbling among the crowds concerning Him; some were saying, "He is a good man"; others were saying, "No, on the contrary, He leads the people astray." (13) Yet no one was speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews.

Public opinion about Him was divided but the people were afraid of the Jews so they only murmured their opinions. They could have been discussing His previous visit to the capital or news about His ministry in Galilee may have reached the city. Similar discussions take place today as some people say that He was only a great teacher and an example of a good man and others say that He was insane since He claimed an equal status with God. Considering all that He said about Himself, one should only be able to conclude that either He was insane or He is the Son of God and equal to the Father. The official Jewish conclusion would be that He did claim to be what He was not and thus misleading common people so that He should be executed. Fearing a similar fate by the Jewish leaders the crowd was hesitant to let them hear their comments.

John 7:14-15

But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach. (15) The Jews then were astonished, saying, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?"

Half-way through the festival Jesus began to teach in the temple. The Jews were astonished at His grasp and exposition of the Scriptures since He had not been taught in any of the rabbinical schools. "Being learned" does not refer to an ability to read and write for such was very commons among the Jewish men. Rather it refers to His grasp of details of the Scriptures. How could He possibly have such an understanding when He had not sat at the feet of the great rabbinical teachers of the day? A similar question about the ability of Peter and John was mentioned: "Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus." (Act 4:13 NASB) It seems that the verse in Acts meant that people assumed the disciples had been taught by Jesus. However they still did not understand how Jesus could have such an understanding.

John 7:16-19

So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. (17) "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself. (18) "He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him. (19) "Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?"

Jesus replied in a manner that they also would not understand or accept. The works were those given by the Father for Him to do (John 5:36) and even His words were those given by the Father for Him to speak (John 3:34). The prophets of old had all said "Thus says the Lord" but Jesus speaks with His authority: "I say to you". Verse 17 does not mean just happening to do God's will but one having an active purpose to do God's will. Purposing to do God's will develops discernment so that one will know God's will. These people should have such an attitude and that purpose should have taught them that Jesus was doing the Father's will. They were invoking the writings of Moses to try to condemn Him but they were not obeying the laws of Moses. One of the commandments is "thou shall not kill" but they were trying to have Jesus put to death.

John 7:20-24

The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?" (21) Jesus answered them, "I did one deed, and you all marvel. (22) "For this reason Moses has given you circumcision (not because it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and on the Sabbath you circumcise a man. (23) "If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath? (24) "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

The reaction of the crowd shows that the judgment of the Pharisees to kill Jesus was not widely known or accepted. This crowd in the Temple may not have been aware of the actions of the Jewish leaders against Jesus. The Synoptic Gospels also record accusations against Jesus:

Matt 9:34 NASB But the Pharisees were saying, "He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons."

Matt 12:24 NASB But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons."

Mark 3:22 NASB The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons."

Jesus is not saying that He only performed one miracle but He is referring them to the miracle of the healing of the paralytic at the pool (John 5:1-18) that led to the controversy with the Jewish leaders. Circumcision was initiated by Abraham (Gen 17:9-14) and commanded in the law of Moses (Lev 12:3). This act was to be done on the eighth day after birth, which may be on a Sabbath so it was allowed. This allowance for "work" on the Sabbath was the reason Jesus is referring when He is quoted as saying "for this reason". Circumcision only affected one part of the body but Jesus made the entire man well so such an act should be even more accepted. He then tells them to not judge superficially but they should evaluate His actions objectively.

John 7:25-27

So some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill? (26) "Look, He is speaking publicly, and they are saying nothing to Him. The rulers do not really know that this is the Christ, do they? (27) "However, we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from."

Some of the crowd were aware of the threats of the Pharisees against Jesus and they rhetorically asked if this were the man they were seeking to kill. If He is that person then why is He publically speaking when He should be hiding from those wanting to kill Him. There were some of the Pharisees present so the people wondered why they were not trying to apprehend Him. A reason they devised was that perhaps the Pharisees did not really know whether or not He was the Promised One. The folklore was that the Promised Messiah would just appear at the proper time without anyone knowing His origin precisely. However these people knew Him to be Jesus of Nazareth so He could not possibly be the Christ. The priests would certainly have been aware that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem (Matt 2:5) but such might not have been well known by the crowd.

John 7:28-29

Then Jesus cried out in the temple, teaching and saying, "You both know Me and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. (29) "I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me."

