

That You May Continue to Believe...



AN Exposition of the gospel of John

Streams of Living Water John 7:1-53

There are a number of scholars that think that chapters 5 and 6 are misplaced. They want to switch their location in the text¹. There is a reason for that. Part of the reason is that there is no verse at the end of five that says Jesus left Judea and went back to Galilee. In one chapter He's in Judea; in the next chapter He's in Galilee. Those that want to switch the two chapters want some sort of transitional verse to get Him from one place to another.

The other reason they want to switch the chapters is because they want to link the beginning of chapter seven to the end of chapter five.² Here's what I mean. At the end of five, the Jews in Judea or Jerusalem demonstrated their intention to kill Jesus. But the beginning of chapter six, Jesus is in Galilee far away from those that hate Him. If you switched six and five, you could go from a verse like...

^{NIV} **John 5:18**...For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

To a verse like...

^{NIV} **John 7:1**...After this, Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to take his life.

You can see how some scholars would think that that might connect the dots better, at least in terms of relating His movements back and forth. Now what would your response be to that kind of discussion? How would you answer someone that argued for relocating the two chapters?

I think the best argument would be, **“That there are no ancient manuscripts that have that order³. If there were, it would be an interesting theory. But since there aren’t any, such an action becomes a highly speculative exercise in which we no longer are trying to understand the text as it lays but rather we are trying to improve the text to meet out twentieth century expectation of how a story should be told.”⁴**

I especially want to make that point in view of the fact that commentators do not seem to mind at all reframing the text to suit their own fancy of how they think it ought to have been written. Its one thing to look at the manuscripts and try to figure out what makes the most sense. It is something else altogether to make stuff up where no manuscript takes us. Now, having said that let’s look at verses one through five of chapter seven.

^{NIV} **John 7:1**...After this, Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to take his life. ² But when the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near, ³Jesus' brothers said to him, **"You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do.** ⁴ **No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are**

doing these things, show yourself to the world." ⁵ For even his own brothers did not believe in him.

The first thing that I would say is that this verse makes perfect sense right where it is at. Jesus had experienced especially vicious opposition in Judea. Now when I use the word Judea I mean the province that contained Jerusalem. In case it gets confusing to you, it might be helpful to think of Judea and Galilee as large counties or perhaps something more like small states separated from each other by only a few miles. Galilee was to the north and Judea to the south. The Judeans thought of themselves as cosmopolitan, devout and educated and they thought of the Galileans as uneducated, unsophisticated hayseeds. They mocked the Galileans for their lack of education and even for the way they talked. (Cf. ^{NIV} **Matthew 26:73**)

Now, I don't want you to get the wrong idea. By chapter seven, Jesus was even beginning to face opposition in Galilee. Still, it was His home turf and He decided that He would spend more time in Galilee because of the violent opposition He faced in Judea.

But His brothers objected. They wanted Him to go up to Jerusalem and show the crowds there more of His miracles. They particularly wanted Him to go at the Feast of Tabernacles. Now, there are a couple of reasons for that.

First, Tabernacles was *the* feast of the year. It was the most beloved feast of Jesus' day. It was more popular than Passover; it was more popular than Pentecost. It was a joyous feast. I'll talk more about what all it involved a little later. But for right now, just remember it was the most anticipated feast of the year. It was also

the most heavily attended feast of the year. Jews, from all over the ancient world, attended Tabernacles. It occurred in September/October and was in one respect, a celebration of God's bountiful harvest. In that regard, it was sort of like our Thanksgiving. Anyway, it was the most heavily attended of the feasts because of when it occurred. Passover was too early in the spring and thus a dangerous time for sea travel. Pentecost was basically at the height of summer thus making it a tortuously hot trip. Tabernacles occurred after the break in the heat, after the harvest and at a time when sea travel was as safe as it ever got in the ancient world.

And people came from all over the ancient world to attend Tabernacles. They came from Greece and Italy, from Spain and from Africa. They came from Egypt, from Asia Minor and from Babylon. Jews from all over the world came and paid their tithes and rejoiced in God's goodness and then went back out into the world. But we'll talk more about that and the symbolism associated with the celebratory rituals of the feast a little later on.

