

# Notes on John 7

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**Introduction** One personal reason for teaching the Gospel of John is my desire to see the unfamiliar parts of this Gospel receive the attention they deserve. Many believers know of events and statements in the previous chapters but hardly know anything in chapter 7, yet it contains material about Christ not found in other Scriptures.

Both John 7 & 8 are tied to the **Feast of Tabernacles**. This is the last OT feast prior to the Passover of the following spring, during which Jesus was crucified. Both water and light were associated with Tabernacles, and the Lord ties both of them to Himself. In 7:37,38, those at the feast were invited to Christ, the Giver of the water of life in answer to their thirst, and as the Light of the World, Jesus is the alternative to walking in darkness (8:12). According to Numbers 29:7-39 drink offerings were part of the celebration of that feast. It was a time when Israel, by living in booths for a week, would remember living in tents in the wilderness after they were freed from Egypt (Leviticus 23:33-43). In the desert they had no gardens or crops and no harvests. The Feast of Tabernacles reminded them of the rich provision of God Who had brought them out of the barren desert into a good land.

The time of Jesus' death of Christ was getting close. No Gospel follows that plot as closely as this one. The desire to kill Him came early (5:18). Here in chapter 7 it intensifies (and continues in chapter 8).

- v. 1: the Jews there [Judea] were waiting to take his life.
- v.11: the Jews were watching for him and asking, "Where is that man?"
- v.19: Why are you trying to kill me?
- v.20: Who is trying to kill you?
- v.25: Isn't this the man they are trying to kill?
- v.30: At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his time had not yet come.
- v.32: Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest him.
- v.44: Some wanted to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him.
- v.45: Why didn't you bring him in?

**The Priority of the Message** The Apostle John gives reasons to believe. Often he pointed to miraculous signs to convince his readers that Jesus must be the Christ, the Son of God. John 7 *refers* to miracles (in verses 3,4,21,23,31&32) but does not report any; rather, it emphasizes His words and His speaking. It is simply false to think that only miracles were convincing, or that they were God's chief means to bring people to faith. John 5 adds to miracles the testimony of John the Baptist and the Scriptures. Most people who observed miracles did not believe (12:37) or had a shallow faith (12:42,43). If only miracles caught people's attention while what Jesus said was ignored, then such signs simply made people more guilty (9:39-41). In this chapter Jesus' ability to speak and His great learning amazed His opponents. It was His words that convinced some of the people that He was the promised Prophet and others that He was the Christ (7:40,41). It was His teaching that made the temple guards fearful of arresting Him (7:46). Nicodemus argued that his colleagues should hear Him (7:51). John wanted his readers to hear Nicodemus make that point, so that they too would pay attention to the words of Christ. Jesus' unbelieving brothers wanted Him to perform more miracles, but when Jesus arrived in Jerusalem He simply began to teach. That teaching had come from the Father (7:16-18). His fame as a teacher was such that when He spoke of leaving for His Father's Presence, some thought He merely intended to teach elsewhere, perhaps among the Greeks. The highlight of chapter 7 is Jesus' message that He is the One Who gives eternal life. In John 7 it is His speaking that receives the most attention. John 7 is explained by Matthew 7, "... *The crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law,*" (Matthew 7:28,29).

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**7:1** There was good reason for the Lord to stay in Galilee and avoid Judea. The leaders in Jerusalem were looking for a way to kill Jesus. Except for a brief visit to a remote region in 10:40-42, this Gospel gives no report after John 7 of Jesus in Galilee again. Two months after Tabernacles in the winter Feast of Dedication (see 10:22) Jesus was still in Jerusalem, the place of danger!

**7:2-5** Jesus' brothers knew that many disciples had left Jesus (6:66). They knew that crowds would gather in Jerusalem for the major feast. Their worldly advice was to go there in order to make a show of His spectacular powers and thereby build up His following again. They were giving advice from their corrupt wisdom to the Son of God, not knowing Who He was, or how God works, or what Christ was on earth to accomplish. Their advice indicates that they thought Jesus was failing in what He was doing. His brothers did not view themselves as His followers. At times they thought He was crazy! (Mark 3:21). They did not believe in Him, though they obviously knew of His miracles. He did not accept their advice. His sheep know His counsel and follow Him (10:4,5). His church does not accept the advice of the world. God does not need our advice (Romans 11:33-36).

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Mary had no other children than Jesus, because she was a virgin all her married life. Such abstinence would not only be unnatural, it would be a sinful violation of the apostolic teaching of 1 Corinthians 7:2-5. Married people should not abstain from sexual union. John 7 says that Jesus had brothers, and Mark 3:31-35 agrees, therefore we do not accept the strange doctrine of *the perpetual virginity of Mary*. We believe that Joseph did not "know" Mary his wife until after she had given birth to Jesus, and then he did (Matthew 1:25).

