

The Gospel of John

Believe and Live!

Lesson 8

John 7:1–52

An Offense to the World

For six months following the feeding of the five thousand and the disclosure that He is the Bread of Life, Jesus walked and taught throughout the region of Galilee. John tells us why He did not go down to Judea—the Jewish leaders sought to kill Him. The tenor of John’s narrative has changed because the atmosphere has changed: these men now have murder on their minds!

At a glance ~ **Read John 7:1–24.**

The story at this point takes on a dark and ominous tone, as John focuses in on Jesus’ polarizing affect on people through the message of hope that He brings. In your initial reading of verses 1–24, what catches your attention at first glance?

The Feast of Tabernacles was a celebration occurring during the seventh calendar month and lasting for seven days (one of three annual celebrations that were required by Jewish law). During this time, the people of Jerusalem built wooden booths with thatched roofs and lived in them to commemorate the forty years their nation spent wandering in the wilderness.

1. It is at this time that Jesus’ four brothers come to Him with some worldly advice. What do they tell Him? vv. 3–5

a. Matthew 13:55 tells us the names of His brothers; what are they?

b. What was the real motive behind their advice to Jesus? How do you know? v. 5

Jesus' brothers were right in their point that anyone who wants to be a prominent public person cannot do it secretly, but the reasoning behind their words rested in the fact that they did not believe in Him. Did Jesus brothers really love and care about Him? They most likely did; but even though they advised Him to become more publicly visible, they certainly didn't understand His mission or believe His claims as the One sent from God.

Jesus' response to His brothers reveals two different world views: man's and God's.

2. In verses 6–9, three different times Jesus stresses the importance of time. What does He state in the following verses about . . .

- a. His time?

- b. His brothers' time?

- c. The world's perspective on Him?

For Jesus' brothers to go to the feast meant that they were acting in accordance with what was normally expected of them. They were no threat to anyone but were merely pious Jews fulfilling their religious obligation, which no one objected to: *"the world cannot hate you."* Jesus upset people with His teaching and His challenges to live righteously. He called sin what it was—sin! The world hated Him and the threats against Him were mounting. He would go to the Feast but on His own schedule, not that of everyone else.

The word "yet" in verse 8 clearly indicates that Jesus always intended to attend; but He knew the Scripture—that He would be offered at Passover time, not the Feast of Tabernacles. There remained six months before His time would come.

3. How and when did Jesus go up to the feast? vv. 10–13

- a. Who sought Him out?

- b. What kind of opinions were circulating about Him?

- c. Did the people speak openly with their comments? Why?

There was fear all around; no one dared speak out about Jesus. Everyone was afraid of what the Jewish religious leaders might do to them.

4. In the middle of the feast where did Jesus go and for what purpose? vv. 14–18

a. What did the religious leaders think of His teaching?

b. How did Jesus answer them about the origin of His doctrine?

Selah ~

In Isaiah 50:4, we find the words of the prophet speaking about the source of Jesus' teaching. What does it say?

- ❖ Personal: What can you take away from this truth about Jesus to apply to your own life today?

In verses 19–24, Jesus takes on the religious leaders with an example from their own law. They accused Him of breaking the law because He healed the paralytic man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath and they wanted to kill Him for it. If they accused Him on those grounds, then they were all law-breakers for circumcising infant boys on the Sabbath. The substance of His argument is verses 23–24: *“If the correct time for circumcising your son falls on the Sabbath, you go ahead and do it, so as not to break the law of Moses. So why should I be condemned for making a man completely well on the Sabbath? Think this through and you will see that I am right”* (NLT) The NIV translation puts verse 24 this way: *“Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment.”*

In focus ~ (Key words) **righteous judgment**

Jesus demonstrated righteousness by healing on the Sabbath and challenging the religious leaders to do likewise. They were deceiving themselves by not using right judgment. Look up these words using the resources you have on hand (Bible translations, dictionary, concordance) and write a definition.

righteous judgment: _____

Take a closer look ~ John 7:38

(Memorize and meditate on the memory verse each time you open your lesson.)

