

John 7:1-14

Introduction

After the opening prologue (1:1-18), John's gospel begins with John the Baptist baptizing in Bethany beyond the Jordan (1:19-28), but as soon as we're "handed off" from John the Baptist to Jesus (1:29-42), were told that "the next day [Jesus] purposed to go to Galilee" (1:43). It was in Galilee that Nathanael, at least, and perhaps also Phillip had their decisive encounters with Jesus (1:43-51). It was in Cana of Galilee that Jesus changed the water into wine and manifested His glory (2:1-11).

After staying a few days longer in Capernaum (still in Galilee), we're told that "Jesus **went up** to Jerusalem" (in Judea) because "the Passover of the Jews was near" (2:13). In John's Gospel, this is Jesus' first recorded visit to Jerusalem, which we know is the political and religious center of Jewish life. It was on this visit to Jerusalem that Jesus "cleansed" the temple (2:13-25) and had a night conversation with Nicodemus (3:1-15), after which He went out into the Judean countryside and was baptizing (3:22).

To this point in John's Gospel things have been fairly calm. In chapter one, when "**the Jews**" sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to question John the Baptist there was evidence of spiritual blindness, but no decided hostility (1:19-28). In chapter two, when "**the Jews**" questioned Jesus' authority for cleansing the temple we find the same thing: spiritual blindness, but still no open hostility (2:18-21). Our first real hint of potential trouble comes at the beginning of chapter four:

- John 4:1-3 — Therefore when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John... He left Judea and went away again into Galilee.

Compared to Judea, Galilee is beginning already to feel like a haven of peace and safety. It was on His way back to Galilee that Jesus passed through Samaria and had His conversation with the woman at the well (4:4-42). And then it was in Cana of Galilee that Jesus healed the royal official's son (4:43-54). John says:

- John 4:54 — This is again a second sign that Jesus performed when He had come **out of Judea into Galilee**.

We don't know how long this stay in Galilee lasted, but in chapter five we're told that Jesus "**went up**" for the second time to Jerusalem (in Judea) because there was a feast of the Jews (5:1). It was on this second visit to Jerusalem that Jesus healed the lame man at the pool of Bethesda and told him to pick up his mat and walk on the Sabbath (5:2-9). And so we read in chapter five:

- John 5:15-18 — For this reason **the Jews** were *persecuting* Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." 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.

It's in the context of this increasingly open hostility toward Jesus that we have His first public discourse where He speaks of His unique relationship with the Father and of the Father's witness to Him as the one whom He has sent (5:19-47). We can only imagine how this must have confirmed the Jews in their hatred of Jesus, so it's perhaps with a feeling of relief that we read at the beginning of chapter six:

➤ John 6:1 — After these things Jesus *went away* to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.

Compared to Jerusalem and Judea, Galilee now feels synonymous with peace and safety. Galilee is far away from Judea and even separated from Judea by Samaria. It's in Galilee that Jesus feeds the five thousand right about the time of another Passover Feast (6:1-14), and then comes to the disciples walking on the sea (6:15-21), and then delivers His second discourse at the synagogue in Capernaum (the Bread of Life discourse; 6:22-58). Even here in Galilee, we find opposition from "the Jews," but at least there's no one seeking to arrest Jesus or kill Him. Nevertheless, many of those who had attached themselves to Jesus as His disciples were abandoning Him (6:59-65).

➤ John 1:11 (cf. 3:19, 32) — He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

And so we come, now, to chapter seven.

I. John 7:1 — After these things Jesus was walking in Galilee, for He was unwilling to walk in Judea because **the Jews** were *seeking to kill Him*.

Notice how John emphasizes that Jesus was "unwilling" to walk in Judea. The implication seems to be that Judea should "logically" have been the very place that Jesus was "walking" because Judea was the home of Jerusalem and the temple. Judea was the true center of Jewish political and national and religious life. As the Jewish Messiah, shouldn't Jesus be walking in Judea, the home of the Jewish capital?

