

John 7 The Feast of Tabernacles

07/25/05

Context

Chapter 6 was situated in Galilee. Now we transition back to Jerusalem, according to the basic theme, “he came unto his own place, and his own people received him not” (1:11). Through ch. 5, he has found rejection in Jerusalem and acceptance elsewhere, but 6 showed rejection outside of Jerusalem, and now we will see acceptance in Jerusalem. The division deepens.

This Jerusalem section extends through ch. 10. It is marked off by two feasts, Tabernacles (7:2) in Sept-Oct, and Dedication (10:22) in Dec, leading up to the Lord’s crucifixion at Passover the following March-April.

These four chapters fall into three sections. Each section begins with an interview of the Lord with some distinguished individual or group, and then continues with a discourse to the people of Jerusalem that grows out of that interview.

- Each interview deals with the question of sin. A key word for these chapters is “sin, sins, sinned, sinner”--27x in John, of which 17 are in 8-9.
- Each discourse ends with an attempt by the authorities to detain or destroy Jesus.

<i>Interview</i>	<i>Reference to Sin</i>	<i>Discourse</i>	<i>Threat</i>
7:1-13, His Brethren	7:7 “the works thereof are evil”	7:14-8:1, His offer, and three errors people make about him.	7:30, “they sought to take him” (cf. 32)
8:2-11, The Adulterous Woman:	8:7 “he that is without sin”--sin is where it is not expected (the rulers).	8:12-59, Jesus as the I Am.	8:59, “then took they up stones to cast at him”
9:1-39, The Blind Man	Sin is not where it is expected. 9:3 “neither this man sinned, nor his parents” 9:25 “Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.”	9:40-10:42, Jesus as the Good Shepherd and one with the Father.	10:31 “then the Jews took up stones again to stone him”

Key theme: “he that sent me.”

- This is John’s theme. The gospel contains 34 of the 80 instances of this phrase in the AV, far more than any other book (next is 2 Kings at 7).
- In John, the concentration is in ch. 5-8 (4 or 5 in each chapter, total of 18; of the others, only 12 and 17 have more than one).

1-13, Interview: Jesus and his Brethren

1-2, Setting

7:1 walked in Galilee.--This is not a change of location, as in 4:3 or 10:40, but a description of his continuing activity. He was not idle, but walked about, teaching and healing. Contrast the description of our adversary, the devil, in 1 Pet 5:8.

the Jews sought to kill him.--This introduction reminds us of what happened the last time he was in Jerusalem, in ch. 5. As the focus shifts back there, the reader must understand the attitude there toward the Lord.

2 feast of tabernacles.--This was one of the three great pilgrimage feasts, which every Jewish male was required to attend. So we have a tension: the Lord wants to avoid Jerusalem because of the threat, but as a righteous Jew, he should be there.

3-5, Challenge from His Brethren

His brethren.--We hear of them also in 2:12; Matt 12:46-47 and parallels; and named (James, Joses, Simon, Judas) in Matt 13:55. The phrase has been understood in three ways—see the second appendix in Lightfoot's *Galatians* for a comprehensive discussion.

1. The most natural interpretation is that they are later sons born to Joseph and Mary.
2. The most commonly attested ancient view is that they were the sons of Joseph by a former marriage. If they were older than Jesus, that might account for the condescending attitude they appear to take in this passage.
3. Jerome, in the fourth century, invented the idea that they were cousins of the Lord, but this view has no earlier advocates.

Either the first or the second is consistent with the language, though the first is the most natural, and most consistent with “until” and “firstborn” in Matt 1:25. At this point they are unbelievers, but through special appearances of the Lord after his resurrection (1 Cor 15:7), at least some of them became believers.

Compare their words (3-4) and their characterization (5).

3-4, Their words seem supportive.

- They acknowledge his works .
- They urge him to display them in Judaea, so that he can get the recognition that he deserves.
- “That thy disciples also may see” suggests that they want him to reinforce his existing body of followers by staging a big display in the heartland, much along the lines of the Million Mom March or the civil rights demonstrations of the 1960's.

Yet v.5 characterizes them as not believing in him, and gives this as the reason (“for”) that they made this suggestion. Matthew Henry lists nine problems with their advice, showing how it concords with their unbelieving status.

John 7

1. They presume to tell him what he should do, as though he were not wise enough to decide for himself.
2. “go into Judaea”: In urging him to go to Judaea, they are careless about his safety. Compare the opposite advice of those who truly loved him, 11:8.
3. They may have hoped that the sophisticated leaders at Jerusalem would unmask his miracles and thus excuse them in their unbelief.
4. “Depart hence”: They may have wanted to get rid of him (“Depart,” v.3, cf. Mark 5:15-17, the attitude of the people of Gadara, when confronted with Christ’s miraculous power).
5. “that thy disciples may see”: They imply that he is denying his disciples appropriate access to his miracles.
6. They reproach his lack of ambition for not seeking a greater exposure of his gifts.
7. “If thou do”: they question the authenticity of his miracles.
8. “seeketh to be known openly”: They ascribe proud motives to him, such as no doubt they held themselves.
9. “Self was at the bottom of all; they hoped, if he would make himself as great as he might, they, being his kinsmen, should share in his honour, and have respect paid them for his sake.”

Note what their advice says about their attitude toward the feast. They view it as an opportunity for self-advancement, rather than a time of gratefully remembering the Lord’s care in the wilderness. Thus many “go to church” for the wrong reasons, to be seen of men and thought well of, rather than to grow in the faith of Christ and to serve his people.

Though they had grown up with him, these men did not believe in him. The key insight here is that the world's relationships and those of the spirit are very different and often out of synch. This has two implications.

1. Being physically related to someone does not mean that you share their spiritual strengths. In particular, an unbeliever cannot assume that the spirituality of a parent or sibling will rub off on them. Each of us must come to know the Lord individually.
2. Those who are closest to us in worldly relationships are often the farthest in spiritual things. Following the Lord means being willing to love him more than earthly relatives (Matt 10:34-37). When we do this, we become part of a spiritual family that is far larger and closer than any worldly family could be (Matt 19:29).

6-8 Jesus’ Response

He begins and ends with the assertion that his time is not yet come, and in the middle gives the reason for his caution. Note the chiasm:

My time is not yet come:	I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come.
but your time is always ready.	8 Go ye up unto this feast:

John 7

My time is not yet come:	I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come.
7 The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.	

6, 8, My time is not yet come.--We should not confuse this expression with the much more common expression about the coming of Jesus' hour (2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1; 17:1). "His hour" is the time of his death and glorification. Here he is simply saying that he will make the trip to Jerusalem for Tabernacles on his timetable, not theirs.

