

G R A C E

Reformed Baptist Church

Soli ◇ Deo ◇ Gloria

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Sermon Notes

The Feast of Tabernacles

John 7:1-9

June 26, 2005

Verse 1

- “After these things” refers to an indefinite amount of time, and does not mean “immediately after these things”; but, rather, it sets the sequence of events with respect to the events in Chapter 6
- “was walking in Galilee” is in the imperfect tense, and therefore, should likely be translated, “continued to walk around.”
- The reason Jesus “continued to walk around” in Galilee is because the Jews [in Judea] sought to kill Him.”
 - This is a reference to John 5:18, “For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.”
 - Typically in John, the term “the Jews” refers to those from Judea [the Judeans], and more specifically, the Jewish authorities [the Pharisees and Sadducees (of the Sanhedrin)] in Judea
 - Jesus spent about one (1) year in Galilee. This was the year in which Matthew, Mark, and Luke (the Synoptic Gospels) focus the most attention on.
- Jesus was “unwilling to walk in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him.”
 - Jesus was fully prepared to die when “His time came”; however, as He will state later, His “time had not yet fully come.”
 - Further, as Matthew Henry stated, “it was not through fear and cowardice that he declined it, but in *prudence*, because his hour was not yet come.”

- As John Calvin stated, “it was not right for Him to rush headlong into danger,” but that also, “He did not turn aside a hair’s-breadth from the course of His duty.”
- In other words, fear did not prevent Him from going into Judea, but, rather, obedience to the will of the Father [i.e. the course of His duty].
- Let us never forget that Jesus was never motivated by fear or concern for His personal well-being, but rather by obedience to the Father’s will.

Verse 2

- Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near.
 - See also John 2:13
 - John the Evangelist reveals Jesus Christ as the **PERFECT AND ULTIMATE FULFILLMENT OF THE JEWISH FEASTS**

- John, specifically, refers to the Feast of Booths [the Feast of Tabernacles] here.
- John 6 took place during Passover; John 7 during the Feast of Tabernacles. These are the first and the last of the seven Jewish feasts, respectively. There was about six months separating the two festivals, thus revealing the approximate time interval between the two chapters.
- The Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated from 15 to 21 of Tishri, which fell in September or October (see Leviticus 23:34).
- In A.D. 32 [possibly the date of John 7], the Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated on September 10-17.
- This year, 2005, it will be celebrated on October 18-25.
- The Feast of Tabernacles was instituted in the Old Testament, and was closely linked with the harvest of grapes and olives [NOT grain, which was reaped between April and June]: Exodus 23:16; Leviticus 23:33, 39; Deuteronomy 16:13.
 - O.T. References to the Feast of Tabernacles: Leviticus 23:33-43; Numbers 29:12-39; Nehemiah 8:13-18; Hosea 12:9; Zechariah 14:16-19
- Leon Morris describes the significance of the Feast:

Tabernacles was the great feast held when the [grape and olive] harvest was finally gathered in...Exodus 23:16 calls it “the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in your crops from the field.” There are references to the feast as lasting for seven days (Leviticus 23:34), and also to the eighth day (as in Leviticus 23:36), from which the conclusion is drawn that an original feast of seven days had been extended by one day [A special assembly took place on the eighth day of the feast, the 22 of Tishri]. Together with the note of thanksgiving for harvest, the feast commemorated the goodness of God to his people during the wilderness wanderings. The tents, or leafy bowers, which gave the feast its name, were erected in the courts of houses or on the roofs. Those in rural areas often built makeshift structures of light branches and leaves to live in for the week (hence “booths” or “tabernacles”). One scholar has noted that the distinctions between rich and poor were largely obliterated for the duration of the feast [because of the “tents” in which everyone lived]. Another theologian referred to the feast as “the Jewish camping festival” (though this translation obscures the fact that the feast had deep religious significance).

- The Feast of Tabernacles was also known for “a water-drawing rite and a lamp-lighting rite to which Jesus quite clearly refers (cf. 7:37ff.; 8:12).” D.A. Carson

- Jewish historian Josephus noted that the Feast of Tabernacles was “especially sacred and important by the Hebrews,” and “this is a festival observed by us with special care.” He concluded that Tabernacles was “the greatest and holiest feast of the Jews.”
- Thus, the Feast of Tabernacles was not simply “a Festival,” it was “the Festival.”
- John’s reference to the Feast of Tabernacles reveals that Jesus Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of the Feast. John 1:14 states, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt [tabernacled] among us...”
 - Many modern-day believers look to the ultimate fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles in a *future* Messianic, millennial reign. Read **Zechariah 14:16-19**.
 - Yet, an understanding of the Person and Nature of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ [I believe] prevents such an interpretation.
 - “Gospel-worship is here represented by the *keeping of the feast of tabernacles*, for the sake of those two great graces which were in a special manner *acted and signified* in that feast- [1] contempt of the world, and [2] joy in God, Nehemiah 8:17. The life of a good Christian is a constant *feast of tabernacles*, and, in all acts of devotion, we must retire from the world and rejoice in the Lord. We must worship as in that feast...we must go to Christ our temple with all our offerings, for in him only our *spiritual sacrifices* are acceptable to God, 1 Peter 2:5.”
Matthew Henry

Verses 3-5

- Jesus’ brothers tell Him to “Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, who Yourself to the world?’ For not even His brothers were believing in Him.”
 - Several points should be noted in these Verses:
 1. The word “go” (“go into Judea”) is in the Imperative Mood, meaning, it is a command. In other words, the brothers of Jesus have the audacity to command the Son of Man as to how He should conduct His ministry.
 2. Yet, the irony here is that Jesus’ brothers, at this time, **are not even true believers**. However, it seems that Jesus’ brothers do, in fact, become true believers following His resurrection [Acts 1:14; 1 Corinthians 15:7].
 3. The brothers tell Jesus to go **to Judea**. It is the Feast of Tabernacles. Thousands of people will be in Judea [specifically, Jerusalem]. This would be the perfect time for Jesus to get the most exposure, His brothers reason.