One thing you ought to notice is the logic that His brothers used to urge Him to go up to Jerusalem. They presented to Him a logical, intelligently argued reason for going. John recorded them saying, **"You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world."**

Do you get their thinking? **"You really ought to go up to Jerusalem. It would be really beneficial for you to go up and get the recognition you deserve. After all, you can't expect to become a national figure here in Galilee."** It was, of course,

disingenuous on their part. They weren't really interested in His well being at all. In some respects their request was similar to Satan's temptation. **"Go up and be all that you can be."**

But, He had already rejected the idea of being made a king. He was going to show Himself to the world but not in the manner that either the world or His brothers expected. You will remember that John has made it a point to remind that Jesus knew what was in men, even His own brothers: James, Joseph, Simon and Judas (^{NIV} **Matthew 13:55**). John gives in verse 5, their underlying basis for wanting Him to present Himself.

^{NIV} **John 7:5**...For (γὰρ) even his own brothers did not believe in him.

Now, it's not entirely clear to me how they could have failed to believe. They had seen His miracles. They knew what He could do. Obviously, they knew His wonderful character. Still, they did not believe that He was the ground and source of eternal life. It is because of that that I am not exactly sure how His presenting Himself in Jerusalem would help them. Maybe they thought it would bring them notoriety or even financial reward. Anyway, Jesus was not fooled by their request. Look how He answers them in verse 6.

^{NIV} **John 7:6**... Therefore Jesus told them, **"The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right. ⁷ The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil. ⁸ You go to the Feast. I am not yet going up to this Feast, because for me the right time has not yet come."**

You remember from an earlier chapter that Jesus only does what the Father wills; He only does what the Father shows Him (^{NIV} **John 5:19**). Besides, the world can

ignore them because they have no insight into the motivations of the world. But He does. He understands and judges rightly and the world hates Him for it.

^{NIV} **John 2:24**...But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men.

At any rate, He stayed behind for a few days. Look at verse 9.

^{NIV} **John 7:9**...Having said this, he stayed in Galilee. ¹⁰ However, after his brothers had left for the Feast, he went also, not publicly, but in secret. ¹¹ Now at the Feast the Jews were watching for him and asking, "**Where is that man?**" ¹² Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, "**He is a good man.**" Others replied, "**No, he deceives the people.**" ¹³ But no one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the Jews.

Jesus held back in the shadows. Now we must not think He was disguised or anything like that. It wasn't Jesus' looks that gave Him away. It was His words. He was holding back. Still, they were looking for Him and their opinions were all over the place. The thing that is clear is that whatever the people actually thought or believed about Him was held in check by fear of the Jews. Look at verse 14...

^{NIV} **John 7:14**...Not until halfway through the Feast did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach. ¹⁵ The Jews were amazed and asked, "**How did this man get such learning without having studied?**"

Now the Feast of Tabernacles was eight days long. The first two days were treated like Sabbath days and the so were the last two. But the middle three days were only half-days, at least in terms of public obligation. During that time people milled about and caught up on fellowship and instruction and even gossip. The text says that about halfway through the feast, Jesus revealed His presence there. He went up into the temple area, probably into Solomon's porch or the Court of Women, and began to instruct the people. The Judeans were

amazed by Jesus ability and wisdom. Remember, I told you earlier that the Judeans in particular regarding the Galileans as hayseeds or bumpkins. As far as the Judeans were concerned, there was only one kind of education and only one place to receive it. To them the only education that mattered was a theological education. Which, of course, is true. To them the only place to receive such an education was in one of the rabbinical schools in Jerusalem. Which, of course, was not true.

When they heard Jesus, he amazed them. They were amazed that He was so...so bright. They were amazed that He possessed such insight and wisdom in the Scripture. They were even more amazed that He was a Galilean and had not been educated in any traditional, theological sense.⁵ He responded to their amazement in verse 16.

^{NIV} John 7:16...Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. ¹⁷ If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. ¹⁸ He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him. ¹⁹ Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?"

Bishop Westcott writes:

The marvel was that Jesus showed Himself familiar with the literary methods of the time, which were supposed to be confined to the scholars of the popular teachers. He did this even though He had never studied in any of the great rabbinical schools (mh. memaqhk,w,j). Christ was in the eyes of the Jews a merely self-taught enthusiast. They marveled at His success, but they did not agree to His claims. The Lord's reply met the difficulty of the questioners. His teaching was not self-originated but derived from a divine Master; infinitely greater than the popular Rabbis. And it had a twofold attestation—an inward criterion and an

outward criterion; the first from its essential character, and the second from the character of Him who delivered it. Anyone who was in harmony with the will of God could not but recognize the source of the teaching.⁶

I love that and I love Christ's answer to His objectors. I think it is interesting that He was not willing to simply answer their question. He did say that He was taught not as they were but at the very knee of God. But He went beyond that and added that last little line that line that incensed them so much. **"Why are you trying to kill Me?"** It is clear that He was trying to provoke their thinking. Now many of the pilgrims there in Jerusalem for Tabernacles would have had absolutely no idea what Jesus was talking about. Still, Jesus included them with the Judeans and the Pharisees because they followed Pharisaic teaching and their bidding⁷. Notice, how the crowd Pharisees and pilgrims alike responded to the charge that they were trying to kill Him.