The trip to Tabernacles is not optional for a pious Jew. It is one of the three required pilgrimage feasts (Deut 16:16). The Lord's brothers are trying to insist that he satisfy this requirement their way. He is insisting on his individual responsibility. We should be careful that people do not try to coerce us into satisfying their objectives by playing on our sense of spiritual responsibility. A godly Christian will seek to fulfill the Lord's teaching, but does so to satisfy the Lord, not men, and will not allow unbelievers to make him feel guilty because he isn't doing it the way they think he should.

Your time is always ready ... Go ye up.--The reason for the distinction is that he is subject to constraints that they do not recognize, and thus they have more freedom of movement than he does. He explains one of these constraints in v.7.

7 The world cannot hate you.--The unbeliever is a friend of the world, unopposed by it, and can move freely in it and take advantage of it.

Me it hateth.--Jesus, like his followers, is hated by the world (cf. 15:18,19). Because of this hatred, he must move cautiously. The believer does not fear persecution, but should not seek it. We are like "sheep in the midst of wolves," and are to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves," Matt 10:16.

Because.--The Lord's explanation of this hatred is extremely important. The world hates him because he "testif[ies] of it, that the works thereof are evil." Compare

- 3:19, 20, "light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."
- 15:32, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin."

The world does not hate Jesus because he is God, or because he is Jewish, or because he is popular. It hates him because he points out its sin. He rips away its veneer of respectability and shows that it is in rebellion against its creator, guilty, and in danger of judgment. Nothing is more painful to the unregenerate person than to be convicted of sin. God's purpose is to show us our sin and then remove it, but the world will fight with all its might to avoid having to confront the problem in the first place.

This verse has a sober application for us. If we are to be Christlike, we cannot sidestep the issue of sin in our presentation of the gospel. Like him, we must testify of the world that its deeds are evil. We

must begin where the apostles began, preaching first “repentance” and then “remission of sin,” Lk 24:47. Brian has reported that some churches seek to be “rocking, relevant, and guilt-free.” Relevance is always important, and rocking is a matter of personal taste, but one cannot represent Christ honestly without bringing people to confront the problem of personal guilt before a holy God.

9-13, Sequel

Luke 2:44 shows that family groups and villages customarily traveled together to and from the feasts. The brothers no doubt urged their recommendation on the Lord while they were planning for their trip, assuming that he would naturally make the trip with others from the village. As a godly Jew, he does make the trip, but he does so on his terms, not conforming to the social expectations of his brothers. Thus he gives us an example of the important difference, so often missed, between true worship and socially correct religious conformity.

11-13 The Jews ... the people.--These verses suggest that the Jews are not a subset of the people (“the multitude”) (as I suggested in ch. 6), but rather the leaders, to whom the people are contrasted.

Note the chiasmic ordering of these two—the animosity of the Jews surrounding the people and the reference to their division.

The Jews sought him.--He divines their motive in v.19—a motive they have held since 5:16. They want to destroy him, and their intention was to do so on their ground, in Jerusalem at the feast, rather than in Galilee where he had much popular support.

13 for fear of the Jews.--The antagonism of the leaders to him is not hidden from the multitude. They realize that, at least in Jerusalem, it is risky to be associated with the Lord.

12 murmuring among the people.--Through ch. 5, opposition to the Lord was centered in Jerusalem, while he found support elsewhere. Ch. 6 marked a split in this pattern, with some opposition arising in Galilee. Now we see a corresponding split in Jerusalem. This is the first of four instances in ch. 7-10 where people in Jerusalem explicitly disagree with one another over the Lord. The other three are characterized as a “division” *sxisma*: 7:43; 9:16; 10:19. This one is marked with the word “murmuring” that was introduced in 6:41, 43, 61; cf. also 7:32.

There is an important difference between the murmuring in ch. 6 and in ch. 7. In ch. 6, located in Galilee, people murmured *against* the Lord. Here, in Jerusalem, when they murmur it is *for* the Lord and *against* the religious establishment. There, they were trying to hide their doubts from his supporters. Here, they are trying to hide their growing faith from his enemies.

The following table shows these four instances of division:

Ref	Group	Friends	Enemies
7:12	People (friends speak first)	He is a good man	Nay; but he deceiveth the people
7:41		This is the Christ.	Shall Christ come out of Galilee?
9:16	Pharisees and Jews (enemies speak first)	How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?	This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day.
10:20-21		These are not the words of him that hath a devil.	He hath a devil, and is mad; why

John 7

<i>Ref</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>Friends</i>	<i>Enemies</i>
		Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?	hear ye him?

They fall into two groups: those showing division among the people, and those showing division among the Jews. In the first group, his friends speak first, followed by those opposed to him, while in the second, the order is reversed.

In both groups, the first statement is a fairly generic ethical assessment: “He is a good man,” “He is a sinner.” The second statement is a much stronger characterization: “This is the Christ,” “He hath a devil.” The effect is to show how the divisions among his hearers are growing and becoming stronger.

A good man.--While not as strong as confessing him to be the Christ, this statement is not trivial. The Lord himself challenged someone who called him “good master,” to be sure he understood what he was saying (Luke 18:19). The epithet is applied to Joseph of Arimathaea (Luke 23:50) and Barnabas (Acts 11:24), and Rom 5:7 seems to consider the title even higher than “righteous.”

Deceiveth the people.--The concern for “the people” suggests that the speakers, though themselves part of “the people,” are aligned with the Jews. The whole construction in their mind is that “the people” need to be guided by the leaders, and protected from anyone who would challenge their authority.

The pervasive metaphor of shepherd and sheep in the Bible shows that there is a need for older and more experienced believers to guide and protect the younger ones, cf. 1 Pet 5. But we must be very careful that this division of responsibility does not become self-serving. As Peter points out, those who are shepherds exercise their role under the eye of the Chief Shepherd, to whom they are answerable. The Jews of the Lord’s day, like those excoriated by Ezekiel (ch. 34) and Jeremiah (ch. 23), have become so self-serving that they are the ones deceiving the people, and God must send a prophet to correct their error.

7:14-8:1, Jesus in the Open

See the handout for the chiasm, ABCDED’C’B’A’. Jesus does not speak after the center, E. The dialog in B-E outlines the points that the people and rulers discuss among themselves in D’-B’.