**7:6-9** The Lord responded to His brothers' advice by treating it as the worldly wisdom that it was. (See Paul on *worldly wisdom* in 1 Corinthians 1:17 – 2:5). God had a time only six months away to display His power in unparalleled glory. The *time* of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection was the greatest display of God's glory. His brothers understood neither God's time or God's ways. When Jesus said the right time for Him had not yet come for the ultimate event in Jerusalem, they did not know by what means He would be glorified (12:30-33). Nor did they see that the cross would gain Him far more disciples than they had in mind when they were giving Him their worldly advice. As the Lamb of God to take away sin (1:29), Christ our Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7) would die on schedule at the right time, at Passover not Tabernacles. Tabernacles was a harvest feast, but in order to have the great harvest gathering of God's people, first they had to be purchased by the blood of the Jesus' Passover sacrifice. The thinking of Jesus' brothers was compatible with the world's wisdom, and thus the brothers were acceptable to it. The world cannot hate its own. Jesus was an offense to the world and its wisdom. As a unified rebellion against God, the world rejected Christ and His ways. The Lord will elaborate on the world's hatred, with His disciples in 15:18-25 and 17:14.

**7:10,11** Some think the Lord spoke to deceive His brothers by saying He would not go and then later He went secretly, contrary to what He had said. This cannot be the case (Titus 1:2). Some ancient Greek texts have the word *yet*, so that we read "I am not yet going up to this Feast." Scribes may have added *yet* to resolve what appeared to be a moral inconsistency. I think the Lord was simply saying that He would not go up to the Feast when and as His brothers had suggested. The emphasis on time was that for Him the right time had not come for the "showdown" in Jerusalem – the time for judgment on the world and the defeat of Satan (12:31). That time had not come in John 7 so Jesus was not going up to Tabernacles in the very public way He entered Jerusalem the week of His death (12:12). In John 7 Jesus did not enter in a predictable way – perhaps by traveling among a group known to be from Galilee. His entrance the following year was public and dramatic. In John 11 the Sanhedrin had voted to kill Him (11:46-53) and they made their intentions public (11:57). Anyone watching for Jesus at that feast would have no trouble knowing when He was entering Jerusalem – surrounded by crowds crying Hosanna! By contrast, in John 7 the right time for going to Jerusalem secretly was the middle of the feast! (7:14).

**7:12,13** John reports different opinions of Jesus. Some even speak well of Him without true faith in Him. Nicodemus began his visit by expressing his personal view that Jesus had come from God (3:2). That is a high appraisal, but we are not saved by holding good appraisals of Christ. Here in v.12 some said He was a good man, or in vv.40,41, the Prophet (also in 9:17; 4:19 and 6:14) and even the Christ! Others viewed Him as a deceiver, a madman (10:20), a Samaritan (8:48), a blasphemer (10:33) or demon possessed (7:20; 10:19-21). The charge that Jesus worked in the power of the devil is reported in the Synoptics even more than in this Gospel (Matthew 12:22-32).

People were under pressure either not to speak of Him or not to make conclusions contrary to what the authorities promoted. Here in v.13, they did not want anyone even to speak of Him. They wanted Him ignored. (This is very much like our time in history.) In John 9:22, people were forced to agree with the leaders' denials of Christ. Today to be considered a genuine Jew by the Jewish community, one must not confess Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah. To be a good Muslim, one must likewise deny that Jesus is the Son of God. John 7 prepares us to expect this kind of persecution. (See also Matthew 10:17-42.)

**7:14,15** When Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, He went to teach in the temple courts. The leaders were surprised that He knew, could quote and explain the Scriptures with the learning and ability of a well-trained teacher. (The Synoptics have many instances of Jesus quoting the Scriptures.) The Lord had never attended any of their schools; they did not teach Him. How then could He speak as He did? The answer to this is twofold: 1) God was the source of the teaching. That is what gives us certainty in truth. John does not report that as a man Jesus did study! 2) As a boy twelve years old, Jesus was learning and seeking knowledge (Luke 2:41-50). Isaiah foretold that the Servant of the Lord would be taught by the Lord during His time on earth (Isaiah 50:4,5). We should be shocked to see the level of ignorance among those with the most learning. They wondered how God could know anything if He had not attended their school! Our time is similar: great scientific and technical learning is combined with great ignorance but does not know it.