But if He's unwilling to walk in Judea and if He spends these days walking, instead, in the comparative peace and safety of Galilee—*why* is this? John answers, "*because* the Jews were seeking to kill Him." What does this mean? Is Jesus afraid? Is He seeking to "hide" from His calling? That's what it could look like. But we already know from the things we've heard Jesus say to this point that this can't be the case.

➤ John 2:19 (cf. 2:22) — Jesus answered [the Jews], "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up [speaking of the temple of His body]."

➤ John 3:14-15 — As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.

➤ John 6:51 — I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.

- John 6:64 (cf. 6:70-71) — “There are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him.

Jesus knows what the future holds for Him; Jesus knows what He has come to do and to accomplish; and yet He refuses to walk in Judea **because the Jews were seeking to kill Him**. We go on to read in verses two:

II. John 7:2 — Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near.

Jesus’ first trip to Jerusalem was occasioned by the Feast of Passover (2:13). Jesus’ second trip to Jerusalem was occasioned by another “feast of the Jews” (5:1). When Jesus fed the five thousand, we know that “the Passover, the feast of the Jews was [again] near” (6:4). John doesn’t tell us if Jesus went up to this Passover or not, but that would have been in the spring (March/April). If the Feast of Booths is now “near” (September/October), then six months have now passed since the feeding of the five thousand – six months of Jesus walking with His disciples in Galilee.

“Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near.” Already we might be wondering: Will Jesus go up to Jerusalem for *this* feast? Will Jesus go up to Jerusalem, when the Jews are still seeking to kill Him?

III. John 7:3-4 — Therefore His brothers said to Him, “Leave here and go to Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. For no one does a thing in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world.”

Jesus’ brothers know very well the claims Jesus has been making, and yet so far His claims have not fit their ideas of the Messiah. In particular, the Messiah was to be a preeminently *public* figure – the one who delivers and rescues His people. So why is Jesus spending all His time in Galilee? Why is He apparently making no preparations to travel with the caravans of pilgrims to Jerusalem for the Feast of Booths? Whatever Jesus might be claiming, both in His teaching and in the signs that He performs, His refusal to walk “publicly” in Judea seems to His brothers to directly contradict those claims.

“No one does a thing in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly.” If Jesus is who He says He is, then He ought to be walking in Jerusalem, He ought to be performing His works in Jerusalem, He ought to be showing Himself to the world. Jesus’ brothers aren’t secretly hoping for His arrest and execution in Jerusalem. That’s not why they’re prodding Him to go there – so He can get in trouble with the religious authorities. They’re just assuming that if Jesus wanted to (especially considering His miracle-working power) He could easily get all the support He needs from the people, and maybe even from some of the religious authorities. From their perspective, there needn’t be any danger at all for Jesus in going up to Jerusalem. From their perspective, if Jesus doesn’t go up to Jerusalem and show Himself to the world, He obviously must not be the Messiah – certainly not the Messiah they’re looking for. John says:

IV. John 7:5 — For not even His brothers were believing in Him.

The brothers challenge Jesus to leave Galilee and go to Judea and show Himself to the world. Only in this way, they say, can He prove to them and to the world (the whole Jewish people) that He is the Messiah. If He will do this, they say, then what real danger can there possibly be? If “*the Jews*,” on the other hand, are wishing for Jesus to come to Jerusalem, this is only because they hope for better opportunities to arrest Him or even to have Jesus killed. So what will Jesus do now? Will He go up to Jerusalem and show Himself to the world?

V. John 7:6 — So Jesus said to them, “My time is not yet here [not yet present], but your time is always opportune [always ready].”

What does Jesus mean by “My time” (*kairos*)? What “time” is He talking about? In John, whenever Jesus speaks of “My hour” (*hora*), He’s always speaking of that climactic redemptive “hour” when He accomplishes redemption through His death, burial, and resurrection and ascension to sit in glory at the right hand of God (cf. 4:21, 23; 5:25, 28; 12:23; 17:1). So later in this same chapter, John will say:

- John 7:30 (cf. 8:20) — They were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His *hour* had not yet come.
- John 12:27 — Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, “Father, save Me from this *hour*”? But for this purpose I came to this *hour*.”
- John 13:1 — Jesus knowing that His *hour* had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.

