

John – An In-Depth Study

[Part 10]

John 7:1-9 [NIV] *“After this, Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to take his life. But when the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near, Jesus’ brothers said to him, ‘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.’ For even his own brothers did not believe in him. Therefore Jesus told them, ‘The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil. You go to the Feast. I am not yet going up to this Feast, because for me the right time has not yet come.’ Having said this, he stayed in Galilee.”*

The Feast of Tabernacles was at the end of September or beginning of October.

It was one of the obligatory festivals of the Jewish calendar.

Every adult Jewish male who lived within 20 miles of Jerusalem was legally bound to keep it in Jerusalem.

There is one unique thing in this passage of scripture, the Greek word used by Jesus or John for “time” or “hour.”

In other passages of scripture [**John 2:4; John 7:30; John 8:20; John 12:27**] the Greek word is “*hōra*” which means the “*destined hour of God*”, season, high time.

But in this scripture the Greek word is “*kairōs*” meaning opportunity, what we call the psychological moment.

An opportunity that must be grasped lest it never returns.

This explains why Jesus did later go up to Jerusalem, but **not** with His brethren.

We learn two things from this incident.

a) We cannot force Jesus’ hand –

It was natural for the brethren to want Jesus to go to Jerusalem at this time when it was crowded with people to witness to.

Jesus will always do things in God’s time, **not** ours.

b) It is impossible to treat Jesus with indifference –

The time that Jesus’ brethren entered Jerusalem was of little importance. No-one would notice that they were there.

But with Jesus it was very different because when Jesus enters anywhere or anyone, He comes with a disturbing dynamic power.

Jesus’ presence is a condemnation of our way of life.

Jesus’ presence is a challenge to our selfishness and our lethargy.

Jesus had to choose His moment for when He arrives things begin to happen in a dynamic way.

John 7:10-13 [NIV] *“However, after his brothers had left for the Feast, he went also, not publicly, but in secret. Now at the Feast the Jews were watching for him and asking, ‘Where is that man?’ Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, ‘He is a good man.’ Others replied, ‘No, he deceives the people.’ But no-one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the Jews.”*

Notice the number of different reactions to the presence of Jesus Christ –

a) Brothers of Jesus’ reaction – did **not** believe Jesus [v5] and they were really egging Jesus on as you might encourage a child to show off to guests or a dog to display its tricks.

There are still people who tolerate Christian religion and forget that it is a matter of life or death.

b) Open hatred – the priests and Pharisees hated Jesus because He exposed the uselessness of their petty rules and regulations.

The Sadducees were a political party that collaborated with their Roman masters to enjoy a comfortable life.

The Sadducees did **not** want a Messiah to upset their wealthy comfort.

It is easy for a person to place their own vested interest above the challenge and the sacrifice that Jesus demands.

c) Both of the above reactions had a consuming desire to eliminate Jesus – When we are faced with Jesus Christ we can either allow Him into our lives and obey what He commands of us or we continue to cling to our own lifestyle and seek to eliminate Jesus’ influence in our lives.

d) There was arrogant contempt – This was the response of the authorities, as in their eyes Jesus was without training in a theological school, no cultural background, surely no intelligent person would ever listen to Him!

This same academic snobbery is still found in religious circles today. [**John 7:15, 47-49**]

e) The reaction of the crowd – At first there was interest [verse 11]. As long as Jesus remains an historical figure in a book, indifference can make Him just an object of interest.

The second reaction was discussion [verses 12, 43] personal views about Jesus were debated.

A true Christian is a person who has passed from talking about and discussing Christ to knowing Christ personally and living the Christ-like way of life.

There is also certain verdicts on Jesus Christ in this passage of scripture –

a) A good man – Jesus is far more than just a good man. [Greek word “*agathōs*” meaning beneficial and honourable]

When Jesus speaks it is **not** just as a good man but as the Creator God.

b) A prophet – This is true, for a prophet is a person who lives so close to God that he knows the will and the purposes of God. A person who speaks with delegated authority of the Creator God. [**John 7:40**]

c) A deluded madman – Jesus turned the mad world upside down by bringing to the world the sanity of God, but from the world’s view was mad. [**John 7:20**]

Chose a cross when he could have had power.

