

As we continue to study what Jesus said about himself in the Scripture, we want to consider the next two in their fullest context in relation to Jesus and the Jewish audience and the Feast of the Tabernacles.

From a negative statement about Jesus we considered Jesus as the Bread of Life. We have studied Jesus as the Way the Truth and the Life and as the Good Shepherd

The Good Shepherd was in context as a contrast to false Shepherds as Jesus is speaking of the Pharisees and their attitudes toward the blind man in John 9.

Today we begin with Jesus as the living water. Jesus does not say I am the living water. But, he is explicit in saying come to me and drink and the water of life will flow from you. He is speaking of the Holy Spirit and new life, an idea which is not lost on his Jewish audience. Just as the new birth is no new concept when Jesus speaks to Nicodemus referring to Ezekiel 36:25-27, even though Nicodemus was missing it at that moment..

I hold to the view that the Gospel of John is written to a Jewish audience and to understand it requires understanding of each of the settings where Jesus makes the I Am statements so significant in John, his discourse on “destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it again” and “come to me and drink.”

All of these things are presented with some major Jewish Festival, or point of biblical understanding in the background.

So to understand Jesus’ relationship to living water and he claiming to be the light of the world we must understand the historical significance of the Feast of the Tabernacles also called the Feast of The Booths because it is during this Feast that he taught these two great truths about himself.

The Feast of Booths John 7:1-13

¹After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him.² Now the Jews’ Feast of Booths was at hand.

³ So his brothers said to him, Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may

see the works you are doing.⁴ For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.⁵ For not even his brothers believed in him.⁶ Jesus said to them, My time has not yet come, but your time is always here.⁷ The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil.⁸ You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come.⁹ After saying this, he remained in Galilee. ¹⁰ But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private. ¹¹ The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, Where is he?¹² And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, He is a good man, others said, No, he is leading the people astray.¹³ Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him.

Some commentators would call this period of Jesus ministry "The Period of Conflict". This period, "the period of conflict," describes the parallel development of belief and unbelief among the hearers of Jesus and the resultant clash between these two opposing forces. The difference between the "period of conflict" and the one preceding it, called the "period of controversy," is this: The period of controversy (5:1-6:71) narrates mostly arguments arising from unsettled attitudes like Jesus being the bread of life which, we have discussed, while the period of conflict (7:1-11:53) represents entrenched positions of opposition.

This particular section begins with Christ in John 7 attending the "Feast of Booths," or in other words the "Feast of Tabernacles." We will divide Christ's attendance at the "Feast of Booths" or the "Feast of Tabernacles" into three different parts.

John 7:1-13 events that took place at the beginning of the feast.

John 7:14-36 events that took place at the middle of the feast.

John 7:37-53 events that took place on the last day of the feast.

The first part of the "Feast of Booths" is the beginning of the feast

John 7:1. "And after these things [in other words, after the mass desertion by many of His so-called disciples following the bread of life discourse] Jesus was walking in Galilee."

The "walking in Galilee" segment that is mentioned here in verse one lasted for a period of nearly six months as recorded in (Matthew 15:1-16:12; Mark 8:1-26

Why had He spent six months walking around Galilee according to John 7:1? It was His desire to avoid Judea. Why avoid Judea? The Jewish authorities wanted to kill Him (John 5:18).

"After these things Jesus was walking in Galilee; for He was unwilling to walk in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill Him."

Just in case you may have forgotten about the earlier difficulties he had with the Jewish authorities in that particular area of Palestine, let's consider some incidents.

In John 2:13 Jesus went up to Jerusalem to celebrate His first Passover after beginning His public ministry. During this time He performed many miracles, which led a large number of people to believe in His name; or in other words, led a large number of people to believe in Him as the Messiah. This popular support made it possible for Jesus to go into the temple and to cleanse it without being arrested. After cleansing the temple, He remained in Judea baptizing more people than John the Baptist.

Because of His growing popularity in Jerusalem and throughout Judea, He chose to leave Judea by way of Samaria in order to get to Galilee. Why? He did this in order to avoid becoming a target of the Jewish authorities in Judea, so He got out while the getting was good.

But He did not stay away. A year later Jesus again returned to Jerusalem for the next Passover. This visit was recorded for us in John 5:1. Hopefully you remember what happened on this next visit.

It began with Jesus healing a man by the Pool of Bethesda. This healing precipitated an encounter with the Jewish authorities that charged Him with breaking the Sabbath. In responding to this charge Jesus told the Jewish authorities in John 5:17, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." What was the response of the Jewish authorities to these words?