NIV John 7:20... "You are demon-possessed," the crowd answered. "Who is trying to kill you?"

But Jesus didn't let up. Instead He went right to the heart of their anger towards Him

NIV John 7:21... Jesus said to them, "I did one miracle, and you are all astonished. ²² Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a child on the Sabbath. ²³ Now if a child can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing the whole man on the Sabbath? ²⁴ Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment."

Now the one miracle He was talking about was the healing of the man at the Pool of Bethesda. He didn't mean that He had only done one miracle altogether. He meant that He had only done one miracle in their presence in Jerusalem. We

know that He is talking about the man at the Pool of Bethesda because He also talked about the issue of which they accused Him⁸. He talked about breaking the Sabbath.

Now, I want you to be sure that you get His logic. It is absolutely inscrutable here. His logic is this. **“Alright, you are committed to the keeping the Sabbath. You are committed to keeping the Sabbath except for one thing only. You don’t mind breaking the Sabbath if a child is born and the eighth day happens to come along on the Sabbath. When that happens, you go ahead and circumcise the child because you see the benefit of the sign of the covenant. But here’s how I want you to think. You will break the Sabbath if it means cutting or hurting a little boy. What I did was better. I didn’t cut or hurt anybody. I simply made someone well that had been sick for thirty-eight years. Come on, use you brain in a spiritual way.”**

His logic was inscrutable and some of the crowds gathered there in the temple began to hear His words and ask the very questions that the Pharisees were afraid of.

NIV John 7:25...At that point some of the people of Jerusalem began to ask, "Isn't this the man they are trying to kill? ²⁶ Here he is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying a word to him. Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Christ? ²⁷ But we know where this man is from; when the Christ comes, no one will know where he is from."

Part, of the crowd was apparently swayed by Jesus and by His response to the Pharisees. They could not understand why the Pharisees hated Him so or why they weren’t trying to stop Him since they hated Him so. Of course, they were mystified by the fact that they knew as much about Jesus as they did. There was

a popular idea that the Messiah would be a mystery man like Melchizedek. They believed he would be an unknown entity from an unknown place. They couldn't understand how Jesus could be the Messiah especially since they knew where He was from. Westcott writes:

According to a Jewish saying (Sanhedrin, 97a) "**Three things were to come wholly unexpected: Messiah, a blessing (a god-send) and a scorpion.**" According to another tradition, Messiah would not even know his own mission until Elijah anointed him.⁹

Still, I want you to think about the irony of that. Was He from Galilee? No, He was not from Galilee in the sense that they were arguing. He was from Bethlehem. But even then, He was not really from Bethlehem. You see that had it wrong on several levels. Now what is interesting is that Jesus could have put much of their concern to rest. He could have just said, "**Look, if you go back and check the tax roles you will find out that I was born in Bethlehem.**" But He never did that. In fact, if anything, He did just the opposite. He kept focusing on the fact that He had come down from heaven. They were concerned about which town He was from and He was trying to get them to see that He didn't just come out of Galilee but that He actually came out of eternity.

^{NIV} **John 7:28...**Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, "**Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, ²⁹ but I know him because I am from him and he sent me.**" ³⁰ At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his time had not yet come.

Now there are two things that you ought to notice. First, they can't seize Him and it doesn't say why other than that it was not His time. It is that phrase "**not His time**" that refers us back to the discussion that He had with His brothers at

the beginning of the section. It does that even or especially because the two verses use two different words. There He said,

^{NIV} **John 7:6**...Therefore Jesus told them, "**The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right.**"

In this verse the word for time is *καιρὸς* and it means something like "**appointed time or scheduled time**". We might use *καιρὸς* when we say something like, "**It's time for supper.**" There the emphasis is not on the hour and minutes but on the appropriateness of the moment. In John 7:30, however, John uses the word *ὥρα* (hour) and in John it especially refers to the hour of Jesus' crucifixion and the exaltation bound up with it (7:30, 8:20, 12:12, 12:27, 13:1, 17:1).¹⁰ The point is that Jesus could not be taken until the "**time**" God had sovereignly appointed. Now look at verse 31.