### **7:16-19 The Lord's brief explanation and appeal:**

1. The source of what He taught was God. Jesus often referred to His Father as "the One Who sent Me". That not only keeps the authority issue clear, it shows He conveyed truth from God; He did not make it up on His own. John 12:44-50 gives the source, the importance, the urgency and the appeal of Jesus' words. The religious leaders appealed to the tradition of earlier rabbis; Jesus appealed to His Father (Matthew 7:28,29).
2. The way to find out if Christ's words are true. Jesus did not just show up on earth declaring Himself to be the Son of God. Other parts of this Gospel (5:31-47; 8:14-18; 14:10,11) address objective testimony. Here the Lord brings up our subjective submission to truth. He tells of man's duty and obligation. The point is not whether a person would like to have his curiosity satisfied. The issue is not academic but moral. It is whether a person will submit to God as God. In that way we can find out!
3. The duty demanded has a reward promised. The person who will discover the truth is the one who chooses to do God's will. This is a guarantee. No one can seek the Lord sincerely and not find Him (Isaiah 55:6; Jeremiah 29:13).
4. An analysis of false teachers. Whoever speaks on his own creates his own message. To that teacher, his opinion is truth; the following is his, and he is honored by those who agree. His motive is selfish.
5. The motivation of a true teacher with Christ as the supreme example. The opposite of how the false teacher works is to give a message that is neither invented nor adjusted by the one carrying that message. Nothing he does is intended to suit either the messenger or hearer, but the sender. This was the case with Christ in a consistent way. His message is trustworthy, given not to please Himself (Romans 15:3) but the Father. The unselfish motive of this Messenger should be a comfort to all who wonder if it is safe to believe Him. In this kind of service, the Lord Jesus is the supreme model for all His servants.
6. Disobeying the law they had. Jesus pointed out those who had the law prohibiting murder were hoping to kill Him in violation of that law. Anyone committed to a policy of sin, does not obey and so disqualifies himself from the benefit promised in 7:17.

**7:20** One way to maintain sin is to deny it. It was well-known among some that Jesus was the man they were trying to kill! (7:25). For the insult, see Appendix 7A below.

**7:21-24** The Apostle John traces the desire of the Jewish leadership to kill Jesus. 5:18 is the first mention, and that was in reaction to Jesus' claim of being God and also to a healing on the Sabbath. That had happened a year or more earlier than what we read in John 7. They had judged Jesus worthy of death as a Sabbath-breaking blasphemer (5:16-18). Here Jesus refers back to that miracle at the Pool of Bethesda, which produced such a reaction. What had He done wrong that Sabbath day?

The Lord pointed out that the Jews were scrupulous to perform a circumcision on a child who was eight days old (Genesis 17:9-13; 21:4). This was required long before the law was given through Moses. If the baby boy was born on a Sabbath, the *eight days* later would be the next Sabbath. The Jews would keep this regulation and circumcise even on that holy day. So to keep the law, they would in a sense cut the baby in two by removing the foreskin! They were not doing wrong or breaking the Sabbath by obeying a command of the Lord on that day. What Jesus did was in a sense the opposite. They would hurt and He would heal! He put a man back together. The invalid had been unable to walk for 38 years, and the Lord made him whole or physically complete. Those who circumcised did no wrong, but He Who healed had done no wrong either. In fact His act was much more beneficial.

**Their Judgment of Christ** In thoughtless judgment Jesus' enemies concluded that activities of mercy were not appropriate on the Sabbath. As a day *made for man* (Mark 2:27,28), it was designed to be for human benefit, not a burden. It was as if they reasoned: You cannot do a kindness on the Sabbath; Jesus did, therefore He was a sinner (9:24)! The Lord said they were judging by mere appearances, because their condemnation overlooked God's provision of that holy day. They had turned the Sabbath into bondage. Christ was being gracious to the man at the Pool of Bethesda, but they thought it was evil! The grace of God embarrasses the legalist! When God saves by pure grace, some will oppose it in principle, sometimes suggesting it is a license to sin. In this way they judge *by mere appearances* against the glory of the gospel. God is always in the wrong if He does not abide by their notions. The wages of breaking God's law is death. Their judgment was that if God the Son did not live by their ideas then He deserved death. When their opportunity eventually came, they carried out their harsh judgment.

**7:25-27** While the desire to kill Jesus was fervent, the leaders did not have ideal circumstances to do it. A number of people thought Jesus was a genuine prophet (Matthew 21:11). The next year, the plotters did not want to arrest Jesus and execute Him during the Feast (Mark 14:2). Perhaps they feared that quite a few from Galilee who would be in Jerusalem for Passover would be His supporters. So John 7 shows Jesus teaching in public, in sight of those seeking His life. This puzzled the people. Some surmised that the religious leaders were wondering if Jesus really was the Christ. Perhaps that was why they did not implement their wishes, when Jesus was in public view. The intention to put Jesus to death was probably not known to pilgrims entering Jerusalem for the feast, but it was certainly known among residents of Jerusalem.

