

The Gospel of John (48) Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles (3)

Introduction:

We have been in John's Gospel for nearly a year. When we began our study of this fourth Gospel, we drew attention to the fact that this Gospel presents the person of Jesus to its readers in a way that is distinct from the Synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Where they set forth the person of Jesus largely from the experience and perspective of the Apostles who were with Him, John's Gospel is quite different. John's Gospel is more of a revelation of the inner life of Christ, of His eternal, divine nature as well as His temporal, human nature. In John's Gospel we have more directly displayed the self-revelation of the Son of God Himself, even as it is related by the "beloved disciple"—the Apostle John. This emphasis of John's Gospel reveals Jesus Christ to us in quite a remarkable manner. Our understanding of Him is greatly enriched, and this may be quite transformative for us as the Holy Spirit reveals Him to us. For as we have sought to emphasize in this Gospel account, God grants to us true and rich spiritual life as we see Jesus as the sum and source of all life. As John said of Him, that in Him is life and He is the light of men (John 1:4). If your spiritual life seems to be rather stifled or stilted, seek to know Jesus Christ with great desire and effort. Ask God to reveal Him to you more clearly and fully, for in knowing Him, every spiritual blessing may be discovered and experienced. In Him are the blessings enjoyed by His kingdom citizens, including a life of joy, peace, freedom from fear, a sound mind, and a life of righteousness and most importantly, fellowship with God through Jesus Christ.

I was reading some of the opening words of **Isaac Ambrose** to his classic book, *Looking Unto Jesus*. He wrote of the special duty of ministers to set forth this theme. It pressed this responsibility on me and our church.

Ministers ought in duty more abundantly to preach Jesus Christ. Dr. Sibbs is clear, "that the special office of the ministry of Christ, is to lay open Christ, to hold up the tapestry, and to unfold the hidden mysteries of Christ." And therefore he exhorts, "That we should labor to be always speaking somewhat about Christ or tending that way; when we speak of the law, let it drive us to Christ; when of moral duties, let them teach us to walk worthy of Christ: Christ, or somewhat tending to Christ, should be our theme and mark to aim at." And I may feelingly say, it is the sweetest subject that was ever preached on. Is it not "as an ointment poured forth," whose smell is so fragrant, and whose savor is so sweet, that "therefore all the virgins love Him?"¹ Is it not comprehensive of all the glory, beauty, excellency, whether of things in heaven or things on earth? Is it not a mystery, sweet and deep? ...It is a worthy study to make farther and farther discovery of this blessed mystery; and it were to be wished that all the ministers of Christ would spend themselves in the spelling, and reading, and the understanding of it... If there be any duty on earth resembling the duty of the saints in heaven, I dare say, this is it.²

Now in our study of this 7th chapter of the Gospel of John, we have considered our Lord Jesus having gone up to Jerusalem from Galilee during the annual Feast of the Tabernacles. Although all of Jerusalem was anticipating seeing Jesus there, for all Jewish males were compelled to attend under the Law of Moses, He had come up secretly after the feast had begun. He did not want to draw attention or notoriety to Himself. He desired to teach the Word of God to the people, that they would consider the message of the kingdom of God for which they had so great a need.

¹ From the Song of Solomon 1:3.

² Isaac Ambrose, *Looking Unto Jesus; A View of the Everlasting Gospel; or, The Soul's Eyeing of Jesus, as Carrying on the Great Work of Man's Salvation, from First to Last* (Sprinkle Publications, 1986), pp. viii-x.

Last Lord's Day we gave our attention to Jesus coming forward in the temple to teach the people regarding their need for spiritual life that only He could bring to them. The people, particularly the Jewish leaders of the people, were quite amazed at the content and manner of His teaching. They asked Him, "How does this Man know letters, having never studied?" (v. 15). Jesus responded by telling them that His doctrine, that is, the content of His teaching, had been given to Him by the One who had sent Him, in other words, God His Father had taught Him His doctrine that He was then proclaiming to the people.

