

"Growing Opposition"
John 7:1 – 8:11
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It's autumn – late September to mid-October - 5 days after the Day of Atonement. Between Chapters 5 & 6 we skipped 1 year. Now between Chapters 6 & 7, we're skipping ahead to the final 6 months of Jesus' ministry. What did we miss in the last 6 months?

The Goodness of God

- The Canaanite woman's daughter is healed of demon possession and another demon-possessed boy is healed
- Jesus feeds the 4,000
- He heals a deaf and mute man
- He heals a blind man at Bethsaida

The Glory of God

- The transfiguration

And finally – and the reason for the growing opposition....

The Gwarnings of God (sorry I couldn't think of a word that begins with "G" that meant warning)

- He points out it's not what *goes into* the mouth that defiles us, it's what *comes out* of our mouths
- He warns the disciples against the "yeast" of the Pharisees and the Sadducees – their teaching
- He talks about cutting off our hands and gouging out our eyes if they cause us to stumble
- He speaks of dealing with sin in the church
- He explains the way of the cross and how we're to pick ours up daily
- He predicts His death

John 7:2 tells that the Feast of the Tabernacles was near. There were three feasts which every male Jew was required to attend in Jerusalem –the Feasts of the Passover, Tabernacles, and Pentecost. It's the seventh and final feast given by the Lord. Known as Sukkot – or Tabernacles – taken from the Latin *tabernaculum* meaning "booth" or "hut". It was meant to be an annual reminder of God's provision during the forty-years in the wilderness when Israel had lived in similar shelters. The feast was to celebrate God's *past* goodness and provision during their wilderness sojourn, and it commemorated God's *present* goodness and provision with the completion of the harvest. The Feast of Tabernacles is also known as the Feast of Ingathering – it was observed after all crops had been harvested and gathered. It lasted for 7 days. The first day and the day

after Tabernacles (the 8th day) are considered sacred assemblies, or sabbaths. Therefore, no work is to be done on these days.

It's the most joyful and festive of all Israel's feasts – Jon Courson calls it the "The Jewish Equivalent to Family Camp." Finally, it's known as one of the pilgrim feasts because of the required pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

Deuteronomy 16:16: "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover), at the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost), and at the Feast of Tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed." During the week, people were to bring tithes and offerings to the Temple.

In verses 3-5 we're introduced to Jesus' half-brothers: James, Joses, Simon, and Judas. James wrote the Book of James and Judas is believed to be the author of the Book of Jude. At this point, they don't believe in Him and are giving Him useless advice. They're basically saying, "If you've got all this power, show it off!" Jesus' response is in John 7:6-8, "Therefore Jesus told them, "My time is not yet here; for you any time will do. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that its works are evil. You go to the festival. I am not going up to this festival, because my time has not yet fully come."

Jesus is on a set course on a set timeline – and He's not going to let His unbelieving brothers throw Him off. When He speaks of His time not yet fully come, He means His appointment at the Cross. For those of you who were here last year, you may remember I showed how Old Testament Scripture actually points to the **very day** Jesus was to enter Jerusalem as the Messiah. He knows when His time is to come, and He's not wavering. His obedience to the Father's plan will bring the fullness of His revelation. So, He tells His brothers to go on ahead

John 7:11-13: Now at the festival the Jewish leaders were watching for Jesus and asking, "Where is he?" Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, "He is a good man." Others replied, "No, he deceives the people." But no one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the leaders.

Now remember, we're 2 1/2 years into His ministry. He's been healing people, feeding people, and providing amazing teaching. He understandably has a lot of people's attention – yet listen to some of their comments – "He deceives the people." Who do you think is accusing Him of this? The people who were healed? The people who were fed? No – it was the leaders whose positions were threatened by the attention Jesus was getting. The only way they could accuse Him was to call Him a deceiver. Verse 13 confirms this – the people were afraid

of speaking out of Who He might be for fear of the response of the alleged religious leaders.

So, we're half-way into the Feast of the Tabernacles, and Jesus comes up to the Temple (being obedient to Deuteronomy 16:16) and begins to teach. The first time Jesus went to Jerusalem, He cleansed the temple (John 2:13-16). This time, He's teaching in the Temple. Before Jesus can impart His Word effectively to us, there must first be a cleansing. The Jews are blown away at His teaching and ask, "How did this man get such learning without having been taught?" Jesus replies in verses 16 & 17, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me. Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own."

They asked where He got His teaching, and Jesus answered – from the Father. This won't be the last time Jesus will tell us He was "sent" by the Father. He goes on to challenge them to test His teaching – **but** in order for them to do this, they're going to have to *choose* to do the will of God. Jesus turns up the heat to emphasize the importance of giving glory to God for His Word in John 7:18, "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."

