

EXPLANATION OF 43RD BIBLEBOOK

JOHN 7 (A.D. 70-95)

INTRODUCTION

John 7:1-9 describes Jesus Christ going around in Galilee, but finally going secretly to Judea.

John 7:10-53 describes the appeal of Jesus Christ to the crowds in the temple. "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."

OUTLINE

(I) 7:1-13. The right time to act.

- a. God's appointed time has not yet come (7:1-9).
- b. God's appointed time has come (7:10-13).

(II) 7:14 - 8:1. The teaching of Jesus in the temple.

- a. The education of Jesus (7:14-18).
- b. The education in the law without obedience is hypocritical and useless (7:19-24).
- c. Different opinions about Jesus (7:25-32,40-44).
- d. Jesus warns that the time is short (7:33-36).
- e. Jesus promises the Holy Spirit (7:37-39).
- f. The reaction of the temple guards and Nicodemus (7:45 – 8:1).

EXPLANATION

(I) 7:1-13. The right time to act.

a. God's appointed time has not yet come (7:1-9).

7:1. And after these things Jesus was going about (viia) in Galilee, for he did not wish (viia) to go about (vnpa) in Judea because the Jews were seeking (viia) to kill (vnaa) him.

7:2. Now the feast of the Jews, that of Tabernacles, was (viia) drawing near.

7:3. So his brothers said (viaa) to him, "Leave (vmaa) here and go (vmpa) (imperatives) to Judea, in order that your disciples may observe (vifa) your works which you are continually doing (vipa),

7:4. For no one does (vipa) anything in secret when he seeks (vipa) to be (vnpa) (known) in public. If you do (vipa) these things, show (vmaa)(imperative) yourself to the world.

7:5. For even his brothers did not believe (viia) in him.

7:6. Therefore Jesus said (vipa) to them, "For me the proper time is (vipa) not yet here, but for you the time is (vipa) always here (ready, suitable).

7:7. The world cannot (vipn) hate (vnpa) you (i.e. you cannot arouse the hatred of the world), but it constantly hates (vipa) me, because I testify (vipa) concerning it that its works are always (vipa) wicked.

7:8. Go up (vmaa)(imperative) to the feast yourselves. I am not going up (vipa) to this feast (now), because for me the proper time has not yet been made full (virp) (i.e. has not yet arrived).

7:9. Having said (vpaa) these things, he remained (viaa) in Galilee.

The Great Galilean Ministry. Jesus went around in Galilee. This part of the Great Galilean Ministry of Jesus (April to October A.D. 29) is described in Mark chapters 5 to 7 and consisted of the following:

- Jesus went from Capernaum (6:24) through Galilee to the region of the border, left Galilee and went to Tyre¹ and Sidon².
- He travelled through Galilee and left Galilee for a second time to Decapolis³. And then returned to Dalmanutha in Galilee⁴.
- He left Galilee for a third time and went to Caesarea Philippi⁵. He finally returned to Capernaum⁶.

Jesus withdrew from the crowds, because he wanted to spend more time with his disciples alone. And Jesus travelled in Galilee and its surrounding countries, because the Jews in Judea wanted to kill him (5:18). Jesus knew that he would eventually die in Jerusalem, but only at God's appointed time.

The seven appointed feasts of Israel. The Old Testament knows seven religious festivals⁷.

- The Sabbath on every seventh day of the week.
- The Passover followed by the Feast of Unleavened bread from 14 to 21 Nisan (March/April).
- The feast of Weeks or the feast of the Harvest (the first fruits) or Pentecost on 6 Sivan (May/June).
- The feast of Blowing the trumpets on 1 Tishri (September/October).
- The Day of Atonement on 10 Tishri (September/October).
- The feast of Tabernacles or Booths from 15 to 21 Tishri (September/October).

¹ Mark 7:24

² Mark 7:31

³ Mark 7:31

⁴ Mark 8:10

⁵ Mark 8:27

⁶ Mark 9:33

⁷ Leviticus 23; Numbers 28-29

- The feast of Purim (Esther 9:18-32) on 14 to 15 Adar (February/March).

Three of these festivals were at the same time pilgrimage-festivals, during which Jews from all countries in the world were required come to Jerusalem to celebrate the festival⁸. The Passover marked the beginning of the harvest. Pentecost marked the ingathering or end of the harvest. And the feast of Tabernacles or “the feast of dwelling in booths” marked the thanksgiving for the harvest.

The feast of Tabernacles. The feast of Tabernacles was celebrated in the seventh month of the Jewish calendar, that is, approximately October and lasted for seven days. It was not only a harvest festival, in which the Israelites thanked God for the vintage, but also a joyful festival commemorating God’s guidance of Israel through the desert for forty years and a festival anticipating God’s blessings in the future for Israel and the whole world.

