

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. John 7:17.

We now come to Jesus' concluding ministry to Judea and Perea. It was a difficult moment because the Jews had made up their mind that Jesus had to be killed (make that murdered) their hatred was so consuming. This is why Jesus apparently tarried in Galilee. The Feast of Booths (Tabernacles) was about to be observed so His half-brothers urged Him attend. The Feast of Booths was one of three national Jewish holidays that every mature Jewish male was to attend. It was to be held for a week. All men were to come to Jerusalem and "camp out" in some sort of temporary tent-like shelter - after the harvest. It was a week of festivities. It was to be a reminder of the LORD's provision for both in the successful harvest and also a reminder of the deliverance of their forefathers from Egypt. The booths were a reminder of their journey from Egypt to the promised land and how temporary their dwelling was during this time.

Now the Jew's feast of tabernacles was at hand. [3] His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. [4] For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world. [5] For neither did his brethren believe in him. John 7:2 - 5.

It was natural for Jesus' brothers to remind Him of the required trip to this festival. The difference was that they betrayed the agenda of the populous at the time - that Jesus was going to continue to give signs in order that His messiahship might be established and that eventually He would assert His kingship. However, John comments that none of His brothers had yet believed in Him. This showed that they had not yet received Him as their Lord and Savior. That conversion would come later on. We should not be too hard on His brothers because even the disciples were slow on the uptake in this regard. I call to your remembrance Peter's protestations when Jesus started to teach that He had to go to Jerusalem in order to die for the sins of the world whereupon Peter said that shouldn't be so and Jesus called Peter "Satan," one who was the adversary, for he did not savor the things of God.¹ Jesus' patiently declined his brothers suggestion because of His need for further evangelism of Jerusalem and Perea. He would show up on His own terms in order to complete His mission of evangelism.

This chapter is characterized by the sharp division that were forming between the spiritually curious and the outright rejecters of Jesus. Again, this chapter happened during the Feasts of Booths, an opportune time for maximum exposure to the Jews of the Gospel but required a careful entrance by Jesus because His time had not yet come - He had to do some evangelizing in Judea and Perea. Alfred C Wieand has the time fixed at October AD 29. From here John will take us through the final evangelism of Judah to the evangelism of Perea to Bethany

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¹ Matthew 16:12 - 23, one who opposed.

(where Lazarus was resurrected)² and a R & R at Ephraim.³

The Murderous Intent of the Jews

But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret. [11] Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he? [12] And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people. [13] Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews. John 7:10 - 13.

Here we see the result of the murderous intent of the Jewish leaders *and* their sway of fear over populous. Jesus attacked this influence in Matthew 23:13 **“But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.”**

Judgement will have a heavy demand for anyone who stands in the way of the evangelism of the lost. Parents also need to be mindful of this terrible judgement.

And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. [6]

But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were

hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. [7]

Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! Matthew 18:5 - 7. I

cannot overemphasize the importance of giving all men the opportunity to hear the Good News! From the youngest child to the oldest man or woman who might even be on their death-bed. All need to hear the Good News that Christ died for their sins and that they can receive Him as their personal Savior and hence receive Eternal Life. This is why we see this conflict in this chapter. Jesus was exposing Himself to premature death but He *had* to go to Jerusalem so that more could hear the Gospel. We will see this in the coming verses and we will see the division that was beginning to form between the spiritually curious and the outright rejecters of the Gospel.

The Debate Begins.

Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. [15] And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? [16] Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. [17] If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or

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² John 11:17 - 46.

³ John 11:54 ff.

whether I speak of myself. [18] He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him. John 14 - 18.

The contrast between the dialogue of the Jews in their “hedging” of the Law and Jesus presentation of the Truth is remarkable. The scribes used different “tools” of debate including rationalism to arrive at a ruling in their “hedge.” They were typically convoluted in their rationalizing. Whereas Jesus just presented the Truth as He had received it from the Father. His teaching needed no collaboration from others - no debate - no consideration of the politics of the time - just the Truth. He taught with authority, a technique unknown before this.⁴

May I point out that the same basic process happens in the heart of the believer as he is either discipled by a skilled Spirit-filled teacher or is studying God’s word by himself. When Peter made his confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus congratulated him that flesh and blood had not revealed this truth to him but “my Father which is in heaven.”⁵ This spiritual process was pointed out in John 14:15 - 31 by Jesus where the Holy Spirit is depicted as the Counselor Who comes alongside and teaches the believer the same Truth that Jesus as a young boy was taught. I must point out that the disciples had been taught by Jesus and that the Holy Spirit was to bring this teaching to light in the hearts of the disciples.⁶ Paul also taught about this learning process in 1 Corinthians 2:3 - 16 in detail. He finally concludes that all believers because of this process “...have the mind of Christ.”

