

## Can This Be the Christ? (Part 1)

### John 7-9

Before you sit down, we're going to do something different: an **active introduction** to the sermon! You have to help me. Turn to 3 or 4 people and ask them the following questions:

- Are you from Raleigh?
- Do you have siblings?
- Where did you attend school? (You can say any school: pre, middle, high, college, home, or "I didn't go to school, I'm too smart for school." Or, "I'm too cool for school").

Did you learn anything about anyone?

- I had you do that as an introduction to chapter 7 because this **chapter is filled with questions! There are about 20 in this chapter!**
- If you have a **red letter Bible**, you will see this back and forth of discussion.

Here's a summary of the questions:

1. "Where's Jesus?" A Question Regarding His Attendance at the Feast (1-13)
2. "Where did Jesus go to school?" A Question Regarding His Training (14-24)
3. "Where is Jesus from?" A Question Regarding His Origin (25-31)
4. "Where is Jesus going?" A Question Regarding His Destination (32-36)

The issue is the identity of Jesus.

"**Can this be the Christ?**" is *the* question. (Perhaps the heading over v. 25 in your Bible).

These questions come in the context of **great emotion**.

This chapter is filled with **skepticism, uncertainty, and hostility** to Jesus.

Now, I want us to consider not only John 7 today, but also **chapters 8-9, briefly – because they form a unit. It all takes place around the Feast of Tabernacles (7:2).**

**Today is basically an introduction to the next 6 weeks of sermons!**

- This is like a **little mini-series** in our study of John. If you're new, it's a great time to join us!
- **Some of you have been awaiting some series to drop on Netflix/Amazon. Come join us for the Feast of Tabernacles series!**

We'll take a **funnel approach**:

1. Overview Chapters 7-9.
2. Overview Chapter 7.
3. Consider the details of 7:1-13
4. Application

**#1: Jesus and the Feast: Water & Light (Chs. 7-9)**

There are two big themes at the Feast of Booths running through these three chapters, with roots in the Exodus: water and light.

## The Feast (v 2)

The month of Tishri (spanning our months of **September and October**) was the most popular and festive month of the year.

- (Kind of like the Raleigh state fair, with some obvious differences).
- Atmosphere electric: “College football is in the air,” the Feast of Tabernacles was in the air.

## Thousands of Jews would flock to Jerusalem

- The **1<sup>st</sup> day** of Tishri was the **Feast of Trumpets**. Joyful time, announcing this special time, and preparing people for...
- The **10<sup>th</sup> day** of Tishri was the **Day of Atonement**. (The High Priest would take the blood of a sacrifice, walk into the holy of holies, and make atonement for the people He represented).
- The **15<sup>th</sup>-22** of Tishri was the **Feast of Tabernacles**, an eight-day celebration.

## Every Jewish male was required to attend.

It came at the **end of the fruit and olive harvest** (not wheat harvest).

- The **people thanked God for the harvest**, as the giver of basic needs.
- **People camped out.**
  - How many of you like camping? We’ll pray for you. I’m like theologian Jim Gaffigan... “Camping is a tradition in our family!... Happy camper!”
  - Isn’t that one of the reasons we go to work so we don’t have to sleep outside? Get wrapped in a sleeping bag, like a bear taco. No thanks.
- **Booths (tent-like structures) were set up all over the city remembering the wilderness, when they lived in booths.**
- The festival originally went for seven days, but **later an eighth day was added**, a solemn assembly, to **express hope for the future of Israel**. (cf., Neh 8:18).

## So, then, the people looked in three directions:

- **Back** – reflecting on God’s provision for them in the wilderness.
- **Present** – thanking God for their crops
- **Future** – expressing longings for their future.

## Two Great Ceremonies

During this special, feast there were two great ceremonies: one involving water, and the other involving light, which also commemorated Israel’s guidance by the pillar of fire, and the provision of water from the rock, and which also looked forward to the fulfillment of prophecies concerning the coming Messiah.

- These were basic necessities: water and light.
- We can’t live without water and light.

- **Hurricane Prep this week: How many of you went to get water, but they were out? Plenty of Lecroix, but no water. One guy was leaving with gallons of wine!**
- **And everyone was making plans if there would be no electricity: candles, flashlights**
- **Jesus takes these two basic necessities, and makes some profound statements about Himself.**

**Only the water he provides, can sustain you, satisfy you; and only the light he gives, can guide you in this difficult and dark life.**

**Without him, we die of thirst, and without him we are left in darkness.**

### **A. Chapter 7: Water (7:37-39)**

The flow of chapter 7....