The seven days of feasting was characterised by bringing sacrifices, living in booths, a procession of lights and the outpouring of water. Small huts made of branches and leaves were erected on the rooftops and in the streets and provided shelter for the pilgrims who attended the feast. The great candelabrum in the temple was lit and reminded the people of the pillar of fire that guided Israel by night after the exodus. There was also a torch-parade by night. And there was the daily ceremony of pouring out water on the altar.

On each of the seven days of the feast, a priest would fill a golden pitcher with water from the pool of Siloam and carry it back to the temple accompanied by a solemn procession. At the temple, amid the sounding of trumpets and the shouting and rejoicing multitudes he would pour the water through a funnel, which led to the base of the altar of burnt-offering. The ceremony reminded the people of Israel of the refreshing stream of water that flowed miraculously from the rock at Meribah in the desert⁹. It pointed forward to the spiritual blessings of the coming Messianic age¹⁰.

The symbolic rite of water-pouring reminded the people of the Old Testament promises, “I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring and my blessing on your descendants”¹¹. “Come all you who are thirsty, come to the waters”¹². And “You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail”¹³. That is why Jesus in verse 38 can say with confidence, “*As the Scripture has said, ‘streams of living water will flow from within him’.*”

God’s appointed time. Why did Jesus first stay in Galilee and not go up to the feast? The brothers of Jesus¹⁴ urged him to go up to Jerusalem to the feast of Tabernacles in order to make himself known to all his followers that came from all parts of the country. His brothers still showed no faith in him. They accused Jesus of being inconsequential. If his ambition was to become a great leader, he had to make a public spectacle of his power and miracles. Their thinking was earthly and materialistic. Only after Jesus had been resurrected from the dead did his brothers change their mind about him and believed in him¹⁵.

The Bible clearly teaches that for every deed and action of Jesus Christ on earth, there is a definite moment, determined from all eternity by God the Father in his eternal plan. Three times in John chapter 7 we read about ‘the right time’. The right time means the proper time or the appointed time for Jesus to act. There was a right time to go up to the feast, but that time had not yet come (7:6,8). There was also a right time to be arrested by the Jewish religious leaders, but also that time had not yet come and so nobody laid their hand on Jesus (7:28-30). No matter what the difficult circumstances of Jesus were, in reality he was save from danger of his enemies, because it was not yet the will of God the Father that he should die at this time¹⁶!

Only in John 12:23-24 Jesus says, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified”. Then Jesus prophesied that he would die. Also in John 13:1 Jesus says that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. And in John 17:1, Jesus prays to his Father saying, “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son”.

Jesus believed that for every deed or event in his life on earth there was a definite time, which from all eternity God the Father had determined in his eternal plan. For Jesus there was a right time to live in a meaningful way and there was a right time to die in a meaningful way. Every event in his life has been scheduled in God’s eternal plan. It is not man on earth, but *the sovereign God in heaven who determines the course of history on earth!* It is only God who determines the course of your history on earth!

⁸ Deuteronomy 16:16

⁹ Exodus 17:17

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 10:4

¹¹ Isaiah 44:3

¹² Isaiah 55:1

¹³ Isaiah 58:11

¹⁴ Matthew 13:55-56

¹⁵ Acts 1:14

¹⁶ cf. Matthew 10:29-30

The hatred of the world. Non-believers do not arouse the hatred of the world. But because Jesus exposes the evil of the world, he constantly aroused the hatred of the world against him. 'The world' is here the region of evil which is hostile against God, Christ and Christians (cf. 1:9-10)¹⁷. The 'world' was especially represented by the religious hierarchy in Jerusalem (2:14-16; 3:19-20; 5:30-47).

b. God's appointed time has come (7:10-13).

7:10. But after his brothers had gone up (viaa) to the feast, then also he went up (viaa), not publicly but as it were¹⁸ in secret.

7:11. Now the Jews were looking (viia) for him at the feast and were saying (viia), "Where is (vipa) he?"

7:12. And there was (viia) much murmuring (secret discussion, whispering) about him among the crowds. Some were saying (viia), "He is (vipa) (a) good (man)", but others were saying (viia), "No, on the contrary, he is leading astray (vipa) the crowd."

7:13. Nevertheless, no one was speaking (viia) openly about him for fear of the Jews¹⁹.

Travelling along bypaths. Jesus went up to the feast as though he did not want to be seen. There are different possibilities: Jesus and his small group of disciples may have travelled along bypaths to Jerusalem. Or they may have travelled by night. Or they may have travelled without announcing their departure from Galilee or their arrival at Jerusalem.

Whispering about Jesus. There was widespread whispering in the crowds about Jesus. Some thought he was a good person, while others denounced him for being a political fanatic or a false prophet that deceived the people²⁰.