- A,E, Extremes and center discuss Jesus’ movements, while elsewhere we have only his speech in the temple.
- B focuses on the Jewish charge that Jesus (B) and those who are sympathetic with him (B’) do not know the law. In each case it is shown that the Jews are the ones who are careless with the law.
- C raises the question whether any of the rulers believe on Jesus.
- D discusses two themes: where Jesus comes from, and the official attempt to arrest him.
- E is the focal point, his offer of living water

B, C, and D deal with three arguments against Jesus:

1. Does he conform to the law of Moses? (In fact, he does so better than the Jews.)

2. Do the rulers approve of him? (No answer—it doesn't really matter!)
3. Does he have the right pedigree? (They are focused on geographical origin, and they get even that wrong—but in fact his origin is in heaven.)

14, 53-8:1 Movement

Jesus went up into the temple.--The repeated movement of Jesus to the temple (2:14; 7:14; 8:2; 10:23) fulfills the prophecy of Mal 3:1, "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple." Yet that same prophecy indicates that his coming will be focused on "purify[ing] the sons of Levi," v. 3, and the focus of the Lord's teaching here is indeed on the sins and shortcomings of the Jewish rulers.

15-24, Conformity to the Law

15 How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?--The first challenge lodged against Jesus, and the last lodged against his followers, is ignorance of the Law of Moses. Judaism is a religion of the book, and places a high premium on formal training in rabbinical schools to learn not only the law, but the history of interpretation of the law. Thus it is natural that the Jewish leaders would take a condescending attitude toward unsophisticated country people without such training

As often in these chapters, note that the Lord is responding, not to a direct question from the Jews, but to a conversation they are having among themselves. It is marvelous enough that Jesus knows the Scriptures without training, but even more marvelous that he knows the hearts of men.

In this section, the Lord's response has two parts. The first part of his response explains the source of his knowledge, from God rather than from the schools. The second part turns the charge back on their own heads, showing that they are the ones who are truly ignorant of the law.

16-18, The Source of Jesus' Teaching

The Lord's first response makes a threefold contrast between one whose doctrine is his own, and one who is sent from God. He states the fact, tells how one can verify the claim, and points out its implications for the character of the speaker.

16 not mine, but his that sent me.--First he states the fact. The Lord builds on his claim from ch. 5 (e.g., vv. 19, 30) that he acts on the Father's authority, and has no authority of his own. A corollary of this claim is that his doctrine, like everything else needed for his mission, comes from the one who sent him. He does not need to be accredited by the rabbinic academies.

Together with the Jews' question, this statement identifies three possible sources of spiritual knowledge.

1. The Jews' instance on being educated in their academies points to knowledge that comes from men. They would insist that the law was given by Moses, but the focus of rabbinical teaching was on which rabbis could be cited for authority on which decision. Thus their teaching was really from men. For example, the Mishna (Berakhot 1:1) discusses when one may say the Shema in the evening:

From the time when the kohanim (priests) enter to eat their terumah (agricultural gifts).

John 7

[It may be recited at any time] until the end of the first watch [of the night]; this is the view of Rabbi Eliezer.

The Sages say: [The Shema may be recited] until midnight.

Rabban Gamliel says: [It may be recited] until dawn breaks (lit. the column of dawn rises).

It once happened that [Rabban Gamliel's] sons came from a place of feasting, and said to [their father]: "We have not recited the Shema." He said to them: "If dawn has not broken, you are obligated to recite it.

"[This is true] not only in this case; rather, in all cases where the Sages said that [some precept can be performed only] until midnight — the precept is [still in force] until the break of dawn. "[For example:] Burning the fats and organs [of the sacrifices, on the Temple altar] — this precept [can be performed] until the break of dawn. "[Another example:] All [sacrifices] which may be eaten for one day — the precept [of eating them can be performed] until the break of dawn.

"If so, why did the Sages say [that these precepts can be performed only] until midnight? "To keep a person away from sinning."

Much of modern Christianity is based on a rabbinic-like reliance on human authorities. How often have we heard a doctrine opposed on the grounds that "many great men of God think differently about this, so we cannot be sure"? Or "I'll go with John MacArthur" (or Chuck Swindoll, or Dwight Pentecost, or ...)

2. Because Jesus was not educated in a rabbinical school, they accused him of being self-taught, of standing on no authority other than his own. This is the accusation he rejects when he says, "my doctrine is not mine." I didn't make it up. It doesn't rest just on my authority.

It is right to be critical of those who stand simply on their own authority. This is the spirit of our age—one man's view is as good as another's, so people are encouraged to "think for themselves" and be independent. But this approach is inappropriate for a faith based on a distinction between the creature and the creator, and the notion that the creator has revealed himself to his people. Such a framework requires that we subjugate our own authority to that of our creator.

3. The Lord claims a third source of authority: not men, nor himself, but "him that sent me." He has not invented his doctrine on his own (#2), nor has he learned it from the schools (#1). Rather, he has received it from the Father. This is how we, following his example, are to be taught. From the rest of the NT, we understand that the mechanisms behind this are the external existence of the Scriptures (John 5:39), and the internal work of the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:20, 27). Human teachers are part of God's provision, but they are to be used critically and not made into authorities (cf. the attitude of the Bereans, Acts 17:11).

The Lord acknowledges that he has not "learned" as they have, from men. His statements in this section are all based on the differences between #2 and #3.

17 If any man will do his will, he shall know.--Next, he tells how to verify the claim.. "Will do " is

John 7

not the future, but the verb of volition: “If any man wills to do his will.” Cf. The same order in 6:69 “we believe and know,” 8:31-32 (“if ye continue in my word ... ye shall know the truth”), 11:40 (“if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see ...”). God’s truth is revealed to those who subject themselves to him, not to those who would stand in judgment over him.

Hendriksen helpfully expands this into a discussion of the relation between the intellect (“know”), the will, and the emotions (love, which according to 15:14 leads to the will). He argues that our love issues from what we first learn about the work of Christ, but the three feed on one another, and all three are subject to God’s sovereign work.

After stating the fact (16) and telling how to verify it (17), he outlines the different characters of those who speak of themselves vs. those who speak under authority.

The comparison between 18a, b is elliptical. Each element contains two of three components, but not the same two. We are left to complete the alternation.

	18a	18b
Source of one’s doctrine	He that speaketh of himself	(lacking, to be supplied from 16, “my doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me”)
Personal objective	Seeketh his own glory	Seeketh his glory that sent him
Ethical characterization	(lacking; contrast with 18b suggests this person will be <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deceitful • unrighteous) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truthful • righteous

18 He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory.--On the one hand, one who speaks on his own authority tries to glorify himself. Though the Jews would have insisted that they were merely preserving the teachings of their fathers, they loved individual recognition (Matt 6:5; 23:5-7). They were jealous of their control over the doctrine precisely to maintain their position of stature and prestige.

18a is an important commentary on our current culture of arrogant autonomy. Those who seek to be the final authority for what they say are really only puffing up themselves and seeking to glorify themselves.