The true issue is found in verse 17. I cannot overemphasis this point. Jesus says emphatically that if man has spiritual curiosity, he *will* discover the will of God. The Holy Spirit carefully conserves the Truth - the criteria for discovering Truth (called doctrine here - actually teaching in the original). The construction of the statement is enlightening. Literally, in the original, the translation (not good English)

would be, **“If anyone desires the Will (to be) his practice...” really makes this whole experience of knowing Truth a personal responsibility with divine enablement. The conditional “if” here is third class - meaning the potential is there though not a “slam dunk” because there is personal responsibility on the part of the listener - maybe he will or maybe he will not - it’s up to him.** The phrase, then, is “if anyone (maybe he will, maybe he will choose not to) *desires*” - this is from the original that means it’s a deep seated desire. “...the (Father’s) will (to be) his practice (his way of life) - I stop here mid-sentence - bad grammar - to point out that this is a cooperative experience between the deep-seated desire of the heart - my term “spiritual curiosity” and the Father’s will and faithfulness of the Father to perform His will in the lives of the spiritual curious. It really is important for us to stop playing around

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⁴ Matthew 7:29 For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

⁵ Read Matthew 16:17.

⁶ John 14:26.

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Jesus Refutes the basis for the Jews' Murderous Intent.

Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me? [20] The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee? [21] Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel. [22] Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man. [23] If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day? John 7:19:23.

This could be a bit confusing if we did not know a bit of detail regarding the Law and the Jews "Hedge." The Law requires that every male Jew be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth - no matter if it falls on the Sabbath. The scribes had to resolve other apparent conflicts involving life threatening situations that had to be resolved on the Sabbath and they did - using rationalism. Towns points out that Rabbi Eliser states *"If circumcision, which concerns one of a man's 248 limbs, displaces the Sabbath, how much more must a man's whole body [i.e., if his life be in danger] displace the Sabbath."* (Yoma 85b).⁷ So healing a man who was infirm (and others with various physical problems) on the Sabbath should have not been an issue with these Jews and that point was not missed by some there on that occasion. Jesus meets their supposed lettered debate with His own brilliant counter in verse 23 - this utterly refutes the basis of their murderous intent.

In the following verses we see the debate that is beginning to rage between the positive volition folks and the negative volition folk. The important point to note here is that once the heart is set one way or the other, there is no arguing a person into the kingdom of God. If he is positive the transition is going to happen. If he is negative - then no debater's technique - no argument is going to swing the heart the other way. It is between the listener and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Presents the Good News - the Response of the Listeners.

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. [38] He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. [39] (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) [40] Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. [41] Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? John 7:37 - 41.

⁷ I'm quoting from The Gospel of John believe and Live, Elmer Towns, page 72.

Here is the Gospel. He preached the same Good News to the Samaritan woman and the results were her salvation and that of many in her home town.⁸ Here the results are mixed. Some believed that Jesus was “the Prophet”⁹ - the one Moses referred to. Others brought up a false argument to buttress their own unbelief of Christ - that no prophet ever came from Galilee - not true. Even most of the Jews did not believe this. It was widely held that Jonah, Hosea, Naham, Elijah, Elisha, and Amos had come from Galilee. So we see a deep division among the people. Not because of the lack of evidence concerning Jesus Christ being the Messiah but because of the spiritually curious hearts were being enlightened and the outright rejecters hearts were being darkened to the uttermost.

More Evidence of this Division:

The Partial Conversion of the Temple Guards and Religious Leaders.

So there was a division among the people because of him. [44] And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him. [45] Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? [46] The officers answered, Never man spake like this man. [47] Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived? [48] Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? [49] But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed. [50] Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) [51] Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth? [52] They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. [53] And every man went unto his own house. John 7:43 - 53.

We are coming to the end of this section - right in the middle of Jesus concluding evangelistic ministry. The cross is before Him. He must carefully choose His confrontations ere He is murdered before the Cross. There are more sinners who are to hear the Gospel. More revelations of miracles and sinners coming the Salvation. It is interesting to me the effect that the power of the Gospel had in the hearts of even the most hardened temple guards. They had been listening to Jesus and had concluded that no one had ever spoken like this man, Jesus. Indeed. The Son of God was preaching the Gospel - empowered with the Omnipotence of the Godhead!¹⁰ Notable others to receive Christ as Savior would be one of their own, Nicodemus and, of course, the sinner who was to be with Christ in Paradise because he had received Christ as his personal Savior.

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⁸ John 4.

⁹ Deut. 18:15 - 19.

¹⁰ Romans 1:16.