No one would say anything openly about Jesus for fear of the Jewish religious leaders and teachers. The Sanhedrin (the highest religious council of the Jews) had not yet made any public statement about Jesus. Therefore no-one dared to speak openly about him, because they feared they would be excommunicated from the synagogue (9:22).

Persecution by the legalists. People who do not submit to the religious rules (laws) of such religious councils are excluded from the official state religion. They are driven from their own families. They are excluded from schools, universities and other social institutions. They are forbidden to set up houses in certain districts, forbidden to make use of the water wells, forbidden to set up their own businesses or forbidden to marry outside the official religion. They are driven out of their houses and towns and threatened with death. They are harassed by the police, arrested, imprisoned, tortured and even murdered! A religion that does such things claims to be 'a religion of peace', but in reality it is 'the peace of terror'. People are terrorised to obey their man-made religious, social and political laws.

(II) 7:14 - 8:1. The teaching of Jesus in the temple.

a. The education of Jesus (7:14-18).

7:14. Now when the feast was already²¹ half over (in the middle) (vppa), Jesus went up (viaa) to the temple and started to teach (viia).

7:15. The Jews therefore were amazed (viia) and said (vppa), "How does this fellow know (by relationship, intuition and reflexion)²² (vira) letters (i.e. the Bible), without having studied (vpaa) (i.e. without an education in a rabbinical school)?"

7:16. So Jesus answered (viao) them and said (viaa), "My teaching²³ is (vipa) not mine, but his who sent (vpaa) me.

7:17. If anyone is willing (vspa) to do (vnpa) his will, he will know (vifd) concerning the teaching whether²⁴ it is (vipa) of God or whether I speak (vipa) of myself (i.e. expressing my own views).

7:18. He who is (merely) speaking (vppa) of himself (i.e. expressing his own views) is seeking (vipa) his own glory. He who seeks (vppa) the glory of him who sent (vpaa) him, he is (vipa) truthful (honest), and there is (vipa) in him no unrighteousness (i.e. nothing false).

The standard education during the days of Jesus (7:15). During the days of Jesus, the only schools that were recognised were schools in which certain religious teachers (rabbis) taught the Old Testament and Jewish theology. The Scriptures were even memorised, as some religions still do today. Unlike the two opposing religious parties, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, Jesus never received any education in any of these religious or rabbinical schools. This means that in the eyes of the Jewish religious leaders and teachers, Jesus failed to receive his degree in any accredited institution. Therefore, *the Jewish religious leaders and teachers concluded that everything Jesus taught must be wrong!* Jewish learning concentrated on the interpretation of the Old Testament according to their own man-made rules²⁵. The implication was that in the eyes of the Jewish religious leaders and teachers with regard to religious matters, Jesus did not teach the standard doctrines, but was only uttering his private opinion.

¹⁷ Psalm 2

¹⁸ G: hós

¹⁹ cf. Proverbs 29:25

²⁰ Luke 23:2,5

²¹ G: édé

²² G: oida

²³ G: didaché

²⁴ G: poteron

²⁵ Isaiah 29:13; Mark 7:1-13

The Jewish religious leaders and teachers not only hardened their own hearts against the teachings of Jesus²⁶, but also urged other people to refuse to listen to his teachings.

The unique source of the teachings of Jesus (7:16). The education of Jesus had a unique Source: God himself (7:16)²⁷! No earthly religious teacher ever taught Jesus! Only God himself taught Jesus! The Jewish religious leaders completely failed to think of the possibility that the contents of Jesus' teaching might have been derived from another source than the Jewish schools. God himself is a source of education that is far superior to any Jewish school! Jesus said that he received his teaching from his heavenly Father. This was a serious warning to his enemies, because if they rejected the message of Jesus then they were rejecting the Greatest Teacher, God himself (6:45)²⁸!

The qualification needed to evaluate the teaching of Jesus (7:17-18). Jesus says that anyone who wishes to evaluate his teaching must have both the proper attitude and the proper motive.

- The proper attitude in evaluating the teachings of Jesus Christ is the willingness to obey God (7:17)²⁹. If a person does not have the desire to obey the will of God as expressed in the Bible, he will never find the true knowledge! Intellectually, he will not be able to grasp the meaning of the teachings of the Bible and experientially he will fail to establish a relationship with the God of the Bible.
- The proper motive or goal in evaluating the teachings of Jesus is to work for the honour and glory of God (7:18)³⁰. If a person speaks to gain honour for himself, then he is nothing but a false pretender. This was what the Jewish religious leaders were doing: they were teaching to gain honour and glory for themselves. They wanted all people to look up to *them* as the leaders and teachers, to admire *them* for their religious zeal and they were jealous whenever the crowds listened to Jesus instead! They were very religious, but also very unreliable (liars and dishonest)! They could not recognise that Jesus was speaking the words of God and they could not teach others the words of God. But Jesus was reliable (truthful, honest), because he did not pretend. He obeyed God, the One who sent him; he spoke God's words and he sought God's honour.

