

LESSON #12 CHAPTER 7:1-52

The Fight of the Feast of Tabernacle: Who is Jesus?

Divine Attribute: Self Revelation

Theological concept: The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

Geographical location: Jerusalem Temple

Chapter Structure

7: 1-10 Disbelief before the Feast

7: 11-36 Debate during the Feast

7: 37-52 Division after the Feast

Spiritual Principles:

P1 The Indwelling Spirit promptly gives us the help we need in whatever situation

P2 Christ lived according to the Father's will and timing. So should we.

Today's lesson...

In the last lesson we read about Jesus first self-proclamation: *"I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."* 6:35 In this lesson, we shall read about a great and wonderful promise that Jesus gave to all who believe in Him — the gift of the Holy Spirit!

"Speak to the people of Israel, saying, On the fifteenth day of this seventh month and for seven days is the Feast of Booths (a) to the Lord. 35 On the first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall not do any ordinary work. 36 For seven days you shall present food offerings to the Lord. On the eighth day you shall hold a holy convocation and present a food offering to the Lord. It is a solemn assembly; you shall not do any ordinary work". Lev 23:34-36

The Feast of the Tabernacle is also called the Feast of Ingathering, the Sukkot (booth in Hebrew). It starts on the 15th day of the seventh month (Tishri) of the Jewish calendar and lasts eight days. It celebrates the ingathering of the crops and fruits at the end of the year (Exodus 23:16) and reminds them of God's providential care of the nation in the wilderness for forty years. The festival aims to remind God's people that they are constantly living in the salvation of Yahweh. Through it, God's people look forward to the coming of the Messiah and His Kingdom.

This was the last feast of Tabernacles for Jesus. Half a year later would be the last Passover. As the Feast of Tabernacles is one of the three Jewish pilgrimage festivals, Jerusalem was crowded with diaspora Jews. Following the solemn Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles was a celebrative time for the people. The temple area was illuminated by large candlesticks, reminding the people of the guiding pillar of cloud and fire. The priests would parade to the Pool of Siloam and bring a golden vessel of water back to the temple every day during the festival, reminding the Jews of the miraculous provision of water from the rock in the wilderness.

Ever since Jesus healed the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda on Sabbath, he had been targeted by the Jewish leaders (5:18). For this reason, Jesus avoided Judea and ministered in Galilee for some time until the Feast of Tabernacles.

This chapter has three divisions: before the feast, during the feast and after the feast. The responses during each of those periods can be characterised by three words: disbelief, debate, and division.

A. 7:1-10 Disbelief before the Feast

2 Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand. 3 So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. 4 For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world."

Jesus is God appearing in the flesh. The Holy Spirit has been with him since his conception in Mary. The siblings who grew up with him would have noticed his uniqueness. At least they would have heard the personal testimonies of their parents and John the Baptist and heard of the miracles he had performed. Yet their hearts were hardened. Not only did they not believe him, but they were also unconcerned about his safety. They instigated him to show himself in Jerusalem and make his name big.

Jesus was certainly not instigated nor took it at heart. Observe our Lord's principle of serving God in 7:6-8: he worked by God's way and timing, *"You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come"* The 'time' here has two levels of meaning. First is the day for him to go to Jerusalem for this feast; Second is the time for him to be handed over to the Jews.

Verse 10 tells us that Jesus set out, likely a few days after his family, *"not publicly but in private"*, i.e. not secretly but merely avoiding the crowd. Jesus was merely preventing a premature triumphal entry into Jerusalem, as did happen six months later.

Life application

Even Jesus, being the perfect man, encountered difficulty in getting his own siblings to believe him. Let us not be disheartened when our family members refuse to listen to the Gospel despite our transformed life in Christ. It may well be a rejection against God rather than against us. Let us not be disheartened nor argue with them. Continue to do the good work of sanctification, and the Lord will make us a lamp on the stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

Starting from verse 11, the scene shifts to Jerusalem. There were three different groups of people. First were "the Jews". These were the Jewish leaders who lived in Jerusalem and were attached to the temple ministry. This would include the Pharisees, the chief priests, and the scribes. They differed theologically but agreed on one thing: their opposition to Jesus and their determination to get rid of him.