No doubt, that with the wonderment of the people, there was also puzzlement. They were asking themselves, "Who is this man, and how do we know what He is saying is truth?" Jesus responded to them, saying, "If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority" (v. 17). This was the key for their identifying spiritual truth and it remains the key for people today. The person who truly desires to do the will of God from the heart, will receive assurance that he has heard the truth when it is proclaimed to him. God Himself will confirm to his soul that what he hears is the very word of God.

Coming to recognize and to know the truth of God through the preaching of the Word of God was one of the evidences that convinced the Apostle Paul that the Christians in the church of Thessalonica were numbered among the elect of God, those chosen by the Father unto their salvation. Paul wrote to that church these words:

²We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, ³remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, ⁴*knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.* ⁵*For (because) our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.*" (1 Thess. 1:2-5)

And then further on he wrote of them:

And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, *you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.* (1 Thess. 2:13)

We look for people in whom God's saving grace is at work. One of the clearest indications is how one hears and regards the teaching of the Holy Scriptures when it is proclaimed to them. When they perceive the teaching and preaching of the Word of God to be the voice of God speaking truth to their souls, we can be quite confident that they are the objects of God's electing, saving grace.

Our Lord then gave another way in which He could be identified as legitimate in what He taught them. We read in **verse 18**, "He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him." Jesus Christ never sought to bring glory to Himself, but rather He sought to bring people to glorify God His Father. This is another abiding principle to assist us in assessing the false from the true. The true man of God, or a true church of God, will desire foremost to glorify God and to glorify His Son whom He has sent. Any man who seeks to bring glory to himself is not to be trusted. His words will be errant and corrupt at some point.

The English puritan pastor, **Thomas Brooks**, who ministered in London in the 1600's, addressed this matter in his book entitled, *Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices*, which is available today. He wrote:

"Now the best way to deliver poor souls from being deluded and destroyed by these messengers of Satan is to display them in their true colors, so that being known poor souls may shun them, and flee from them as from hell itself."

He then went on to identify *seven identifying marks of false teachers* that he had derived from the various passages of Scripture, which address them. We have cited these before, but they deserve repetition in our hearing. The marks of a false teacher are as follows:

- (1) The first distinguishing mark is that they are men-pleasers. They preach more to please the ear than to profit the heart.
- (2) The second distinguishing mark of false teachers is that they are notable for casting dirt, scorn and reproach upon the person, names and credits of Christ's most faithful ambassadors. In order to build themselves a following, they destroy others.
- (3) The third distinguishing mark of false teachers is that they spew out the devices and visions of their own heads and hearts. "The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart, not from the mouth of the Lord" (Jer. 23:16).
- (4) The fourth distinguishing mark of false teachers is that they easily pass over the great and weighty things of both the law and the gospel, and dwell mostly upon those things that are of the least importance and concern to the souls of men.
- (5) The fifth distinguishing mark of false teachers is that they cleverly disguise their dangerous principles and soul-deceiving notions with very attractive speeches and golden expressions.
- (6) The sixth distinguishing mark of false teachers is that they strive more earnestly to win men over to their opinions, than to improve their behavior.
- (7) The seventh distinguishing mark of false teachers is that they exploit their followers through covetousness. "They eye your goods more than your good."

After our Lord affirmed the manner in which the truth of His teaching could be validated, He confronted the Jewish leaders before the gathered crowd regarding their design and attempts to murder Him (v. 19). The people were for the most part uninformed of the evil intentions of their religious leaders. We read of the crowd's response in verse 20: "The people answered and said, 'You have a demon. Who is seeking to kill You?'"

Jesus then reasoned with them why their charges against Him were illegitimate. He concluded by saying to them in verse 24, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

We now arrive this morning to verses 25ff. Let us read **John 7:25-31**.

²⁵Now some of them from Jerusalem said, "Is this not He whom they seek to kill? ²⁶But look! He speaks boldly, and they say nothing to Him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is truly the Christ? ²⁷However, we know where this Man is from; but when the Christ comes, no one knows where He is from."

²⁸Then Jesus cried out, as He taught in the temple, saying, "You both know Me, and you know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. ²⁹But I know Him, for I am from Him, and He sent Me."