Anyone who wishes to understand and evaluate the teaching of Jesus Christ must have both the proper attitude and the proper motive. Then only will he know by experience whether the teaching of Jesus Christ really comes from God in heaven! Then only will also he be truly reliable (truthful, honest, real, genuine).

The relationship between knowledge, love and obedience.

- Knowledge leads to love and obedience. In John 17:26 Jesus says that he has given *knowledge* of God to his disciples, so that God's *love* may be in them. In John 14:15 Jesus says, "If you *love* me, you will *obey* what I command." Therefore, knowing the True and Living God leads to loving God and loving God leads to obeying God. The relationship between these three is then: first knowledge, second love and third obedience.
- Obedience leads to love and knowledge. John 7:17 says, that you must be willing to obey before you can find true knowledge. John 14:21,23 says that you must obey before you can experience love. Ephesians 3:17-19 says that you must be rooted in love before you can grasp the knowledge of God. Therefore obedience to God leads to more love for God and love for God leads to more experiential knowledge of God! The relationship between these three is then: first obedience, second love and third knowledge.
- All three: the knowledge of our mind, the love of our heart and the obedience of our will are inter-dependent, influence one another and enrich one another. Only when we continue with all three of these will our spiritual life spiral upwards! None of these three is really first. What is really first is the sovereign grace of God! Only by God's grace do we gain knowledge, love and obedience³¹! God's sovereign grace influences and transforms our entire personality so that we may live for the glory of God³².

b. The education in the law without obedience is hypocritical and useless (7:19-24).

7:19. Did not Moses give (vira) you the law? Yet none of you does (keeps) (vipa) the law. Why are you seeking (vipa) to kill (vnaa) me (i.e. transgress the sixth commandment in the law)?

7:20. The crowd answered (viao), "You have (vipa) a demon. Who is seeking (vipa) to kill (vnaa) you?"

7:21. Jesus replied (viao) and said (viaa) to them, "One deed (miraculous work: a healing on a Sabbath) I did (viaa) and you are all amazed (vipa).

7:22. For that reason Moses gave (vira) you the (law of) circumcision - not that it is from (originated with) (vipa) Moses but with the fathers - and you always circumcise (vipa) a person on the Sabbath!

7:23. If a person always receives (vipa) circumcision (destroying a part of the body) on the sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken (vsap), are you angry (vipa) at me for once making (viaa) a man completely whole (restoring the whole body of a man) on the Sabbath?

7:24. Stop judging (vmpa) according to appearance, but render (vmpa) (imperatives) a just judgement.

²⁶ Hebrews 3:15-16; 4:2

²⁷ cf. Isaiah 50:4-5

²⁸ Luke 10:16

²⁹ Hebrews 11:6

³⁰ Romans 11:36

³¹ cf. Philippians 2:12-13

³² cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

Paul taught that physical circumcision of Jews was the sign of keeping ‘the law’ in the sense of keeping the covenant of grace (faith and obedience).

- Circumcision was a sign of keeping the covenant of grace (2067 B.C.). In Romans 2:25 the apostle Paul maintains, “Circumcision indeed has value (i.e. if you are already circumcised), but only if you would *continually* practise the law (in the sense of the covenant of grace), but if you *continually* are a transgressor of the law (in the sense of the covenant of grace), your (physical) circumcision has *permanently* become (spiritual) uncircumcision.”

The word ‘law’ has several different meanings in the letter to the Romans and the correct meaning is dependent on the context of the word. In Romans 2:25 the word ‘law’ does not refer to the various Old Testament moral, ceremonial and civil laws, which were given during the time of Moses (1407 B.C.), but rather to the Old Testament covenant of grace, which was established during the time of Abraham (2067 B.C.)! In this Old Testament covenant, God promised that he would be their God and they would be his people³³. This was a covenant of promise and grace. The requirements of this covenant of grace³⁴ was *faith* in God’s promise³⁵ which had to be shown in *obedience*³⁶. *The sign and seal* of this covenant was physical circumcision³⁷.

Paul maintains that physical circumcision as a sign of the covenant of grace only had value when the Jews fulfilled the requirement of faith and showed their faith by their obedience. *If the Jews had no faith in God and his messianic promises and no obedience by walking with God, their claim on God’s covenant promises was mere presumption and even an empty mockery!* Thus, in Romans 2:25-27, keeping (the requirements of) the law is equivalent to keeping the covenant of grace which God made with the patriarchs. And breaking (the requirements of) the law is equivalent to breaking the covenant of grace which God made with the patriarchs. When the requirements of God’s covenant were neglected or violated, physical circumcision became spiritual uncircumcision. Then the outward sign of physical circumcision lost its significance (2:25)³⁸!

