

SESSION ONE

The Sent One: *Finding Peace in His Identity (John 7:1-52)*

“Jesus is not one of many ways to approach God, nor is He the best of several ways; He is the only way.” ~ A. W. Tozer

I. The Attitude of Jesus’ Brothers (7:1-13)

7:2 . . . *Feast of Tabernacles* . . . Sukkoth, meaning “booths” or “tabernacles,” was a principal feast of ancient Israel (see Judg 9:27). Joy and celebration marked this event as Jews commemorated the wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness. Along with Passover and Pentecost, this was a feast of pilgrimage to Jerusalem (see Deut 16:16-17).

“It is not surprising that Sukkoth [Feast of Tabernacles] is marked as the greatest sacrifice in terms of the quantity and value of offerings, because it came at the time of year when the disposable wealth of produce was at its height. The underlying dynamic of sacrifice is that when Israel enjoys the produce of God’s land with God, according to the preparation and timing and consumption that God desires, Israel is blessed.” ~ B. Chilton, “Feasts and Holy Days,” in *DNTB*, 374

7:3-5 Similar to the crowds in Galilee, the brothers of Jesus sought a political Messiah (6:15); and thus, they failed to understand Jesus’ true mission. Eventually, Jesus’ brothers will come to trust him (see Acts 1:14).

7:6 . . . *my time has not yet arrived* . . . The ironic twist is that while Jesus’ brothers understood this “time” to refer to going to Jerusalem for the festival, Jesus’ reference to “time” is His death, burial, and resurrection. His going to the feast would only hasten this hour.

7:8 . . . *I am not going up to this feast because my time has not yet fully arrived* . . . Four major explanations have been set forth in attempts to reconcile these words with Jesus’ statement in verse 10.

- Jesus is really denying his brothers’ request to perform signs. He will go to the feast, but not in the public fashion they desire.
- Jesus did not travel up to Jerusalem with the other pilgrims to the feast. Rather, Jesus traveled privately to Jerusalem.
- Jesus is simply not going up now.
- Jesus cannot go to the Feast on His own accord. The Father would have to instruct Jesus to do so (3:8).

II. The Presence of Jesus in Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles (7:14-25)

A. The Sabbath Question Revisited (7:14-24)

7:20 . . . *who is trying to kill you?* This question from the crowd creates a distinction between the leadership and the general populace in their response to Jesus.

7:21 The “one work” appears to harken back to Jesus’ healing of the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath (5:1-47).

7:23 . . . *you circumcise a male child on the Sabbath* . . . Rabbinic literature taught that circumcision overrode the command to observe the Sabbath. What Moses did in part, Jesus performs completely. Once again we see this contrast between Moses and Jesus (see 1:17).

B. Public Response to Jesus’ Teaching (7:25-31)

7:27 . . . *no one knows where he [Christ] comes from.* This statement could reflect the kaleidoscope of views surrounding the Messiah, especially in light of Matthew 2 (known that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem). Other scholars have argued that the prevalent Jewish notion which espoused that the Messiah’s presence remained unknown until His public revelation, served as the basis for this comment in 7:27. Either position would seem to originate from Old Testament prophetic passages such as Malachi 3:1 and Daniel 9:25 that indicate the sudden appearance of the Messiah.

7:29 Contrasted with you do not know Him, Jesus emphatically claims that I do know Him.

7:30-31 Instead of receiving Jesus, the crowd seeks to seize Him. And yet, God remains sovereign. His “hour” will occur on His timetable, no one else’s. Clearly, the crowd understood the claims Jesus was making.

C. The Attempt to Arrest Jesus (7:32-36)

7:34 Another example of misunderstanding occurs in John’s Gospel as the Jews fail to grasp Jesus’ departure out of the world.

This scene may reflect Amos 8:11-12: “Behold, days are coming,’ declares the Lord God. ‘When I will send a famine on the land, not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of the Lord. And people will stagger from sea to sea and from the north even to the east; they will go to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, but they will not find it.’” (also, see Deut 4:29; Job 28:12; Isa 53:6; Hos 5:6).

D. Jesus as the Source of the Living Water (7:37-39)

Many scholars have noted the importance of ceremonies surrounding the Feast of Tabernacles and these verses in the Fourth Gospel. Note the excellent description in Leon Morris’ commentary:

“On each of the seven days of the feast a priest drew water from the pool of Siloam in a golden flagon and brought it in procession to the temple with the joyful sounding of the trumpet. There

the water was poured into a bowl beside the altar from which a tube took it to the base of the altar. Simultaneously wine was poured through a similar bowl on the other side of the altar. These symbolic ceremonies were acted thanksgivings for God's mercies in giving water in past days (probably looking right back to the smiting of the rock in the wilderness and then on to the giving of rain in recent years). They were also an acted prayer for rain in the coming year. It is also significant that the words of Isaiah are associated with these ceremonies, 'with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation' (Isa. 12:3). The Jerusalem Talmud connects the ceremonies and this scripture with the Holy Spirit: 'Why is the name of it called, the drawing out of water? Because of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, according to what is said: With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.'" (*John*, 420-421).

7:38 . . . *from within Him will flow rivers of living water* . . . "The inexhaustible Mosaic supply of life-giving water in the wilderness could now be found in Jesus, the new prophet-like-Moses (7:40). Jesus is the source of the awaited eschatological stream" (Burge, *The Anointed Community*, 93).

E. The Response of the People (7:40-44)

7:40 . . . *the prophet* . . . This reference is most likely to an eschatological Mosaic prophet expected on the basis of Deuteronomy 18:18.

F. The Response of the Jewish Leaders (7:41-52)

7:48-51 Nicodemus bravely asserts that the Jewish leadership must first hear Jesus. The use of the negative answer in the Greek indicates that Nicodemus is sure of his point.

7:52 . . . *no prophet comes from Galilee?* This statement fails to recognize that Jonah originated from Gath Hopher, a few miles north of Nazareth in Galilee (2 Kgs 14:25). The religious community overlooked these facts in the midst of the turmoil.

III. Intersect

- A. Humanity's presumptions, desires, self-righteousness, and overall wickedness will hinder a proper view of Christ.

Ephesians 1:17-23 -

- B. A proper understanding of Christ stems from God's self-disclosure—a disclosure based upon humility and grace.

Philippians 2:6-11 -

" Any battle for victory, power, and deliverance - from ourselves and from sin - which is not based constantly upon the gazing and the beholding of the Lord Jesus, with the heart and life lifted up to Him, is doomed to failure." ~ Alan Redpath