

PDF version of the lesson notes.

## **I. Introduction**

- Hydraulic fluid, spills, and saving the river.

## **II. Structure of John 7**

- John 7 is pretty long; I think it is helpful to have a rough outline of the structure of the chapter. I don't mean this to be definitive, but rather I just want to give an overview of what is going on.[1]

7:1–13	Should Jesus attend the Festival?
7:14–18	Is Jesus a Qualified Teacher?
7:19–24	Jesus and the Law
7:25–31	The Origins of Jesus
7:32–36	Where is Jesus Going?
7:37–39	The Living Water
7:40–44	A People Divided
7:45–52	A Leadership Divided

## **III. Should I Stay or Should I Go**

- Read John 7:1–9:

(1) After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him. (2) Now the Jews' 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. (6) Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready. (7) The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. (8) Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come. (9) When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee.

### ***A. They Sought to Kill Him***

- In verse 1, we find out that Jesus is in Galilee because "he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to Kill him." *What does it mean to "not walk in Jewry?"*
- The archaic nature of the King James Version makes it a little bit difficult figure out what is meant, but verse 3 suggests that it means that Jesus was staying away from Judaea. The NRSV translates verse 1 as the following:

(1) After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He did not wish to go about in Judaea because the Jews were looking for an opportunity to kill him.

- First, why did the Jews want to Kill Jesus? This seems to reference the events of chapter 5 when Jesus heals the paralytic man. *Who is John talking about when he says, "the Jews?"*
- I think verses 10–13 give us some context:

(10) 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.

- *Do these verses help us understand who "the Jews" are? Can we at least rule out some groups?*
- The Evangelist clearly makes a distinction in these verses between the "Jewish People" and the "Jews." The Jewish people react in a mixed fashion: some think he is good and some bad. The reaction of the Jewish People to Jesus is quite different than that of "the Jews" as identified by the Evangelist. One possibility is that "the Jews" refers to the residence of Jerusalem or Judaea; Jerusalem is full of people from all over region (such as Galilee) because of the festival. Maybe the distinction is between the resident of Judaea and everyone else. I see that as unlikely. I think the term is used in a narrow sense to refer to the Jewish Authorities or leaders. Consistent with this idea, later in the chapter the conflict is really between Jesus and the rulers (verse 26), the pharisees (verses 32,45), and chief priests (verse 45). Everybody else in the chapter has a mixed or favorable response including some groups that are clearly from Judaea (like the temple police). This identification is also consistent with the confrontation in chapter 5 involving the healing of the paralytic man that gave rise to this situation because it was with the leadership as well.

## ***B. The Feast of the Tabernacles***

- The Festival or Feast of the Tabernacles is a very important backdrop to this chapter. However, I am going to hold off most of our discussion of the festival until verses 37–38. The Feast of the Tabernacles was celebrated roughly (by our calendar) in the second

week of October. This connects the festival with the harvest and thanksgiving for the harvest. Each family constructed its own temporary shelter: a tabernacle, booth, or tent. The tent was a type or reminder of Israel's wandering in the desert before entering the promised land. All Jewish Men were required to attend this festival (Deut 16:16–17).[2]

### ***C. The Brothers of Jesus***

- *Can we figure out from this pericope whether the reference is to literal or metaphorical brothers?*
- First, the Evangelist does, once at least, use brother as a metaphorical or spiritual description. Post resurrection, Jesus tells Mary to tell his brothers about his resurrection. She tells the disciples. However, I don't think he is referring to the disciples here. These brothers did not believe in Jesus (verse 5), and belief is the core of the metaphorical or spiritual use of the title, brother. Thus I think the narrative itself strongly points to the idea that he is conversing with his literal brothers.
- What do you make of the brothers' suggestion to Jesus? Does it remind you of any other stories in the gospels?
- I don't want to overstate the parallel, but it does remind me some of the second temptation of Christ (Matthew 4:5–7):

(5) Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, (6) And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. (7) Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

- *Do you see a connection here? Does this possible connection help us understand why the Evangelist parenthetically inserts that the brothers do not believe in Jesus?*
- I think it does help us understand in what sense the brothers do not believe. They seem to believe in his ability to do miracles (unless their suggestion is sarcastic). Thus the narrative insertion may indicate that they don't understand, completely misunderstand his Messianic role, or don't really accept his Messiahship even though they believe in his power to do miracles.