Here, however, Jesus doesn’t speak of His “hour” (*hora*), but of His “time” (*kairos*). Jesus can’t be referring to the time of His sufferings and death and resurrection because in the context this would mean nothing to His brothers and also because Jesus compares his own “time” with the “time” of His brothers (Jesus never compares His own “hour” with the “hour” of others). So the “time” Jesus must be referring to here is His “time” to go up openly and publicly to the feast at Jerusalem. “My time [to go up openly and publicly to Jerusalem — to show Myself to the world, as you put it] is not yet here, but your time [to go up openly and publicly to Jerusalem] is always opportune.” And why is this? Jesus explains in verse seven:

VI. John 7:7 — The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil.

Remember how optimistically Jesus’ brothers spoke about “the world”?—“If you do these things, show Yourself to the world [and then at least the vast majority of that Jewish “world” in Jerusalem will believe in you].” But now see how Jesus speaks about “the world” and even about Himself in entirely different categories than those in which His brothers are thinking: “The *world*,” He says, “cannot hate you, but it hates Me *because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil*.” What Jesus seems to be saying is that when His “time” *does* come to “show Himself to the world” (to go up openly and publicly to Jerusalem as Israel’s Messiah) this will be the very thing that brings about His own death at the hands of that “world.”

There couldn't be two more contrary or opposite views. "Show yourself to the world and they will believe," say Jesus' brothers. And Jesus answers: "When My time comes to show Myself to the world, this will be the very thing that brings about My death at the hands of that world.

Your time is always opportune (always ready) because the world cannot hate you (you are still of the world) and because you were not sent from the Father to testify about the world that its deeds are evil. But "My time," Jesus says, is not yet here. And can you see why? Can you see the relationship, now, between Jesus' "time (*kairos*)" (and by implication all of His "times") and Jesus' "hour (*hora*)"? My time is not yet here (My time to go up publicly and openly to Jerusalem and show Myself to the world) precisely because My "hour" has not yet come (the hour of my sufferings and death). "Therefore," Jesus says:

VII. John 7:8 — Go up to the feast yourselves [publicly and openly]; I do not go up to *this* feast [publicly and openly] *because* My time [for that] has not yet been filled up."¹

When Jesus says, "I do not go up to *this* feast," we understand that there's another feast to which He *will* go up publicly and openly, and at which He *will* show Himself to the world – because then the "time" for that will have been "filled up." And it's this "time," when it comes, that will lead on directly to that final "hour" of Jesus' sufferings and death at the hands of the world to which He has shown Himself.

The whole life of Jesus was filled with "times" appointed by His Father, but in the end, all of these "times" were determined by that final "hour" for which He had come into the world. Therefore, when Jesus was walking in Galilee, being "unwilling to walk in Judea *because the Jews were seeking to kill Him*," He wasn't running away from that hour. He was, even then, living entirely *in the light* of that final hour. And it's with this reality fixed in our minds that we must also read verses 9-10:

VIII. John 7:9–10 — Having said these things to [His brothers], [Jesus] stayed in Galilee. But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as if, in secret.

In John's Gospel this is Jesus' third—and also His last—journey from the relative peace and safety of Galilee to the lion's den of Judea. This is the third—and last—time that John tells us Jesus "*went up*" (*anabaino*) from Galilee to Judea. We read in chapter two:

➤ **John 2:13** — The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus **went up** [*anabaino*; (from Galilee)] to Jerusalem.

And then in chapter five:

➤ **John 5:1** — After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus **went up** [*anabaino*; (from Galilee)] to Jerusalem.