4. Also, Jerusalem, the capital, is in Judea. This is the seat of power. The Jewish leadership is there, and if Jesus reveals Himself powerfully to the leadership [during the Feast of Tabernacles, nonetheless], it is likely that others will follow, His brothers reason. A possible analogy would be Washington, D.C., during the Inauguration of a President.
5. Also, and most significantly, Jerusalem, in Judea is the location of the Temple. The Temple [it is difficult for us to realize this today] was the center ancient Judaism. If Jesus could prove Himself there [in front of thousands of ‘religious people’], surely that would be sufficient to win thousands of additional followers.
6. Jesus’ brothers suggest that His work in Galilee is “in secret” [Verse 4], and that He needs to reveal Himself publicly [i.e. in Judea].
7. Jesus’ brothers tell Him to go to Judea so that His disciples may see His works. This is, possibly, a reference to John 6:66, where His “disciples” left Him.
8. The brothers believe that if Jesus were to perform miracles, then those in Judea would believe in Him, on the basis of the signs and wonders. However, this reveals a fundamental, fatal flaw in His brothers’ logic.
9. Signs, miracles, and wonders NEVER evoke genuine faith (John 2:23-25; 4:48). Genuine faith is a gift of God given through the power of the Holy Spirit and the instrumentality of the Word of God. Also, true faith comes, not by sight, but, rather, through hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ.

* Signs, miracles, and wonders were **a witness to and authentication of the truthfulness of the testimony** of Jesus and His apostles. Again, they were never intended to [or have the power to] create faith.
10. His brothers state that He should show Himself to “the world.” [Obviously, here, it is not every single individual in the entire world]. As D.A. Carson notes, in this context, they simply mean that Jesus should show Himself “to everybody.”
11. His brothers’ request reveals the fleshly nature of their desires. It is as though they are offering the most logical, natural suggestion – what **they would do** if they were Jesus – seek the glory and praise of men. See, here, in Jesus’ actions that
12. Also, the brothers may reason that Jesus’ miracles may give them, His brothers, special attention in Jerusalem, as well.
13. The words of His brothers also reveals a challenge to Him, a hint of doubt on their part...**If You do these things...**”

14. John the Evangelist states that “not even His brothers were believing in Him.”

It is certainly possible that His brothers had faith; however, it was not **in Him**.

This past week, at the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting, Dr. Albert Mohler, President of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary referred to an ongoing study conducted by Dr. Christian Smith of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. This is the largest study ever conducted on adolescent faith.

The study has revealed that only a very small percentage of young Americans embrace the New Age movement or other forms of organized paganism.

However, the study has also found that for millions and millions of Western adolescents, their faith “has no obvious object” and is “an amorphous spirituality known as moralistic therapeutic deism.” In this form of deism, so many adolescents believe that God wants them to “feel good about themselves, be healthy and have a good self esteem.”

How is this similar to Jesus’ brothers?

They, like “the disciples” of Chapter 6, were interested in what Jesus Christ could do for them.

Yet, biblical faith is faith in Christ – not simply agreeing with His teachings, but faith and dependence in His perfect life, death, and resurrection. In His character and nature [the Holy One of God] and His status – the Son of God, the second member of the Trinity.

As Dr. Mohler stated, “faith is God’s gift with a specific referent.”

15. Ironically, it **will** be in Jerusalem where Jesus will, in a most dramatic fashion, show himself to the world. However, it will not be in the glory of signs and wonders, but, rather, in the shame of the Cross. In John 12:32, Jesus states, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.”

Verse 6

- Jesus, then, stated, “My time is not yet here, but your time is always opportune.”
 - This is similar to Jesus response to His mother in John 2:4, “My hour has not yet come.”

- As Andreas Kostenberger states, “Jesus’ situation is different from that of his unbelieving relatives: what they do is inconsequential; Jesus is a marked man who must plan His steps.”
- Further, Jesus lived His life – every single second – in complete obedience to the will of the Father. He had no idle, purposeless time...unlike His unbelieving brothers. Every one of His steps was in perfect accordance with the will of the Father.
- Matthew Henry states, “every minute of Christ’s time was precious, and had its own particular business allotted to it. He had some work yet to do in Galilee before he left the country.”
- Read Ecclesiastes 3:1. The words of Jesus, here, should give new meaning to this text. Also, what does this verse state about the nature [or frequency] of “divine appointments?”
- **What does this say about our use of our “free” time?**
- There is a sense that as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, we give up some of our “rights,” and submit to His will for our lives. In a similar way, Jesus, unlike His brothers, was “under special restraint,” and therefore remained in Galilee.

Verse 7

- Jesus now, makes a powerfully indicting statement, “The world cannot hate you...”
- Why? Because they are part of it, unlike Jesus, who “testifies of it, that its deeds are evil.”
- This is why the world hated Jesus, and it will hate anyone who is like Christ.
- Further, this is why Scriptures states that “all who desire to live a godly life will be persecuted.”
- **Does the world hate you?**

Verses 8-9

- Finally, Jesus tells His disciples to go to the Feast.
- Jesus states, “My time has not yet fully come.”
- Note: Jesus is NOT stating that He will not go to the Feast at all, but, He is stating that He will go up on HIS time, not theirs. For, He does go to Jerusalem later.
- When He does, however, “He went up to given certain teaching, not to observe the feast in the manner of a pilgrim...but as a Prophet.