John often reported conversations about Jesus among the people. One popular notion was that Messiah would appear from an unknown place. There is absolutely no Scripture that suggests that; in fact, it teaches the opposite. But religious opinions do not need Scripture to exist, even when a specific prophecy would correct them. Error does not need Scriptural support to be believed. See 7:41,42 & 52 for where the Messiah would come from. I suspect that the people heard many times, "*When the Christ comes, no one will know where he is from.*" This is folklore religion; and this kind of thinking (heard early and often), may seem to be harmless, yet it was resistance to truth. Identifying the Messiah affected their eternal welfare; they could glibly dismiss the only Savior as not the real one, because of the prevalent ignorance about the origin of the Christ.

**7:28,29** Just as there were two kinds of birth in John 3, two kinds of food and water in John 4, two kinds of bread in John 6, here there are two origins of Jesus being discussed. With irony Jesus said something like this, "Oh sure, you know where I am from," but they did not know He was from above (3:31). In Galilee they could say they knew His father and mother (John 6:41,42), but knowing His human origin is not the same as knowing that the Eternal "*Word was became flesh and made His dwelling among us,*" (1:1,2,14). Their assurance of knowing a little about His life on earth became a terrible assumption that they knew all that mattered. The Lord reminded them (yet again) that He was not here on His own, that He was sent, that they knew neither Him nor the Father Who sent Him, and that that One is real and true. The power of His words and miracles should have made them careful to consider His claims. On the same day, Jesus claimed that His teaching (v.16) and His mission (v.28) were at the Father's initiative.

**7:30-32** Two things in 5:18 brought the anger of the Jewish religious leaders on Him: His activity on the Sabbath and His claim to equality with God. Here in John 7, His words again indicated His former life in heaven with God. He did not claim to be another of God's many prophets, but One Who came from the presence of God. This infuriated His enemies. He had said this sort of thing openly and often, even in the courts of God's holy temple. The hatred was there, but God is in control of the anger of men. They were not allowed to take Him away to judgment and death until Passover a little while later (v.33). All attempts to arrest Him failed till the time God had ordained.

The opposite of murder would be to believe in Him. The murder and the faith were simultaneous. God has clearly chosen to accomplish and complete His redemptive work in the presence of much evil and rejection. Those who pioneer in the face of great difficulty will find that faith appears in the context of vigorous rejection. If this Gospel was written for Jews of a later generation to read, they would know that the Jewish leadership admitted Jesus' miracles. It would be foolish to deny what multitudes of witnesses had seen. The miracles were a reason for faith when Jesus was on earth, and these were still a reason for faith after He left. By reporting popular conversation, the apostle pursued his evangelistic goal. The question, "*When the Christ comes, will he do more miraculous signs than this man?*" was, and still is a forceful question. It also shows how foolish it was to ask for one more miracle (as in 6:30) when it was common knowledge that Jesus had done so many.

The Pharisees hated it when they knew that people concluded He must be the Messiah. The people's question was one the Pharisees could not answer. Their efforts to kept attention away from Christ was a great failure as well. The leaders feared losing the support of the people, so they felt the need to have Jesus arrested immediately. This became yet another failure in their attempts to stop His influence. The chief priests (who were Sadducees) controlled the temple, so to have the temple police involved would require their cooperation.

**7:33,34** "Looking for Jesus" was a matter of great frustration for His opponents. They saw Him teach in a very public way. Yet their kind of looking was so that they could seize Him and put an end to His ministry. They wanted Him removed. Jesus turned this into another kind of looking. Soon His work on earth would be finished; they would look for Him then and never find Him. Worse for them, was that He would go where they could never go. With those words Jesus referred to a time only months away when they would see Him no more. He would ascend into heaven and be seated at the right hand of God. Everyone who rejects Christ should hear His words, "Where I am, you cannot come!" That was a chilling reminder that only hell awaits those who dare to reject Him. Later Jesus assured His disciples that "*where I am*" was the place they will join Him (14:3), and they would see His glory forever (17:24).

**7:35-36** His enemies can think only in terms of their own experience. They reason that He must be going to some other location on earth. That He had come *down from heaven* (6:58) was unthinkable to them. And to them His return to heaven would be just as ridiculous (note also 6:62). So they wonder if Jesus will go to teach in Gentile regions farther from Judea. They wondered if He would teach the Greeks. Of course through His disciples this IS what He eventually did in the later spread of the gospel – yet another irony in this Gospel. They heard His words but not His meaning. They did not believe and they did not know how lost they were.

**7:37-39** Here is the most famous statement found in John 7. Both the Lord's standing up to speak and His crying out showed His emotion. In pain He was calling His people to faith in Him again. I suggest that the reason for the strong emotion was the persistent pattern of unbelief towards Him shown in the preceding verses. When He spoke of His return to the Father, they took it to mean He might go somewhere else to teach Greeks (v. 35). They could not believe He was the One from heaven He claimed to be (v.16). His brothers did not believe; before He left Galilee they had proposed that He follow a worldly strategy (vv.2-5). The leaders were unable to explain His ability to teach (v.15), but they still sought to suppress any discussion of the claims of Christ among the people (vv.13,32), and made rash judgments about Him (vv.21-24). They even had plans to kill Him (vv.1,19,25). All of this comes from unbelief. The plain gospel truth is that all hope of eternal life comes only through the One they were so resolutely rejecting. This was a great grief to the Lord Jesus.

