

“Growing Opposition”
John 7:1 – 8:11
Chris Grattan

Chapter 7 starts with the words “after this.” After the events of chapter 6, the feeding of the 5,000; Jesus walking on water to His disciples; the great discourse on Jesus being the bread of life (about eating His flesh and drinking His blood); and then many disciples turning away from Jesus and no longer following Him. . .

Verse 1 says, “After this, Jesus went around in Galilee. He did not want to go about in Judea because the Jewish leaders there were looking for a way to kill him.”

Some might look at this verse and wonder if fear kept Jesus from ministry in Judea. Jesus wasn’t afraid of what these men might do to him, He just knew His time hadn’t yet come. In Galilee, however, His teachings were well received. Recall Jesus had told His disciples when He sent them out, “If a city welcomes you, stay there, if they don’t shake the dust from your feet and move to the next town.” (Matt. 10:14) Galilee received Him, so He pursued His ministry there.

The Feast of Tabernacles was approaching. It is the most joyous of the Jewish festivals and is known as Sukkot. It’s one of the three pilgrimage festivals mentioned in the Bible and is celebrated on the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Tishrei, which usually falls in September or October. The holiday lasts for seven days (Lev. 23:33-44) and is a time for giving thanks for the harvest and for remembering the Israelites’ journey through the wilderness after leaving Egypt. During the holiday, many Jews build and dwell in temporary outdoor structures called sukkot, which are meant to remind them of the Israelites’ temporary dwellings during their wilderness journey.

Jesus’ brothers urged Him to go to Judea “so that your disciples may see the miracles you do.” Their justification is in **verse 4**: “No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world.” And then John writes, “For even His own brothers did not believe in Him.”

And Jesus replied in **verse 6**: “Therefore Jesus told them, “My time is not yet here; for you any time will do.” It wasn’t going to Jerusalem for the feast that was the problem; it was the desire of so many that He would make a public proclamation that He was the Messiah! That time would most certainly come on that first glorious Palm Sunday, the day of the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, the exact day prophesied 476 years earlier by the prophet Daniel.

One of your questions from your study this week is a reference to **Galatians 4:4-5** ⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

As glorious as the incarnation was that first Christmas, the true “fullness” was Jesus’ obedience to the cross, and that “time” was soon approaching!

Back in 2002, just a few months after my wife Barbara and I adopted our eight-month-old twin daughters from China, we lived in Pasadena, less than ½ mile from my financial office (which I still work at). We knew God wanted us to move to a city that I never heard of - Brea, CA and God opened a door for me to take a job at a Methodist church as the Family Director. I worked at that church for only about two years. Then for the next six years, I drove back and forth five days a week to Pasadena to work at the financial office. During that time, I wondered why God had me move my family to Brea to work at that church for such a short time. But then in early 2010, God opened another door for me, at a church called Friends Community Church, a church that opened its doors for the first time the exact month Barbara and I moved to Brea, November 2002. Looking back now I see that God was preparing me for eight years for the amazing job that I now have! Not my idea of timing, but certainly God’s perfect timing!

You People of the Word know something about God’s timing, don’t you? At exactly the right time, we found each other. All of us praise God for that!

Jesus went on to tell His brothers in **verse 8**: “You go to the festival. I am not going up to this festival, because my time has not yet fully come.” Many translations have Jesus saying, “I am not going yet to the festival.” Jesus certainly intended to go, but not yet, and not in the public way that His brothers wanted Him to. As the theologian Marcus Dods said, “That is to say, He went up, but not at His brothers’ instigation, nor with the publicity they had recommended.”

When Jesus arrived alone secretly, we see what was going on at the festival in **verses 11-13**. ¹¹ Now at the festival the Jewish leaders were watching for Jesus and asking, “Where is He?” ¹² Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about Him. Some said, “He is a good man.” Others replied, “No, He deceives the people.” ¹³ But no one would say anything publicly about Him for fear of the leaders.

Many people at the festival were much like Jesus’ brothers, wanting Him to publicly proclaim Who He was. Others argued that He was a “good man”, meaning someone that wanted good for the people; however, others argued the exact opposite, that He was someone that “deceives the people”, meaning desiring to corrupt them.

What’s fascinating is that both sides were afraid to speak publicly about Him because they feared man. Why are so many afraid to speak the name of Christ?

There’s a great passage from **Isaiah 42:10-12**: ¹⁰ Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise from the end of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that fills it, the coastlands and their inhabitants. ¹¹ Let the desert and its cities lift up their voice,

the villages that Kedar inhabits; let the habitants of Sela sing for joy, let them shout from the top of the mountains. ¹² Let them give glory to the Lord, and declare his praise in the coastlands.