1. **Beginning of the Feast (7:1-13):** Jesus' brothers want to serve as Jesus' campaign managers, and have him go declare his messiahship in Jerusalem (7:1-13).
2. **Middle of the Feast (7:14-36):** Many people questioning whether or not he is the Messiah.
3. **End of the Feast (7:37-ff):** Jesus declares himself to be the fulfillment of the water ceremony (7:37-39), then there's debate about his identity (7:40-52).

**The Water Ceremony.** Some priests would go to the Pool of Siloam with large golden pitchers, amidst great songs of celebrations, singing **Isa 12:3** **“With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.”**

- Trumpets would be blown, and the pitchers would be filled with water.
- They would then head up to the Temple Mount, enter the temple precincts, and would pour the water on the altar in the temple. (cf., Ezekiel 47).
- During this occasion, Jesus says...

### **7:37-39**

<sup>37</sup> 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. <sup>38</sup> Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ ” <sup>39</sup> 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.

**Jesus claims to be the source of spiritual life, renewal, and refreshment you need.**

- This water of life will be made available as Jesus dies on the cross, rises from the dead, ascends to the Father, and pours out His Holy Spirit.
- In Him, we have forgiveness, peace, and satisfaction.
- Spiritual thirst is a universal problem, and in Jesus that need is met.
- **Now, as believers, we drink deeply from the wells of salvation everyday, as this water refreshes us today, and tomorrow, and the next day, until we see Him.**

### **B. Chapter 8: Light (8:12, 9:5)**

The story line continues into chap. 8 as Jesus declares, “I am the light of the world.” (John 8:12)

<sup>12</sup> Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

Notice the word, “**Again.**” 7:53-8:11 interrupts the flow of these chapters.

- There’s a textual question regarding this passage, which is why it appears in brackets, or as a footnote in your Bible.
- Some scholars think it’s simply **out of place.**
- Others don’t think we can’t take it an original part of John’s gospel, but they contend **it’s an authentic piece of apostolic tradition that describes a real event in Jesus’ ministry.**<sup>1</sup> **It’s profitable to study, and doesn’t contradict anything else in Scripture.** It serves as a great illustration of Jesus’ truth and grace.

Here are the reasons for the questions surrounding it (Carson/Piper):

- The text is **absent from virtually all early Greek manuscripts**, as well as early manuscripts in other languages. It’s not in any Gk manuscripts before the 5<sup>th</sup> century.
- **Absent in the Fathers.** Carson adds, “All the early church Fathers omit this narrative: in commenting on John, they pass immediately from 7:52 to 8:12.”
  - Further, “No Eastern Father cites the passage before the tenth century.”
  - Origin, moves from 7:52 to 8:12 in his commentary. When Tertullian gives judicial instructions on adultery, he makes no reference to this story.
- **Placement.** Of the later manuscripts that do include it, they have it in different places: some place it here in 7:53–8:11, but some place it after Luke 21:38, others after Luke 24:53, and others place it after John 7:44, John 7:36 or John 21:25.
- The **vocabulary in John:** there are numerous expressions and constructions that we don’t see anywhere else in John.
- It **interrupts the flow of chapters 7-9.** Contextually in doesn’t fit.

I’m not going to spend a week on it, but I will allude to it over the course of the next several weeks to illustrate various points.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> MacArthur, 323. More quotes:

- Borchert calls it, “a text looking for a context.” (NAC, 365)
- Bruce Metzger: “The evidence for the non-Johannine origin of the periscope of the adulteress is overwhelming.... At the same time the account has all the earmarks of historical veracity. It is obviously a piece of oral tradition which circulated in certain parts of the Western church and which was subsequently incorporated into various manuscripts at various places” (A Textual Commentary, 219-220).
- Andreas Köstenberger: “This represents overwhelming evidence that the section is non-Johannine.” (Baker, 246)
- Doug Moo: “The textual evidence make it impossible to hold that this section is an authentic part of the gospel.” (778) He balances this saying, “This story is true to the character of Jesus. Throughout history ... it has been held as authentic.” (NICNT)