The last day of the Feast of Tabernacles had come. This feast celebrated God's great provision for them in the past, when God had preserved their lives in bleak conditions. Among them stood One they did not know (1:26), the One Who was God's great provision (3:16) for eternal life. During Tabernacles they remembered the time when Rock had supplied water for their fathers in the desert. Jesus of Nazareth was that Rock Who had traveled with them (1 Corinthians 10:3-5). In John 7 as the Lord God of Israel personally taught in their temple courts, the passion of their leaders was to murder Him.

The gospel was given in terms of coming to drink of Christ. Coming and drinking are simple analogies for faith. The Israelites in the desert could not make their own water, and neither can we. They did not even find their own water. God provided for them bread from heaven (6:31-33) and water from the rock (Exodus 17:6; Numbers 20:8; Deuteronomy 8:15). Jesus remains God's ultimate bread from heaven for salvation, which was their greatest need. He is the Rock of salvation. (Note how Psalm 18 joins God as Rock and Savior). He satisfies thirst (just as in 4:13,14), and He gives the Spirit Who produces abundant life within (10:10). In a different analogy with the same truth, Christ the True Vine is the source a fruitful life (15:8).

The gospel to Jew and Samaritan is the same! The spring of water welling up (4:14) is the same as living water flowing within (7:38). Both texts speak of this blessing as a gift (4:14; 7:39). It is a gift only from Christ, only for believers. The Samaritans believed (4:39), and the Jews at that feast should have but did not (vv.38,39).

There were many believers before Jesus came to earth and there was much activity of the Holy Spirit. Yet the OT presents a future time when the Spirit would be

- poured out – giving the sense of greater measure
- upon all flesh – indicating a greater extent of this gift (Joel 2:28,29),
- producing a greater obedience or fruitfulness from this life-giving downpour (Isaiah 44:3-5), when the Lord would make a new and better covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34). The NT makes clear that Jesus is the Mediator of that new covenant (Hebrews 8:6), so the giving of the Spirit had to wait for Jesus' ministry on earth to be accomplished. A number of Scriptures assert that it is the Holy Spirit Who would produce in the hearts of God's people the obedience God promised (Ezekiel 36:24-27).

John 7:37-39 is the first place in the NT to reveal that the benefit of the Spirit is dispensed by Christ to all who believe. 7:27-39 is the first place in this Gospel to explain that the living water of 4:10 is the Holy Spirit. Jesus was speaking at a moment a few months prior to His death, resurrection, and ascension. Christ as our priest needed first to offer the sacrifice for our sins, which the Father would accept without reservation. Then our priest would be in the position (having removed all obstacle of sin by His blood) to favor us with blessing. The chief immediate blessing Christ gained and gave was the outpouring of the Spirit. The Spirit gives Christ's church: its interest in Christ, holiness in life, and power in proclamation. The Spirit also brought the Scriptures to completion. When Jesus ascended into heaven, He, "*Exalted to the right hand of God, ... has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear,*" Acts 2:33. This Scripture shows that this blessing has its basis in the ministry of Christ, and His finished work on the cross. Then the pouring out of the Spirit followed to change the history of this world by bringing the nations to Christ.

It is a serious error to suppose, as some teach contrary to this text, that one can receive Christ but not receive the Spirit. Jesus plainly promised that those who believe in Him will receive the Spirit. "... *If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ,*" (Romans 8:9). (See also Acts 2:38; 2 Corinthians 1:21,22.)

**The Feast of Tabernacles and Nehemiah 9** It is puzzling to read in v.38 of Scripture speaking of streams of living water flowing within, when there is no OT Scripture that says exactly that. Jesus was not quoting a Scripture; He was saying in His own words the substance of what Scripture had promised. The OT does speak in Ezekiel 36 of a change of the heart within, a change brought about by the Spirit. And it does speak of the Spirit giving life in Ezekiel 37. (In Ezekiel 37, the word *breath* in vv.6 & 10 may be translated *Spirit*. Breath and spirit are the same word in Hebrew; v.14 does say the Spirit.) So John 7:38 speaks of a promise God had already made.

