
Day 1

Learn: Read John 7.1-10. Jesus had left Judea before because the religious leaders were after him [see 5.18; also, if your Bible says “the Jews” wanted to kill Jesus, remember John often uses the term “Jews” to mean Jewish religious leaders]. While in Galilee, Jesus had offended many of his followers, who then turned away [see 6.66]. That was in the spring; now it is autumn, about six months later. The festival of tabernacles [or booths] celebrated the harvest of olives and grapes, and commemorated God’s provision during the Exodus from Egypt. God instructed in the Mosaic Law that everyone [especially all Jewish men] were to come together for this festival and reside in temporary shelters [called “tabernacles” or “booths”] made of branches and leaves.

Jesus’s brothers did not yet believe in him. He had claimed to be the Son of God and the Messiah-savior [Christ], but they did not believe. Of course, because they didn’t believe, they must have thought he was a bit wacky! Even though he had done miracles, they chided him in this passage. In their minds, if he is the long awaited Messiah, then he should be at the religious center of the Temple in Jerusalem, not wandering the countryside of Galilee. Jesus responded that they could go to the festival whenever they wanted, but he knew it was not time for him to go yet, because God the Father was guiding his steps. They were of the world, and could go without causing problems, but because of who he really was and what he had been teaching, he had stirred up demonic activity, persecution by the sinful and worldly religious leaders, and antagonism by many others who did not like his message. He had to time things right, so as not to upset the plans God the Father had for him; so he went to Jerusalem later, in secret.

Reflect: Jesus’ brothers had grown up with him, so they were surprised when at roughly the age of thirty, he started wandering around, preaching to crowds, gathering disciples, and claiming to be the savior and Son of God! You can imagine what you would think if your brother did that, even if he could do magic tricks! But our problem is a little different. We grow up and along the way we develop some ideas about God or Jesus, but they might not be accurate any more than the ideas of Jesus’ brothers. What, if any, of the teaching in John so far has conflicted with what you thought before? Can you accept what John has said about Jesus, despite what you had assumed before?

Day 2

Learn: Read John 7.11-20. Some people liked Jesus, especially because of his miracles. Others thought he must be a deceiver, being uncomfortable with his teachings. Jesus said those with a heart for God and his will would recognize that his teaching was from God, and thus recognize that he is trustworthy and righteous because he is serving God instead of himself. The religious leaders are impressed with his grasp of Scripture and how he teaches with it, yet they do not believe in who he says he is and they find some of his teachings offensive.

When Jesus was in Jerusalem last time [back in chapter five], he told the religious leaders that despite their love for the writings of Moses, Moses would accuse them of being unrighteous, because they did not recognize Jesus as the “greater prophet” that Moses had said would come. We know from the Bible that this greater prophet is the same as the Messiah-savior prophesied elsewhere, but many in Israel had not made that connection yet. Now Jesus continues to use Moses to argue against the religious leaders, saying that they might say they revere the Law of Moses, but they are not following it, because they seek to kill him. They think they are justified to kill him, because they don’t believe his claims to be the Son of God, and thus they think he is blasphemous. But Jesus says if they had a heart seeking after God then they would not doubt his teachings and not be willing to break the Law by killing him.

Reflect: One problem people were having was they were not genuinely seeking to know God and his will, and they were not genuinely seeking truth in the scriptures. What about you? Jesus says that if you are genuine in these things, you will recognize his words as those from God the Father and know that he is who he said he was: first, the Messiah-Savior we call Christ, who was prophesied to come throughout the Old Testament; and second, the divine Son of God, who came to die so we could be reconciled with God and forgiven of our sins. Are you actively seeking to know God and his will for you? *How* are you seeking? *How else* might you seek? Do you fully believe that Jesus spoke for God and was himself God the Son [of the triune God, Father-Son-Holy Spirit]?

Day 3

Learn: Read John 7.21-24. When Jesus was last in Jerusalem, he healed a paralyzed man on the Sabbath, and told them man to get up and carry his mat away. The astonishment to which Jesus refers is the commotion the religious leaders raised because this was done on the Sabbath. They were upset because Jesus healed on the Sabbath and told the man to carry off his mat on the Sabbath, both of which broke their manmade customs about the Mosaic Law [though not biblical teaching itself]. These Sabbath rules were so strongly and universally held, it was quite a shock to everyone that a rabbi and prophet like Jesus would dismiss them.

Jesus here points out that they all break the same customs when they circumcise male infants on the eighth day of life, even when that falls on the Sabbath. It had always been Jewish custom that circumcision took priority over the Sabbath [perhaps because circumcision was part of the covenant between God and Abraham, which predated the rest of the Mosaic Law]. Jesus accused them of being hypocrites, but also of using false criteria to assess his behavior. They were not being fair in their assessment, but rather self-righteous and legalistic. After all, he healed that man!

Reflect: The religious leaders were very intent on following the Law and the manmade customs about the Law, but had failed to adopt the character of God reflected in the Law, and that caused them to misuse the Law and not assess Jesus accurately. They had misconceptions about Jesus' identity and the meaning and use of the Law. What about you? Do you read the Old Testament? Do you see it as merely an interesting story, as merely a list of dos and don'ts, or do you see it as revelation of God's character that you could adopt and live out? Are you willing to read through the entire Bible and seek to know God more intimately through what he has revealed? Should you seek some help understanding?

Day 4

Learn: Read John 7.25-31. Though we earlier saw many in the crowd were shocked that Jesus said some were trying to kill him, some from Jerusalem were aware of the plot of the religious leaders. They in turn were surprised that Jesus was teaching openly and not being seized by the religious leaders. They wondered if the religious leaders had had a change of mind and now believed in Jesus. But they quickly dismissed this idea. They surely knew of the prophecy that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, but there was a general idea that other prophecies such as Malachi 3.1 indicated the Messiah would suddenly appear on the scene somewhat mysteriously, ready to deliver the nation from oppression and injustice. The facts that Jesus was known to have grown up in Nazareth, had been doing itinerant preaching for a couple of years, and had only mixed results in making people believe in him, led these people to figure he could not be the Messiah. Others in the crowd did believe Jesus was the Messiah [Christ] because of his miracles.

Reflect: Here again we see some people who are misunderstanding Scripture and thus forming misconceptions about Christ. What about you? You might have misunderstandings or misconceptions even if you went to church as a child [your church might have taught them to you, just like the Jewish religious leaders did!]. How can you investigate whether you are incorrect in any of your ideas about Jesus, the commands of Scripture, the character of God, or what God wants of you? What are you willing to commit to do toward growing in understanding?

Day 5

Learn: Read John 7.32-36. Jesus knew the religious leaders and their assistants were out to get him. He knew that his time for crucifixion was near. What he said about it confused the religious leaders, who wondered if he was heading out of the region, into Gentile [non-Jewish] lands. Look at some of the things Jesus said in this passage: the world hated him because he testified to its evil; the religious leaders wanted to kill him; their motivation was hypocritical, since they were willing to violate the Sabbath Law for circumcision but accused Jesus of doing so for a healing; his skeptics did not know God nor seek to do God's will; they would soon succeed in bringing him to death, but that would return him to Heaven where they could not go.

Reflect: Though Jesus does not walk the earth today, much is the same regarding this problem. In a world devoted to sinful pleasure and intolerant of judgment, people hate the idea of Jesus as a standard, a righteous judge, a needed savior. These skeptics often are hypocritical, definitely are ignorant of God and not seeking his will, and presently are headed to Hell instead of Heaven. Only sharing gospel truth in love can help them. Are you shining light for Christ or are you insignificant to the plans of God like were Jesus' brothers at this point?