

John 7:30-52
July 27, 2025

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: Think about people you know who don't know Jesus yet. Perhaps they are family members, or friends, or colleagues, or neighbors. Why do you think they struggle with identifying Jesus as the Messiah who came to save all of us? [Let people engage]

Transition: In today's text, we find ourselves at the Feast of Tabernacles that goes for seven days. It is the last day, and Jesus stands up to make some pronouncements about Himself. The people who heard him were Pharisees, the crowd, the Jews who lived in Jerusalem, the temple guards, and even Nicodemus. They all heard what Jesus said, but many were divided about *who Jesus was*. Was He really the Messiah, or just a good spiritual teacher?

This question is still being asked in today's time. There are people in our own circles of influence who have at least heard of Jesus, but they are trying to figure out if he is really a Savior and need to be saved! It is up to us to at least share our testimony and to point people to Jesus as often as we can! Let's read the storyline and see what we can learn from it.

BOOK:

³⁰ At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his time had not yet come. 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?"

³² The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about him. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest him.

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.**"

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'?"

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.**" 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."

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 (seed) 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.

Unbelief of the Jewish Leaders

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.

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.”

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?”

⁵² They replied, “Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet (the prophet) does not come out of Galilee.”

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What stood out to you? What questions do you have? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about man? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit? [Let people engage]

Q: What is your takeaway? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

You cannot help but feel sorry for the people described in this chapter, people who responded to Jesus in the wrong ways. His half-brothers responded with disbelief; various people responded with debate; and the result was division. Had they willingly received the truth, and had they acted with sincere obedience, they would have ended up at the feet of Jesus, confessing Him as Messiah and Son of God.

But people *today* commit the same blunder and permit their prejudices and superficial evaluations to blind them to the truth. Don’t let it happen to you!

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 317-319). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

At this point, our Lord raised His voice so that everybody could hear (note also John 7:37). He was probably speaking in a tone revealing irony: “Yes, you think you know Me and where I came from! But really, you do not!” Then He explained why they did not know Him: *they did not know the Father!* This was a serious accusation to make against an orthodox Jew, for the Jews prided themselves in knowing the true God, the God of Israel.

But Jesus went even further: He boldly asserted that He not only knew the Father, but was sent by Him! He was once again claiming to be God! He was not simply *born* into this world like any other human; He was *sent* to earth by the Father. This means that He existed before He was born on the earth.

This was certainly a crisis hour in His ministry, and some of the leaders tried to have Him arrested; but “His hour was not yet come.” Many of the pilgrims put their faith in Him. It was a faith based on miracles, but at least it was a beginning (see John 2:23; 6:2, 26). Nicodemus first became interested in Jesus because of His miracles (John 3:1–2), and eventually he openly professed faith in Christ.

The Pharisees and chief priests, who presided over the Jewish religious establishment, resented the fact that the people were trusting in Jesus. Apparently, these “believers” were not afraid to tell what they had done (John 7:13, 32). This time, the rulers sent members of the temple guard to arrest Jesus, but it was Jesus who “arrested” them! He warned them that they had but “a little while” to hear the truth, believe, and be saved (see John 12:35ff). It was not Jesus who was in danger, but those who wanted to arrest Him!

As in previous messages, the people misunderstood what Jesus was saying. Within six months, Jesus would go back to the Father in heaven, and the unsaved Jews would not be able to follow Him. What a contrast between “where I am, there ye cannot come” (John 7:34) and “that where I am, there ye may be also”! (John 14:3)

Had these men been willing to do God’s will, they would have known the truth. Soon it would be too late.

The End of the Feast: Division (John 7:37–52)

The last day of the feast would be the seventh day, a very special day on which the priests would march seven times around the altar, chanting Psalm 118:25. It would be the last time they would draw the water and pour it out. No doubt just as they were pouring out the water, symbolic of the water Moses drew from the rock, Jesus stood and shouted His great invitation to thirsty sinners. It has been pointed out that this “great day,” the twenty-first of the seventh month, is the same date on which the Prophet Haggai made a special prediction about the temple (Hag. 2:1–9).

While the ultimate fulfillment must await the return of Christ to this earth, certainly there was a partial fulfillment when Jesus came to the temple. Haggai 2:6–7 is quoted in Hebrews 12:26–29 as applying to the return of the Lord.