The implied ethical characterization is that a person bent on his own glory will subordinate all other concerns to that objective. He will become a law unto himself.

he that seeketh his glory that sent him.--The comparison with the first member is elliptical. After “he that speaketh of himself,” we should expect, “he that speaketh of God.” The Lord leaves v.17 to establish the principle that you will seek to glorify the one for whom you speak. Because he speaks for God (v.16), they should understand that he seeks God’s glory.

Here is an acid test for each of us. Do we seek to glorify ourselves, or our God?

In the context, the sender is clearly God. One who seeks God’s glory rather than his own has two characteristics.

1. “the same is true.” What we say will be trustworthy, because we have no ulterior motive that would lead us to prevaricate. If we truly seek to represent God, we will try to present what he has said as accurately as possible. To distort it would be to take away from his authority.

2. “no unrighteousness is in him.” The message that the Lord carries from his Father embodies his law, God’s demands on his people. A true ambassador will himself conform to the message that he carries. To do otherwise would be to show that he considers himself above that message, and therefore superior to his master.

19-24, The Error of the Jews’ Teaching

Why go ye about to kill me?--Now the Lord goes on the offensive. They accuse him of not **knowing** the law; he retorts that they do not **keep** the law.

His first charge is that they seek to kill him without just cause. The question is rhetorical—the real point that he wants to make concerns the sabbath, and the controversy from 5:16. But starting with an abstract question about the Sabbath would lead to an academic discussion, and he wants to make his claims clear to a broader circle, not just the Jews who were complaining about his lack of learning. And indeed, he succeeds in getting the attention of the multitude standing by.

20 The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?--They have been unaware of the degree of the official opposition to him. Their first reaction is that he is paranoid. Mark 14:2 shows how careful the officials were to hide their opposition to the Lord from the people. Now the Lord has made it public, placing them in an embarrassing condition.

This revelation is in line with his mission as described to his brothers in 7:7 of testifying that the world’s works are evil. He is making manifest the ungrounded hatred of the Jews.

21 I have done one work, and ye all marvel.--In fact, he has done many works, but he has in mind one that caused them to “marvel.” To understand his reference, we should realize that “marvel” *qaumazw* is fairly uncommon in John, and often has a negative sense. Instances of marveling in John include peoples’ reaction to:

- the claim “you must be born again,” 3:7, implying the inadequacy of Nicodemus’ spiritual qualifications;
- his speaking with a Samaritan woman, 4:27;
- his claim to be the Father’s agent of judgment, 5:28;
- his unlearned knowledge of the scriptures, 7:15.

We might almost translated the verb, “you are all offended.” Once we understand that the verb has this nuance, we can identify the one work that offended them: the healing of the infirm man at the pool of Bethesda in ch. 5. In fact, 5:20 uses the verb in connection with that event.

So he focuses their attention on that healing. “I did one deed on the Sabbath, and you were scandalized. You accuse me of breaking the law. But how about yourselves?”

22 Moses therefore.—The “therefore” asserts that the command to circumcise was given specifically to authorize just such things as the healing of the infirm man. It establishes the principle that some things are more important than the sabbath, and take priority over them.

Moses gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers);--He turns their attention to the rite of circumcision. He refers it to Moses, but notes that it in fact antedates Moses, going back to Abraham. This is important for his argument. Just as Paul will later argue that the

covenant of Sinai cannot overturn the covenant with Abraham (Gal 3:17), he asserts that the Sabbath law does not overturn the law about circumcision.

ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man.--They in fact recognize that some things are more important than the Sabbath, because they practice circumcision on the Sabbath day. A male child is to be circumcised on the eighth day after birth (Lev 12:3), and if that falls on the Sabbath, it is not to be delayed.

23 If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?--He offers an *a fortiori* argument. Healing a man is surely a more fundamental good than circumcision. How can they object to such a healing, if they themselves are willing to waive the sabbath laws for circumcision?

24 Judge not according to the appearance.--The Jews' condemnation of his healing was thus superficial. The real issue was not whether he healed on the sabbath. Their own conduct with regard to circumcision should show that this was not really wrong. The issue is his challenge of their authority. They are citing the sabbath law as a cloak for their own wicked desire to eliminate Jesus.

judge righteous judgment.--He challenges them to a judgment that goes beyond the outward appearance to consider the underlying principles involved. The contrast in v.24 can be compared with Luke 11:42, "ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

25-26, Acceptance by the Rulers

Them of Jerusalem.--The people at large were unaware of the plot to kill Jesus (v.20), and were amazed that the plot existed. By contrast, some of the residents of Jerusalem did know of this plot, and are amazed that it has not proceeded further. In the previous verses the Lord has challenged the Jewish leaders on two points:

- the source of their teaching;
- their understanding of the sabbath day.

Yet they do not move to quench him. Perhaps (the local citizens surmise) this is because they are beginning to be persuaded that he really is the Christ.

Their speculation shows something about them. In their careful attention to who's on the ruler's black list and who is not, and in their query about what the rulers believe, these people show the degree of control that the rulers exercise on them. They are preoccupied with what is currently approved or not by the hierarchy, more than they are by Christ. They are an example of people who are constantly concerned with what other people think.

27-36, Origin

This section is chiasmic. It focuses on the Lord's origin (outer members) and the rulers' attempt to arrest him (center). In more detail:

John 7

Jewish confusion	27 Howbeit we know this man whence he is : but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.	35 Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go , that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? 36 What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come?
Jesus' reply • His true home • The Jewish failing	28 Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am : and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not . 29 But I know him: for I am from him , and he hath sent me .	33 Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me . 34 Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come .
Attempted arrest	30 Then they sought to take him : but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.	32 The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him .
Growing belief	31 And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?	

The second half speaks of his destination by way of pointing to his origin, since both have to do with “him that sent” the Lord.

27 we know this man whence he is.--The speakers are still the sycophant dwellers in Jerusalem of v. 25. They make two errors.

1. They think they know his origin (namely, Galilee). Compare the later error of the leaders in v. 52. Even in an earthly sense, he was born in Bethlehem, but he will make the point in the next paragraph that his true origin is heavenly.
2. They claim that Messiah’s origin is unknown, even though Micah 5:2 was clear enough that the Jewish sages could advise Herod of its meaning in Matt 2:5. Some of the audience in fact expected Messiah from Bethlehem (v.42). But see Robertson and Morris for citations showing that some Jews expected the Messiah to appear suddenly and unannounced. The Talmudic tractate Sanhedrin (p. 97a) quotes R. Zera, “Three come unawares: Messiah, a found article, and a scorpion.” Trypho the Jew in debate with Justin Martyr, claims, “Christ ... is unknown, and does not even know himself, and has no power until Elias come to anoint him, and make him manifest to all.” As usual, there was wide diversity of opinion among the Jews.