Washed disciples feet when He could have had people kneeling at His feet.

Came to serve in a world that should be serving Him as their Creator and Sustainer.

d) A seducer – How the Jewish authorities looked on Jesus who was leading people away from true religion as given to them by Moses. Accused of being a Sabbath-breaker, a drunkard and glutton, having disreputable friends.

e) A man of courage – One thing everyone who met Jesus was to see his courage, moral and physical. [verses 25-26]

Jesus feared God so much that He never feared what men could do to Him.

f) Most dynamic personality – A picture of a gentle, anaemic Christ is totally false. From Jesus Christ there flowed a power that sent those dispatched to arrest Him back in empty-handed bewilderment. [John 7:45-46]

g) Jesus was the Messiah – The Anointed One of God, no other title would do in their minds. [John 7:40] Human categories cannot fit Jesus Christ because He is divine.

h) There was a reaction of fear – Those in the crowd who feared to talk openly about their reaction to contact with Jesus Christ. [John 7:13] Fear of the world's authorities.

The true Christian is never afraid to let the world know what they believe even if they face persecution or even martyrdom.

i) There was a reaction of belief – There was a number of people in the crowd who could **not** deny or disbelieve the evidence of their own eyes. [John 7:31]

When a person rids themselves of prejudices and fear they are bound to end with belief in Jesus Christ.

j) There was a reaction of defending Jesus –

Nicodemus, who had previously met with Jesus Christ, had the personal courage and conviction to be a lone voice in defence of Jesus in the council of the Jewish authorities. [John 7:50-51]

In the world that is becoming more hostile to the Christian faith, we may find we also are a lone voice who will have to defend Jesus Christ before those in our community.

This is a privilege that God has given to every Christian, to be advocates and defenders of Jesus Christ in the face of hostile criticism and mockery.

“Defender of the faith” is a royal title!

John 7:14-18 [NIV] *“Not until halfway through the Feast did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach. The Jews were amazed and asked, ‘How did this man get such learning without having studied?’ Jesus answered, ‘My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. He who speaks on his own does so to gain honour for himself, but he who works for the honour of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him.’”*

Those who seek to know the will of God for them and do it, will know intuitively that Jesus is telling the truth about Himself.

To test validity of any religious speaker there are two questions we have to ask:

1) Do their words agree with, **not** contradict, what we read in God’s Word, the Christian Bible?

2) Do their words point towards Jesus Christ and God the Father and **not** to themselves and their personal opinions?

John 7:19-31 [NIV] *“Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?” “You are demon-possessed,” the crowd answered. “Who is trying to kill you?” Jesus said to them, ‘I did one miracle, and you are all astonished. Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a child on the Sabbath. Now if a child can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing the whole man on the Sabbath? Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment.’ At that point some of the people of Jerusalem began to ask, ‘Isn’t this the man they are trying to kill? Here he is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying a word to him. Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Christ? But we know where this man is from; when the Christ comes, no-one will know where he is from.’ Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, ‘Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, but I know him because I am from him and he sent me.’ At this they tried to seize him, but no-one laid a hand on him, because his time had not yet come. Still, many in the crowd put their faith in him. They said, ‘When the Christ comes, will he do more miraculous signs than this man?’”*

The Pharisees were very careful to keep the letter of the law as given by God through Moses, but failed to keep the spirit of the law as expounded by Jesus and recorded in Matthew chapter five.

This is a turning point in the Jewish authorities seeking to silence Jesus.

Up to this time the main charge had been breaking the Sabbath day and the statutes they and the scribes had added to what Moses had given them.

After this time the charge against Jesus would be that of blasphemy by Jesus setting Himself up as God. It was this charge that did bring about His being murdered by the Romans, as they saw it a threat to their rule.

For the Jews to say they do not know where the Messiah would be born were ignoring their own prophet Micah’s words. [**Micah 5:2**]

“At this they tried to seize Him.” John is impressing on his readers the impotence of any human agency to forestall the *“hour of time”* that Jesus set for His arrest and crucifixion.

Note how John indicates again the link between miraculous signs and the crowd believing what Jesus Christ said and claimed.

