

The Gospel of John

Chapter 7:32-53

May 11, 1997

- **The Gospel of John Outline:**

- Chapter 1 Our Lord is the Word, the Light and the Life
- Chapter 2 The Lord of the Wedding Feast; Zeal for the purity of the temple
- Chapter 3 Spiritual Birth, Belief and Salvation vs. Unbelief and Condemnation
- Chapter 4 The Ministry in Samaria, The Harvest, The Faith of the Nobleman
- Chapter 5 Paralytic man healed on the Sabbath, Unity of The Father and Son
- Chapter 6 The Bread of Life
- Chapter 7 The public debates about Jesus during the Feast of Tabernacles

- **Review and Introduction**

In the previous two sections of this chapter, we have been reviewing the various public opinions of who Jesus was (is) and the debates which followed His teaching in the synagogue during the Feast of Tabernacles. This section we consider today will conclude the festival instruction but not the debates which will continue until His second coming.

- **Exposition of John 7:32-53**

32 The Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring these things concerning Him, and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take Him.

- Having heard that some of the people were accusing the Jewish leaders of actually being one of Jesus' followers, they moved to show the people that they wanted nothing of His teaching. Because they had made no attempt to arrest Him or stop His teaching in the synagogue, the people accused the Jewish leaders of being believers in Him.

33 Then Jesus said to them, "I shall be with you a little while longer, and then I go to Him who sent Me."³⁴ "You will seek Me and not find Me, and where I am you cannot come."

- It is rather difficult to know exactly which group Jesus is now addressing. Given that John gives us the impression that Jesus is still in the synagogue and that later on the officers sent to arrest Him return to those who sent them, it is likely that He is still addressing the crowds which now included the officers.
- There are a number of things which can be learned from His instruction on this point. Jesus was not taken by surprise by the presence of the officers; He knew that He would one day be arrested and executed. He also knew that He would be exalted to the right hand of the Father after His death by means of His resurrection and ascension.
- It can be difficult to fully understand what our Lord is telling the crowd but some things are obvious. He rebukes them for seeking to take Him away sooner than He might otherwise be taken away. In addition, He contrasts their seeking Him to arrest Him now with their seeking of Him after His glorification. This contrast demonstrates that there are those who will seek Him for wrong motives. Either they want to have their stomachs filled or they want to have their eyes delighted by miracles or they want to have their pride puffed by engaging in debate. He may also be alluding to the distress which will later come upon the Jews during their persecution. Some of those will be granted genuine faith and others will seek Him with improper motives and will be unsuccessful in finding comfort from Him.

35 Then the Jews said among themselves, "Where does He intend to go that we shall not find Him? Does He intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks?"³⁶ "What is this thing that He said, 'You will seek Me and not find Me, and where I am you cannot come'?"

- As has happened repeatedly, many of His listeners had not been granted Spiritual ears to hear and struggled to understand His instruction in a temporal context. Much in the same way that we experience when we declare the gospel to those who are dead, evaluating the spiritual truths of the scriptures will be perceived as foolishness to those who are perishing.
- The people thought that maybe Jesus would flee from arrest by hiding out with those Jews who had been scattered abroad by the various occupations over the centuries. During the Assyrian conquest of the Northern kingdom and the Babylonian conquest of the Southern, many Jews fled to other regions and dwelt among many nations. This dispersion was furthered under the Hellenistic conquest of Alexander the Great and continued through the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 a.d. It is this dispersion which has led to today's popular Zionism movement.

37 On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink."³⁸ "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."³⁹ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

- On the most public day of the festival Jesus doesn't hide and speak in small numbers, He stood openly and "cried out" to the masses which again probably included the officers sent to arrest Him. As has been noted a number of times by the author of this book, though there were those who sought to take Him by force it is the Word of God which could not be broken and therefore Jesus would not be taken until His time was determined by the Father.
- Jesus cries out an invitation to the masses to come to Him those who were thirsty and attaches a promise of satisfaction to His invitation. Those who truly thirst, which is a forceful craving, will find their thirst quenched by coming to Him. Jesus then explains the basis of coming to Him which is found in belief. There is a specific kind of belief in Christ which results in our eternal security. There are many bases upon which we may believe in Jesus but only one way that we may do so unto salvation which is pictured by the flow of living water from our hearts. This also pictures a satisfaction of thirst that is so complete that they are overflowing with thirst-quenching water.
- John provides the divine commentary for us on Jesus' teaching. He explains that Jesus was teaching about the indwelling of the Spirit of God which would be sent in a new way as evidenced at Pentecost in Acts 2. The giving of the Spirit was also under the direction and timing of the Father. Although the Spirit had been given to many in the scriptures for the purpose of accomplishing various tasks or purposes, the Spirit now would be given as a permanent deposit guaranteeing our future resurrection and glorification.

40 Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, "Truly this is the Prophet."⁴¹ Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Will the Christ come out of Galilee?"⁴² "Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?"⁴³ So there was a division among the people because of Him.⁴⁴ Now some of them wanted to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

- Some had been granted faith to believe in Him and others were left to stumble through their temporal thought. Some were content to surrender to Him and others wanted to debate more about His origin, which is somewhat interesting that they did not know that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and apparently Jesus does not fill them in on this minor detail because even then these people would not think Spiritually.

45 Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why have you not brought Him?"⁴⁶ The officers answered, "No man ever spoke like this Man!"

- Having listened and perhaps been granted faith to believe in Him, the soldiers sent to arrest Him returned empty handed most likely expecting to be rebuked. It appears that to some degree these soldiers had understood Jesus' teaching and were able to withstand the pressure to arrest an innocent man who spoke authoritative truth.

47 Then the Pharisees answered them, "Are you also deceived?"⁴⁸ "Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him?"⁴⁹ "But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed."⁵⁰ Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them,⁵¹ "Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?"⁵² They answered and said to him, "Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee."

- The hard heartedness of the Pharisees is so obvious here that they rebuke the faith of the soldiers by holding themselves out to be ones in whom they should believe. They point out that they have not believed in Him and therefore others should not believe in Him. Most certainly, the leaders are afraid that further accusations of being a follower of Jesus would result in their unsuccessful arrest of Him.
- The Pharisees and scribes were the teachers in the synagogues and here they proclaim that those whom they were to teach were accursed for not knowing the law. It is an indictment upon them that those whom their students were not equipped.
- Here we have the first sign of Nicodemus after his discussion with Jesus in chapter 3 and we see him coming to the defense of Jesus and he points out the hypocrisy of his fellow Pharisees. However, his defense is met with sarcasm and shallow thinking.

53 And everyone went to his own house. NKJV

- As was customary at the conclusion of the feast everyone returned to their permanent dwellings—deep in thought.