- Circumcision was also a sign of keeping the Law of Moses (1407 B.C.). However when the Law was added to the covenant³⁹ circumcision also became a sign of keeping the law of Moses (the moral, ceremonial and civil laws of Israel)⁴⁰. This means that keeping the covenant of grace (made with Abraham) was still the most essential meaning of the Mosaic Law! The obedience which God required was obedience to the moral law: love God and your neighbour as yourself⁴¹. The sign that one committed oneself to obedience was circumcision. Circumcision in itself was not the fulfilment of the requirement to obey. Loving God and the neighbour (the moral law) was the requirement to obey.
- Circumcision took the place of loving God and the neighbour. In the period between the Babylonian exile (587 B.C.) and the first coming of Jesus the Jewish religious teachers and leaders had replaced the original meaning of physical circumcision, namely keeping the covenant of grace by faith and obedience, with their legalistic and outward keeping of the ceremonial law. However, merely keeping the Mosaic Law (the outward ceremonies like circumcision) without keeping of the covenant of grace (by faith and obedience) has absolutely no value!

Jesus reminded the Jews that physical circumcision of Jews was the sign of keeping ‘the law’ in the sense of keeping the covenant of grace (faith and obedience). While circumcision actually came from God during the time of Abraham, the Jewish religious teachers believed that circumcision came from Moses. They replaced the keeping of the covenant of grace (by faith and obedience to the moral law of loving God and the neighbour) with their legalistic and outward keeping of the ceremonial law, that is, keeping outward religious ceremonies, especially physical circumcision. *While circumcision originally was the sign of the covenant, it became the covenant itself.* The keeping of the ceremonial law (physical circumcision) became more important than keeping the moral law (loving God by keeping the Sabbath and loving the neighbour by healing the paralytic)!

The first argument of Jesus was that the Jewish religious leaders and teachers claimed *to know the law*, but they *did not obey the law*. The fourth commandment teaches to keep the Sabbath holy (separate) by stopping your normal work⁴², by getting refreshed⁴³, by meeting together to worship God⁴⁴ and by doing good and saving lives of others⁴⁵. The fourth commandment thus deals with loving God and loving the neighbour as you love yourself⁴⁶. However, the Jewish

³³ Genesis 17:7; Leviticus 26:12

³⁴ Romans 2:26

³⁵ Genesis 15:5-6; cf. John 6:28-29

³⁶ Genesis 22:17-18; Hebrews 4:2,6; James 2:17,22

³⁷ Genesis 17:9-14

³⁸ cf. Deuteronomy 30:6

³⁹ Galatians 3:17

⁴⁰ Leviticus 12:3; John 7:19,22

⁴¹ Mark 12:30-31

⁴² Exodus 20:9-10

⁴³ Exodus 23:12

⁴⁴ Leviticus 23:3

⁴⁵ Mark 3:4

⁴⁶ Mark 12:30-31

religious teachers violated this commandment by not loving God and by not loving their neighbour (for example, the paralytic)!

The second argument of Jesus was that the Jewish religious leaders and teachers *destroyed* something (the foreskin) on the Sabbath, while Jesus *made something completely whole* (the paralytic) on the Sabbath (5:9).

If the Jews allowed the performance of a ceremonial cleansing rite (circumcision) of just one part of the body (the male organ) on the Sabbath, why should they forbid the performance of the healing of the whole body including the soul (of the paralysed man) on the Sabbath (5:9)? Therefore the Jewish religious leaders and teachers must not judge what Jesus did on the Sabbath by mere outward appearance⁴⁷, but by what really happened. Jesus had already taught the people that he is the Lord (Master) of the Sabbath and may determine what is done on the Sabbath⁴⁸. He determined that people may do good on the Sabbath and save lives on the Sabbath⁴⁹.

Jesus maintained that being educated in the law or knowing the law without obeying the law is hypocritical and useless. The Jewish religious leaders could not refute the arguments of Jesus.

Plotting to kill Jesus was another example of the Jews breaking the law. Another example: the sixth commandment of the moral law says, “You shall not kill”⁵⁰, but the Jewish religious leaders were trying to kill Jesus (5:18)! Jesus knew exactly what was in their minds and hearts (2:25; 6:61,64).

Crowds of ordinary people are usually slow to see through the conspiracies of their leaders. That is why they said that Jesus is demon-possessed. They thought that Jesus was suffering from a persecution mania (7:20).

c. Different opinions about Jesus (7:25-32,40-44).

7:25. Therefore some of the people of Jerusalem were saying (viaa), “Is (vipa) this not the man they are seeking (vipa) to kill (vnaa)?”

7:26. Now look, he is speaking (vipa) openly, and they are saying (vipa) nothing to him. Surely not⁵¹ the authorities have really come to know (by observation and experience)⁵² (viaa) (i.e. have really become convinced) that he is (vipa) the Messiah (the Christ)?