28 Then cried Jesus.--It is unusual in John for anyone to “cry out” *krazw*. The Baptist cries out once to announce Jesus (1:15), and the Lord cries out three times: here (28-29) to declare his origin, again in 7:37-38 when he makes his offer of living water, and once more in 12:44-50, his last public declaration. For John, the verb marks statements of great importance.

Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am.--According to 8:19, they do not in fact know him, and his comments here show that they do not understand his heavenly origin. So this statement must be taken as ironical, or questioning. “Oh, so you know me, and whence I am, do you?” After challenging their presumed knowledge of him, he proceeds to set the record straight concerning his origin.

I am not come of myself.--The explanation of his true origin is chiasmic.

John 7

I am not come of myself, but he that sent (<i>pempw</i>) me is true,	for I am from him, and he hath sent (<i>apostellw</i>) me.
whom ye know not .	29 But I know him :

Note three corresponding members:

- The Lord claims to be delegated, not autonomous. This is a repetition of his great claim from John 5.
- He has been sent by a true and trustworthy authority. The verbs are different in 28 and 29.
 - That in 28 emphasizes that the Son has come to do the Father's will.
 - The verb in 29 emphasizes that he carries a message from the Father, thus establishing the authority of his words, of which a notable one is about to be proclaimed in 37-38.
- They do not know the Father (8:19, 55), but he does.

So if they do not even know the one who sent him, how can they claim to really know him, or understand his origin?

The fact that he cries out this statement makes this claim of their ignorance and his heavenly authority extremely important. Let's consider the verse in more detail.

Whom ye know not.--The heart of the sin problem is that people are alienated from God.

- Adam and Eve disobeyed God's law when they ate the fruit. Then, guilty, they "hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden" (Gen 3:8). Like a disobedient child, we do not want to face the Lord.
- Jonah disobeyed the Lord by not going to Nineveh. Then he "rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD" (Jon 1:3).
- The basic principle is articulated in Isa 59:1,2. "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."

The great tragedy of this is that God has built us for fellowship with himself.

- Psalm 84:2 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.
- Psalm 42:1,2 As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?
- Psalm 63:1 O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;
- Psalm 143:6 I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land.

What each of us really wants in life, whether we know it or not, is intimacy with God. Without this intimacy, we are like zombies. We go through the motions of life, but inwardly we are dead, because

John 7

we are cut off from the source of life.

How can we gain this intimacy? The Lord speaks these words to “the Jews.” Their example shows us some things that will not work.

- They went to the synagogue, their church, every week, but they did not know God.
- They studied the scriptures, but they did not know God.
- They prayed, but they did not know God.

They thought they knew God, but in fact they did not. The answer is found in the Lord’s next words:

But I know him.--The Lord Jesus was sent into the world by the Father. He knows the Father intimately, and he can introduce us to the Father. We cannot approach God on our own, but he can bring us into God’s courts. When I was in college, I lived only an hour and a half away from school, and would sometime bring my roommates home for the weekend. They could not have come into my home on their own, but they were welcome as my guests.

But our situation is worse than that of my roommates. They did not know my parents because they had never met. We do not know God because we have heard and rejected his law; we have sinned against him. How can this offense be overcome? The answer is in the two ways that the Father has sent the Son.

28, he that sent me (pempw) is true.--The first reference is to sending someone to do a task. The Father sent the Son to be the savior of the world (1 John 4:14). He came to die for our sin and rise again for our justification. By obeying the Father, he has made us both innocent and righteous—innocent because he has removed our guilt, and righteous because his obedience is imputed to us. When we acknowledge that the Father sent the Son in this way, we are receiving Jesus as Savior. But this is only half of the transaction.

29, he hath sent me (apostellw).--The second reference is to sending someone with a message. The Lord came as a “prophet like unto” Moses (Deut 18:15). He has come to teach us of our sin and God’s solution to it. Our response is to “hearken” to him, Deut 18:15. When we acknowledge that the Father sent the Son in this way, we are receiving Jesus as Lord.

This great truth that the Lord cried out in the temple requires a response from us. John 1:12 tells us the proper response to the Lord’s cry: we should “receive him,” that is, believe upon him. In the next two verses, we see two different responses.

30 Then they sought to take him.--The Jews are offended by the Lord’s charge that they do not know God. People do not like to be reminded that they are sinners. They try to silence him, by arresting him. This is just what he told his brothers, in 7:7, would happen: “The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.”

Note the Lord’s “hour” here, in contrast with his “time” in vv. 6-8. His “hour,” throughout John, is the time of his glorification: 2:4; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 17:1. The Lord is secure in the Father’s timing. Man’s hostile desires can have no effect on him unless they are aligned with the Father’s time.

31 many of the people believed on him.--In spite of the growing Jewish opposition, there were many who did receive him. The center of this little chiasm focuses on those who responded favorably to the Lord.

John 7

will he do more miracles.--Compare their question with that of the Samaritan woman in 4:29 and the opinion of her compatriots in 4:42. They (a culturally mixed people with much Greek influence) were persuaded because of his words; the people of Jerusalem, because of his actions. Compare 1 Cor 1:22, "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom."

32 The Pharisees heard that the people murmured.--This verse corresponds to v.30 in the little chiasm. Eventually the rumor of the belief of some reached the Pharisees. They had to hear of it, unlike the Lord in ch. 6, who responds to murmuring with a direct answer.

They feel threatened by those who turn to Jesus, because they have determined to destroy him, and this becomes more difficult in the face of popular support. So they "sent officers to take him."

33 Then said Jesus.--This verse corresponds to 28-29. There the Lord made two points:

- His true home was not Galilee, as they thought, nor even Bethlehem, where he was really born, but heaven.
- Their own spiritual inadequacy was seen in that they did not know God, the one who had sent him.

Both points recur here. He repeats the point of his origin by stating that he will return to the one who sent him. Their inadequacy is seen in that they cannot follow him there.

His language is veiled, as in the latter part of ch. 6. He will not cast his pearls before swine. To Nicodemus, early on, he speaks of ascending to and descending from heaven. Here, now that the opposition is solidifying, he speaks only of coming from the one who sent him and returning there.

34 Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me.--His point is not that they will seek for Jesus of Nazareth, but that they will long for the Messiah. The period after the crucifixion of Christ, and in particular after the fall of the temple, was marked with false Messiahs. One of the most prominent was Simon bar Kochba, who led an unsuccessful rebellion against the Romans about AD 132-135.