The second group is "the people of Jerusalem" in 7:25. These were the Jews who resided in Jerusalem, and they, of course, would have likely sided with the religious leaders.

The third group would be "the people" (7:12, 20, 31-32), which would be the festival crowd that had come to Jerusalem to worship. They were not up to date on all the gossip in the city, and many of them would not be influenced by the attitude of the religious leaders in Jerusalem.

Jesus was obviously and inevitably the talking point of the city at this time. Some said that he was a good man. Others said he was a liar. The debate began before he even arrived at the city! (7:12,13)

B. 7: 11-36 Debate during the Feast

Debate #1: By what authority did Jesus teach? Is his teaching true?

14 About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. 15 The Jews therefore marvelled, saying, "How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?"

The first and the last days of the Feast of Tabernacles are considered the 'greater' part of the festival because there are holy convocations. Jesus appeared in the temple for the first time as a public teacher. He knew the risk but was faithful to the Father's work: manifesting God.

Jesus' interpretation of the Law surpassed those given by the teachers of the laws. Even the religious leaders marvelled at his teaching, "*How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?*" If they could humble themselves and seek to know God sincerely, they would rejoice when they heard Jesus said, "*My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.*" 7:16 And this marvel would have become their blessing. Conversely, if they were consumed by vain glory, arrogance and jealousy, the marvel would condemn them at the time of judgment.

Not only does Jesus have the authority to teach, but his interpretations of the law are in line with God's heart. He could have said, "My teaching is His who sent me as well as mine." He did not because he had never sought his glory but the glory of God.

17 If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. 18 The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.

If a man's heart seeks God's glory, his thoughts will align with God. If the Jewish leaders had desired to do God's will, they would know God's heart and would know that what Jesus taught was from God and was true. Truth would witness itself to the doers of truth. All who do the will of God would be able to know the truth. Did not the untrained Samaritan woman understand the new doctrine of worship in truth and spirit? Did the Pharisee Nicodemus not understand the new doctrine of regeneration by the Holy Spirit? Did you and I not convicted by the new way of being saved by faith?

Jesus pointed out sharply that the heart of the problem of the Jewish leaders was "*seeking their own glory*" instead of God's glory. They underwent profound training not to teach God's people true knowledge of God. They loved to sit in high places and receive man's applause; they yoked the people of God by adding new doctrines of man to the law of God. Their hearts were so preoccupied by personal motives that there was no room for truth. This proves that an enlightened and educated mind is no guarantee of a pure heart of a sanctified will. Moses' face shined after he spent forty days on the mountain with God alone. This reminds us that the only way to have our hearts and minds purified is to be close to God. The only way to be close to God is through reading the bible. Matthew Henry, the Puritan pastor and theologian in the 18th century, said, "Those who resemble God are most likely to understand him".

Life application

Jesus does not need to learn from men because He is the Word. This does not mean that you and I do not need to learn and be equipped with the Bible and theology as a fallen and created being; our understanding of the Divine is limited. That is why one of the essential gifts that Christ gives to His church is the gift of

teaching. We ought to be humble to ask, ponder, and meditate. Learn and walk closely with God, lest we will be seeking our glory as Jewish leaders.

Jesus not only taught publicly at the temple, but he also exposed the evil thoughts of the leaders:

“23 If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man’s whole body well? 24 Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.” (7:23,24)

The law of Moses stipulated that all Jewish boys must be circumcised on the 8th day after birth (Ex 12:44) If it falls on a Sabbath, circumcision will take precedence over the Sabbath. To the Jewish leaders, the work of circumcision was in accordance with God’s will and was thus permitted on the Sabbath. Yet they condemned Jesus for performing a good deed of healing a man and setting him free from the physical bondage of 38 years on the Sabbath! (chapter 5) The judgement was made solely on the surface level, and it seemed to have been motivated by jealousy. A just verdict would consider the intent and spirit of the law rather than just outward appearances.