### ***D. I'm Not Going***

- *What are verses 6–10 about? Specifically, what does it mean that, "I go not up yet unto this feast for my time is not yet full come? What are the possibilities? Why does Jesus say he is not going to the feast but then in verse 10 he actually does go the feast?*

1. Well, one possibility is that Jesus is suggesting that appearing publicly now will set

things in motion too quickly and lead to his death too quickly. After all, verse 1 does mention that the leadership wants to kill him. My reservation is that it seems contradicts the rest of the narrative. Jesus does go to this feast and eventually in a very public way (37–38).

2. Maybe, Jesus is really explaining why he is not going to go to the feast and perform great miracles that will show Judaea that he is the Messiah. The true sign of his Messiah–ship has not yet come, and will only come at his death and resurrection. That is why his brothers' advice is so wrong. My reservation with this possibility is that it doesn't really explain why Jesus says the time is not right for him to go to the feast, then he does go to the feast privately, and then finally makes a very public appearance. Maybe, the implication is that he simply can't go with his brothers at this point because going with them would express acceptance of their advice.
3. Maybe, Jesus is expressing the fact that his Father has not told him yet to go to the feast. His earthly family has advised him or told him to go. In contrast, Jesus follows the command or advice of his heavenly family (specifically, his Father in Heaven). His time is not yet because he is waiting to learn the will of his Heavenly Father. Another way to translate the phrase we are discussing is,

I myself am not going up to the festival, because the right time for me has not yet fully come. [WBC]

The "right time" is when the Father wants the Son to attend. The right time is not determined by earthly concerns. Jesus is not trying to sneaky or evasive; he is waiting to learn the will or have the will of his Father revealed.

- *Are you surprised that Jesus said he wasn't going to attend given that all males are required to attend the feast? Isn't Jesus obedient to the Law?*
- I actually view this as evidence for the my third possibility above. Jesus is obedient to the will of the Father. He is waiting to learn his Father's will in the specific case. The law or requirement that all males attend the festival is clearly important, but not as important as doing the Father's will.
- *Why does Jesus say that "world cannot hate" his brothers?*
- They are the world; their advice is worldly; their understanding of him is worldly.

#### **IV. Teachings From God**

- Read John 7:14–18:

(14) Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. 15 And the Jews marveled, 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 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.

- *How are verses 16–17 an answer to the question in verse 15? Who is actually asking the question in verse 15? Is the reaction of the questioners surprising given who it is? Or does "marvel" have pejorative connotations?*
- *Do you view verse 17 as different from a scripture like Moroni 10:3–5? How is it different? How is it similar? Do you think any of this related to Brigham Young's quip that,*

*More testimonies are gained on the feet than on the knees?[3]*

- *What is verse 18 about? Why the distinction between speaking for oneself and speaking for another? Why is Jesus emphasizing motives or incentives? Do you think he is condemning the religious leadership?*

## **V. Living Water**

### ***A. The Water Drawing Rite***

- In the interest of time let's skip ahead to John 7:37–39. I view verses 37–39 as the climax of the chapter. Although, the preceding verses that we skipped are well worth studying extensively.
- I think the backdrop of the Feast of the Tabernacles is very important here. During the seven days for the festival proper the rite of the water drawing took place. George Breasley–Murray explains the rite as follows (emphasis in original):[4]

The pilgrims entered into the procedures with the greatest delight: in Sukk. 5:1 it is stated, "He who has not seen the joy of the water–drawing has not seen joy in his whole lifetime." At the break of day priests processed the water and bore it back to the temple. On approaching the watergate on the south side of the inner court the *shophar* (trumpet) was sounded three times—joyous blasts which were explicitly related to Isa 12:3, "*with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.*" The priests bearing the water then processed around the alter, watched by pilgrims, while the temple choir sang the Hallel (i.e, Pss 113–118). When the opening words of Psalm 118 were reached, "give thanks to the Lord," every man and boy shook the lulab (a bunch of willow and myrtle tied with palm) with his right hand and held aloft a citrus with his left (a sign of the harvest gathered in), and the cry "Give thanks to the Lord" was repeated three times. The same thing happened at the cry "O Lord save us!" of Ps 118:25. Since all this took place at the time of the daily offering, the water was

offered to God in connection with the daily drink offering (of wine).