³⁰Therefore they sought to take Him; but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come. ³¹And many of the people believed in Him, and said, "When the Christ comes, will He do more signs than these which this Man has done?"

There is a change of emphasis with verse 25ff. In the verses before the *authority* of Jesus was the primary issue. Beginning with verse 25 the *identity* of Jesus is the focus. A new character, or "voice", is introduced in our discourse. Before there were "the Jews", who are in John's Gospel the Jewish leaders in

Jerusalem who were hostile to Jesus.³ There was also “the people” or “the crowd”, which would have been all at Jerusalem, including many Jewish pilgrims present for the feast.⁴ And now here in verse 25 we read of a third group, who are set forth as “some of the people of Jerusalem.” These people should probably be understood as local residents of Jerusalem, not the Jewish pilgrims from other lands.

Each of these three groups of people seem to serve a different purpose in the narrative. This was pointed out by **Edward Klink**:

It is worth asking why the narrator would distinguish this group from “the crowd” in general. If “the Jews” (first verbal exchange, vs. 14-19) present to the reader the *theological* issues at stake, and “the crowd” (second verbal exchange, vs. 20-24) presents to the reader the *faith* issues at stake, then “the people of Jerusalem” (third verbal exchange, vs. 25-29) present the *political* issues at stake. The Jerusalemites did not initiate the challenge to Jesus, but they clearly knew about and understood it, as their statement makes clear. The political issue at stake is one that had already been revealed to the reader (5:18; 7:19), but its mention here presses it again into the scene at hand. The focus on “this man” serves to introduce the theme of this section of the pericope.⁵

As we look over the passage before us, we may apply this outline for our consideration:

1. The confusion of Jesus’ true identity (7:25-27)
2. The confession of Jesus’ true identity (7:28-29)
3. The collusion of Jesus’ enemies (7:30)
4. The concession of many of the people (7:31)

I. The confusion over Jesus’ true identity (7:25-27)

²⁵Now some of them from Jerusalem said, “Is this not He whom they seek to kill? ²⁶But look! He speaks boldly, and they say nothing to Him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is truly the Christ? ²⁷However, we know where this Man is from; but when the Christ comes, no one knows where He is from.”

We had read a few verses earlier that “the people” had accused Jesus for being wholly deluded, even having a demon, when He charged that there were those seeking to kill Him (v. 20). And now we read that “some of them from Jerusalem” asked themselves, “Is He not the one that the Jewish leaders were trying to kill?” And so, we see that there was confusion and difference of opinion of who Jesus was and how the Jewish leadership regarded Him. The Jews had been less than aggressive in their efforts to kill Jesus, largely due to their fear of the populous, who would not at this time stand for their treachery.

Two matters brought puzzlement to these people. First, if Jesus was the man that they were trying to kill, how does one explain that He is so bold and preaching and teaching in the very temple at Jerusalem? And secondly, if the Jewish leaders are not forthright in their efforts to kill Him, perhaps they have come to believe that it is true concerning Him, that He is the promised Messiah.

Various opinions are ventilated in the crowd, and there is a good deal of talking at cross purposes. Some might dismiss as madness His charge that an attempt was being made on His life; others knew that the charge was not baseless. But if His life was indeed being sought, that made His boldness the more

³ 7:1, 11, 13, 15, and 35.

⁴ 7:12, 20, 31, 32, 40, and 43,

⁵ Edward W. Klink, III, **John**. Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Zondervan, 2016), p. 369. Again, the word “pericope” is a reference to the narrative unit or section of the Gospel. This pericope is the entire setting of the events that took place because of Jesus at Jerusalem during the feast of the tabernacles.

remarkable, and not only His boldness but also the slowness of the authorities to arrest Him or even prevent Him from speaking as He did in public. Why were they so reluctant to intervene? Perhaps (said some) since His last visit to Jerusalem that authorities had received evidence which proved He really was the Messiah.⁶