^{NIV} **John 7:31**...Still, many in the crowd put their faith in him. They said, "**When the Christ comes, will he do more miraculous signs than this man?**"

The crowds were asking the right question and the way their question is structured demands a "**no**" answer. The logic is like this, "**Now this may or may not be the Christ. However, you don't you think it is possible that someone else is going to come along and do more miracles than this man, do you?**" Now one commentator, D.A. Carson, makes the point that faith based on signs in the gospels is not a very strong faith and is generally discouraged in John (2:11, 2:23, 4:48) but it is better than nothing (10:38)¹¹.

^{NIV} **John 4:48**..."Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told him, "**you will never believe.**"

^{NIV} John 10:38... "But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father. "

Anyway their faith or perhaps the questions they asked based on what Jesus said caught the ear of the Pharisees.

^{NIV} John 7:32...The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about him. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest him.

Now, notice John the consummate storyteller makes that statement and then returns to Jesus and even builds suspense with the words Jesus says.

^{NIV} John 7:33... Jesus said, "I am with you for only a short time, and then I go to the one who sent me. ³⁴ You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come."

Such a statement leaves the reader wondering are they going to arrest Him in the next verse? It is deeply ironic. What do you think He was talking about? Of course, it left the crowd who heard it with a different question.

^{NIV} John 7:35...The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we cannot find him? Will he go where our people live scattered among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks? ³⁶ What did he mean when he said, 'You will look for me, but you will not find me,' and 'Where I am, you cannot come'?"

Now there are a couple of possibilities here. They may have been wondering if Jesus was going to go out from Israel and teach Greek-speaking Jews. Such Jews were called the Diaspora, which meant something like "the scattered". Or the question may have been wondering if He was going out among the Greek-speaking Jews to teach Gentiles. This too is ironic because that is ultimately what

happened. It wasn't Jesus that did so however. It was His disciples that took the message to the Gentile world and they received it in a way that the Jews did not.

^{NIV} **John 7:37...**On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "**If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.**"

Now finally, we get to the great climax of the chapter. But before I speak to that I really do need to finally talk about the Feast of Tabernacles.

To understand what Jesus says in 7:37-38 and later in chapter 8, you must have an intimate knowledge of the workings of the Feast of Tabernacles. In Jesus' time this was the feast "**especially sacred and important to the Hebrews**" (Josephus *Ant.* 8.4.1). The importance of Tabernacles can *even* be seen back further than that. For example, the dedication of Solomon's Temple took place at Tabernacles (1 Kings 8:2), and that made the connection between Tabernacles and Temple especially close.¹²

During the Feast of the Tabernacles, (also called Booths) the Israelites, even those that had houses in Jerusalem, camped out in makeshift houses called "tabernacles". They were kind of like tents except that they were made out of leafy tree branches. Those that went up to Jerusalem for the feast camped out in the open areas around Jerusalem and stayed in the makeshift dwellings. Those that lived in the city usually built their "**tabernacles**" upon the roofs of their houses or in the open courtyards of their homes. All Israelites were required to sleep in them for a week. They were uncomfortable and they were small and cramped. Still every Israelite was to do so. It was to be a reminder of their

wilderness wanderings and how the Lord delivered them into the land in which they no longer dwelled in temporary houses.

^{NIV} Leviticus 23:34..."Say to the Israelites: 'On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the LORD's Feast of Tabernacles begins, and it lasts for seven days. ³⁵ The first day is a sacred assembly; do no regular work. ³⁶ For seven days present offerings made to the LORD by fire, and on the eighth day hold a sacred assembly and present an offering made to the LORD by fire. It is the closing assembly; do no regular work. ³⁷ ("These are the LORD's appointed feasts, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies for bringing offerings made to the LORD by fire-- the burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings required for each day. ³⁸ These offerings are in addition to those for the LORD's Sabbaths and in addition to your gifts and whatever you have vowed and all the freewill offerings you give to the LORD.) ³⁹ "So beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to the LORD for seven days; the first day is a day of rest, and the eighth day also is a day of rest. ⁴⁰ On the first day you are to take choice fruit from the trees, and palm fronds, leafy branches and poplars, and rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. ⁴¹ Celebrate this as a festival to the LORD for seven days each year. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come; celebrate it in the seventh month. ⁴² Live in booths for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in booths ⁴³ so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God."

Just as a side note, that is probably what Peter had in mind at the Transfiguration. He uses the same word σκηνη.

^{NIV} Luke 9:33...As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters-- one for you, one for **Moses** and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.)