- This ceremony was performed for seven days: the water was carried from the pool of siloam to the temple during each ceremony. The water was both a reminder of water that the Israelites received from the rock in the desert (Numbers 20:2–13) and a symbol of hope in the coming deliverance by the Messiah.[5]

### ***B. The Proclamation***

- Read John 7:37–39:

(37) 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.)

- *Given the backdrop of the rite of the water drawing, what is Jesus doing? What is his message to the people? How would the crowd or the people have understood his proclamation?*
- The last day referred to in verse 37 could be either the 7th or 8th day. Deut 16:13 refers to 7th day as the last, but Lev 23:34–36 counts an eighth, Sabbath day. If it is the 7th day, then a water rite has probably just been performed or maybe is being performed. The ceremony was the most elaborate on the 7th day. No rite was performed on the 8th day.[6] *Does the image change if Jesus did this on the 7th or 8th day?*
- *What is the second part of Jesus' proclamation in verses 37–38 about? Specifically, what does, "[h]e that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water?" Is the verse saying that living waters flow out of those that believe? If so, what does that mean?*
- It seems to me that the most natural reading is that we come to Christ and our thirst is quenched (we thirst no–more). The rivers of living water flow within us (from our heart) and change us as the gush within us; the living waters transform us. I think it also suggests that we become rivers of living water to others. *Do you think verse 39 is consistent with this idea?*
- *Are there any other possible readings or interpretations of verse 38?*
- Apparently, there is a lot of controversy over how to translate verses 37–38. Actually, maybe translate is not the right verb. It seems like most of the controversy is over how to punctuate the verses (remember there is no punctuation or even spaces between words in the manuscripts). Many scholars currently suggest that this proclamation by Jesus has a poetic parallel structure. For example, the NIV, ESV, NET, and others all provide two

possible translations for this verses. The first, usually in the main body of the texts, is close to what we just read in the King James Version. The second, usually in the margin notes, follows the poetic construction. The WBC translation using the poetic construction is the following:

"If anyone thirsty, let him come to me,  
and let him drink who believes in me."

As the Scripture said, "Rivers of living water will flow from his heart."

- Is this case, I think the most natural reading is that the rivers of living water flow from the heart of Jesus. Actually, maybe that is overstating things. It seems like the pronoun could refer to either the believer or Jesus in the poetic reading. So I guess, at the least, the poetic construction opens the possibility that "his heart" refers to Jesus' heart. *So which construction do you think is more likely? Is verse 39 an important key? Does verse 39 help us decide if "his heart" refers to Christ or believers?*
- I think verse 39 does suggest that "his heart" refers to the believers heart; that the believers or disciples of Christ become rivers of living water. I guess it just seems more natural to think of the Spirit gushing as a river from the heart of the believer. In other words, believers receive the living water from Christ, but it only becomes a river gushing from our heart when the disciples receive the Spirit after the death and glorification of Christ. If "his heart" refers to Christ's heart it just doesn't seem to have the same effect. If it is about the Spirit (as living water) gushing from the heart of Christ it seems like the image would be more like, the Spirit is flowing from his heart, like a River of gushing water, but the believers will not receive it until he is glorified. I think I prefer the first reading. However, I don't feel confident in proclaiming one reading over the other, but I guess I am inclined to suggest that the first seems more consistent with the parenthetical note. *What do you think?*
- However, I still like the poetic rendering of the verses. The parallel poetic construction connects Jesus' proclamation, I think, in a very cool way to another proclamation by Jesus just one chapter earlier in John 6:35:

And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life:  
he that cometh to me shall never hunger;  
and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

- The structure is not exactly the same, but it is similar. They both use parallelism to express a remarkably similar message. Thus even though I think there is a higher probability that "his" refers to believers than Christ, I actually do prefer the poetic rendering of the verses.

## Endnotes

1. Adapted from, Breasley–Murray, George R., 1988, *Word Biblical Commentary*, Word Books, 105.

2. Gaebelien, Frank E. (editor), 1981, *The Expositor's bible Commentary: John–Acts*, Regency Reference Library, 81–82.
3. I don't know the original source for this quote, but Truman G. Madsen quotes in a 1994 devotional at BYU. See Madsen, G. Truman, 1994, On How We Know , BYU Speeches.
4. Breasley–Murray, George R., 1988, *Word Biblical Commentary: John*, Word Books, 113–114.
5. Coogan, Michael D. (Editor), 2001, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, Oxford University Press, 161.
6. Breasley–Murray, George R., 1988, *Word Biblical Commentary: John*, Word Books, 114.