Their confusion was due to their false assumptions regarding Jesus. Even though the miracles He performed and the authoritative and profound teaching that He promoted gave evidence that He was the Messiah, when they applied the test of what they “knew” would be true of the coming Messiah, they dismissed Him as an illegitimate claimant to messiahship. We read in **verse 27**, “*However, we know where this Man is from; but when the Christ comes, no one knows where He is from.*”

There were different beliefs about the Messiah and from where He would originate. Some Jews believed the Messiah would be a heavenly figure, one like a Son of Man. But Jesus did not fit this mold. Others believed that He would remain obscure and hidden until the day when He would be manifested to Israel. But Jesus standing in the temple teaching the people did not conform to this belief. Others were quite convinced that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, which is southwest of Jerusalem about seven miles. But again, or so they thought, Jesus was from Galilee, and therefore He could not be the promised Messiah, as they were presently thinking. Everyone knew from where He had come, or so they thought.

By the way, this idea conveyed in verse 27 is an example of irony that John is noted for in His Gospel.

This is an instance of ‘Johannine irony’. They were thinking of Jesus’ Galilean home; to them He was ‘Jesus of Nazareth’. But the Evangelist has in mind a profounder answer to the question whence Jesus came – an answer which comes to expression in Jesus’ next words.⁷

Donald Carson explained the matter more fully:

No sooner has the suggestion been ventilated than it is dismissed. The reason lies in the first of three popularly-held notions of what the Messiah would be like that are mentioned in this chapter (cf. further on vs. 31, 42), The Jerusalemites are convinced that they know *where this man is from; when the Christ comes, no-one will know where He is from*. This cannot mean that they think the biblical revelation provides no hint of Messiah’s ultimate origins (cf. Mic. 5:2; Matt. 2:4-6; cf. Dan. 7:13). These Jerusalemites are not like those who thought in apocalyptic terms and assumed the Messiah would be hidden from before the creation until the moment of His self-disclosure (1 Enoch 48:6; 4 Ezra 13:51-52; the former source is probably post-Christian, the latter certainly so). Rather, the Jerusalemites hold the view, attested elsewhere (Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 8.7; probably presupposed in some rabbinic language about the Messiah ‘appearing’, SB 2. 489), that the Messiah would be born of flesh and blood yet would be wholly unknown until he appeared to effect Israel’s redemption. The same perspective is presupposed in Matthew 24:26-27; Mark 13:21-22; Luke 17:23-24. With such expectations, there could be none of this ‘perhaps he is, perhaps he isn’t speculation. As far as they were concerned, they know where Jesus came from: He sprang from Nazareth, and His family home was now in Capernaum, and He had been engaged in an itinerant ministry for some time. This is of course another instance of the celebrated ‘Johannine irony’: The Jerusalemites are not as informed of Jesus’ true origins as they think.⁸

Here we see that some were quite convinced that they understood the teaching of the Holy Scriptures and they “knew” that Jesus did not conform to them. In reality, they did not fully understand the Scriptures and they certainly did not understand the person of Jesus. So it is, we can potentially be so convinced that we have clear understanding of a matter, but in reality there are gaps in our thinking and misapprehensions of

⁶ F. F. Bruce, **The Gospel of John** (William B. Eerdmans, 1983), p. 178.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Donald Carson, **The Gospel According to John** (William B. Eerdmans. 1991), pp. 317f.

what the Lord is doing in people's lives. This is why the Holy Scriptures on many occasions caution us to be careful lest we judge matters and people too quickly, which may only serve to reveal to us our own folly.

II. The confession of Jesus' true identity (7:28-29)

We read in verses 28 and 29 our Lord's words regarding His true identity:

²⁸Then Jesus cried out, as He taught in the temple, saying, "You both know Me, and you know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know.
²⁹But I know Him, for I am from Him, and He sent Me."

Although these Jews were talking about the identity of Jesus with one another, perhaps in smaller groups, it is clear that Jesus knew what they were saying and thinking. Perhaps He overheard them, or perhaps the Holy Spirit had informed Him as to their speech and thoughts.