John 5:18. "For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, [having healed a man at the Pool Bethesda] but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God."

This purposed desire on the part of the Jewish authorities to kill Jesus forced Him to once again leave Judea, not to avoid *becoming* a target but because now He *was* the target.

If you left a particular place because you knew that a particular person or persons wanted to kill you, how likely would it be that you would return back to that same place? It would, I am sure, not be very likely in most circumstances. However, this was not the case with Jesus.

John 7:2. "Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was at hand."

What exactly is the "Feast of Booths" or the "Feast of Tabernacles"?

There are three major feasts in Judaism. The first is Passover, which was celebrated at the beginning of the grain harvest in the spring. Then came Pentecost, seven weeks later, at the end of the grain harvest. And then came the "Feast of Booths," or in other words the "Feast of Tabernacles." The "Feast of Booths" or the "Feast of Tabernacles" took place in autumn and celebrated the tree and vine harvest.

Beyond the celebration of the autumn harvest another purpose was also served. Theologically, the "Feast of Booths" was to remind the Jewish people of the temporary shelters they lived in during their wilderness wanderings (Leviticus 23; Deuteronomy 16).

Obviously this feast was extremely important to faithful Jews. In light of this, it is not at all surprising that the question about whether Jesus would attend the feast would become a point of discussion since this particular feast was at hand. And this is precisely what occurred.

John 7:3-4. "His brothers therefore said to Him, 'Depart from here, and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may behold your works which You are doing. (4) For no one does anything in secret, when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If you do

these things, show Yourself to the world."

Who are the brothers that John refers to here in John 7:3?

When John refers to Jesus' brothers, he is referring to the sons of Mary and Joseph who were named James, Joses, Jude, and Simon (Matthew 12:46; Mark 6:3).

What were the brothers of Jesus saying to Him according to the verses that we have read? In essence, Christ's brothers were saying to Him, "if you want to be recognized as the Messiah then you must sooner or later go to Jerusalem and prove yourself" (John 7:3-4). Go public, big time.

Were these words of genuine encouragement?

Though the words of Christ's brothers in John 7:3-4 might seem sincere, we know they are puzzling not because t John makes it clear that their words flowed from a heart of unbelief in John 7:5. "For not even His brothers were believing in Him."

In light of His brothers' unbelief, the words that they spoke to Him in John 7:3-4, may seem sarcastic. But it seems that what they are saying is all they meant. Show the world who you believe yourself to be. Now is the time. They could not deny what they have seen Him do as far as miracles but they had no understanding of the significance of what they saw. They are projecting onto him what they would have done.

Jesus responds in an interesting way.

In order to do this He first lays the groundwork for this confrontation by pointing out a specific difference between Himself and them.

John 7:6. "Jesus therefore said to them, 'My time is not yet at hand, but your time is always opportune.'"

The word "time" (KAIROS) refers to the right time. His brothers are free to go up to the Feast at any time because they had no divine mission to consider, but this was not true of Christ. Christ had a divine mission and therefore the timing of what He chose to do, even in respect to going up to the Feast of Booths was important, which was

distinctly different than His brothers. This is the point that He makes in John 7:6.

Jesus will now expand on this difference as He confronts His brothers. How does He do this? He points out to them that though they lack a divine mission, it has not prevented them, along with the world, from opposing Him.

John 7:7. "The world cannot hate you; but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil." Clearly in this verse we see Christ portraying the world as hating Him, but the world is not any different than His own brothers. How is this shared hatred communicated in this verse? The shared hatred of the world and the brothers of Christ for Christ were communicated when He tells His brothers, "The world cannot hate you."

The reason why the world will not hate His brothers is because His brothers are a part of the world and in that sense they hate Jesus because He exposes their sin. This is a very powerful response to the brothers encouragement to Christ to go up to the feast.

Some have drawn out from this that Jesus, in the most literal sense, was hated by his brothers. I don't see it.

Jesus responds in John 7:8, "Go up to the feast yourselves; I do not go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come."

"I do not go up to this feast because My time - meaning the right time-kairos- has not yet fully come." When Jesus says that His time has not yet come He is not referring to the time of His crucifixion otherwise he would have said, "Because my hour hora- has not yet come," which is His common expression for referring to the time of His crucifixion. (a study can be done here comparing the use of kairos, chronos, and horas- all words which mean time in various contexts. Here the word is kairos.)