How is all of this related to the Feast of Tabernacles? Every day in that feast, water was carried to the temple and poured out in thanksgiving to the Lord. Living in tents reminded them of Israel's wilderness experience and God's supply of water for them in that difficult time. According to Leviticus 23, the Feast of Tabernacles was appointed by God to be celebrated in the seventh month with a sacred assembly on the first and last day. Nehemiah combines many things we read in John 7:37-39. For centuries Israel had not celebrated this feast, but in Nehemiah's time in the appointed seventh month they did (Nehemiah 8:1-17). Chapter 9 is a prayer of confession and worship; in it they remembered God had given them good laws and manna, "*In their hunger you gave them bread from heaven and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock...*" (v.15). "*You gave your good Spirit to instruct them. You did not withhold your manna from their mouths, and you gave them water for their thirst,*" (v.20). So the OT tied the provision of water and the Holy Spirit to the Feast of Tabernacles.

On the last day, as many gathered in a sacred assembly, Jesus cried out for them to come to Him for water. He meant that they would receive the Spirit. His choice words fit the occasion very appropriately; they were close to Nehemiah 9. He spoke as the Lord, for it was Christ with His Father and Spirit who cared for Israel in their journey through the desert. In John 7, Jesus was present in the flesh sent by the Father, and He promised the Spirit to those who believe in Him. They did not need shelter the way Israel once did. By this time they had wells, houses and crops, but they needed to drink from Christ their Rock. Jesus still promises the Holy Spirit to all who come to Him to drink.

**7:40,41** When the Lord was here, there was no common understanding among the Jews that the promised Messiah and the promised Prophet of Deuteronomy 18:15-19 were the same person, thus their inappropriate distinction in vv.40,41. There was a prophet coming Who would be THE Prophet. This recognition of Christ in v.40 was not prompted by a miracle but by His teaching. (See the box below: Christ the Promised Prophet.)

**7:41-43 Jesus' Place of Origin** A few key indicators would enable people to identify the Christ.

1. Where He would be from (v.27)
2. What He would do (v.31) i.e., miracles
3. Whether He was in the line of David (v.42)

All three objectively identified Jesus as the Messiah. God had given clear predictions (Isaiah 42:9 & 48:5-7) so that when fulfilled, Israel could recognize the promised One. V.42 is John's only mention of King David and Bethlehem. He knew what Luke and Matthew had written. Other chapters in John develop the significance of miracles. Here in John 7 the apostle dwells on where Jesus would be from.

The people of Israel had difficulty accepting that such a great Deliverer from God (Who would liberate the nation from its enemies, Luke 1:74) could be an ordinary looking man moving about among them. (Isaiah 53:1-3.) Some in v.42 were well aware that the Christ would be in the line of David and from Bethlehem. I am certain that the religious leaders were careful to check out both the place of Jesus' birth and His genealogy. When they found that Jesus had both of these qualifications to be recognized as the Messiah, they were keenly disappointed to lose what would have been a valid argument against His claims. If His birthplace had been different or His link to David absent, Jesus would have been disqualified from being the Messiah. His opponents would have argued the point aggressively. On these matters they were silent. The real Messiah had to meet all the identifying features predicted by God's holy prophets. Otherwise God would have misled His people in Scripture, and that is something God cannot do.

John does not mention Isaiah 9:1-7, which predicts that the light would shine *in Galilee* and that the child to come would be David's Son. The Apostle John knew that Matthew 4:12-16 quoted Isaiah 9, but John was not trying to write everything in the Synoptics again. Perhaps by the time John's Gospel circulated, it was common knowledge to its first readers that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Matthew 1 and Luke 3 both trace Jesus as the offspring of King David. In John 7 Jesus' being from Galilee was promoted by His enemies as a reason to reject Him, yet nowhere in the four Gospels do they deny His birthplace; they preferred to speak of Him as *Jesus of*

*Nazareth* – not a title of honor in their minds, and one that could be used to obscure His descent from David. The census under Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1-7) was unusual. Unlike most of His neighbors Jesus grew up in Galilee (with its local accent) though He was born in Bethlehem in Judea. His enemies resisted all the evidence, especially by explaining His miracles as the work of Satan (Matthew 12:24). I have no doubt that they researched both His birthplace and genealogy and then suppressed this information. Many had been born in that village; by itself that proves little. I am convinced that Jesus' descent from David was the greater shock when it was discovered. In rebellious unbelief these three objective indications of Jesus' true identity were resisted.

These markers begin centuries earlier in the OT. Micah 5:2 predicted Bethlehem, and 2 Samuel 7:11-16 His descent from David. For Christ's miracles Isaiah 61:1-3 and Isaiah 35:4-6 should be compared with Matthew 11:4,5. The people were right to think, "*Does not the Scripture say ...*" but they failed to apply these predictions to Jesus. Thus some could hear Him and think He must be the Christ, while others, without the facts, were convinced that He failed to meet the criteria of the OT.