Keeping that in mind, it was probably not the fact that Peter wanted to build "tabernacles" or "shelters" that was so goofy. He was a Jew and no self-respecting Jew would have wanted to build a temple for men, not even Elijah

and Moses. The goofiness may have come from the fact that he wanted to build booths for two men who had been dead a long time, one for 1400 and the other for 800 years.

All during the Feast of Tabernacles, participants waved leafy branches called *lulabs* which was really something like a fan made out of fronds from a palm tree sandwiched between two other kinds of tree branches. They were designed to be light and wavy. During the ceremonies, the participants, and there would have been thousands, would sing and shout and wave their *lulabs*. The *lulabs* were symbolic of the bounty of the land that God had given the Jews. Also the participants carried in their left hands something called a citron (which basically is a large citrus fruit like a lemon)¹³. It also indicated the bounty of the land that God had given them.

Beyond the booths, the *lulabs* and the citrons, however, there were two elements of the Feast of Tabernacles that were particularly beautiful. One element, and we'll talk about this more next week, was that they lit up the temple all night during the Feast of Tabernacles. They used four giant menorahs and they lit thousands of candles that caused the temple to glow all night long. During the night, they played music all night long and men and women danced all during the night at the temple to express their gratitude to the Lord for His deliverance and for His guidance. The light was symbolic in two ways. First, it brought to mind the fiery cloud that led the Israelites through their wilderness wanderings. Secondly, it demonstrated that Israel ought to be a light to the nations, a candle upon a hill calling out for the nations to come and worship the living God. But we'll talk, as I said, a lot more about that next week.

Now, a moment ago I said that the Feast of the Tabernacles contained two particularly beautiful elements. The first one I have already described. The second involved water. Each day of the feasts one of the temple priests would lead a procession of thousands out of the temple down through crowded streets other steps of the Pool of Siloam.

The Pool of Siloam had been built by King Hezekiah hundreds of years earlier. Essentially, it was a large pool that connected the city with a spring on the outskirts of Jerusalem. The spring was channeled under the wall to the Pool of Siloam through a tunnel carved out of solid rock. The Pool was inside the wall of the city and the idea was that having the pool connected to a spring outside the city would mean that they would never have to worry about being cut off from a fresh supply of water during a siege.

Anyway, the priest led the multitude down to the Pool of Siloam where he dipped a golden pitcher into the pool and withdrew two or three pints of water. He would then lead the procession back to the temple and he and the crowd would march around the altar once and then he would climb the steps of the altar and pour the water into a silver funnel that ran out at the base of the altar. At the same time another priest would pour a pitcher of wine into another funnel on top of the altar that also ran out at the base of the altar.

When they finished the people would sing the Great Hallel, which was made up of Psalm 113-118. The priest would sing out the first line of each of the six psalms and the people would repeat it. After every other line they would shout out as a group **"Hallelujah."** Of course, as they did they would wave their *lulabs* with immense joy.

They repeated this for seven days. The first day of the feast they offered 13 bullocks. The second day they offered 12. The third day they offered eleven and so on down to the last day when they offered only seven¹⁴. Now here was the significance. If you add the total number of bullocks offered, it added up to seventy. The Jews believed they were offering one bullock for each nation of the world.

In addition, the water being poured out was symbolic of how the Lord gave them water to drink in the wilderness from a rock that followed them around and the point that Zechariah and other prophets made in the prophecies was that that water would flow out of the temple out to all the nations of the world.¹⁵ Listen to how Zechariah puts it.

^{NIV} **Zechariah 14:8**...On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea and half to the western sea, in summer and in winter. ⁹ The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name.

Anyway, like I said they repeated the water ceremony for seven days in a row. On the last day of the feast, the great day of the feast, they did one thing different. They marched around the altar seven times before the priest went up the steps of the altar to pour out his golden pitcher. The crowd seeing the burnt offering and the water exuding from the base of the altar waved their *lulabs* and answered back responsively as the priests led them through the Great Hallel.

They finished up hearing and repeating these words...

^{NIV} **Psalm 118:1**...Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. ²Let Israel say: "**His love endures forever**" ⁶**The LORD is with me; I will**

not be afraid. What can man do to me? ⁷ The LORD is with me; he is my helper. I will look in triumph on my enemies. "

^{NIV} Psalm 118:8..."It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man. "

^{NIV} Psalm 118:14..."The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. ¹⁶ The LORD's right hand is lifted high; the LORD's right hand has done mighty things!"