Verse 28 records that "Jesus cried out." This expression in John's Gospel always precedes an important saying. "Jesus' response to the Jerusalemites gives the impression of a prophet."⁹ But further, John states that Jesus had cried out "in the temple", which further enhances to the readers the importance of this declaration of Jesus.

This was somewhat of a departure from our Lord's normal manner of speaking. Of Jesus "crying out", **J. C. Ryle** (1816-1900) wrote:

This is a remarkable expression. We find our Lord departing from His usual practice, when we read that He "cried," or raised His voice to a high pitch. Generally speaking the words in St. Matthew apply strictly, quoted from Isaiah 42:2: "He shall not strive or cry, neither shall any man hear His voice in the street" (Matt. 12:19). Yet we see there were occasions when He did see it right to cry aloud and lift up His voice, and this is one. The perverse ignorance of the Jews, their persistence in blindness to all the evidence, and the great opportunity afforded by the crowds around Him in the temple courts, were probably reasons why He cried.¹⁰

What was He saying when He cried out? Essentially He was rebuking them for their limited and errant understanding of His true nature and the identity of His person. Within the context of the Gospel account, here Jesus is again stating that He is the eternal Son of God.

He said, "You both know Me, and you know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true." He acknowledged that they knew Him in a measure, in that as a man He had come from Nazareth of Galilee. But that was not the real issue. It was not important where He was from (as a man), but what was important was that God had sent Him, that being God His Father. When Jesus said, "He who sent Me is true", He was saying that God His Father was real. But these Jews were oblivious of Him. They actually did not know His Father. Jesus declared to them, "and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, *whom you do not know*. But I know Him, for I am from Him, and He sent Me." This was quite an amazing declaration. These Jews assumed that they were the people of God. They knew God and God knew them. But Jesus told them that they did not know Him. Here are the words of **Robert Lenski** (1926-2002):

The fact that Jesus grew up in Nazareth in the home of Joseph and Mary reveals nothing about His true origin and mission, and the assumption of the citizens that it reveals everything only demonstrates their foolish ignorance.¹¹

⁹ Klink, p. 370.

¹⁰ J. C. Ryle, **Expository Thoughts on John**, vol. 2 (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987, orig. 1869), p. 36.

¹¹ R. C. H. Lenski, **The Interpretation of St. Luke's Gospel** (Augsburg Publishing, 1946), p. 561.

And here are further words of Lenski describing what played out on this occasion:

When Jesus testifies that he is “from Him” He already declares His mission, namely, that He is sent as the Messiah. But He states this directly, “and He did commission Me.” This is an independent statement... It forms part of an answer to the question “whence” (from where) Jesus is... “**I** am from Him; **He** did commission Me.” In other words, this God, whom these citizens do not know, Jesus knows so well, for Jesus came from Him, and that God did Himself send and commission Jesus. In the completest way the question, whence Jesus is, is thus answered. And at the same time these citizens are shown why they know nothing of Jesus’ origin although they think they know everything, and why Jesus knows what is hidden from them. The issue is squarely drawn: on the one side a spurious deduction, on the other firsthand testimony to the fact; on the one side vain and empty denial that Jesus is the Christ, on the other the assured reality that he is, indeed, the Christ. While it is brief, this testimony of Jesus is most direct and to the point and at the same time highly dramatic.¹²

Now Jesus identified God His Father as “He who sent Me.” This is the fourteenth verse so far in the Gospel of John in which Jesus referred to God the Father in this way. It serves to show that Jesus had a purpose and a mission that God the Father had sent Him to accomplish. It speaks of our Lord’s conscious awareness of this great task of His life, to accomplish the redemption of His people.

This expression, “He who sent Me”, is one of the major statements of Scripture in which the distinctions between the Persons of the Holy Trinity may be discerned. We have spoken of this before, but it bears repeating. The biblical doctrine of the Trinity is a declaration that we are monotheists. We believe in one God. We are often accused falsely by others (Jehovah Witnesses, Muslims) as being polytheists, but this is wrong. We believe in one God, as our confession states forthrightly: “**The Lord our God is but one only living and true God.**” That is the first statement of Article Two, which is entitled, “God and the Holy Trinity” in the Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689. We believe in One God.