7:27. Yet we know (by relation, intuition and reflexion)⁵³ (vira) where this (man) is (vipa) from. But when the Messiah comes (vspn) no one will know⁵⁴ (vipa) from where he is (comes) (vipa).

7:28. So Jesus cried out (viaa), teaching (vppa) in the temple saying (with irony)(vppa), “(So you think that) you know me⁵⁵, and (also) you know⁵⁶ (vira) from where I am (vipa)!” But I have not come (vira)⁵⁷ of my own accord. On the contrary, he who sent (vpaa) me is (vipa) the real One. Him you do not know⁵⁸ (vira)!

7:29. I do know⁵⁹ (vira) him, because I am (vipa) from his presence⁶⁰, and he sent (viaa) me.

7:30. Therefore they were attempting (viaa) to arrest⁶¹ (vnaa) him, but no one laid (viaa) a hand on him, because his hour had not yet⁶² come (vila).

7:31. But many in the crowd believed (viaa) in him and kept saying (viaa), “When the Messiah *once for all* comes (vsaa), surely he will not do (vifa) more miraculous signs than this man has done (viaa)?”

7:32. The Pharisees heard (viaa) the crowd mumbling (whispering) (vppa) these things about him; so the chief priests and Pharisees sent (viaa) temple guards⁶³ to arrest (vsaa) him.

7:40. So some of the crowd having listened to (vpaa) these words were saying (viaa), “This (man) is (vipa) indeed (really) the Prophet (cf. 1:21).”

7:41. Others were saying (viaa), “This is (vipa) the Messiah.” But some kept saying (viaa), “Surely the Messiah does not come (vipn) out of Galilee?”

7:42. Has not the Scripture said (viaa) that out of the seed of David and from Bethlehem, the village where David was (lived) (viaa), the Messiah comes (vipn)?”

⁴⁷ cf. 1 Samuel 16:9

⁴⁸ Mark 2:27-28

⁴⁹ Mark 3:4

⁵⁰ Exodus 20:13

⁵¹ G: mépote

⁵² G: ginóskó

⁵³ G: oida

⁵⁴ G: ginóskó

⁵⁵ G: kai+egó (kaigó), +moi (kamoi), +me (kame) in kai ... kai (and also).

⁵⁶ G: oida

⁵⁷ G: erchomai, eleusomai, élthon. élélutha. To come.

⁵⁸ G: oida

⁵⁹ G: oida

⁶⁰ G: par autou

⁶¹ G: piazó

⁶² G: oupó

⁶³ G: hupéretas

7:43. So there was (viad) a division⁶⁴ among the crowd because of him.

7:44. Some of them wanted (viia) to arrest (vnaa) him, but no one laid (viaa) a hand on him.

The opinion of the religious leaders (7:25-26). The Jews in Jerusalem probably knew that the Jewish religious leaders wanted to kill Jesus. But because the religious leaders had not done this yet, the people began to wonder whether the Jewish religious leaders had changed their opinion about Jesus. “Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Messiah (the Christ)?” *What counted in Israel was not the truth, but the opinion of the Jewish religious leaders! Whoever thought differently than the Jewish religious leaders were thrown out of the synagogue. The ordinary people were taught not to think for themselves!* Instead, they were forced to please their religious leaders⁶⁵! That is why the ordinary people were so afraid of the Jewish religious leaders (7:13,48; 9:22,34; 12:42).

The opinion of the ordinary Jews (7:27,40-44). Some Jews thought that no-one could know where the Messiah would come from (7:27). Others thought that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee (6:42) and could therefore not be the Messiah, because the Scripture says that the Messiah according to his human nature from Mary and his legal position from Joseph would be from the royal family of David⁶⁶ and would be born in Bethlehem (7:41-42)⁶⁷.

The declaration of Jesus (7:28-29). Jesus uses irony when he says, “(So you think that) you know me, and you (also) know where I am from!” In reality the Jews did not know his origin (which is from God the Father) and they did not know him personally (as Saviour and Lord). In order to know Jesus Christ personally and intimately in experience one needs to be born again by the Holy Spirit⁶⁸!

Jesus continually repeated that he did not come on his own authority, but was sent by God (5:30; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10). His Sender is not a fiction of the imagination, but reality. *The Jews (and other religions) think that they know who ‘God’ is, but Jesus says that they do not know who the real God is (8:55; 17:25)⁶⁹!*

The Jews wanted to arrest Jesus, but no-one laid his hand on Jesus, because his time had not yet come (7:30)! The exact time for his arrest, trial and crucifixion had not yet arrived. Likewise, when Christians are surrounded and threatened by enemies, nothing will happen to them without God’s sovereign permission and at God’s time⁷⁰! Christians do not need to live in fear!

