



Disciplers Bible Studies

JOHN
LESSON 8

The Provider of the Water of Life John 7:1-52

Introduction

A. Reminder

As we continue our study of Christ's public ministry and miraculous signs, keep in mind that the first and foremost thrust of John's Gospel is to present the person and purpose of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Savior of the world. Thus far, John has given us: (a) specific events involving Christ's supernatural sign miracles and great discourses; and (b) the nature of the unbelief which had led the majority of Jews to refuse to accept Him as their Messiah.

B. Overview

This week's lesson, John 7, is marked by continued Jewish unbelief, arguments, confusion and divisiveness. Jesus once again clearly defended His claim as the Son of God and revealed that He is the provider of "living water."

Chapter 7 may be described as controversy between divine righteousness and truth on the one hand and Pharisaic self-righteousness and hard-heartedness on the other. Warren Wiersbe puts it this way, "John 7 has three time divisions: (1) before the Feast of Tabernacles (vss. 1-10); (2) in the midst of the Feast (vss. 11-36); and (3) on the last day of the Feast (vss. 37-52.) The responses during each of those periods can be characterized by three words: disbelief, debate, and division."

Outline of John 7:1-52

- I. The Journey to Jerusalem (7:1-10)
- II. Controversy in the Temple (7:11-36)
- III. The Claim of Jesus (7:37-52)

I. Journey to Jerusalem (7:1-10)

A. The Feast of Tabernacles

In our last lesson, John 6, after feeding the multitude, walking on water and giving His profound spiritual discourse in Capernaum, Jesus ministered in Galilee another six months. We know that

He stayed that long because: (1) the Judean Jews still sought to kill Him; and (2) His Galilean miracles occurred at Passover time in the spring, whereas the Feast of Tabernacles was in the fall about six months later (Exodus 23:16; Deuteronomy 16:13-15.)

John 7 is centered around the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast was a grape and olive festival commemorating the Israelites' sojourns in the wilderness which was celebrated in the fall. It was a joyous, festive type of harvest-thanksgiving, and was considered the most popular of the three required Jewish feasts.

B. The Advice of Jesus

1. The Wisdom of the World

Jesus' brothers told Him that if He is the Messiah He should go to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles since that is the best place to make Himself known publicly and to invite people to recognize Him. In that way, His remaining disciples would continue to believe in Him and more people would become His disciples. They encouraged Him to promote Himself, perhaps assuming that He wanted as large a following as possible. Their advice was like the wisdom of the world - go win over the world by doing something spectacular.

2. Jesus' Family

Jesus had four brothers and at least two sisters (Matthew 13:55-56.) The Biblical record does not tell us whether they were sons and daughters of Joseph's by a previous marriage or whether they were born to Mary after Jesus. The Bible does call Jesus Mary's first-born son.

3. His Brothers' Unbelief

It is strangely interesting that none of Jesus' brothers believed in Him. They had been around Him for approximately thirty years and had observed both His personal sinless life and divine miracles. They knew His claims to be the Son of God and yet they were doubtful about His divine origin and Messianic authority. They were confused in their faith and

urged Him to prove His claims by going to the place of the Jewish leaders and forcing them to recognize Him. Two of Jesus' brothers were James and Jude, who later became believers and wrote the New Testament books that bear their names (Acts 1:14; 1 Corinthians 15:7; Galatians 1:19; Jude 1:1).

C. The Response of Jesus

1. The World of His Brothers

Jesus did not take the advice of His brothers because He was following His Father's schedule. In His response He said that His *"time has not yet come."* Jesus did not say that He would not go to Jerusalem, but that He would go according to His Father's agenda. He told His brothers to go ahead to the Feast, and then He rebuked them with these words, *"The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil."* He was saying, in effect, that they loved the world and the world takes each of them as belonging to it like one of its own.

Later, Jesus went up to the Feast secretly.

2. The Word "World" in the New Testament

In the New Testament, the word "world" is used basically in two different ways, depending on the context of the passage. The first way is to refer to it as the world which God loves; this is "the world of humanity" (John 3:16.) The second way is "the world which is in opposition to God". This is the world under the dominion and control of Satan (John 12:31; James 4:4.)

The Bible also represents these two worlds as two spiritual kingdoms in conflict. The first kingdom is the Kingdom of God, which is the present, available, direct rule of God through Christ. The second is the kingdom of darkness, under the rulership and influence of Satan. This second kingdom is represented in part by contemporary culture. Throughout the Church Age, the Kingdom of God has been in direct, non-physical confrontation with the kingdom of darkness. The eventual outcome will be total victory for God when Satan is defeated at Armageddon (Revelation 16:14,16; 19:11,16,20; 20:1,2) and later cast into the lake of fire and brimstone (Revelation 20:10.)