<sup>2</sup> For a full treatment of this passage, and for answers to various questions surrounding this passage, see Piper’s sermon here: <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/ neither-do-i-condemn-you--3>. Piper agrees with the aforementioned scholars, but decides to preach a sermon dedicated to explaining what we call “textual criticism,” in order to address issues related to the transmission of Scripture, the reliability of Scripture, and authority of Scripture. As Piper shows, none of the questions surrounding 7:53-8:11 should lessen your confidence in the reliability of Scripture. He concludes: “So when I agree with the vast majority of scholars that the story of the woman taken in adultery was not in the Gospel of John, you should not think: ‘Oh my, everything is up for grabs now.’ Or: ‘How can I count on any text?’ On the contrary, you can be thankful that God has, in his sovereign providence over the transmission process for 2,000 years, ordered things so that the few uncertainties that remain alter no doctrine of the Christian faith. That is really astonishing when you think about it, and we should worship God because of it.”

## Back to the Light of the World...

This light ceremony was fulfilling the image of the people being led by the pillar of fire by night.

The ceremony included four large stands each with four golden bowls were placed in the Court of Women.

- These sixteen bowls, reached by ladders, were filled with oil.
- When they were lit at night, Rabbis said that they lit up all of Jerusalem.
- In a world that didn't have public lighting, this must have been extraordinary.
- The Levites would sing, and men would dance and sing with torches in their hands.

It's in this context that Jesus stands around these 16 lit bowls, and declares that he is the light – not just of Jerusalem – but of the world.

The concept of light was deeply imbedded in OT thought:

- The first act of creation, “Let there be light”
- The Messiah would be the bringer of light. When Matthew heard Jesus teach, and perform his miracles and quotes **Isaiah 9:1-2**, “The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light...”

## C. Chapter 9: One more reference to Light.

Finally, there's a climactic illustration of Jesus being the light of the world, as he heals the **blind man (9:1-41)**.

### John 9:5

<sup>5</sup> As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

- The blind man is **a case study** of sorts.
- Jesus gives this man sight.
- This man is a living example of one who has gone from darkness to light, and goes on to follow the light.

Light speaks of hope, of salvation.

Light speaks of goodness.

Light speaks of the kingdom of God.

Summary: You can't live without spiritual water and spiritual light, and you find them only in Jesus. Apart from him we are thirsty, and apart from him, we are walking in darkness.

## #2: Jesus and the Crowd: Uncertainty & Hostility (ch. 7)

Jesus is encounters waves opposition in chapter 7.

- Today you can mention certain names and you just get a reaction. It's like hitting a golf ball in a phone booth. That was Jesus.
- He has a large number of skeptics and haters who are **murmuring** about him (v. 12).
- And some who want to kill him (v. 1).
- We're only a third of the way into John's Gospel and people already want to kill him!

## A. What People were saying:

### Reactions to Jesus:

- His brothers disbelieve (v. 5)
- The world hates him (v. 6)
- Some think he's a good man (v. 12)
- Some think he's a deceiver (v. 13, Cf Deut 13:5)
- Some think he's a demon-possessed man (20)
- Some think he's ordinary man (25–27, 41b–42)
- Some think he's prophet (7:40)
- Some think he's Messiah (7:31, 41a)

People are confused, enraged; some want to arrest him, others want to kill him.

- Think about this. God comes to earth, and on one is listening!
- Instead they criticize, attack, and plot to kill him.

## B. Why did Jesus keep going?

- **His resolute commitment to the Father's will.**
  - He was driven by fear of man, but by faithfulness to the Father.
- **Further, we see in vv 37ff – he would soon be glorified, and achieve something glorious.**
  - He would win a people for himself. (John 17)
  - The glory made the suffering worth it.
- **His life is a pattern for us.**
  - We must not be driven fear of man, but fear of God.
    - We must be principal-driven, not people-pleasing driven.
  - We must remember that while we suffer now, glory awaits us.
    - So we press on amidst opposition.

## #3: Jesus and His Brothers: Misunderstanding & Clarification (7:1-13)

V. 1 – Jesus couldn't move freely because of the hatred of his enemies. So he stays in Galilee for the time being.

V. 2 – John gives us the important context.

V. 3-5 – [Read] His brothers want to be his publicity managers!

- We know Jesus had brothers (cf., Matt 13:55; Mark 6:3), including James the Just, who is the author of James and the pillar of the church in Jerusalem. And the author of Jude was his brother also.
- James eventually believed after the resurrection (1 Cor 15)
  - This should give you hope, if you have unbelieving family members.
  - Keep loving, serving, honoring them....
- But he and the others have not believe yet.