So if He is not referring to the time of His crucifixion when He says "My time has not yet fully come," then what is He referring to? When Jesus refers to His time as "not yet having fully come," He is referring to the right time for Him to go to the feast.

His brothers certainly could go up to the feast when they went because anytime

would have would have been a right time for them but this was not true of Christ. He had to wait for the right time. And that is what He meant to communicate to His brothers when He said to them, "I do not go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come." You are of the world, your time does not matter, my time is a divine appointment. This does not mean that God is not Sovereign in all things. But their time is insignificant to this divine kairos appointment of Jesus.

So what happened next?

John 7:9. "And having said these things to them, He stayed in Galilee. "But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as it were, in secret."

At some point in time after His brothers left, His time, or in other words the right time for Him to go up to the feast, came and He left for Jerusalem. He went in secret. In light of the context, we would have to assume that "in secret" meant that He did not join Himself with any large group of pilgrims headed toward Jerusalem for the festivities.

His choice not to join Himself with a large body of people headed toward Jerusalem for the feast allowed Him to enter Jerusalem without a lot of fanfare. This lack of fanfare made it difficult for the Jewish authorities to pinpoint the exact location of Christ who they expected to come to the feast. How do we know this?

John 7:11. "The Jews therefore were seeking Him at the feast, and were saying, 'Where is He?'" They were trying to find Him.

John 7:12. "And there was much grumbling among the multitudes concerning Him; some were saying, 'He is a good man'; others were saying, 'No, on the contrary, He leads the multitude astray.' "

The word translated "grumbling" signifies "quiet discussion or suppressed discussion." What were they discussing? They were talking about whether Jesus should be viewed positively or negatively. They were discussing whether or not Jesus was a good man who in effect was speaking truthfully or perhaps an evil man who was seeking to lead

Even though there was a great deal of quiet whispering going on amongst the multitude about whether Jesus was a good man speaking truthfully or an evil man who was leading the multitude astray everyone was trying to keep their opinions to themselves. Why?

John 7:13. "Yet no one was speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews." Apparently, no matter what position a person held about Jesus, they apparently were uncomfortable with being identified with any discussion about Jesus because of the Jewish authorities. The fear of being linked with any conversation about Jesus indicates the level of animosity that the Jewish authorities felt toward Jesus.

Jesus choosing to come into Jerusalem for the feast of Tabernacles in light of the fixed attitude of the Jewish authorities against Him was a significant transition in the story of the life of Christ and we should take note of this.

But beyond taking note of this significant transition, we also need to take note of another transition that took place after the resurrection of Christ.

Some time, most likely after the resurrection of Christ, James and Jude, brothers of Christ and prominent figures in the early church, came to faith in Christ.

This brings us to the second part of the Feast of Booths.

The second part of the "Feast of Booths" could be entitled, "The Middle of the Feast" (John 7:14-36). Look at the very first words of John 7:14. "But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple." The word "midst" helps us to chronologically divide the "Feast of Booths" into another part. Everything that we will be examining from verse 14 through verse 36 will be taking place in the midst or in the middle of the feast. It is obvious that this segment is quite lengthy and will need to be broken down into a number of even smaller parts for the purpose of our study. How

can this section of Scripture that deals with the middle of the "Feast of Booths" be broken down even further?

John 7:14-36 answers three different questions.

The first question addressed in John 7:14-36 is "Where did Jesus go to school?" This question on the surface might appear to be rather mundane, but it actually is anything but mundane, as we shall see.

Though John 7:14-24 addresses the question of where Jesus went to school, we unfortunately will not be able to examine all these verses this weekend. This will not however prevent us from discovering a very important truth. What is that important truth?

"But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach." Why did Jesus enter the temple in the midst of the feast? The answer is to teach.

What was He teaching? The passage does not tell us, but clearly His teaching caught the attention of the Jews. Let me read for you the beginning of verse 15. "The Jews therefore were marveling."

Why were they marveling? "The Jews therefore were marveling, saying 'How has this man become learned, having never been educated?'"

How should we understand this surprised expression on the part of the Jews? Were they surprised because Jesus, though untaught, was teaching at a level of competency that far exceeded His training? Or, were they surprised because Jesus, who had no proper education, was inappropriately presenting Himself as one who was in fact well versed in the Scriptures? I believe that the latter of these explanations is the best way to understand their surprised expression. To be continued.