**7:44-46** No one seized Him. It would be difficult to walk to the front of a group of people listening to any capable teacher and physically arrest him. The crowd would not like it. They might even react. In many minds, Jesus' identity was a matter of great debate as John 7 shows. Perhaps the guards were told that Jesus was a sinner (as in 9:24), but when they heard Him for themselves they could not reconcile such an appraisal with what He was saying. Their reply (*No one ever spoke the way this Man does!*) was, ironically, truth beyond their understanding. (The more famous example of this in 11:50 was Caiaphas stating gospel truth; his gospel words were far different from what he meant.) This reluctance of the guards to arrest Jesus shows how great a problem it was for the religious leaders to arrest Jesus under circumstances favorable to them. Later Judas would offer to show them where they could find Him at night away from any crowd of listeners (18:2).

**7:47-49** I think the guards recognized that Jesus had a God-honoring message. However, for the Pharisees and chief priests, it was their settled opinion that He was a deceiver. They meant that He had fooled others but not them. They presented their view of Christ as the judgment of the highly educated elite, the experts. They created an arrogant image that only uninformed people believed in Christ, a tactic still in use today. Their words reveal a low opinion of their own people when they said this crowd was *cursed*, though the God of Abraham had promised blessing to His people, not just to the professionals. It is a dangerous atmosphere to think that only the clergy can know the things of God (1 John 2:20,21). If that argument is seriously given, it shows that the clergy have failed to teach their people. If only the clergy knows, the clergy is incompetent.

**7:50-52** This is the second time that Nicodemus is mentioned. (See 3:1-9 and 19:39.) The OT law does not specifically say that a man must be heard, but that all facts in a judgment must be established by proper witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15-21). When his colleagues showed contempt for Nicodemus, it would be quite difficult to speak of him as uneducated. (In 3:10 Jesus had called him *the teacher*.) Yet in their scorn they would say something disrespectful of Nicodemus too. They knew better than to suggest that he too might be a Galilean, but they spoke that way anyway. This shows their arrogance. God was pleased to have Jesus grow up as a Galilean, and to have most of His apostles from that region. (Note 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 and Ephesians 2:20. The New Jerusalem has many Galilean names connected to it in Revelation 21:14.) There is no record of God's great prophet, John the Baptist, ever entering Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the chief center of rejection. Repeatedly the Lord said that that was where He would die (Matthew 16:21; 20:17,18; 23:37,38; Luke 9:31), He was born in David's village and murdered in David's capital. "*Surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!*" (Luke 13:33).

The careless words that no prophet had ever come from Galilee was wrong. If God had predicted Jesus as the only prophet from that region, no other Scripture would disqualify Him as Messiah. The Pharisees did not pay attention to Isaiah 9, but their argument that no prophet had ever come from Galilee is false on other grounds. Sometimes the elite, so proud of their knowledge, have their ignorance revealed. Nahum, an Elkoshite (Nahum 1:1), was from a village in Galilee, and Jonah was from Gath Hopher (2 Kings 14:23-25), a town a short distance from Nazareth! Nahum and Jonah were both prophets and both were Galileans.



**Christ the Promised Prophet** A prophet of God is anyone called by Him to convey a revelation from Him. Such a person was usually a male but a few women are mentioned in Scripture (Exodus 15:40; Judges 4:4; 2 Kings 22:14). Faithful prophetic ministry declared messages from God without alteration (Jeremiah 23:25-40). Prophecy is not limited to prediction. Whatever he says must agree with all of God's revelation (Deuteronomy 13:1-5), and any error in the message disqualifies the prophet (Deuteronomy 18:21,22).

There were many prophets, but the Lord promised to send the greatest one of all, "the Prophet". *"I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account,"* (Deuteronomy 18:18,19).

The Lord said that the Prophet promised in Deuteronomy 18 would be *like Moses* because Moses had unique access to speak with God "face to face", i.e., in interactive conversation (Deuteronomy 34:10). A prophet could pray to the Lord and did, but usually the prophet, like Ezekiel, simply received a message and conveyed it (Ezekiel 22:1,17,23). Christ, the ultimate Word from God, had always been face to face with the Father (1:1,2). Now He is again at the Father's side. Jesus is the Prophet Who has made Him known (1:18). There is none greater!

*"You must listen to Him,"* The Prophet's words are God's (Deuteronomy 18:14,18). To reject Him is death (Acts 3:22,23), but whoever hears and believes has crossed over from death to life (5:24). Often Jesus reminded people that His words were not His own, *"For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it,"* (12:49).

The Apostle John wants us to believe in Christ. That is his constant burden throughout this Gospel. So he reported that the Baptist was not the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 18. He was happy to tell us that the Samaritan woman (4:19) and the man born blind (9:17) both had Jesus right. Both were uneducated and unsophisticated, yet God brought them to see that Jesus is the Prophet or the Messiah or the Son of Man. The religious leaders did not believe, but some of the people thought Jesus must be the Prophet (7:40). John shows that our salvation depends on what the humble were made to see, and the proud theologians missed.