35 Then said the Jews.--Corresponding to the confusion in v.27, once again the Jews show their ignorance. The Lord has turned the discussion about his origin into a promise of his return to heaven. The Jews can conceive of a heavenly destiny no more than they can a heavenly origin for him. This world is the limit of their perception. They can only imagine that he is going to leave Holy Jerusalem and seek more acceptance among the ignorant Jews who are dispersed among the Gentiles.

Ironically, as Acts and Romans 11 show, it was the dispersion and then the Gentiles themselves who were the main beneficiaries of the Lord's salvation. Is this, like Caiaphas' later statement in 11:49-51, an instance of how God speaks through the folly of men? Compare Balaam's ass, Num 22:28-30.

37-39, The Offer

At the center of the chiasm, the Lord makes his great offer. Again, he cries out, emphasizing the importance of what he is saying.

37 In the last day, that great day of the feast.--The Feast of Tabernacles lasted for seven days. It was full of symbolism of the exodus:

- The people lived in booths.

John 7

- They carried bundles of diverse plants that recalled the stages of their journey.
- In connection with each day's sacrifices, a priest walked down to the pool of Siloam, drew a pitcher of water, brought it back to the temple, and poured it into a basin on the side of the brazen altar, recalling the Lord's provision of water from the rock. The water ran down a tube to the bottom of the altar.
- On each day the priests walked around the altar, but on the seventh day they walked around it seven times, recalling the conquest of Jericho by which they entered into the promised land.

See Edersheim's excellent work *The Temple* for a fuller description.

If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.--In the light of the daily ceremony of the pouring of the water, these words would be particularly appropriate. Some surmise that the Lord speaks them just as the priest has ascended the altar with the golden pitcher, as the people are shaking their bundles of branches and singing the festival Psalms. He would be claiming to be the fulfillment of that ceremony. "Do you want water? I can provide it."

Clearly, "thirst" here is being used metaphorically. The Lord is not offering physical water for desert travelers. Here's a survey of the biblical metaphorical uses of "thirst." The oldest and most common references refer directly to a thirst for God, a desire to have intimate fellowship with him, and the other references can all be understood as derived from that.

Direct reference to a thirst for God, a longing for fellowship with him

- Psalm 42:2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?
- Psalm 63:1 O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;
- Psalm 143:6 I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah. <<verb lacking, but the sense of the verse requires this notion>>
- Isaiah 44:3 For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring:

Derived senses:

- Isaiah 12:2-3 Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. <<God is the salvation for which they thirst>>
- Amos 8:11-14 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it. In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst. They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beersheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again. <<Note the introductory *hinneh*, comparable to the Lord's cry here. God's word is one way that he manifests himself—if we cannot hear his word, we miss him. Note the alternative to God's word: following other gods.>>

John 7

- Isaiah 32:6 For the vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the LORD, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail. <<false teaching turns people away from the Lord>>
- Isaiah 55:1 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. <<with v.1 “come to the waters,” cf. v.3, “come unto me [yhwh].>>
- Matthew 5:6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. <<He is *yhwh cidqenu*, the Lord our Righteousness, Jer 23:6; 33:16>>

John’s interpretation of the Lord’s utterance confirms this identification: “this spake he of the Spirit” (v. 39). He understands the Lord to be offering the fulfillment of Isa 44:3.

Lessons from this metaphor:

- It provides the ultimate answer to all human longings. The root of all human dissatisfaction is a thirst for restoration to fellowship with God. The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16), all are attempts to scratch this itch, but the only thing that can really satisfy is fellowship with God. Augustine: “Thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee.”
- It shows the deficiency in one who asks, “How much do I have to read my Bible? How often do I have to go to church?” One who truly recognizes the source of their longings, and who has tasted that the Lord is good (Psa 34:8), will not ask “how little can I have,” but “how much can I get?”

38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.--What is the OT reference here? No OT passage contains these words literally. Zane Hodges (Bib Sac 136, 1979, pp. 239-248) argues persuasively that the allusion is to Ezekiel 47:1-5.

- The waters issuing from the temple originate at the south side of the altar (v.1), reflecting the flow of the water as it is poured into the altar and flows out of its base, as in the ceremony at Tabernacles.
- The “living water” reflects v.9, the power of Ezekiel’s water to give life.
- The plural “rivers” reflects the Hebrew dual in v.9.
- John tells us that the statement refers to the Holy Spirit. We can expect the Jews to have recognized this. The Talmud refers the pouring of the water to the Spirit, citing Isa 12:3 (Gill cites T. Hieros. Succa, fol. 55. 1. Bereshit Rabba, sect. 70. fol. 62. 3. & Midrash Ruth, fol. 32. 2. Caphtor, fol. 52. 1.) So the Lord’s offer amounts to a promise that those who respond to him will become temples, indwelt by the Spirit of God and from whom that Spirit flows in life-giving power.

The message of this parallel is striking. Believers are depicted as temples, dwelling places for the Spirit of God. Paul will later use this imagery in 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19-20 (though there he may be talking about

John 7

the church rather than the individual, cf. Eph 2:19-22 and the contrast with 6:15). Think about the history of the relationship of people with God's dwelling.

- At first, God dwelt in the garden. Man had access to this edenic temple, but when he sinned, he was excluded, and fiery sword blocked his return, Gen 3:23, 24.
- When God appeared to Moses at Sinai, he ordered him to keep the people away from the holy mountain where he was enthroned. Even after sanctifying themselves (Exod 19:10-11), they could not ascend the mount into God's presence, upon pain of death (v.12, 21).
- In the wilderness, God told Israel to make him a tabernacle. He dwelt in the innermost recess of this tent-temple, enthroned upon the ark of the covenant in a room known as the most holy place. To approach carelessly to this room was to be slain, as Nadab and Abihu, two of Aaron's sons, learned, Lev 10:1-2. Only the High Priests could enter this sanctuary, only once a year on the day of atonement, and only with the blood of sacrifices, Lev 16:1-3.
- Later, Solomon built a more permanent temple in Jerusalem. This temple also had the most holy place, and the rules governing the tabernacle applied here as well. Uzziah penetrated only as far as the holy place, but even there he was smitten with leprosy for intruding on the sacred precincts, 2 Chr 26:16-20.

Throughout the history of God's people, the temple carried a mixed message. It was God's way to dwell among his people (Exod 25:8), but it also marked their separation from God by an elaborate system of protocol and priestly privilege. It reminded them graphically that "your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa 59:2). The average believer could not enter into God's throneroom. For those thirsty for intimate fellowship with God, the temple offered only small sips.

What a change our Lord's offer indicates! Instead of excluding the believer from the temple, it turns the believer *into* the temple. It offers full satisfaction to those who are thirsting for intimacy with God.