^{NIV} Psalm 118:19..."Open for me the gates of righteousness; I will enter and give thanks to the LORD. ²⁰ This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter. ²¹ I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation. "

^{NIV} Psalm 118:22..."The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; ²³ the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. ²⁴ This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. ²⁵ O LORD, save us; O LORD, grant us success. ²⁶ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you. "

Right there, there would have been a brief pause in the worship as the priests prepared additional sacrifices. It was right then during that pause that most scholars think it happened. Right then as the joyous crowd looked toward the altar, right then there rose up behind them a strong and noble voice like the sound of many waters, like the roar of young lion saying,

^{NIV} John 7:37..."If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."

And you see brothers and sisters, He would have been saying in that, **"Now in Me is all this that you love so dearly is fulfilled. It is true that a rock followed your fathers around in the desert. I am that rock. Come to Me and I will give you water that lasts."**

Alfred Edersheim, the great Jewish Christian and commentator wrote this:

It was then, immediately after the symbolic rite of water-pouring, immediately after the people had responded by repeating those lines from Psalm 118 - given thanks, and prayed that Jehovah would send salvation and prosperity, and had shaken their *Lulabh* towards the altar, thus praising 'with heart, and mouth, and hands,' and then silence had fallen upon them - that there rose, so loud as to be heard throughout the Temple, the Voice of Jesus. He interrupted not the services, for they had for the moment ceased: He interpreted, and He fulfilled them.¹⁶

Of course, they knew that Jesus was talking about the Holy Spirit. The whole ceremony was geared to illustrate the glorious coming of the Holy Spirit. But just in case the reader might miss it look at what John says in verse 39.

^{NIV} **John 7:39**...By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified. ⁴⁰ On hearing his words, some of the people said, "**Surely this man is the Prophet.**"

Notice, He is not a prophet. He is *the* prophet. Still they could not get Galilee out of their minds.

^{NIV} **John 7:41**...Others said, "**He is the Christ.**" Still others asked, "**How can the Christ come from Galilee? ⁴² Does not the Scripture say that the Christ will come from David's family and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?**" ⁴³ Thus the people were divided because of Jesus. ⁴⁴ Some wanted to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him.

Finally in verse 45, those temple guards made it back to the Pharisees. There is something almost comedic about their response.

^{NIV} **John 7:45**...Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, "**Why didn't you bring him in?**" ⁴⁶ "**No one ever spoke the way this man does,**" the guards declared.

Their response was not a response borne out of faith. Also you have to remember that these were not Roman thugs. These men were Levites trained in the Scripture and granted the high honor of guarding the temple of God. They would have struggled to take Jesus because of the words that came from Jesus' mouth. Let me say one thing about the NIV translation here. I think it ought emphasize man, which it does not. Literally it was, **"No man ever spoke like this."** And, of course, they were right. Jesus was the God-Man, the holy, blameless, matchless wisdom of God come down from heaven to reveal the salvation of God to the world.

The Pharisees responded to the guards in hateful and bitter language.

^{NIV} **John 7:47...** "You mean he has deceived you also?" the Pharisees retorted. ⁴⁸ **"Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? ⁴⁹ No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law-- there is a curse on them."**

Now, there are two things you ought to note here. First, they call the crowd an "accursed mob." The rabbis of that day looked down on common people. They often referred to them **"am ha'ares"**¹⁷, which meant something like **"people of the land."**¹⁸ It was a contemptuous title. Rabbis often mocked and chided the stupidity of the people. Of course, the people as uneducated as they were knew that he rabbis viewed them contemptuously and they often felt the same way about the rabbis.¹⁹ I read one quote this week which I have lost that came from a famous rabbi and said something like this, **"The rabbis despise the people. No wonder then that before I became a rabbi I used to like to beat rabbis."**²⁰

Of course that is pretty extreme but there was tension. The other thing that I want to point out is that the Pharisees may not have known the answer to their

own question. They asked, "**Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him?**" They think they know the answer and they think the answer is no. So John has Nicodemus respond to them not necessarily as a believing man, which I think he later becomes, but as a fair man.

^{NIV} **John 7:50...** Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier, and who was one of their own number, asked, ⁵¹ "**Does our law condemn anyone without first hearing him to find out what he is doing?**"

You will remember that Nicodemus had already encountered this uncultured, uneducated Galilean personally. You will remember that Jesus pretty much cleaned his clock spiritually. So he wanted to be more careful.²¹ Still they reply even to him, the great teacher of Israel, in a contemptuous manner.

^{NIV} **John 7:52...**They replied, "**Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee.**"

I might one final comment regarding even this conclusion. There were at least two prophets that came out of Galilee. You will know both of their names. One you will know particularly well. One was Nahum and the other was Jonah.