He's telling them there's nothing false about Him because He's seeking the glory of the Father. He's building His case about the unity He has with the Father. He's beginning to show them He's God.

John 7:19, 21-23, "Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?" Jesus said to them, "I did one miracle, and you are all amazed. Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a boy on the Sabbath. 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?"

Jesus is really getting in their faces. He calls them hypocrites for wanting to kill Him for allegedly not obeying the Law, but He points out what is true for all of us – none of them have obeyed the Law. He then digs into their hearts – what is more important, healing a man – even on the Sabbath – or being obedient to the Law? The Law is not what is going to get them to God. The Law is meant to make them realize they need God to get to them. He makes His point by reminding them they break the Sabbath to *hurt* someone – a circumcision. He *healed* someone!

Jesus makes His final point in this exchange when He says in John 7:24, "Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly." Anyone here guilty of judging by appearances? Our homework rightly referenced 1 Samuel 16:7 which tells us God doesn't look at the outward appearances but looks at the heart. We can see Jesus pointing out this very thing in this section of Scripture.

The questions keep coming about Jesus. "Isn't this the man they are trying to kill? Here he is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying a word to him. Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Messiah?" Then they make a curious statement in John 7:27, "But we know where this man is from; when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from." They think Jesus is from Nazareth, but they say they won't know where the Messiah may come from. This is probably because of what is said in Isaiah 53:8b, "He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation?"

Jesus then makes His boldest statement yet to the people who He is in John 7:28-29, "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, but I know him because I am from him and he sent me." He again tells them He has been sent by the Father but also tells them He came from the Father and invokes God's name, "I am". This really sets them off and they wanted to take Him – but it was not yet His time.

Again, the Pharisees and the Sadducees hear the crowd saying Jesus might be the Messiah, so they send officers to take Him. Jesus then offers this spiritual "hide and seek" statement in John 7:33-34, "I am with you for only a short time, and then I am going to the one who sent me. You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come." The Jewish leaders can't figure this Jesus out – 'where's he going that we can't go'?

Why can't they go where Jesus is going? For the same reason today millions of people will not go to heaven – their unbelief in who Jesus is. Jesus will tell us in verse 6 of Chapter 14 that the only way to get where He's going is to first go through Him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

It's now the day after the Feast of Tabernacles (the 8th day) which was considered a Sabbath, when Jesus returned from the Mount of Olives to teach in the Temple. A little more on the Feast of the Tabernacles – again, it was a seven-day celebration and offering of sacrifices – with the final day pouring out water in the temple to remind them of the time God gave them water from the Rock while they were in the wilderness. This marks the beginning of the rainy season. Each morning of Tabernacles, a water libation (sacrificial pouring out of a liquid) was offered to the Lord as a visual prayer for rain.

The high priest was accompanied by a joyous procession of music and worshipers down to the Pool of Siloam. He would carry a golden pitcher capable of holding a little more than a quart of water. He would get the water and bring it back to the Temple Mount. He would re-enter the Temple at the southern gate – known as the “Water Gate” because of this ceremony. As he entered, three blasts of the silver trumpets sounded from the Temple and the priests within one voice repeated the words of Isaiah, “Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” (Isaiah 12:3) Siloam means “Sent One” – just as Messiah would be the Sent One who would pour out His Spirit upon a thirsty people.

Now some of you might remember that last year I was able to dig up a rare picture of Job’s three “friends” – baring a striking resemblance to the Three Stooges. Well, once again, after extensive research, I have uncovered another rare photo – this time of the High Priest at the Water Gate:



The celebration of the water pouring (as opposed to the ceremony) was observed during the evenings of the feast by an impressive light ceremony in the Temple. It was to be symbolic of God leading the Nation of Israel through the wilderness with a pillar of fire by night. The light celebration was also reminiscent of the descent of the Shekinah glory in Solomon’s day and looked forward to the return of the Shekinah in the days of the Messiah (Ezekiel 43:1-6).

On the last day of the feast, the priests returned from the pool of Siloam with empty pitchers as an illustration of their need for One to satisfy the thirst of their hearts. Jesus is that One and He cries out in John 7:37-38, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” 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.

Ancient Jewish theology connected the water-drawing ceremony with the Holy Spirit. We often think of the Holy Spirit as being a new arrival of the third person of the Trinity in the New Testament. The facts are, though, the Holy Spirit was promised several times in the Old Testament.

Isaiah 44:3: "For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, and My blessing on your offspring;" (NKJV)

Isaiah 59:21: "As for me, this is my covenant with them," says the LORD. "My Spirit, who is on you, will not depart from you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will always be on your lips, on the lips of your children and on the lips of their descendants—from this time on and forever," says the LORD."

Ezekiel 11:19: "I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh."

Ezekiel 36:27: "And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws."