- Before, you could enter into *his* dwelling. Now, he can dwell within *you*, in the person of the Holy Spirit
- Before, you were excluded from the holy of holies. Now, you are the holy of holies.
- Before, you languished in your own thirst. Now you can be the source for vivifying water that will satisfy those around you.

This last point is very important, and a challenge to us all. God does not save us just for our own sakes, but so that he can use us as his instruments in blessing others. Cf. Rom 6, yielding our members as instruments of righteousness, and Paul's repeated description of himself as a servant of Jesus Christ.

One technical note is worth making here. By recording this statement of our Lord (alone among the the evangelists), John is showing that one of Paul's teachings (that the believer is a temple) is rooted in the Lord's words. This is a repeated phenomenon in John, and suggests that documenting these teachings is one of John's objectives.

39 the Spirit.--The Lord speaks obliquely, in figures, hiding his meaning from the insincere. The evangelist interprets the metaphor. Concisely, he sets out three points, some of which are more fully developed later in the book.

John 7

- The water represents the Holy Spirit. This in itself is in keeping with OT teaching, which represents the Spirit as something that God can pour out. We have already considered Isa 44:3. Other examples are Prov 1:23 and Joel 2:28,29.
- The idea of the Spirit flowing out from a person is based on the Lord's later promise in the upper room (14:16-17, 26) to give the Spirit to his disciples. John wants us to understand the Lord's cry here as an anticipation of that promise.
- This gift of the Spirit marks a change in God's relationship with his people. Not until the Lord is glorified can the Spirit come. This is amplified further in the upper room discourse:
 - by the contrast in 14:17, "he dwelleth with you (now), and shall be in you (in the future)"
 - explicitly in 16:7, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."

The gift of the Spirit is an element of the new covenant, and cannot be conveyed until that covenant is in force, something that requires the death of the ratifying sacrifice (Heb 9:16).

40-46, Origin

The second half of the chiasm treats the same three questions about the Lord as the first half. Now, however, the Lord is silent, and the discussion is entirely among the people who have heard his answers in the first half and his great offer in 37-38.

The first question to be considered is the last one that was the topic before the offer (27-36): the question of his origin, together with references to the attempt on the part of the leaders to apprehend him.

40 many of the people.--In 27, the question about the Lord's origin was posed by "them of Jerusalem." By contrast, the question here comes from "the multitude," the mass of pilgrims, mostly from the rural areas who had come to Jerusalem for the feast. We will see an interesting distinction between their comments.

40-43, Many ... others ... some ... a division.--There were three opinions among the pilgrims.

Some thought that Jesus was the promised "prophet" like Moses from Deut 18:15. In the thinking of the day, "They apparently looked for two separate individuals to come as they seem to have anticipated a suffering servant and a triumphant Messiah in two different people" (Constable). Compare the three distinct titles in 1:19-21, "Christ," "Elijah," "That Prophet." His offer of water reminds them of Moses' provision of water from the rock during the wilderness wanderings, just as his provision of bread brought to mind Moses' provision of manna in 6:31.

Others (v. 41a) thought that he was in fact the promised Messiah, the Christ, as in the first discussion of his origin (7:31). There, his miracles were the persuasive factor. Here, in addition, they have heard his offer of living water. Gill points out,

the same prophecy that speaks of miracles to be performed in the times of the Messiah, speaks also of waters breaking out in the wilderness, and streams in the desert, of the parched ground becoming a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water, Isa 35:5.

This would be a step up from "the prophet"; in 1:20 it is mentioned first and the prophet is last. Matt

John 7

16:14 shows that, like Elias, a notable prophet was expected before the arrival of Messiah. So the people are now thinking through the options that the chief priests considered in ch. 1.

Yet a third group (41b-42), as in 7:27, reject the notion of his Messiahship on the grounds of his origin. But note the difference in their argument. The city dwellers subscribe to the rabbinic fantasy that when Messiah arrives, he will appear out of nowhere. The multitude are much more down to earth. They know of the prophecies indicating that Messiah will be of Davidic descent (2 Sam 7) and be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). It is often the case that the more learning one has, the less willing one is to take the word of God at face value.

Their objection is based on Jesus' Galilean associations, probably reinforced by his dress and his speech. Nazareth was "his country" (Luke 4:23). It was not Bethlehem, and it was not Davidic, falling rather within the territory of Zebulun, the tribe of Jonah the prophet.

Ironically, John's readers will recognize that Jesus is both Davidic and born in Bethlehem. Yet John does not insist on this. There are two reasons for this.

First, John delights in irony, leaving "obvious" bloopers unanswered and expecting his readers to recognize them. See "irony" in Wood's index for other examples:

- 4:12, Jesus *is* far greater than Jacob
- 6:15, the interplay between Jesus' true kingship and the kingship intended by the people. Bailey, in Woods: "He who is already King has come to open his kingdom to men, but in their blindness men try to force him to be the kind of king they want; thus they fail to get the king they want, and also lose the kingdom he offers."
- 6:30, they have just seen a great sign, and yet they appear ignorant of its meaning
- 6:42, if they had known of the virgin birth, their question would have been answered
- 7:15, the one the Jews reject as unlearned is in fact the *logos*, the very Word of God
- 7:27 shows the same ironical treatment of Jesus' origin as the present verse.

Second, the Lord here is emphasizing, not his earthly origin, but his heavenly. What is most important is not the physical circumstances of his birth, but the fact that he was sent from the Father, with divine authority, and will return to him. To point out the people's error here would detract from this central point.

The "division" here repeats the theme introduced in 7:12, and to be seen again in 9:16; 10:19. Before ch. 7, the difference in opinions over Jesus was seen mostly in the contrast between separate episodes. Now it becomes more intense, as people in the same episode and of the same social class disagree among themselves. Cf. Matt 10:34, "I came not to send peace, but a sword." This increasing schism is the heart of John's theme from 1:11,12.

44 some of them would have taken him.--This note recalls the corresponding panel in the first half. There, we read of two efforts to apprehend him, one popular and one official. The people of Jerusalem (25) sought to take him (30), and the Pharisees sent officers to arrest him (32). Here, we learn the outcome of both of these efforts.

- 44 recalls 30 almost verbatim. The subject, continuing from 43, is "the people." Thus this is opposition at the popular level, an attempt at a "citizen's arrest." The reason for their failure is

not stated here, but the parallel with v.30 leads us there for the answer. His career followed a divinely determined timeline, and no one could harm him or interfere with him before that time was due.