3. The World Systems of Satan

In the discussion with His brothers, Jesus spoke of the world of contemporary culture which was and still is in opposition to God. This world today manifests itself in such things as ungodly lifestyles,

extravagant materialism, unrestrained self-indulgence, mindless entertainment, immoral sexual behavior, greed, corruption, violence, etc. These world systems of Satan seek to tempt us to strive for power, position, possessions and honors. They tempt us to conform to the world's standards by dictating our values and pressuring us into their mold.

II. Controversy in the Temple (7:11-36)

A. The Attitude of the Jews

In Jerusalem, the same Jewish leaders who planned to kill Jesus in John 5 and again in John 7:1 still sought Him because of His healing on the Sabbath and making Himself equal with God. The multitude of people, on the other hand, were divided in their reaction to Jesus. Some thought of the help and blessings His works and words had brought to many and they said, *"He is a god."* Others thought He was an imposter, throwing up smokescreens of good deeds and power to cover His false claims. They were divided over His convicting discourses calling for repentance and faith in Him. No one, however, verbalized their opinions openly for fear of the Jewish leadership.

B. Concerning the Authority of Jesus

1 The Source of His Wisdom

In the midst of the Feast, Jesus started teaching in the Temple. The people marveled at His speaking and knowledge, wondering how this carpenter from Nazareth, with no rabbinical education, could be so learned in Old Testament Scriptures and so brilliant in His statements (Matthew 7:28-29; Mark 1:22.) Jesus told them that His words were accurate, wise and authoritative because they came from God Himself. His spiritual maturity and wisdom on the human level came entirely from His unique and uninterrupted communion with His Father.

John MacArthur points out that in the Gospels, Jesus never quoted from books other than the Old Testament. He never referred to secular history, literature, mathematics or poetry, but always confined Himself to spiritual or religious subjects. God was the sole source of His authority. His words were authoritative because they were backed by His selfless conduct which glorified God.

2. Commitment to God's Will

Jesus told His audience that if anyone was willing to do God's will, not just to know God's truth, God would enable that person to believe that Jesus' teaching came from above. Once an individual

made the commitment to follow God's will, He began to convince that person what is true. Faith goes before reason, not the other way around. Dr. Constable's notes state, "Jesus' point was that submission to God, rather than intellectual analysis, is the foundation for understanding truth, particularly the truth of Jesus' teachings."

3. Healing and Circumcision on the Sabbath

Jesus then reminded the people of His last visit to Jerusalem when they were seeking to kill Him, making themselves violators of the law which Moses gave: "*Thou shall not kill*" (Exodus 20:13). They did not understand the extent of the Pharisee's hatred of Jesus at this time, nor of their plots to kill Him. However, they were aware of the animosity of their leaders toward Jesus, so they accused Him of having a demon.

Ignoring their accusation, Jesus spoke further of His divine authority which was not in conflict with Moses' law. The one work that He had done on the Sabbath, healing the paralyzed man, had caused them to marvel. However, this was the turning point at which time the leaders sought to kill Him. He told the people that they, too, had broken their Sabbath law when they circumcised a male child on the eighth day after his birth and that eighth day fell on the Sabbath. Circumcision symbolized wholeness, so why were they angry with Him when He made a man whole on the Sabbath?

4. Righteous Judgment

Jesus told them not to judge according to appearance, but according to righteous judgment. True, discerning, righteous judgment penetrates beneath surface appearances and has an inner, discriminating spirit in tune with God.

5. Concerning the Origin of Jesus

The people began to wonder why the leaders allowed Jesus to teach in the Temple since they had wanted to kill Him. But then they said this can't be the Christ because we know this man is from Galilee. In response, Jesus cried out that He had not given Himself this mission, but that God, "*whom you do not know*," had sent Him. His profound earnestness so affected His listeners that some thought He truly was the Messiah - the Son of God. Others thought he was a blatant, ego-centered lunatic or liar. No one, however, laid a hand on Him because His hour had not yet come.

6. Concerning the Destination of Jesus

The arrival of the Temple officers probably reminded Jesus of His approaching crucifixion, resurrection and return to heaven. His warning words to the crowd meant that NOW is the DAY for SALVATION (Romans 13:11), i.e. now is the time to acknowledge Me, believe Me and accept Me as your Messiah. No doubt, many of these people were struggling with this warning when the interruptive appearance of the Temple guards prompted more questions to one another.