¹ Cf. In light of the other occurrences of the perfect passive form of *pleroo* in the NT, "filled up" seems to be the best translation as opposed to "fulfilled" (cf. Mk. 1:15; Lk. 4:21; John 3:29; 16:24; 17:13; Rom. 1:29; 15:14; 2 Cor. 7:4; Gal. 5:14; Phil. 1:11; 4:18; Col. 2:10; 1 Jn. 1:4; 2 Jn. 12; Rev. 3:2).

And then for the last time here in chapter seven:

- John 7:9–10 — Having said these things to [His brothers], [Jesus] stayed in Galilee. But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also **went up** [*anabaino*], not publicly, but as if, in secret.

He may not go up to this feast to show Himself to the world, but He does go up, “as if in secret.” Why? Because He knows that *this* is the “time” (*kairos*) that has now come—this is the “time” that has even now been “filled up.” And this “time,” too, is ultimately “determined” by that final “hour” for which He came into the world. Jesus won’t return again to Galilee until He comes to His disciples on the shores of the Sea of Galilee after His sufferings, and death, and resurrection (21:1).

From this point on, in John, there will be a constant undercurrent of danger – of hostility and hatred on the part of the Jews toward Jesus, punctuated by attempts to seize Him, or even to kill Him. A little later on in this chapter, John tells us:

- John 7:32 — The chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to seize Him.

In chapter eight:

- John 8:59 — Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.

And then in chapter ten:

- John 10:31, 39–40 — The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him... Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him, and He eluded their grasp. And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing, and He was staying there.

This retreat across the Jordan was only a brief respite before Jesus returned again to Judea when He heard that Lazarus was dying (11:1-7). After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, John tells us:

- John 11:53 — So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.

And then we read something that reminds us of what we just saw this morning in chapter seven:

- John 11:54 — Therefore Jesus no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews, but went away from there to the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there He stayed with the disciples.

He stayed in Ephraim until six days before the Feast of Passover, when Jesus came again to Bethany, and from Bethany rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, with the crowds all following Him and shouting: “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel” (12:1, 12-15). When Jesus rode into Jerusalem openly and publicly at the Feast of Passover, six months after this Feast of Booths in chapter seven, He did so because His time had

come – because the time for this entrance, when He would “show Himself to the world,” was now “filled up.”

The life of Jesus was filled with “times” appointed by His Father, and in the end, all of these “times” were determined by that final “hour” for which He had come into the world. Jesus lived the whole of His earthly ministry entirely in the light of that final “hour” – so that even His refusal to walk in Judea where the Jews were seeking to kill Him, and even His going up to Judea, as it were, in secret, and even His temporary retreats, and even His “triumphal” entry into Jerusalem were *all* just His next purposeful and obedient steps *toward* the cross.

As this section began with a reference to the Jews seeking to kill Jesus, so it also ends with a reference to “the Jews” and another reminder of things to come.

IX. John 7:11–13 — So the Jews were seeking Him at the feast and were saying, “Where is that man?” There was much murmuring [whispering] among the crowds concerning Him; some were saying, “He is a good man”; others were saying, “No, on the contrary, He leads the people astray.” Yet no one was speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews.

Jesus lived the whole of His earthly ministry in the light of His final hour, and that also explains what we read next, in verse fourteen:

X. John 7:14 — But *when it was now the midst of the feast* Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach.

Conclusion

Let’s not forget as we work our way through John that the Jesus who heals, and who teaches, and who shows compassion, and who daily confronts the constant unbelief of the world—even the unbelief of His own brothers—is all along purposefully and obediently moving *toward* the cross where He will suffer and die for the world He came to save. Let’s not forget this as we’re working our way through John, and so let us love this one who gave Himself—even the whole of His life (all of His “times,” until His final “hour”)—for us.

And though we may not *know* the times appointed for us (cf. Ps. 31:14; 139:16) as Jesus did, may we still...

➤ **Hebrews 12:1–2** — ...lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

May we daily (in all our “times”) be willing to deny ourselves and take up our own cross and *follow Him* (Lk. 9:23).