- 45-46 recalls the official effort in 32. “The officers” are the ones the Pharisees sent out in 32. They return empty-handed. This is a more surprising failure than that of the people—we have here the temple guard, a professional police force able to use force (18:3 “weapons”) to maintain order in the temple. But they also fail in their mission. The real reason for their failure is the same as in v.30, but excuse they give (46) is the unique nature of the word of God that he spoke. They, no less than the multitudes, were captivated by his teaching. Their inability to overcome his words is a fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy of Isa 11:4, “he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.”

Concerning the officials, Calvin well notes, “Those officers acknowledge that they are subdued and vanquished by the word of Christ, and yet they do not on that account repent or give due honor to the word.” They fall between the people who acknowledge him as the Messiah, and the official rulers, who were hardened against him. They recognized the power and authority of his word, but do not submit to it.

So many people today will recognize Jesus as a great moral teacher, but not receive him or truly submit to him.

47-48, Acceptance by the Rulers

These verses bring us back to the topic of 25-26. In both places, people are impressed by the Lord’s words (there, his boldness; here, speech unlike that of any other man). But in both places, the impact of his word is dampened by a consideration of what the rulers think. The concern about what others think is a constant threat to spiritual health, especially when it leads us to discount the words of our Lord. Like the Bereans, we should be open to consider what other suggest. But also like them, we should be dedicated to the word that God has given us, and faithful to follow it, whatever others may think.

49-52, Conformity to the Law

The final panel of the chiasm really includes all three elements of the challenge to the Lord

- The question posed by the Pharisees about the law corresponds to the first panel, vv. 15-24.
- Nicodemus, by answering in support of Jesus, responds to the second panel, 25-26, 47-48.
- The Pharisees’ ill-informed claim about where prophets come from responds to the discussion about the Lord’s origin, 27-36, 40-46.

this people who knoweth not the law.--Those who follow the Lord are slandered with the same accusation used against him in v.15. “People,” as usually in John, is *oxlos* “multitude,” here probably in the sense of “mob, rabble.”

Cursed.--There are two Greek words meaning “accursed.” One, used in Gal 3:10, 13, is the LXX reflex of the Hebrew *arwr* (70x in the OT). The other is used only here in the entire Greek Bible. Clues to its meaning are found in Josephus’ use of the word:

John 7

- Ant 1,58 uses it of Cain's banishment
- Ant 6,117 uses it of Saul's curse on anyone who would eat before finishing off the Philistines in 1 Sam 14:24-30
- Ant 7, 208 uses the word to describe how Shimei described David in 2 Sam 16:5-7.

In Josephus, the term thus appears to emphasize banishment, exclusion from the people of God. If this is indeed its special sense (and we must remember that Josephus doesn't use the other term at all), the rulers may be declaring that those who follow Jesus are excluded from the community. This verse may be the one in view in 9:22, "the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue."

Nicodemus.--Yet there is one among the educated Jewish leaders who is sympathetic to Jesus, Nicodemus, whom we met in ch. 3.

he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them.--These two clauses are related. Why did he come to Jesus by night? Because he was one of them, and ashamed to be open about his attraction to Jesus. He must have been stung by the rebuke of the rulers to the temple guard in 47-48. If he were truly the Lord's, he would have confronted his peers and said, "Yes, there is one among the rulers and Pharisees who believe on him." His own faith is not yet at such a point of maturity. The point of law that he raises is not in itself a sign of his faith: Calvin notes that "the same might be said of a robber or an assassin." But at least he does stand against the prevailing temper of the group, and in this he reflects once again the question of whether any of the rulers believe on Jesus.

Doth our law judge any man.--Nicodemus raises a point of order. Clearly, it is irregular to condemn a man without permitting him to defend himself. Prov 18:13, "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him." Of course, the rulers have heard the Lord's teaching (e.g., ch. 5). But Nicodemus' point is that he has not enjoyed due process in keeping with their law, and they do not deny his point.

This rebuke from Nicodemus is the counterpart to vv. 19-24, where the Lord counters the charge that he was ignorant of the law by showing that the rulers didn't understand the Sabbath law in relation to circumcision. So after they have accused the rabble of being ignorant of the law, Nicodemus points out that they are departing from their own legal processes.

52 They answered.--Nicodemus does not directly confess the Lord, and they do not directly accuse Nicodemus of being a believer. Instead, they ask whether his tolerance stems from a sympathy with Galilee, which was despised among the sophisticates of the day.

Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.--Their statement is overly hasty, for Jonah came from Gath Hopher in Zebulun (2 Kings 14:25), and in fact the Talmud attributes a statement to Rabbi Eliezer to the effect that "there was not a tribe in Israel from which there did not come prophets" (Sukk. 27b). Even more, Isa 9:1-2 predicts that the light of God's Messianic deliverance will dawn first in Galilee. Once again, their own ignorance of the law is demonstrated.

So all three of their challenges have been met—first from the mouth of the Lord himself (vv. 15-36), and then in the discussions among his hearers (40-52). At the center is his remarkable claim that he can constitute each believer a temple of God, thus disenfranchising the Jewish hierarchy.

7:53-8:1, Return to homes

Note that each goes “to his own house.” The feast is over, they are no longer required to dwell in booths, and they return to their homes.

Integration

Each of the three sections in 7-10 begins with a private interview and then expands into public discourse. Here the Lord began speaking to his half-brothers, before the great discourses of the feast of Tabernacles. The relation between the two appears to be based on 7:7, the hatred that the world bears him. The whole organization of the chapter is around the three objections that people raised to him: his unsophisticated theological background, his lack of approval by the hierarchy, and his origin. Here we see for the first time attempted arrests, both by the rulers and by the people at large. Thus the private interview forms the basis for the rest of the chapter. We shall trace this same relationship in the following two sections.

Notes

Apostellw* vs. *pempw

Distribution: *apostellw* is the more common word (822 vs. 101 occurrences in the Greek Bible), and more widely distributed. It is most common in 1 Macc (0.4% of the words). The gospels and Acts all use it with comparable frequency (0.12%-0.18%). *pempw* is disproportionately John’s word. He uses it more than 4x as frequently as do the other gospels (0.2% vs. 0.01-0.05%). The only book that uses it more frequently is Philippians (0.31%).

Distinctive senses: Both can be used to describe the sending of people. But *pempw* focuses on sending things (Phil 4:16; Mark 5:12), while *apostellw* focuses on sending messages.

One sends *p* a person to learn something about other people (Phil 2:19; John 1:22; Col 4:8), while one sends *a* a messenger to tell them something (but 1 Cor 4:17 uses *p* in close to this

One sends *p* someone to do a task: John to baptize (John 1:33), Jesus to do the Father’s will (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38, 39—note concurrence of *qelhma* and *pempw* in John). Herod sends *p* guards to kill the Baptist, Matt 14:10.