Jesus then continued to teach in the outer courtyard. He stated that they know of His physical origin but they do not understand that He did not come on His own volition as some other teacher would do. He did not come as just Jesus of Nazareth but was sent by the Father. By their actions He further stated that they did not know the Father. He further stated that He knows the Father because He was from Him and was sent by Him. Anybody who rejects the Son does not know the Father who sent Him. Such a statement is echoed in the Synoptic Gospels:

Matt 11:27 NASB "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.

Luke 10:22-24 NASB "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." (23) Turning to the disciples, He said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see, (24) for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see them, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear them."

Jesus further elaborated on the gift the disciples were given in that they could have eyes to see the truth that many prophets and kings of ages past had wished to see. His meaning is clear and the Jews could not bear to hear it.

John 7:30-31

So they were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come. (31) But many of the crowd believed in Him; and they were saying,

"When the Christ comes, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?"

As further stated in verses 32 and 45 below, the Pharisees tried to seize Jesus but nobody was allowed to lay a hand on Him because it was not yet the time for that to happen as further stated by John who also recorded when the time had come:

John 8:20 NASB These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.

John 12:23 NASB And Jesus *answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

John 12:27 NASB "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour.

John 13:1 NASB Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

John 17:1 NASB Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You,

Although the Pharisees were gripped with jealousy and fear of losing their power over the people, many in the crowd did believe in Him. They reasoned that when the Christ did come surely he would not perform more signs than those performed by Jesus of Nazareth. Probably among those present would be those who witnessed the feeding of the multitude in Galilee and some from Jerusalem who witnessed the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda.

John 7:32-34

The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about Him, and the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to seize Him. (33) Therefore Jesus said, "For a little while longer I am with you, then I go to Him who sent Me. (34) "You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come."

The crowd was not voicing their opinions loudly for fear of the authorities but the Pharisees heard their whisperings. The chief priests and the Pharisees were the major members of the Sanhedrin then sent the temple police to seize Jesus. The chief priests were the most wealthy and powerful members of the Sanhedrin and the high priest was always chosen from their members. They were also Sadducees, the majority party of the Sanhedrin. The temple police were Levites chosen to keep order in the temple. The leader of the temple police was the captain of the temple and was second in authority to the high priest. Seeing the events Jesus said that He only had a short time to remain with them before He would return to the Father. He knew that they would continue to search for Him but they could not come to where He was going so they would not find Him after He left. His words were not understood by those who heard Him for they did not believe His statements about His true origin.

John 7:35-36

The Jews then said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find Him? He is not intending to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks, is He? (36) "What is this statement that He said, 'You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come'?"

The Jews were the leaders and they began to discuss among themselves as to where this man thought that He would go. The Dispersion was the area north and west of them where Jewish colonies existed in a Greek environment. They wondered if He planned on a ministry trip to the Jews in those lands or even to the Greeks living in the area. The speakers did not know that Jesus would not be going in that area but that tens of thousands of His followers would be in the area a few years hence. They repeated His words trying to understand what He meant. They could not know that He was actually stating their lost condition that would prevent them from following Him to the Father as John later records: *Then He said again to them, "I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come."* (John 8:21 NASB)

John 7:37-39

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. (38) 'He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.' (39) But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

The festival lasted eight days with a great ceremony on the last day:

Lev 23:36 NASB 'For seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation and present an offering by fire to the LORD; it is an assembly. You shall do no laborious work.

Num 29:35-39 NASB 'On the eighth day you shall have a solemn assembly; you shall do no laborious work. (36) 'But you shall present a burnt offering, an offering by fire, as a soothing aroma to the LORD: one bull, one ram, seven male lambs one year old without defect; (37) their grain offering and their drink offerings for the bull, for the ram and for the lambs, by their number according to the ordinance; (38) and one male goat for a sin offering, besides the continual burnt offering and its grain offering and its drink offering. (39) 'You shall present these to the LORD at your appointed times, besides your votive offerings and your freewill offerings, for your burnt offerings and for your grain offerings and for your drink offerings and for your peace offerings."

It is very helpful to know what was going on with this festival that relates to the comment by Jesus on anyone being thirsty. In thanking God for the produce they also acknowledged God's gift of rain needed by the crops. Each day a priest would obtain water in a golden pitcher from the pool of Siloam and pour it into a funnel at the west side of the altar and the choir began to sing the Great Hallel (Psa 113-118). There was no water used on the eighth day but a prayer for rain was offered that would give more meaning to the statement by Jesus about a source of water. Jesus stated that if anyone was thirsty they were to come to HIM. As John explains in verse 39 Jesus was referring to the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus had already told the woman at the well about this water (John 4:14). We do not know precisely which Scripture Jesus is referring although there are several predictions for the Day of the Lord regarding water such as:

Zec 14:8 NASB And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter.