^{NIV} **John 7:53...**Then each went to his own home.

Now what is the point of all this? We've been making the point that John was written to encourage early first century Jewish Christian to keep the faith. We have been arguing that John was trying to demonstrate to them that Jesus was not only better than the synagogue but that He was the fulfillment of all that the Old Testament anticipated. He was better than Jacob, better than Moses. He was better than the temple, better than the ceremonial law. He was the fruition and

apex of all the Holy Scripture promised. He was the fulfillment of the hope of all the faithful who had gone before. He was and is worthy of faith and of trust.

Of course, the lesson for us is much simpler and I think from this chapter is extremely simple. Jesus is the source and comfort of all who put their trust in Him. He will sustain us with His blessed spirit and that will bear exude forth from us to give life-giving hope to those around us. So, even when we become disappointed that our spiritual expectations have not been met or even when we are unable to answer the objections of unbelievers let us cleave to Him. Out of Him flow rivers of living water. Let us come and drink to our heart's content.

¹ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII (Vol. 1)* (Doubleday: New York, 1985), 235. Brown's discussion is as good as anybody's. He references Bultmann and Schnackenburg. The argument is pretty simple, "How did Jesus get from Judea to Galilee?"

² Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 209. Bultmann is not only representative but on of the first to call for such wholesale restructuring of the text. "The present order of chs. 5 and 6 cannot be the original one. Since in 6.1 Jesus goes "to the other side" (τεραν) of the lake, he must have been at the lake-side beforehand; but in ch. 5 he is in Jerusalem. Thus ch. 6 has no connection with ch. 5. On the other hand it would follow on ch. 4 very well. Correspondingly 7.1 assumes that Jesus had been staying in Judaea (Jerusalem) up till then, and ch. 7 would thus link up with ch. 5. So the original order must have been chs. 4, 6, 5, 7. This is confirmed by the fact that this order makes good sense of 4.44, which otherwise makes no sense at all (seep. 204), and also by the fact that 6.2 is now seen to be a reference back to the exemplary story of 4.46-54"

³ Brown, 236. "The projected rearrangement is attractive in some ways but not Compelling. There is no manuscript evidence for it, and we must not forget that there are other indications that favor the present order. For instance, in our COMMENT on vii 37–39 we shall point out that the sequence of the manna in vi and the water theme in vii seems to be a deliberate reference to OT passages with the same sequence. No rearrangement can solve all the geographical and chronological problems in John, and to rearrange on the basis of geography and chronology is to give undue emphasis to something that does not seem to have been of major importance to the evangelist."

⁴ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John (Rvd.)* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 48. Morris argues this way, "One cannot help thinking that sufficient attention is not being given to the author's intention. We all too readily assume that he must have had somewhat the same canons of consistency as we have. But if he was not interested in producing the kind of

consistency that we take for granted he may well have had different standards as to what part of his writing should follow what other part. In other words, it is always better to try to make sense of the manuscript as it stands than to try our hands at varying the order. A number of modern writers, for example C. K. Barrett, C. H. Dodd, and R. H. Lightfoot, are convinced that we should take the present order of John rather than try to rearrange it.”

⁵ Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 262. “Jesus’ teaching produced critical amazement and bewilderment among those who heard him in the temple, not astonishment over his knowledge (as in Lk. 4:20), but offense (cf. 3:7; 4:27; 5:28; 7:21). How could this man, who had never received the appropriate training, act as one instructed in the Scriptures? Moreover, the fact that he chose to teach in the undoubtedly reinforced this mood.”

⁶ B.F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1954), 118.

⁷ Morris, 361. Morris quotes Bernard who writes: “This is a lifelike touch. It was not the people but the Jews who had begun the plot; the people knew nothing of it.”

⁸ *Ibid*, 361.

⁹ Westcott, 120.

¹⁰ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), 171. “The reason Jesus gives for the distance he maintains between his mother and himself must be viewed in the light of the cross. *My time has not yet come*, he says: the word ‘time’, literally ‘hour’ (*hora*), constantly refers to his death on the cross and the exaltation bound up with it (7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1), or the consequences deriving from it (5:28–29), so it would be unnatural to take it in any other way here. But how could that have been a response to Mary? And what could the reader be expected to understand from so enigmatic a reference?