John 7:32-36 [NIV] *“The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about him. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest him. Jesus said, ‘I am with you for only a short time, and then I go to the one who sent me. You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come.’ The Jews said to one another, ‘Where does this man intend to go that we cannot find him? Will he go where our people live scattered among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks? What did he mean when he said, “You will look for me, but you will not find me,” and “Where I am, you cannot come?””*

Again an attempt was made to arrest Jesus, but it again failed.

The statement that Jesus made shows that the final act of the mission God the Father had given Him was foremost in His mind.

The response to this attempted arrest of Jesus was again misunderstood by the Jewish authorities. They thought that Jesus was about to visit all the scattered Jews throughout the world.

Jesus was referring to His return to His Father in heaven but the Jews again could **not** understand the spiritual implications of Jesus’ statement.

This statement by Jesus Christ also brings us face to face with His previous statement in **Matthew 7:7** and also the prophet Isaiah. [**Isaiah 55:6-7**]

The physical life has its time limit and during that short period of time an opportunity to do something may come once and then never come again.

John 7:37-39 [NIV] *“On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in 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.’ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.”*

John’s mention of the time when Jesus made this statement for certain reasons that were known to all Jews.

One was the daily water ritual that was specially stressed on the final day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

The ritual was connected with the need for rain during the following year.

Also the feast was called the Feast of Ingathering [**Exodus 23:16; Exodus 34:22**] when thanks for the second and main harvest of grain had been gathered in was given.

Again Jesus is using the physical in a spiritual sense.

It is against this background that Jesus pointed to Himself as the only One who could satisfy their spiritual thirst.

This passage of scripture tells us a very important fact about the Holy Spirit and our relationship with Him.

The Holy Spirit is never stagnant. John had already likened it to a moving wind [**John 3:8**] now the Holy Spirit is likened to flowing water.

Romans 5:5 [NIV] *“And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”*

When we read Paul’s statement with the flowing out of the Holy Spirit through us, it is love, one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit in us [**Galatians 5:22-23**] that flows out from us.

The Greek preposition used in **Romans 5:5** translated “in” or “into” is “en” meaning indwelling but when used in conjunction with “shed abroad” [King James] indicates an outward movement from within, the preposition “ek” which would then make a better translation by the word “through our hearts” as we are shown in **John 7:38**.

It is a natural reaction of a Christian filled with the Holy Spirit to share the love generated in us with other people. [**Matthew 19:19; Matthew 22:36-40**]

John 7:40-52 [NIV] *“On hearing his words, some of the people said, ‘Surely this man is the Prophet.’ Others said, ‘He is the Christ.’ Still others asked, ‘How can the Christ come from Galilee? Does not the Scripture say that the Christ will come from David’s family and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?’ Thus the people were divided because of Jesus. Some wanted to seize him, but no-one laid a hand on him. Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, ‘Why didn’t you bring him in?’ ‘No-one ever spoke the way this man does,’ the guards declared. ‘You mean he has deceived you also?’ the Pharisees retorted. ‘Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law, there is a curse on them.’ Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier and who was one of their own number, asked, ‘Does our law condemn a man without first hearing him to find out what he is doing?’*

They replied, 'Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee.'"

The response of the Pharisees shows their attitude towards ordinary Jewish people. No wonder Jesus had little good to say about them.

"*Cursed*" the Greek word used was "*epikataratōs*" meaning to bring down a curse upon yourself, an attitude of complete contempt. The Pharisees had a phrase by which they described the ordinary people who did not observe all the many regulations of the ceremonial law, "*the people of the land.*"

For examples of this contempt was a Rabbinic law saying no family members of a Pharisee should entrust a testimony of people of the land. Neither trust them with no secret, appoint them guardians of any orphan, nor custodians of any charitable funds, not to accompany them on a journey or invite them as a guest, and if possible nothing should be brought or sold from one of these people of the land.

It is a frightening thing to see a person who thinks themselves either too clever or too good to need Jesus Christ, yet this can happen.

Nicodemus was the only one to offer a weak, indirect defence of Jesus, by quoting **Exodus 23:1-9** or **Deuteronomy 1:16**.

Perhaps his previous meeting, upon meditation, had made an impact on his approach to the words of Jesus Christ.

Also the death of Jesus Christ may have added to this change of mind and heart. [**John 19:39**]