III. Claims of Jesus (John 7:37-52)

A. The Offer of "Living Water"

1. To All Who Come and Believe

The last and greatest day of the Feast fell on the Sabbath. It was a gloriously special day in Jewish culture because it commemorated the day when the Israelites crossed the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land. Several Jewish historians recorded that it was traditional not to draw water on this day because the Israelites were no longer in desert wasteland, but now drank from the rivers of Canaan.

Since this day had special meaning concerning water, Jesus presented Himself as the provider of living water, "*If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink*." He promised, not only to these listeners, but to men and women of all ages, an inner, personal, permanent satisfaction to all who come to Him and believe.

2. The Living Water is the Holy Spirit - (7:39)

Jesus explained further that the living water He offered was the Holy Spirit who would indwell believers in a new and living way. This outpouring of the Spirit had been predicted in the Old Testament (Joel 2:28-32), and would be fulfilled at Pentecost after the cross and resurrection (Acts 2:16-21.)

Those who believed Jesus and received His promise by faith, including His disciples, experienced the quenching of their spiritual thirst immediately and completely. However, the actual fulfillment of the promise would come after Jesus settled the sin problem on the cross. We will see later in our study of John that the Holy Spirit's new mission will occur after Jesus' glorification (death, resurrection and ascension.)

3. The Response of the People

The crowd was still divided about who Jesus was. Some truly believed He was a Prophet. Others said, *"Truly this is the Prophet. This is the Christ."* Still others, apparently, not knowing that He was born in Bethlehem said He cannot be the Messiah because He came out of Galilee.

Their reaction to Jesus was not unlike that of many people today. They let some question or unclear point about the Bible, or about God, or about Jesus confuse and bog them down. They do not rely on the truth or the light they have, even though Biblical, historical evidence has been accurately displayed, recorded and experienced by men and women for over 2000 years.

Most of the Jews of Jesus' day could not see that Jesus was a good and powerful Man who spoke and acted with authority. Similarly today, many people get hung up on some minor point concerning Jesus or the Bible. God wants us to act upon the light we have and not become skeptical or unbelieving over secondary issues. Through creation and the written Word, God has given us what He wants us to know and kept the secret things to Himself (Deuteronomy 29:29.) As we grow and learn to react with Him, He teaches us more and more.

4. The Unbelief of the Jewish Leaders

The officers of the Pharisees who had been sent to arrest Jesus were so moved by His words that they did not touch Him. They said that no man ever spoke like this Man. The chief priests were very disgusted with the officers and asked them, *"Were you also deceived?"* The leaders' next words implied clearly that they, as the high and mighty, educated chief priests of Old Testament Scripture, knew that Jesus was an imposter and deceiver. Further, they were certain that many in this crowd of people were mesmerized by Jesus' words and accursed because they did not know the Law. Their whole point was that only uneducated, simple-minded people would believe Jesus; no one of any account academically would believe in Him.

5. Nicodemus' Intervention for Jesus

Nicodemus spoke up in the interest of fair play at this point. We noted in John 3:2 that he had privately stated his belief that Jesus was a teacher who had come from God. This does not mean that he had become a believer in Jesus, although he may have (John 19:38-39.) He did not defend Jesus at this meeting because the situation was probably too threatening. But he did link himself with the

Man from Galilee and was willing to stand up for Jesus' rights to be heard.

The Pharisees replied to Nicodemus that no Prophet had ever come out of Galilee. Actually, they were wrong because both Jonah and Nahum had come from there. The important point is that if they had made an effort to investigate Jesus' origin thoroughly, they would have known that the messianic Son of David would originally come from Bethlehem (Micah 5:2.)

Applications

1. Re-read 3. The World Systems of Satan on page 2. Ask yourself, "Am I in any way involved in worldly things which are at enmity with God, such as mindless entertainment, immoral thoughts, ungodly behavior, hypocrisy, gossiping, coveting, envying or other deeds of darkness?"

2. Many of us tend to judge situations and people quickly. We know that sometimes there is a fine line between condemning judgment and discriminating judgment. Jesus told the crowd not to judge according to appearance, but to judge according to righteous judgment (7:24.) Do you judge others on first impressions, such as unkempt hair, body marks, overbearing behavior, poor grammar, etc? If so, what can you do about it?

3. Do you sometimes let unclear points or controversial matters about God and His Word cause you to doubt the ultimate truths of the Bible? Do unimportant questions bother you – such questions as where did the wives of Adam's sons come from, or was Jesus absent from the Trinity during the nine months of Mary's pregnancy? Always try to distinguish between the vital truths that God has given us and the secondary issues or mysteries that He has kept secret. Trust totally and completely in His sovereignty, love, mercy and grace. Remember that the original manuscripts of the Word of God are inerrant and infallible.