Debate #2: Is Jesus the Christ?

In verses 25-36, the debate moved away from the question of Jesus’ teaching authority to his messianic claims.

Verses 25-27 recorded the discussions of the residents in Jerusalem, who lived under the influence of the religious leaders. They knew that the leaders wanted to kill Jesus, but why was Jesus teaching at the temple and getting away with it? Could the leaders have been convinced that Jesus was indeed the Messiah sent from God? If that was the case, then why were they not worshipping Him and leading others to worship Him?

“27 But we know where this man comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from.” At that time, it was widely believed that the Messiah, after coming into the world, would remain hidden in some unsuspected place until the divinely appointed time for his public manifestation. Thus, they concluded that the leaders did not believe that Jesus was the Christ what they thought was reliable information,

1. Nobody knows where the Christ comes from;
2. We know where Jesus of Nazareth came from;
3. Conclusion: Jesus cannot be the Messiah.

But Jesus refuted them openly:

“Yes, you think you know me and where I came from! But really, you do not! You do not know me because I came from the Father, and you do not know the Father!” (paraphrased from 7:28-29)

“28 So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, “You know me, and you know where I come from. But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know. 29 I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me.”

This was a serious accusation to make against the orthodox Jew, for the Jews prided themselves in knowing the true God, the God of Israel. These words also implied the superiority of Jesus. He was not

simply *born* into this world like any other human; He was *sent* to earth by the Father. This means that He existed before He was born on the earth, and He has been with the Father!

Thanks be to God that even though the religious leaders rejected him, many pilgrims put their faith in Him. The Jewish leaders resented the fact that people were trusting in Jesus so they sent members of the temple guard to arrest Jesus, but it was Jesus who arrested them, for they could not lay their hands on him, *“No one ever spoke like this man!”* ^{7:46}

C. : 37–52 Division after the Feast

“37 On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as [f] the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” 39 Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

The Lord has already told the Samaritan woman that he had the water of eternal life. Now He revealed that believers would not only drink the living water, but they would become channels of living water to bless a thirsty world! Where did the Old Testament talk about this wonderful truth?

Zechariah 14:8 *“On that day (of Yahweh) living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem”*

Ezekiel 47:9 foresaw a river flowing out from the temple of God, *“so everything will live where the river goes.”*

Revelations 22:1 In the new Jerusalem, *“Then the angel [a] showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb”*

Combining the visions from the Old and New Testaments, we see a living water flowing from the throne, through the temple, and out of the city of God. The apostle John tells us that the living water is the Holy Spirit. ^{7:39} We who trust Jesus have the Spirit of God forever, both as an individual and corporately as a church! With God’s Spirit dwelling in us, we become God’s everlasting temple! The Spirit we have received is not of the world but of God so that we can understand the things of God. With the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who knows God’s thoughts, we can know the heart of God if we are willing to!

The Holy Spirit is not given to enslave us like a foreman but to be our Counsellor. He fights against our flesh whenever we incline towards our flesh; He guides us whenever we seek God’s will; He intercedes for us whenever we do not know how to pray; He causes us to see our sins and compels us to repent; We can love God because the Holy Spirit pour out the love of God in our hearts. He empowers us to will and to act according to God’s good purpose. By the power of God, He helps us according to God’s fatherly love and Christ’s brotherly love for us. He is God’s children ever-present help and He promptly gives us the help we need whatever the situation is! (Ps 46:1)

P1 The Indwelling Spirit promptly gives us the help we need in whatever situation

Praise God for bestowing such an honourable and powerful gift to His children generously! What a perfect salvation in Christ!

D. Closing

No matter how people around him responded to him, be it his siblings, disciples, authorities, or people he came to serve, the Lord Jesus was not distracted from what he ought to do, which is the Father’s

will for him. Our Lord has set a clear example of a faithful and humble servant, focusing on seeking the glory of the Father and working according to the Father's way and timing. As we strive to live for God's glory, let us follow Christ's way and timing.

**P2 Christ lived according to the Father's will and timing.
So should we.**