But the first words of the third paragraph of this article read this way: “**In this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, the Father, the Word or Son, and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, yet the essence undivided...**” There is the statement of the Three Persons of the Holy trinity. The Bible teaches that there is One God and He manifests Himself in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The confession then speaks of how we are able to distinguish these three persons of the Holy Trinity:

... the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son; all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on him. (Article 2, Paragraph 3)

The language of our Lord in John 7:29 underscores this statement. Jesus said, “He who sent Me.” God the father is never described in the Holy Scriptures as having been “sent” by the Son or by the Holy Spirit. This distinguishes the Person of the Father from the Persons of the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is what our confession meant by the words that the persons of the Trinity are “distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations.” In other words, they relate to one another differently One to the Other. The Father sends, but is never sent. The Son is sent by the Father. The Holy Spirit is said to have been sent by both the Father and by the Son. Here we see, therefore, that their “relative” properties, that is, the manner that the three Persons of the Holy Trinity relate with one another reveals their distinction from one another, even though the three persons of the Holy Trinity is One God.

J. I. Packer (b. 1926) described this doctrine in this way:

¹² Ibid, p. 564.

The basic assertion of this doctrine is that the unity of the one God is complex. The three personal “subsistences” (as they are called) are coequal and coeternal centers of self-awareness, each being “I” in relation to two who are “you” and each partaking of the full divine essence (the “stuff” of deity, if we may dare to call it that) along with the other two. They are not three roles played by one person (that is *modalism*), nor are they three gods in a cluster (that is *tritheism*); the one God (“He”) is also, and equally, “they,” and “they” are always together and always cooperating, with the Father initiating, the Son complying, and the Spirit executing the will of both, which is His will also. This is the truth about God that was revealed through the words and works of Jesus, and that undergirds the reality of salvation as the New Testament sets forth.¹³

Robert Reymond (1932-2013) stated the doctrine of the Trinity perhaps more succinctly:

Three propositions (or doctrines) are essential to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity: (1) there is but one living and true God who is eternally and immutably indivisible (the doctrine of monotheism); (2) the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are each fully and equally God (the doctrine of the three Persons’ “sameness in divine essence”; and (3) the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are each distinct Persons (the doctrine of the three Persons’ “distinctness in subsistence”). These three concepts represent in capsule form the biblical doctrine of the Trinity.¹⁴

Now after Jesus declared that they did not know the Father, He declared that He did know Him. Jesus said,

“You both know Me, and you know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. ²⁹***But I know Him, for I am from Him, and He sent Me.***”

Matthew Henry (1662-1714) wrote of our Lord’s words:

They knew *whence* He came perhaps, and *where* He had His birth, but He will tell them what they knew not, *from whom* He came. (1.) That He did not *come of Himself*; that He did not run without sending, nor come as a private person, but with a public character. (2.) That He was sent of his Father; this is twice mentioned: *He hath sent me*. And again, “*He hath sent me*, to say what I say, and do what I do.” This He was Himself well assured of, and therefore knew that His Father would bear Him out; and it is well for us that we are assured of it too, that we may with holy confidence go to God by Him.

III. The collusion of Jesus’ enemies (7:30)

We read of the people’s desire to “take Him.” **Verse 30** reads, “***Therefore they sought to take Him; but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.***”

It would seem that there were now many more desirous of His death than just the Jewish leaders of Jerusalem, or “the Jews” as John had identified them. Here the “they” must have included not only the Jewish leaders but numbers of those Jewish worshippers in the temple who heard His assertions. “These assertions exasperated the Jews... They sought to seize or apprehend Him.”¹⁵

But their desires and efforts were thwarted because it was not in God’s time that He purposed it would occur: “***but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.***” God had decreed when and how the death of Jesus Christ would take place. “His hour” was set in the eternal decree of God determined before creation, and that appointed time was yet a future event.

¹³ J. I. Packer, **Concise Theology; A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs** (Tyndale House Publishers, 1993), p. 42.

¹⁴ Robert L. Reymond, **A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith** (Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), pp. 205f.