To answer the second question first, rhetoric would call this sort of reference an internal prolepsis, a reference to a theme that will be developed later or to an event that will occur later in the narrative. Such device captures the reader’s interest and asks questions: What does ‘hour’ mean? When does this ‘hour’ come? By whetting the reader’s curiosity it encourages more thoughtful reading; moreover the book becomes deeper and more complex when it is read the second, third and subsequent times. Anticipating the development of the theme, then, we note that the ‘hour’ of Jesus’ death, resurrection and exaltation to glory is in the first part of this Gospel constantly said to be ‘not yet’, until the arrival of the Gentiles (12:20ff.). From that point on, with Jesus on the way to death, the hour is said to have arrived (13:1; 17:1).”

¹¹ *Ibid*, 319.

¹² Brown, 326ff. Much of the material in this section is adapted from Brown and Alfred Edersheim.

¹³ Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews Book VIII, Chapter 13*. As to Alexander, his own people were seditious against him; for at a festival which was then celebrated, when he stood upon the altar, and was going to sacrifice, the nation rose upon him, and pelted him with citrons [which they then had in their hands, because] the law of the Jews required that at the feast of tabernacles every one should have branches of the palm tree and citron tree; which thing we have elsewhere related. They also reviled him, as derived from a captive, and so unworthy of his dignity and of sacrificing. At this he was in a rage, and slew of them about six thousand.

¹⁴ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-1954), vol. 2, 23.

¹⁵ C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 348-349. Dodd understates the idea by saying an allusion is probable. It is not probable; it is certain. "It is probable that the dialogues themselves contain deliberate allusions to the ritual of the festival and the ideas associated with it. One of the most distinctive ceremonies of the Feast of Tabernacles was that of libations of water. The water was drawn in solemn form from the Siloam reservoir, conveyed to the temple, and poured over the altar of burnt offering. This took place on each of the seven days of the Feast (and, according to inferior authorities, on the extra eighth day also). It was associated with prayers for rain, and may have been the survival of a primitive rain-making ceremony, since the festival was celebrated about the time when the first rains of autumn might be expected. However that may be, the idea of the satisfaction of the need for water in order to live recurs in rabbinic discussions of the festival and its meaning, and water is made to symbolize various spiritual blessings."

¹⁶ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Chapter 7. In The Last, The Great Day Of The Feast') Taken from an internet version.

¹⁷ William Fairweather, *The Background of the Gospels* (London: T&T Clark, 1920), 193. Fairweather has a great section on "the people of the land." My copy is Klock & Klock reprint.

¹⁸ Carson, 331. "The label had originally been applied to the entire nation of Israel (e.g. Ezk. 22:29), but came in time to refer to the common people against the leaders (Je. 1:18), and then to the mixed population that lived in Samaria and Judea during the exile, in distinction from the blood Jews who returned after the exile (Ezr. 10:2, 11). Amongst the rabbis 'the people of the land' always refers to the people who do not know the law, i.e. the Law of Moses both as it is found in the Hebrew Scriptures and as it was thought to be preserved in oral tradition; and if they do not know it, they cannot keep it. Since the law is the law of God, people of the land' are characterized by both ignorance and impiety."

¹⁹ F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel & Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1983), 185. "The disparaging judgment pronounced on the crowd expresses a characteristic attitude of many Pharisees towards the common people. The common people 'the people of the land', as they called them — simply could not be expected to master the details of the oral law, the 'tradition of the elders', and therefore they were always liable to infringe it. Even the liberal Rabbi Hillel, of the generation before Christ, summed up this attitude when he said, No member of the common people is pious'. From the Pharisees' point of view, the common people could

easily be misled by any plausible teacher, because of their shocking ignorance of the true interpretation of the law."

²⁰ C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to John: An Introduction with Notes and Commentary on the Greek Text*, (London: S.P.C.K, 1967), 274. Still Barrett gets awfully close to the same sentiment. "A passage which shows both that the dislike was returned by the (*am ha'arets*) and also that the gulf between the two classes was not impassable is *Pesahim* 49b: R. Aqiba said of himself: "When I was an (*am ha'arets*) I used to say, "I wish I had one of those scholars, and I would bite him like an ass." His disciples said, "You mean like a dog." He replied, "An ass's bite breaks the bone; a dog's does not.""

²¹ Paul D. Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985), 81. "Have any of the rulers believed in him, or any of the Pharisees?" As a matter of fact, a man who is both ruler and Pharisee, though he has not yet openly believed in Jesus, has expressed his private awe before him; and just to make sure we do not forget, the author ushers Nicodemus back onto the stage two verses later to speak a cautious word in Jesus' defense. The result is that 7:45–48 constitute one of the most genuinely comical scenes in the New Testament."