Jesus was referring to the experience of Israel recorded in Exodus 17:1–7. That water was but a picture of the Spirit of God. Believers would not only drink the living water, but they would become channels of living water to bless a thirsty world! The “artesian well” that He promised in John 4:14 has now become a flowing river! While there are no specific prophetic Scriptures that indicate “rivers of water” flowing from the believer, there are a number of verses that parallel this thought: Isaiah 12:3; 15; 32:2; 44:3; and 58:11; and Zechariah 14:8. Note that Zechariah 14:16ff speaks about the future Feast of Tabernacles, when the Lord is King.

Water for drinking is one of the symbols of the Holy Spirit in the Bible. (Water for washing is a symbol of the Word of God; see John 15:3 and Eph. 5:26.) Just as water satisfies thirst and produces fruitfulness, so the Spirit of God satisfies the inner person and enables us to bear fruit. At the feast, the Jews were reenacting a tradition that could never satisfy the heart. Jesus offered them living water and eternal satisfaction!

What was the result of this declaration and invitation? The people were divided: some defended Him and some wanted to arrest Him. Is He a “good man” or “a deceiver”? (John 7:12) Is He “the Christ”? (John 7:31) Is He the promised “Prophet”? (John 7:40; Deut. 18:15) If only they had honestly examined the evidence, they would have discovered that, indeed, He was the Christ, the Son of God. They identified Jesus with Galilee (John 1:45–46; 7:52) when in reality He was born in Bethlehem (see John 6:42 for similar reasoning).

The temple officers returned to the Jewish council meeting empty-handed. It certainly should have been relatively easy for them to arrest Jesus, yet they failed to do so. What stopped them? “Never man spoke like this Man!” was their defense. In other words, “This Jesus is more than a man! No mere man speaks as He does!” They were “arrested” by the Word of God, spoken by the Son of God.

Again, the leaders refused to face facts honestly but passed judgment on the basis of their prejudices and their superficial examination of the facts. It is much easier to label people (and *libel* people!) than to listen to the facts they present. “So some of the people have believed on Jesus! So what? These common people know nothing about the Law anyway! Have any *important* people—like ourselves—believed on Him? Of course not!” They would use a similar argument to try to discredit the witness of the blind man that Jesus healed (John 9:34).

We should not be surprised when “the intelligentsia” refuses to trust Jesus Christ, or when religious leaders reject Him. God has hidden His truth from “the wise and prudent” and revealed it to “spiritual babes,” the humble people who will yield to Him (Matt. 11:25–27). Paul was a very intelligent rabbi when God saved him, yet he had to be “knocked down” before he would acknowledge that Jesus Christ was the resurrected Son of God. Read 1 Corinthians 1:26–31 to learn Paul’s explanation for the difficulty of winning “smart religious people” to the Savior.

No doubt the rulers would have sent the guard out again, but Nicodemus spoke up. This man is found three times in John's Gospel, and each time he is identified as the one "who came to Jesus by night" (see John 3:1–2; 19:39). No doubt Nicodemus had been doing a great deal of thinking and studying since that first interview with Jesus, and he was not afraid to take his stand for truth.

Nicodemus was sure that the council was not giving Jesus an honest hearing. The rulers had already passed judgment and were trying to arrest Him before He had even been given a fair and lawful trial! Perhaps Nicodemus had in mind such Old Testament Scriptures as Exodus 23:1 and Deuteronomy 1:16–17; 19:15–21.

What did Nicodemus want them to consider about Jesus? His Word and His works. It was Jesus the Teacher and the miracle worker who had attracted Nicodemus' interest in the first place (John 3:2). In fact, Jesus had pointed to His works as proof of His deity (John 5:32); and He repeatedly urged the people to pay attention to His words. The two go together, for the miracles point to the messages, and the messages interpret the spiritual meaning of the miracles.

You can hear the sarcasm and disdain in the reply of the rulers: "Are you a lowly and despised Galilean too?" They refused to admit that Nicodemus was right in asking for a fair trial, but the only way they could answer him was by means of ridicule. This is an ancient debate trick: when you cannot answer the argument, attack the speaker.