If we are afraid to proclaim Jesus Christ in this life, He will not proclaim us to His Father! (Matt. 10:33)

Half way through the Feast, Jesus went up to the temple and began teaching. The people were amazed at His knowledge. To their question of "How does He have such learning?", Jesus replied in **verse 16**, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me." He went on to say in **verse 18**, "Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him."

Such an amazing truth that Jesus spoke right here, and one that each and every preacher and teacher should heed. If you are not speaking the Words of God, the Bible, then you are seeking your own glory and not that of God!

In the next passage, Jesus called out the hypocrisy of the religious leaders that were trying to kill Him because He healed the crippled man on the Sabbath (in chapter 5). Jesus told them in **verse 23**: Now if a boy can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing a man's whole body on the Sabbath? In essence saying, "You can wound a child on the Sabbath through circumcision, but you say I can't make a man whole?" He challenged them saying, "Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly."

They rebuked Him because of the "appearance" of breaking the Law, healing on the Sabbath, but didn't see the true heart of God which desires healing for His children.

In Matthew, Jesus spoke of the "woes" against the religious leaders. He said this: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness." (Matthew 23:23)

Why are we so quick to judge, so easily swayed by appearance? Praise God that He judges by looking into our hearts! Reverend George Morgan said, "We should ever bear in mind that that "...appearance' may be deceitful, and therefore with the love that hopeth all things, we should be ready to give men the benefit of any doubt or any uncertainty that is in our minds."

Then some people in Jerusalem started asking, "Isn't this the man they are trying to kill?" (8:25) That's interesting because in the previous passage the people were confused when Jesus spoke of those trying to kill Him. It's important to understand that there were many Jews that came from all over the known world to be

in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. Those from Jerusalem would have heard of the plans by the religious leaders to kill Jesus, so they asked the question.

Because Jesus was speaking publicly (as He always did), the people imagined that the religious leaders must believe Him since they were not arresting Him (which is so far from the truth). The religious leaders were afraid of the people, and that's why they didn't act.

In verse 27 and then in verses 40-43 we see this fascinating discussion among the people, first saying no one knows where the Messiah will come from and then acknowledging that He will come from David's descendants and from Bethlehem:

John 7:27 "But we know where this man is from; when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from."

John 7:40-43 ⁴⁰ On hearing his words, some of the people said, "Surely this man is the Prophet." ⁴¹ Others said, "He is the Messiah." Still others asked, "How can the Messiah come from Galilee? ⁴² Does not Scripture say that the Messiah will come from David's descendants and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?" ⁴³ Thus the people were divided because of Jesus."

Clearly, they were divided, "No one will know where he (the Messiah) is from," and then "the Messiah will come from David's descendants and from Bethlehem." As was often true, the people were confused by Scripture believing that the Messiah would miraculously appear based on **Malachi 3:1**:

"Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts."

We also saw the confusion when Jesus was speaking about being the Bread of Life. The people said in **John 6:42**: "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, 'I have come down from heaven?'"

But they also knew that Scripture was clear on Him being a descendent of David:

Jeremiah 23:5 "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land."

Micah 5:2 "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days."

One of my favorite passages in Scripture is **Philippians 2:5-11**: ⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

This is a beautiful picture of the Messiah, fully God, but also becoming fully man to redeem mankind! I often think about this great truth, Jesus is fully God and also fully man. It's hard to fully wrap my mind around that; hard to fully grasp. But I believe this amazing truth that the Son of God up in Heaven did humble Himself by becoming a servant, a human and then go to the cross to redeem mankind! Born, incarnate in Bethlehem, and then appearing as the Messiah when He starts His ministry!

Jesus spoke to the crowd in **verses 28-29**: ²⁸ Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, “Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own authority, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, ²⁹ but I know him because I am from him and he sent me.”

Almost sarcastically He said, “You know me and where I’m from.” But they didn’t understand His Heavenly origin! However, when He spoke of WHO sent Him, they knew what He was claiming, and they tried to seize Him. But they were unable to because His hour had not yet come!

While many didn’t believe or didn’t want to believe, we see in **verse 31** that “Many did believe in Him.” Those that believed made a great statement in **verse 31b**: “When the Messiah comes, will He perform more signs than this man?”

Jesus said to the crowd that was looking to stone Him in **John 10:37-38**: ³⁷ “Do not believe me unless I do the works of my Father. ³⁸ But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.”

Such an amazing statement from Jesus. It was as if He was saying, “You may not understand where I’m from; you may think the Messiah couldn’t come from Galilee, but the miracles that I do are very clear and certain, I am the Christ!”

If you ever question “if” Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Messiah, the Redeemer, or if your faith ever waivers, think about this:

Who did more miracles than Jesus? Who taught with more insight and authority than Jesus? Who loved more remarkably than Jesus? Who suffered with more courage than Jesus? Who raised from the dead with more triumph than Jesus? Who ascended to heaven in greater glory than Jesus? Who changed more lives than Jesus? Who has comforted more grief-stricken hearts than Jesus? Who has healed more broken hearts than Jesus? Who has restored more marriages than Jesus? Who has gained more followers than Jesus? Who is He that changed your heart!!?