“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”

What does this verse reveal to you about Jesus? What difference will the living water He offers you make in your everyday life?

The Message of Hope

Outlook ~ Read John 7:25–52.

Picture Jesus standing in the temple court, teaching the people amidst the growing hostility all around Him. He is bold in His presentation, uncompromising in His challenge to get His listeners tuned into the truth. Not only are the people amazed, they are even more shocked that the Jewish religious leaders are allowing it!

1. Why do the people appear confused about what to believe? vv. 25–27

Jesus spoke with such authority that no one contradicted Him. Those who knew the Scripture were aware of Malachi 3:1, which predicted that the Messiah would suddenly appear in the temple; but they also knew Jesus and all about His background, mistakenly ruling out any possibility that He was the one the Jews were waiting for.

2. Yes they knew Jesus but, according to His response, who did they not know? vv. 28–29

The Jewish leaders understood that He was talking about God and that He was accusing them of not knowing Him. Jesus understood that His remarks would spark a hostile response and it does.

- a. What did they seek to do next? vv. 30–31
- b. The leaders were hostile but what about the people?

3. When the Pharisees heard the people whispering about Him, what did they do?
vv. 32–36

a. Because Jesus knows He is on God’s timetable, of what is He confident?

God’s protective hand was at work on Jesus’ behalf, keeping Him from the violence aimed at Him. He announces He is going to die, but they do not understand what He means: *“You will seek me and not find Me, and where I am you cannot come”* (v. 36). His response throws the people into confusion.

On the final day of the feast He reveals the hope that He promises to all. Once again His remarks will bring about divided opinions.

4. What ordinary symbol does Jesus use to illustrate the blessing that is to come?
vv. 37–39

a. What promise does He make for all who come to Him to quench their thirst?

b. Jesus gives a hint of the timetable when this promised would be fulfilled—what is it?

Remember, John is penning these words years after the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was sent to indwell the hearts of believers. God’s Spirit was always present in the world—but not as the indwelling presence in people’s lives until after Jesus was glorified. We will see Him teach in greater depth on this extraordinary truth in the Upper Room Discourse in John 13–17; but here He illustrates it simply by using the symbol of water.

5. John details three different results that follow the teaching of Jesus. Notice the different opinions that were expressed.

a. What do the people say and what is the result? vv. 40–43

b. What is the response of the palace guards? vv. 44–46

c. How do the Pharisees feel about the actions of the guards sent to arrest Jesus?
vv. 47–49

d. What pronouncement did they make regarding the crowds?

6. Who reappears from the crowd to speak to the Pharisees? How do they respond to one of their own who speaks on Jesus' behalf? vv. 50–52

The Pharisees were pompous and arrogant about themselves but full of derision and condescension about everyone else. Nicodemus, whose life had earlier been impacted by his encounter with Jesus, knew to be very cautious in dealing with these men. He purposely raises a point to attempt to cool their anger but to no avail. Jesus had touched a raw nerve and they responded accordingly. They would not change their opinion of Him.

Selah ~

Human beings are capable of going for long periods of time without the satisfaction that comes through enjoying food—creature comforts—physical pleasure—goals achieved—happiness, etc. But the human body cannot exist for very long without water. Jesus issues the invitation to all who seek to satisfy a thirsty soul: *“If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.”* What is it *you* are thirsty for? Try to identify it . . . and then realize you won't find your satisfaction in anything the world has to offer. Your true satisfaction and fulfillment in life will only be found by drinking deeply of Jesus. As you seek Him, out of your heart will flow rivers of living water to quench the thirst of those around you who need Him too! Think about it and record your thoughts.

More like Jesus ~

Are *you* becoming more like Jesus? Absolutely! Every time you open the Word and spend time getting to know Him more intimately, you partake in the life-long process of drawing near—going deeper—bearing fruit—becoming more like Him. As you close your lesson today, determine to put into practice what you've learned by noting it below.

- Recite your memory verse _____

- Reflect on a lesson you received _____

- Respond with prayer and praise to God _____

Notes