¹⁵ W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Expositor’s Greek New Testament*, vol. 1 (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1951), p. 766.

This idea of “His hour” is mentioned a few times in John’s Gospel. It is here in John 7:31. We will see it again in the next chapter. There we read, “These words Jesus spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one laid hands on Him, for *His hour* had not yet come” (John 8:20). But the time will come in this Gospel that this hour of our Lord will have arrived. We read in John 13:1, “Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that *His hour* had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.”

But that hour was yet in the future, at least six months off in the future. Until then these people were powerless to hinder or stop the Lord Jesus from accomplishing what His Father had sent Him to do.

This saying aroused varied reactions. On account of it (“therefore”) His enemies sought to arrest Him. But God is over all. His purpose is worked out. Men cannot interfere with it. The time for Jesus’ death was not yet and His enemies could not bring that time forward no matter how they might try.¹⁶

We should take comfort of this truth that our days are in His hands. God appointed the day of your birth and the day of your death. And we need not fear that event, if we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The writer to the Hebrew Christians wrote of this.

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. (Heb. 2:14)

We need not fear what lies before us in this world, for two reasons: First, it will only get really bad when “our hour” has come, that is, when God has appointed whatever is to take place that it is the time for it to take place. Until then, we may be assured that the Lord will preserve us. And secondly, when whatever comes does come, it cannot and will not ultimately have any bearing whatsoever of our spiritual and eternal well-being. We are invincible in this respect: “We may boldly say: ‘The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’” (Heb. 13:6). The answer is ultimately “Nothing at all of any eternal significance.”

Our Lord Jesus had foretold great calamities that would come upon His disciples in the soon destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. But the message that He gave them was to “Fear not.” Here is **Luke 21:10ff**:

Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. ¹¹There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. ¹²But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name’s sake. ¹³This will be your opportunity to bear witness. ¹⁴Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, ¹⁵for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. ¹⁶You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. ¹⁷You will be hated by all for my name’s sake. ¹⁸***But not a hair of your head will perish.*** ¹⁹By your endurance you will gain your lives. (Luke 21:10-19)

IV. The concession of many of the people (7:31)

Even as we read of the hostile and evil intentions of the people of Jerusalem toward our Savior, we read this of others that were present:

“And many of the people believed in Him, and said, ‘When the Christ comes, will He do more signs than these which this Man has done?’”

¹⁶ Leon Morris, **The Gospel According to John** (William B. Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 414.

There were those coming to believe on Him. No, their faith does not seem to have been based on a great deal of substantive information. But faith did characterize them. They were convinced that Jesus was the Christ by the many “signs” He had wrought in their midst. These “believers” suggest that God was doing both a work of redemption as well as a work of judgment among the people. And this is what the Lord Jesus is always doing in history. He is as the great winnower of the peoples of the earth, separating His “wheat” from the “chaff” of unbelievers. Yes, there will be a great separation of the last day, but that separation is taking place throughout history. He is doing so today among us. He is separating His people, true believers, from all others, who listen to these things with little attention, little interest, and little regard. Or, if they do listen, it gets them upset. They become angry when they learn what it is we believe and what we dare teach our people. They regard themselves as advanced and civilized and we are but errant and ignorant. But more. To them we are deceiving and being deceived. But the Lord is doing a work, a great work of salvation throughout this world, and He is doing some of that work among us, and we thank Him for it.

Is there anyone here who has yet to confess Him openly, to own Him as your own Lord and Savior? What are you waiting for? You have far more evidence to substantiate everything that is claimed by us than did these people who “believed on Him.” Your believing family members have testified to you. This church has testified of the truth of Jesus Christ to you. These people believed and confessed Jesus Christ with far less information and understanding that you have presently. We read of them, “And many of the people believed in Him, and said, ‘When the Christ comes, will He do more signs than these which this Man has done?’” Can you do less than they? Stand forward and confess Christ to another, to me, or to your parents. Stand forward and own Him as your Savior. You will not only be blessed now, but will be so eternally.

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God,
be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen. (1 Tim. 1:17)