Eze 47:9 NASB "It will come about that every living creature which swarms in every place where the river goes, will live. And there will be very many fish, for these waters go there and the others become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes.

Joel 3:18 NASB And in that day The mountains will drip with sweet wine, And the hills will flow with milk, And all the brooks of Judah will flow with water; And a spring will go out from the house of the LORD To water the valley of Shittim.

Isa 33:21 NASB But there the majestic One, the LORD, will be for us A place of rivers and wide canals On which no boat with oars will go, And on which no mighty ship will pass—

It was not from some earthly Jerusalem that Jesus referred but from the dwelling place of God.

We know in the new heavens and earth there will be a new Jerusalem on earth from heaven:

“And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.” (Rev 21:2 NASB) Jesus stated that this flowing water referred to the gift of the Holy Spirit and that would not occur until He was glorified.

John 7:40-42

Some of the people therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, "This certainly is the Prophet." (41) Others were saying, "This is the Christ." Still others were saying, "Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He? (42) "Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?"

The Prophet would be an allusion to the promise by Moses: *“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him.”* (Deut 18:15) Others thought that perhaps He was the Messiah as predicted: *“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity.”* (Mic 5:2 NASB) The crowd was confused however because the Micah verse stated He would come from Bethlehem. They thought it ridiculous that the Promised One would come from Galilee. They also expected Him to be a descendant of David as implied by the following:

Isaiah 55:3 NASB "Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, According to the faithful mercies shown to David.

2Sam 7:12-16 NASB "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. (13) "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. (14) "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, (15) but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. (16) "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.""

This reference could be an instance of John's irony for Jesus was born in Bethlehem and He was born of the seed of David (Rom 1:3)!

John 7:43-46

So a division occurred in the crowd because of Him. (44) Some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him. (45) The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, "Why did you not bring Him?" (46) The officers answered, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks."

John repeatedly informs us of divisions among the people depending upon how they perceived Him. Some of the people wanted to seize Him in obedience to the wishes of the Sanhedrin but nobody forcibly grabbed Him. We read earlier that the temple police had been sent to bring Him to the Sanhedrin but they return empty handed. The chief priests and Pharisees question the temple police to determine why they did not bring Him to them as requested. Obviously the police were impressed by the statements of Jesus and stated that no man had ever spoken with such authority as did Jesus. The Greek structure implies their saying that no ordinary human being had ever spoken as did Jesus. Such authority and grace they had never heard before:

Matt 7:29 NASB for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

Luke 4:22 NASB And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?"

This evaluation has stood for 2000 years.

John 7:47-49

The Pharisees then answered them, "You have not also been led astray, have you? (48) "No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he? (49) "But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed."

The Pharisees expected the disciplined police officers to obey their orders and not be persuaded by the talk of the person they had been sent to bring to them. They then continued to show their arrogance by stating that none of the Sanhedrin had believed Him and only the ignorant crowd members believed Jesus. They evidently did not know that Nicodemus had believed in Jesus and he was a member of their group. This same argument is used today by atheists and others as they say that only ignorant people will believe that Jesus was who He stated Himself to be. Many people today who are considered intellectuals consider that anyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ, physically died on the Cross, and was physically resurrected are deluded. There are people who recognize that Jesus of the Bible actually lived but was only a prophet. However such people must ignore His statements about Himself being one with the Father and other statements about His being God. The Synoptic Gospels spell out this revelation to infants clearly:

Matt 11:25 NASB At that time Jesus said, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants.

Luke 10:21 NASB At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, "I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.

The reference to infants means people who are young in mind not in age. I am pleased and humbled to have given this insight by God so that I would believe Jesus is indeed the promised Messiah, my Lord and Savior.

John 7:50-53

*Nicodemus (he who came to Him before, being one of them) *said to them, (51) "Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?" (52) They answered him, "You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee." (53) [Everyone went to his home.*

Nicodemus does come forward to His defense but only by stating a legal technicality. Nicodemus was a fellow member of the Pharisees and could understand the law so he brought forward this objection to any treatment of Jesus without proper interrogation. The angry members of the Sanhedrin questioned the origin of Nicodemus as they did not expect anyone except someone from the Galilee area to defend Jesus. They evidently did not remember that Elijah was from Gilead (Galilee beyond Jordan). Jonah was also from northern Israel. The ruling authorities of the south thought that only someone from their region could be a prophet. Evidently the fact of the birth of Jesus in Judaea was not known by them or such was ignored.