The opinion of many Jews in the crowd (7:30-31). There were many in the crowd (mainly pilgrims) who began to put their faith in Jesus Christ. They believed that he was the Prophet⁷¹ or the Messiah (7:40-41). They believed that the Messiah would do miracles⁷² and that he would free Israel from Roman oppression⁷³. They believed, because they saw his miracles (2:23; 4:45,48)⁷⁴. This does not imply that their faith led to their salvation, because the verb is in the aorist tense and does not imply *continual and persistent* faith.

The reaction of the Jewish religious leaders (7:32). When they heard what the crowd was whispering, the chief priests (who were Sadducees) and the Pharisees sent their servants (the temple guards) to arrest Jesus. The Sadducees and Pharisees were two religious parties that were arch-enemies of one another. But their common hatred against Jesus Christ united them in their persecution of Christ and Christians! Later two more arch-enemies, Pontius Pilate (the Roman governor) and king Herod (the Jewish king), became ‘friends’ when they both condemned Jesus Christ at his trials⁷⁵. Likewise, the various religions in the world and even the unreligious are united in their condemnation and persecution of Christians. The servants of the Jewish religious leaders are appropriately called ‘under rowers’ or ‘galley slaves’.

So, the people were divided because of Jesus⁷⁶. Some wanted to arrest him, but in the end no one laid a hand on him (7:44).

d. Jesus warns that the time is short (7:33-36).

7:33. So Jesus said (viaa). “Yet a little while I am (vipa) with you, and (then) I go (vipa) to him who sent (vpaa) me.

7:34. You will seek (vifa) me, but you will not find (vifa) me, and where I am (vipa) you cannot (vipn) come (vnaa).”

7:35. The Jews therefore said (viaa) to one another, “Where does this fellow intend (vipa+) to go (+vnpn) that we shall not find (vifa) him? Surely he does not intend (vipa+) to go (+vnpn) to the Diaspora among the Greeks and teach (+vnpn) the Greeks?”

⁶⁴ G: schisma

⁶⁵ cf. Galatians 1:10

⁶⁶ 2 Samuel 7:12-13; Acts 2:30; Romans 1:3; 2 Timothy 2:8; Revelation 5:5

⁶⁷ Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:3-5

⁶⁸ 1 Corinthians 2:12-14; 1 John 3:6-9

⁶⁹ Matthew 11:27

⁷⁰ Matthew 10:28-30

⁷¹ Deuteronomy 18:15-19

⁷² Isaiah 35:5-6; Matthew 11:2-5

⁷³ Acts 1:6

⁷⁴ Acts 8:13

⁷⁵ Luke 23:12; Acts 4:27

⁷⁶ cf. Luke 2:34

7:36. What is (vipa) the word which this fellow is saying (viaa) (i.e. what does he mean by saying), ‘You will seek (vifa) me, but you will not find (vifa) me?’ and ‘Where I am (vipa) you cannot (vipn) come (vnaa)’?”

Warning to take a stand with regard to Jesus. Jesus said that he would be with them only for a short time (from October A.D. 29 to May A.D. 30). After he had completed his God-given task he would return to the One who sent him (God the Father in heaven). Then the Jews would look for him, but not find him (cf. 13:33,36). They would not even be able to come where Jesus was going! The Jewish nation would frantically and in despair seek freedom, but it would be too late⁷⁷! Jesus made it very clear that God’s eternal plan would be executed and that no-one could thwart it⁷⁸!

This is a very serious warning for all people! There will come a time when people who harden their hearts against Jesus Christ and his Word will not be able to repent anymore⁷⁹! These people will certainly die (the eternal death) in their sins (8:21,24)!

Whoever accepts God the Son, accepts God the Father⁸⁰. But whoever rejects God the Son, rejects God the Father⁸¹. This is the most serious warning for all the religions in the world and the unreligious: Jesus Christ is the only Way to God (14:6). There is no other Way⁸²! In the presence of God the Father there is no room for those who reject God the Son!

John 7:34 is a ‘mashal’ – a paradoxical statement, a hidden saying, a riddle, which the Jews once again interpreted literally (cf. 2:19). They thought that Jesus meant that he would slip away and hide among the Jews living in the dispersion⁸³.

e. Jesus promises the Holy Spirit (7:37-39).

7:37. Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus was standing (vila) and cried out (viaa) saying (vppa), “If anyone is thirsty (vspa), let him come (vmpr) to me and drink (vmpa)(imperatives).

7:38. He who continually believes (vppa) in me, as the Scripture says (viaa), ‘From within him shall certainly flow (vifa) rivers of living (vppa) water.’”

7:39. Now this he said (viaa) about the Spirit, which those who believed (vpaa) in him were about (vii+) to receive (+vnpa). For the Spirit was (viaa) not yet⁸⁴ present, because Jesus was not yet glorified (viap).