They challenged Nicodemus to search the prophecies to see if he could find any statement that a prophet would come out of Galilee. Of course, Jonah was from Galilee; and Jesus said that Jonah was a picture of Himself in death, burial, and resurrection (Matt. 12:38–41). Perhaps Nicodemus read Isaiah 9:1–2 (see Matt. 4:12–16) and began to trace the great messianic prophecies in the Old Testament. If he did, then he became convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was the very Son of God.

You cannot help but feel sorry for the people described in this chapter, people who responded to Jesus in the wrong ways. His half-brothers responded with disbelief; various people responded with debate; and the result was division. Had they willingly received the truth, and had they acted with sincere obedience, they would have ended up at the feet of Jesus, confessing Him as Messiah and Son of God.

But people *today* commit the same blunder and permit their prejudices and superficial evaluations to blind them to the truth.

Don't let it happen to you!

Blum, E. A. (1985). *John*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 301-302) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

7:30. Jesus' rebuke of the Jerusalemites stirred them to attempt **to seize** (*piazō*, "arrest"; cf. vv. 32, 44; 8:20; 10:39) **Him. But** the Father had ordered a **time** and place for His manifestation

(His death), and until then all things would work in concert toward that goal. They could not lay **a hand on Him because** the Father's hand was over Him.

7:31. The exposure of Jesus and His teaching moved **many in the crowd** to believe on **Him**. They logically thought that His **miraculous signs** marked Him out as unusual. Certainly, the Messiah could not do any more miracles **than this Man**. But the crowd's faith in Jesus as Messiah was tentative and was not linked to belief in His atoning death.

7:32. Since many in **the crowd** were turning to Jesus, they would set aside the Pharisees' traditional teachings (cf. Mark 7:1–23). **The Pharisees**, as the guardians of Jewish traditions (see comments on the Pharisees, John 1:24–25), realized something needed to be done about Jesus soon. **The chief priests** were leading priests, not just high priests. **Arrest** is the same Greek word (*piazō*) as “seize” in 7:30, 44; 8:20; 10:39.

7:33. While the plan to arrest Him proceeded, **Jesus** continued to teach. The nation had **only a short time** to decide about Him. This time was determined not by the authorities, but by God. When He had completed God's plan for His earthly life, He would return to the Father.

7:34. **You will look for Me** is a prophecy that the Jewish nation will long for her Messiah. She is doing this now, not knowing that Jesus is her Messiah. Later she will weep for Him (Zech. 12:10–13; Rev. 1:7). The time of spiritual opportunity is now. A time will come when it is too late. He went bodily to heaven where unbelievers **cannot come** (cf. John 8:21). So people today do not have the unique opportunity people had when Jesus was speaking to them face to face.

7:35. Once more the words of Jesus were an enigma to **the Jews** (cf. vv. 15, 31, 41–42). **Where** could He possibly **go that** they could not **find Him**? Because they were of the earth, they could think only earthly thoughts (cf. Isa. 55:8). During some of that period the Jewish people lived in Palestine whereas others migrated throughout the Roman Empire and beyond, as far east as Babylonia. They were **scattered among the Greeks**. “Greeks” means not just people of Greece or Greek-speaking peoples but generally non-Jews or heathen (cf. “Greek” and “Jew” in Col. 3:11). The question then was, Will Jesus go **teach the** heathen? Without the Jews realizing it, this question was prophetic of the spread of the gospel after Jesus' Ascension.

7:36. The crowd, after pondering what Jesus meant, simply repeated their questions. They did not understand His words.

c. The last day of the Feast (7:37–52).

7:37. **The Feast** of Tabernacles was celebrated with certain festival rituals. One was a solemn procession each day from the temple to the Gihon Spring. A priest filled a gold pitcher with water while the choir sang Isaiah 12:3. Then they returned to the altar and poured out the water. This ritual reminded them of the water from the rock during the wilderness wanderings (Num. 20:8–11; Ps. 78:15–16). It also spoke prophetically of the coming days of Messiah (cf. Zech. 14:8, 16–19). The Feast's seventh and **last** day was its **greatest** (cf. Lev. 23:36). **Jesus stood**, in contrast with the Rabbis' usual position of being seated while teaching. **Said in a loud voice** (cf. John 1:15; 7:28; 12:44) was a way of introducing a solemn announcement. His offer, Come to Me and **drink**, was an offer of salvation (cf. 4:14; 6:53–56).