Deuteronomy 34:10 pointed out that no prophet had risen in Israel like Moses, a man through whom God did many miraculous signs. The NT record shows that Christ did many signs and wonders. This too was a major means to identify the Prophet (6:14).

**7:53** For this verse, see the notes in chapter 8.

## Appendix 7A

### Misunderstandings and Reaction

There are good reasons to pay close attention to the reactions against the Lord recorded in this Gospel. These are things that will appear in every age till the return of Christ.

1. Since the Lord taught, *"If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you"* (15:18-21), we should accept being misunderstood, hated, and defamed as a natural reaction of the world against us. The apostles also endured opposition (2 Thessalonians 3:1,2; 1 Corinthians 16:8,9), and we too should expect it (2 Timothy 3:10-13).
2. The idea of a life of ease in the present life does not fit the teaching of Scripture. Being believers does not make all trouble go away; in some ways being a Christian increases one's difficulty.

3. Not all reaction is entirely personal. It can be caused by confusion in interpreting Scripture; often it is just ignorance of God's word. The core of the rejection is against the gospel message, and for that reason it is against the messenger.
4. We are commanded to "*consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men*". The Lord added to this specific order a reason: "*so that you will not grow weary and lose heart,*" (Hebrews 12:3). The experience of Christ enduring opposition and the struggles of His children are similar. We have these sufferings in common with Christ (Colossians 1:24), and we need to know that.

John 7 contains an unusual record of misunderstandings about Christ. Much of it is hateful reaction to Him, but some of it is simply conversation about Christ among the people. What follows is a listing in the order they appear in this chapter. Not all of them need comments. These reactions are more than a matter of knowing historical events.

Some were seeking to kill Him (v.1). Jesus lived under this threat most of His ministry. His own brothers did not believe, but offered Him worldly advice contrary to His calling from God (vv.3-5). They misunderstood what He was doing. The world hated Him (v.7). People held conflicting opinions of Him (vv.12 & 43). The most educated leaders realized that Jesus' learning and grasp of Scripture was profound (v.15). No one else had such a knowledge, and they could not understand how it could be. When He told them in vv. 16-18, they would not accept His reply, though His answer was the only explanation for how He could speak as He did.

When He spoke of their intentions to kill Him, they replied with ridicule, denial, and name-calling (v.20). He had been accused of being a Sabbath breaker (5:18). When He made a careful explanation about the Sabbath in vv.21-24, there is never any indication that they considered it. His rational defense has no reply in any of the four Gospels. To call Jesus demon-possessed is real blasphemy. They described Him as the opposite of what He was; He had no demon but was filled with the Holy Spirit without limit (3:34).

V.27 is much like folk religion. People often heard opinions that they accepted as the final word. They were sure they knew where Jesus was from (and they were wrong), and they assumed that when the Messiah would come that no one would know where He is from (and that too was wrong). Their ignorance in simple things made them dismiss truth. This brought an emotional response from the Lord (v.28).

Some sought to seize Him (v.30), but some believed (v.31); not all reaction was bad. The Lord said some would keep the message His disciples gave just as some did when He spoke (15:20). Religious leaders feared that their followers would believe in Jesus, thus the chief priests and Pharisees organized a scheme to arrest Him. Much reaction was from individuals; 7:32 shows an institutional and corporate reaction.

Jesus' words were misunderstood (v.35). OT prediction spoke of the Prophet and the Messiah. It was not clear to the people that the Prophet and the Messiah were the same Person. So the Word of God from Jesus' mouth and the ancient Scriptures were both being twisted.

The OT predicted that the Messiah would be connected to both Galilee and Bethlehem. If Jesus did not have a ministry in Galilee, He would not fit the prophecy of Isaiah 9:1,2. Yet again, it was the ignorance of Scripture that allowed for the stumbling block of Galilee in vv. 41 & 52.

To all this, one must observe the degree of scorn and arrogance the leaders expressed to the guards. They are pictured as stupid, and even the teacher Nicodemus, one of their own rulers (3:1), was reviled. When Nicodemus raised the point of their judging Jesus without hearing Him, he shows that their appraisal of Jesus was unfair. Many Jewish leaders knew that Jesus spoke the truth. John even says they "believed". Yet they gave in to the pressure of their peers (12:42,43). For them to admit agreement with Jesus, would be like a scientist in a university openly rejecting the theory of evolution. He would be more likely to face scorn than a reasoned rebuttal.

Ignore the following, mere notes of things to go in the Introduction later.

Glossary: "Synoptics" the Baptist, OT, NT, etc.

Intro. Use your text; these are notes! All references to texts with no book named (as in 7:12) are all from John.

i.e.,

NIV, ESV, NKJ

Hopefully can use commentaries