**They challenge him to appear publicly at the feast.**

- They are saying, “Jesus, go show off in Jerusalem.” “Go do some miracles.”
- “You can’t stay in Galilee!” “Besides, you’re losing followers!” (6:66)
- And of course, “Jerusalem, the holy city, is where you should put yourself out there.”

**5:** John says, they “did not believe in him.”

- Not that he couldn’t do miracles, but they didn’t understand what kind of Messiah he was.
- They a **misunderstanding** about his person and work.

**Jesus rejects their proposal, like he did when his mother brought up the absence of wine at the wedding (John 2).**

- Like in that event, in due course, he acted, but in his own time and in his own way.

### **A. What misunderstanding prevented them from truly believing?**

- **They didn’t realize that Jesus’ ministry would actually be *unpopular*.**
  - Jesus wasn’t into publicity stunts.
  - **He would *not* be lifted up as an “A List” celebrity, but lifted up as the Crucified Lamb of God.**
  - Such a message remains foolish to some people (Cf., 1 Cor 1:18-25)
- **(Related to this) they had the wrong concept of the Messiah.**
  - Remember previously, many wanted to make him “king.”
  - Many people wanted a **military Messiah.**
  - **But a humble Messiah, who wasn’t out to grab publicity, who would eventually die on a cross – who wants that Messiah?**
  - **Messiah’s gain the votes of the masses.**
  - **Messiah’s win! But Jesus is different.**
  - **Example: Nick Saben, “Guys we’re going to lose every game!” We’re not Kent State!**
  - **But the way Jesus will win is by dying.**
  - **They will eventually kill him. But he will rise and ascend back to the Father, as the victorious and vindicated Son of God, and He will receive the reward of his suffering.**

## Applications:

- **It's possible to be "around Jesus all the time" but not believe in Him.**
  - That is, you can go to church services, have Christian friends and parents, but not be in the faith.
  - **These brothers had a bunk bed with Jesus!**
    - He never sinned! They had to know he was "a good kid." Something happens in the house, and Mary's like, "**Well, I know it wasn't Jesus. Which one of you was it?**"
    - Yet, they didn't believe. The tense denotes **ongoing unbelief.**
  - **I know many children of my heroes in the faith who don't believe. When they speak of their unbelieving children, they weep.**
  - **Must keep praying for our family members.**
- **Others believe in the wrong Jesus, or are interested in Jesus for the wrong reasons.**
  - **They want the Jesus of their imagination, not the Jesus of biblical revelation.**
  - **We dishonor Jesus when we expect things of Him that are not part of his mission.**
  - **We dishonor him when we look at him like his brothers, for what we can get: for worldly power, success, or our own self-interests.**
- **The most obvious form of this is the prosperity gospel.**
- **But there are other versions of it – you can look to Jesus as a means of all kinds of selfish ends.**
- **Jesus came to die for sinners, and give us reconciliation to the Father, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life – what else should we want?!**

## B. Clarifications: Jesus corrects his brothers' misunderstanding (6-9) [Read]

### Clarification #1: Jesus is governed by a divine agenda, not human planning (6, 9)

- He says, "You guys go ahead to Jerusalem. I'll determine when I go, based upon my Father's schedule, not yours."
- His brothers are not operating on such a divine timetable – "your time is always here." Their task was to just be faithful Jews and go up to the Feast; Jesus had more than that in mind.
- His life was governed by his father's schedule, not human planning. (cf., Gal 4:4)
- **See v. 30** – He's sovereign over the events of his life.
- "No one will take his life, but I lay it down of my own accord." (10:18)
- Not only was the cross planned by the God, but the details of his life as well.
- **One of the marks of a disciple is that we abandoned our schedule, agenda, for God's agenda.** Sometimes we are pursuing God's will, but not patiently waiting on God's timing.

### Clarification #2: Jesus expects hatred, not popularity (7)



- The world can't hate his brothers, because they are of the world.
- But the world hates Jesus because he's different.
- He expects hatred, and so should we.
- **When you stand with Jesus, prepare to suffer like Jesus.**
  - When you're with Jesus, you have a target on your back.
  - But when you are with the dominion of darkness, your not.
  - As soon as you cross the line of faith, the attacks come.
- Followers of Jesus shouldn't be surprised if they receive some level of opposition.