7:38. **Streams of living water will flow from within** one who **believes in** Jesus. That is, he will have a continual source of satisfaction, which will provide life continually (cf. 4:14). When Jesus added, **As the Scripture has said**, He did not identify the Old Testament passage(s) He had in mind. But He may have thought of Psalm 78:15–16 and Zechariah 14:8 (cf. Ezek. 47:1–11; Rev. 22:1–2).

7:39. John explained that the “living water” (v. 38) was the coming gift of **the Holy Spirit**. The Spirit within a believer satisfies his need of God, and provides him with regeneration, guidance, and empowerment. In the earliest Greek manuscripts, the words, **Up to that time the Spirit had not been given**, are simply, “for there was not yet Spirit.” This cannot be taken in an absolute sense since the Spirit had actively worked among people in the Old Testament era. Jesus referred to the special baptizing, sealing, and indwelling work of the Spirit in the Church Age, which would start on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:5, 8). Jesus said He would “send the Spirit” to His followers (John 15:26; 16:7). “The Spirit had not [yet] been given” to indwell believers permanently (cf. Ps. 51:11). That happened after **Jesus was glorified**, that is after His death, resurrection, and Ascension. “Glorified,” “glory,” and “glorify” are used frequently in John’s Gospel (John 7:39; 11:4; 12:16, 23, 28; 13:31–32; 14:13; 15:8; 16:14; 17:1, 4–5, 10).

7:40–41. The crowd continued to debate Jesus’ identity. **Some** saw Him as **the Prophet** mentioned by Moses (Deut. 18:15, 18). He would speak God’s words to people but not in the awesome display of Mount Sinai from which Moses spoke. Jesus is indeed that predicted Prophet (Acts 3:22), but many rejected Him as such. Some said Jesus **is the Christ**, that is, the Messiah, but **others** rejected that idea because He came **from Galilee** (cf. John 7:52).

7:42. According to Samuel and Isaiah (2 Sam. 7:16; Isa. 11:1) the Messiah was to be born into a Davidic **family**. Micah predicted that He would be born in **Bethlehem ... David’s** hometown (Micah 5:2). Jesus *is* from a Davidic family (Matt. 1:1–17; Luke 3:23–38; Rom. 1:3) and *was* born in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1–6), but the crowd ignorantly overlooked those facts.

7:43–44. The crowd’s **divided** opinion about **Jesus** enabled Him to continue His ministry without immediate arrest (**seize**, *piazō*, is the same word for “arrest” in v. 32, and is also used in v. 30; 8:20; 10:39). Many of the people held a favorable opinion of Jesus even though they did not personally commit themselves to Him (cf. 7:12, 31, 40–41). His enemies had to be careful lest a riot would result. So for a time, **no one** touched **Him**. Twice later the Jews were again divided over Jesus (9:16; 10:19–21).

7:45–46. **The temple guards**, who were sent to arrest Jesus (v. 32) returned without Him. Responding to the question **Why?** the guards answered, **No one ever spoke the way this Man does**. Literally this is, “Never spoke thus a man,” which implies that the guards sensed that He was most unusual or perhaps more than a man. The Gospels often reveal Jesus as a most impressive Teacher and Speaker (e.g., Matt. 7:29; 22:46). Though Jesus was opposed, many of those who heard Him were moved by Him (cf. John 7:15; 12:19).

7:47–48. The Pharisees’ question to the guards, **Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in Him?** reveals their pride. They thought they were too educated (v. 15) to be taken in

by a deceiver. Ironically a number of the rulers *did* believe (12:42; 19:38–39). The Pharisees were jealous of Jesus’ great popularity (“The whole world has gone after Him” [12:19]).

7:49. The Pharisees explained Jesus’ popularity among the populace by suggesting that the people were too ignorant to recognize Jesus as a deceiver. The crowd (**this mob**), according to the Pharisees, did not know **the Law**. They did not study it, so they could not obey it. And since they did not obey it, they were under God’s **curse** (Deut. 28:15). The irony of the situation was that the Pharisees, not the mob, were under God’s wrath because they rejected God’s revelation in Jesus (John 3:36).