Ezekiel 39:39: "I will no longer hide my face from them, for I will pour out my Spirit on the people of Israel, declares the Sovereign LORD."

Joel 2:28-29: "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days."

Do you hear God's desire to pour out His Spirit on His people? Let me ask you a question. What do you seek to satisfy your thirst? What are you looking for? Healing? Forgiveness? Peace? Compassion? Protection? Wisdom? Love? All of that is available to you if you will simply drink from Jesus – rivers of living water will flow over you and through you fully satisfying every thirst you'll ever have.

Now they're suggesting He's the Prophet or the Christ. But they then get hung up on something that they shouldn't have in John 7:41-42, "Still others asked, "How can the Messiah come from Galilee? Does not Scripture say that the Messiah will come from David's descendants and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?" They were confused about who He was because they didn't take the time to get to know Him. Are you confused at all about who Jesus is? Take the time to get to know Him. He wants you to know Him, but you have to take the time.

We then get to one of the key verses in today's reading regarding our lesson topic in John 7:43, "Thus the people were divided because of Jesus." We often think of Jesus as being this loving God Who seeks to unify people in His desire to reconcile people to the Father. In reality, though, He is doing something very different. He says in Matthew 10:34, "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." Does Jesus want everyone to repent and believe in Him? Absolutely. However, He knows not everyone will, and He's not afraid to distinguish those who will and those who won't. You simply can't remain neutral on the subject of Jesus. He won't allow it.

We're reintroduced to Nicodemus in verses 50 and 51, "Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier, and who was one of their own number, asked, "Does our law condemn a man without first hearing him to find out what he has been doing?" If you recall, Nicodemus, a Pharisee, approached Jesus in the night and learns about being born again. Here in these verses, we see Nicodemus beginning to emerge from the night – his darkness – and venturing into daylight by suggesting they hear Him out before seizing Him. We'll find out when we get to the 19th chapter when Nicodemus will see the Light – when he finds Jesus at the Cross. That's where we should lead all people who are struggling with their unbelief. The Cross is where all the defenses fall down – all the pride – all the misconceptions about God.

These alleged experts of the Scriptures then offer a bonehead statement in John 7:52, "They replied, "Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee." Apparently, they hadn't read 2 Kings 14:25 too closely which tells – a prophet does come out of Galilee – Jonah.

Now in the 8th chapter, we find Jesus teaching in the temple. The Scribes and Pharisees barge into His teaching with a woman caught in the act of adultery. They try to trip up Jesus by telling Him the Law says she should be stoned. So, if He agrees, His message of compassion and forgiveness is lost. If He disagrees, He will be contradicting the Law – giving them a legitimate accusation against Him. One question – where was the man? The fact that the man was not brought in with the woman proved they had no interest in enforcing the Law. They didn't want to stone the woman – they wanted to trick Him and then stone *Him*.

Jesus ignores their game and starts to write in the dirt. When pressed, He turns the table on their trick and says in John 8:7b, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." He then stoops down and keeps writing in the dirt. What do you think He was writing? Jeremiah 17:13 offers a clue, "LORD, you are the hope of Israel; all who forsake you will be put to shame. Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust because they have

forsaken the LORD, the spring of living water. Many Bible scholars suggest He was writing the sins of each of the men ready to throw their stones.

They would eventually all leave and Jesus asks in John 8:10, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She responds, "No one, sir." Other translations say she called Him 'Lord'. Jesus then makes this awesome statement followed by a wise command in John 8:11, "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." The woman didn't need to be condemned – she needed to be saved.

As I conclude, I want us to think about the topic of today's lesson and ask the question, 'Why oppose Jesus?' What is it about Jesus that causes opposition to Him? Well, He tells us in today's reading "The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that its works are evil."

Jesus told the truth – the works of the world are evil. But if He's telling the truth, why is it opposed? Because there are people who don't want to believe the truth. They don't want to believe that they're inherently evil. That makes them feel uncomfortable. They prefer the lie that they're good people because that is what makes them feel better. That is why the truth hurts. It confronts a personal preference, viewpoint, or even belief that is actually a lie.

Does the truth ever *not* hurt? Yes – if you are living in the truth, then it doesn't hurt. The greatest example of the truth hurting is Jesus Himself. The people who felt uncomfortable with Jesus were the ones whose personal livelihoods were being challenged. In other words, they were living a lie, and they were angry that the Truth was revealing it. In order to protect the lie, they tried to kill the Truth. The good news is they failed. The Truth triumphed over the lie and lives. It was painful for God, but He knew we needed to know His Truth. As we continue through this Gospel, we all know the opposition to Jesus is going to grow until it crescendos at the Cross. Are you feeling the opposition from the enemy as you walk with the Lord? He knows. He understands. Let's meet Him at the cross right now and pray.