### John 15:18-19

<sup>18</sup> "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Why did he receive such opposition? From this chapter, there are at least 3 reasons:

- **A Moral reason** (v. 7)
  - Jesus's life and teaching exposed human sin.
  - They don't want to live under his authority.
- **A Religious reason** (14-24)
  - Jesus didn't receive training like other Rabbis (16-19)
  - Jesus valued life-change over religious ceremonies (20-24)
- **A Belief Reason** (25-36)
  - They didn't believe he came from heaven and was returning there.

**Application:** We will see opposition to Christ and his people for the same reasons:

- **Morally:** People don't want to be told that what they're doing is wrong.
- **Religiously:** People don't want you messing with their religious traditions.
- **Belief:** Many think what we're teaching is just ridiculous. **We might as well pray to the tooth fairy and worship an Eastern Bunny.**
- In Luke, Jesus is teaching on persecution and he says:

<sup>16</sup> You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. <sup>17</sup> You will be hated by all for my name's sake. <sup>18</sup> But not a hair of your head will perish. <sup>19</sup> By your endurance you will gain your lives.

- **Suffering now, glory later. You may be persecuted; hated, tortured, but you will rise like me, with a glorified body! (I'm going to get some bangs and play in the band!)**

**Clarification #3: Jesus' mission involved exposing sin and dying for sinners, not being a military Messiah (7b, 10-13)**

- His brothers had no concept of a crucified Messiah, neither did many others.
- Many in the early church described Jesus as "reigning from the cross."
- The world hates Jesus because "he testifies that its works are evil" (7b).
- But Jesus came into the world not to merely expose sin, but to die for sinners.

- Remember John 3:16ff – not to condemn but to save!
- Like a good doctor, Jesus not only exposes our problem, but provides the cure – at great cost to himself.

**He exposes our sin to us, in order that he may heal us.**

The religious leaders were pros at exposing sin.

- In the story of the woman caught in adultery (8:1-11), they want to stone her.
- But Jesus, the sinless one, exposes our sin, but doesn't stop there. He makes atonement for our sin.
- **How? Through the cross, which is now looming large in John's gospel...**

**Read v. 10-13**

- Jesus does eventually go up to Jerusalem, but it's not clear when, and probably not at the beginning of the feast. (10-13)
- He went up to teach not to participate like a pilgrim, like everyone else.
- He went "privately" meaning he wasn't drawing attention to himself.

**13:** John concludes this part of chapter 7 with a note about people's "fear of the Jews," that is, the Jewish leaders.

- Their fear prevented free, open discussion.
- In other words, the opposition and hostility is rising.
- This sets the stage for what's coming in the rest of this section, and the rest of John's gospel. The cross is approaching.
- Soon, Jesus will be lifted up on the cross, to die as the crucified Messiah.
- But there would be a great reversal; through that death, sinners who believe in Jesus would find forgiveness and freedom and life.

**He wasn't the Messiah they expected;  
He wasn't the Messiah they even wanted;  
but He was the Messiah they needed.**

As believers, we reflect on his cross daily.

- "Dad, I'm at Golgotha. I'm at Golgotha."
- "That's great son, I go there everyday."

**#4: Jesus and You: Receive Him & Imitate Him**

Let me wrap up our introduction to this section of John, chapters 7-9.

**Can this be the Christ? Yes it is!**

**1. Receive this Savior, the one who offers us living water, and light in darkness.**

**John 1:9-13**

<sup>9</sup> The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup> He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

## **2. Imitate this Savior, as you offer this thirsty world living water, and as you shine as a light in a dark world.**

John 12:35–36 (ESV): <sup>5</sup> So Jesus said to them, “The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. <sup>36</sup> While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.”

Paul points out that as sons and daughters of light, we have a **similar role to play in exposing sin (Jn 5:7)**.

### **Ephesians 5:7-11**

<sup>7</sup> Therefore do not become partners with them; <sup>8</sup> for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), <sup>10</sup> and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

- **We are to expose the works of darkness, not participate in works of darkness**
- **But we expose the darkness not to elevate ourselves, but to lead people to the cure – the precious blood of Jesus, who cleanses sinners, satisfies the thirsty, and gives light to those in darkness.**
- **We are preaching half the gospel, if we only expose sin, and don't offer the cure for sin.**
- **We must point sinners to the Savior, who would soon face his appointed hour, and die for sinners once and for all.**

**Can this be the Christ? Yes.**

**Receive in Him, and pattern your life after him.**

**He is the ultimate water, and the ultimate light, and we can't live without him.**