7:50–51. The Mosaic Law (Deut. 1:16–17) and Rabbinic law stipulated that a person accused of a crime should get a fair **hearing**. Nicodemus appeared as a fair-minded man who did not want the Sanhedrin to make a false or hasty judgment. He had personally spoken with **Jesus** and knew He was from God (John 3:1–3; cf. 12:42; 19:38–39).

7:52. Even though Nicodemus was a respected teacher in the nation (3:10), he was insulted by the other members of the Sanhedrin. Their prejudice and hatred against Jesus were already strong enough to overthrow reason. The Sanhedrin accused Nicodemus of being as ignorant as the Galileans. **A prophet does not come out of Galilee**, they argued. So the messianic Prophet cannot be a Galilean (cf. 7:41).

White, J. E. (1998). *John*. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman Concise Bible Commentary* (pp. 475-476). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Prophet from Galilee? (7:45–52)

The temple guards sent to arrest him exclaimed, “No one ever spoke the way this man does.” The Pharisees simply dismissed them as deceived, arguing that since none of the Pharisees had expressed belief in Jesus, then He was not to be accepted. The Pharisees elevated their own sense of learning and understanding. In so doing, they exaggerated the ignorance of the average person. This produced a spiritual pride that led them to believe that true understanding rested solely with their own musings. Then Nicodemus, who had spoken with Jesus earlier, reminded them all that no one was to be judged without a hearing. The response was the adamant stance that no prophet could come from Galilee, which was patently false, since Jonah the prophet was from Galilee.

Allen, J. P. (1972). *John*. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), *The Teacher’s Bible Commentary* (pp. 673-674). Broadman and Holman Publishers.

The Jewish leaders have made Jesus an open issue (vv. 11, 12). So the question is, will he go up to Jerusalem and risk the hostility of the rulers?

Special points—Jesus’ brothers enter the picture here in a surprising way. Apparently, they have unworthy motives. Their names appear in Matthew 13:55. They were actually his half-brothers, all younger than he, and were for years under his care and support. They had been friendly when John wrote 2:13, but certainly they had not accepted his messianic claims. Verse 5 makes that

clear. They either wished to involve him in difficulties, or gain from his popularity, or cause a showdown. In any case, they were acting beyond their rights.

It here appears how sensitive Jesus was to timing. He knew what was ahead, but he refused to let others force him to be a victim of circumstances. He would act, not merely react. He was in control; he would give his life, not just have it taken. So he spoke of his time, “My time is not yet come” (v. 6). The word means “season,” the fitting and proper season for showing himself to the world (v. 4).

The time was really nearer than the brothers thought. Jesus would, indeed, go up to Jerusalem, but not on their terms. He went and found the city in a turmoil over him.

John portrays three groups in the bitter debates. “The Jews” (v. 11) refers to the hostile ruling class. The depth of their feelings is seen in the literal reading of verse 11, “Where is that fellow?” On the other hand, “the people” (v. 12) denotes the Galilean crowd. They were divided but were asking honest questions. The third attitude is seen in “the people of Jerusalem” (v. 25, RSV). They knew their leaders better than the visitors to the city. They knew that Jesus’ charge that they wanted to kill him (vv. 19–20) was true.

Jesus would not remain in hiding. He boldly disputed with his accusers. And on the last great day of the feast he made another startling claim. One of the features of the worship had been the daily pouring out of the drink offering. With that in his mind, Jesus cried out, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (v. 37). With courage he declared that God would no more honor the ceremonies of the ancient wells of salvation. Henceforth there was to be a new source of the Water of life. It would be in him.

Truth for today—There is a significant truth in verse 17. It is a supreme test for knowing what is God’s will. “If any man’s will is to do his will, he shall know ...” (RSV). In Jesus’ usage, that was to be their way of knowing whether God had sent him. In ours, the same principle applies. Whoever wants to know God’s will must *want to do* that will before he can know it. It doesn’t say, “if any man’s will is to *know* his will.” The question is on doing.

God never submits his will to us for our approval! He shows himself to us if we desire to act. Our acceptance is to be in advance. Then one truly wants it. God always reveals the next step to us while we are on the way to doing what we already know to do.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). John 7:1-29. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.