The religious leaders once again tried to arrest Him this time with force, which most certainly made Him think about the "TIME" coming. Jesus said in **verses 33-34:** ³³ Jesus said, "I am with you for only a short time, and then I am going to the one who sent me. ³⁴ You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come."

These are beautiful words by Jesus. They have come to arrest Him, to take Him by force, yet in a few short months, He will freely allow them to arrest Him, and He will freely go to the cross!

It's interesting that these are the same words that Jesus spoke to His disciples in **John 13:33:** "My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come."

The huge difference is the tender words that Jesus spoke to His disciples, calling them "My Children," and then He said, "so I tell you now." They won't follow Him now as He goes to the cross, but they will eventually follow Him (as will all that believe). But those, like the Jews that don't believe, will not!

Then we come to the last words Jesus spoke during the festival. **John 7:37-39:** ³⁷ On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." ³⁹ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified."

Throughout the first seven days of the festival, water was taken from the Pool of Siloam and poured on the altar to remind the people how God miraculously provided water in the wilderness. On the eighth day, no water was poured, only prayers, because it was symbolic of being in the Promised Land.

Here Jesus spoke with a loud voice to "anyone who is thirsty." Calling people to Himself to drink and satisfy their deepest thirst – their spiritual thirst! For those that come to Him and drink, for those that come believing, the Holy Spirit will be poured out into their hearts!

After some continued discussion by the people about Who Jesus was and is, the temple guards returned to the chief priests and Pharisees and were asked, "Why didn't you bring Him in?" The guards replied, "No one ever spoke the way this man does." The guards would have heard many rabbis teach, but they had never heard someone speak with such power and authority as Jesus. The pride of the religious leaders is so very clear as they dismissed the guards.

As chapter seven closes, we see Nicodemus (who we are told was a follower of Christ), challenge the religious leaders, saying in **verse 51**: "Does our law condemn a man without first hearing him to find out what he has been doing?"

They rebuked Nicodemus and showed their disgust for those from Galilee by saying, "Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee." Either they didn't care, or didn't know, that the prophet Jonah (a picture of Christ) came from Gath Hepher, which was three miles north of Nazareth in Galilee!

Most Bibles have a footnote that chapter eight, verses 1-11, are not in many early and reliable manuscripts. Some scholars do not even think it is a genuine part of the Gospel of John. However, it has been preserved in Scripture and we do well to pay attention to its teaching.

As Jesus so often did, He left the city and spent the night at the Mount of Olives and the next day returned to the temple courts to teach the people. The Pharisees sought to try and trap Jesus by presenting a woman caught in the act of adultery:

John 8:3-5: ³ The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴ and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?"

This prearranged plan was very intentional to catch this woman, but didn't bring the man that was "caught" with her. And the witnesses must have known the act of adultery was going to take place and would have had to agree exactly what they saw take place. As the Theologian James Boice said, "Under these conditions (required by the Law) the obtaining of evidence in adultery would be almost impossible were the situation not a setup."

Jesus doesn't answer their question. Instead, He bent or stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger. We see this beautiful picture of Jesus stooping down, placing His posture in the same position as the woman's. He will address the sin, but first He identified with her in her low position!

What Jesus wrote we do not know, but after more questioning by the teachers of the law, Jesus straightened up and said: **John 8:7b** "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Jesus exposed a common sin: a desire to punish the sins of others, while ignoring our own sin.

We read the account in 2 Samuel 12 where King David is approached by the prophet Nathan who confronted him regarding his sin with Bathsheba. Nathan related to David a story about a rich man who takes an ewe lamb from a very poor man to feed a traveler, rather than taking one of the many lambs the rich man had. David burned with anger and said the rich man must pay! Nathan replied to David, "You are the man!" When confronted with this truth in **2 Samuel 12:13**, David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord."

Those who accused the woman seemed to understand they too had sinned. They were convicted and left in order of oldest to youngest probably because the older men understood their sin more fully. They left Jesus with the woman. We see our study conclude with these two wonderful verses:

John 8:10-11: ¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" ¹¹ "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

Through these powerful words by Jesus, we see that:

- He recognized what the woman had done was sin, because He told her to stop sinning.
- He told her to repent, and to not continue her sin.
- He gave her hope that her life could go on in freedom from sexual sin.
- He gave her a word of hope to speak against the shame that later would likely threaten to overwhelm her life.

Jesus knew the thoughts and intents of the heart. He knew it about His brothers; about the crowds at the festival; about the Pharisees' plans; and about both the accusing men and the woman being accused. As Jesus ministered to people, He brought truth and hope. He continues to do that for us today. **Hebrews 6:19:** "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure."

Let's pray!