The outpouring of streams of living water. Probably just after the completion of the symbolic rite of pouring water on the seventh day, Jesus stood up and gave a public invitation to everyone, including those who opposed him, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” This was again ‘a mashal’: the issue was spiritual thirst for eternal life (salvation). It was as if Jesus wanted to say to the crowd that this water was pointing to him. Jesus Christ is the True Fountain of living water. ‘Coming to Jesus’ was a symbol for believing in Jesus (6:35) and ‘drinking the water’ was a symbol for receiving eternal life (4:14). Whoever *continually and persistently* believes in Jesus will never again have this spiritual thirst (4:14; 6:35). Two very important things will result from coming to Jesus Christ and believing in him.

The believer himself will receive everlasting life. “He who believes in Jesus Christ will never be thirsty” (6:35). All people who drink from the Fountain, Jesus Christ, receive lasting satisfaction for themselves. They will receive everlasting life, that is, complete salvation. They will experience what Jesus promised the Samaritan woman (4:14), “The water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life”.

The believer himself will become a channel (a means) of everlasting blessings to others. “He who believes in Jesus Christ, streams of living water will flow from within him” (7:38). In the Old Testament the river of life is found in the city of God⁸⁵. It flows out from under the threshold of the temple to become an abundant blessing⁸⁶. *That is why Jesus says, “As the Scripture says”. The Holy Spirit gives to these Old Testament prophecies their deepest and highest application in the New Testament.* All believers who have ever lived in the world constitute *together* ‘the city of God’, ‘the New Jerusalem’⁸⁷. The streams of living water is pictured as flowing from the hearts of every *individual* believer (7:38)! By coming to Christ, the believer’s own thirst is quenched and he himself will become a channel (a means) of abundant blessings for others!

⁷⁷ cf. Luke 19:41-44; 21:20-24

⁷⁸ Isaiah 14:24-27

⁷⁹ Genesis 6:3; Psalm 95:8-11; Proverbs 1:24-28; Isaiah 6:9-10; Amos 8:11-12; Matthew 13:11-15; Acts 28:26-27; Hebrews 3:12; 6:4-8; 10:26-29; 12:17

⁸⁰ Matthew 10:40

⁸¹ Luke 10:16)(John 5:23; 1 John 2:23

⁸² Acts 4:12

⁸³ cf. Acts 8:1,4; James 1:1

⁸⁴ G: oupó

⁸⁵ Psalm 46:4

⁸⁶ Ezekiel 47:1-12

⁸⁷ Hebrews 12:22-24; Revelation 21:9-10

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament connects the issuing of streams of blessing with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit⁸⁸.

In the Old Testament the visible outpouring of water was a symbol of the later invisible outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Likewise, the writer John says, “By this Jesus 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” (7:39). Jesus proclaimed that everyone who believed in him would receive everlasting life, that is complete salvation, but also an abundant life now. Christ is the real Source and Mediator of eternal life as well as of abundant life for everyone who comes to him and believes in him.

However, the promise consisting of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit would not be fulfilled until Christ was glorified, that is, until he was crucified, resurrected, ascended into heaven and enthroned in heaven⁸⁹. Then only would he pour out the streams of living water into the hearts of believers. Then only he will begin to draw people from all over the world to himself (12:31-32).

The crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and outpouring of the Holy Spirit are unique events in the history of salvation. In the New Testament the invisible outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the baptism of the Spirit is symbolised by the visible outpouring of water at the baptism with water.

It is through the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ works rebirth, new life and salvation in the hearts and lives of believers. And it is through the Holy Spirit that he will make Christians channels (means, agents, instruments) of abundant blessings for other people. In the book of Acts we can read how, after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, the believers became an abundant blessing for other people. They brought the gospel of salvation to very many people all over the world!

f. The reaction of the temple guards and Nicodemus (7:45 – 8:1).

7:45. So the temple guards came (back)(viaa) to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said (viaa) to them, “Why did you not bring (viaa) him?”

7:46. The temple guards answered (viao), “Never did a man speak (viaa) as this man.

7:47. The Pharisees therefore answered (viao) them, “Surely not you also have been led astray (virp)?”

7:48. None of the rulers or the Pharisees believed (viaa) in him, (did they)?

7:49. But this crowd (rabble), who does not know⁹⁰ (vppa) the law, is (vipa) damned (accursed)⁹¹.

7:50. But Nicodemus, the one who had come (vpaa) to him previously, being (present) one of them (i.e. one of their number), said (vipa) to them,

7:51. “Surely our law does not judge (vipa) a man without first hearing (vsaa) his side⁹² and knowing (learning)(by study, observation and experience)⁹³ (vsaa) what he is doing (vipa), (does it)?”

7:52. They answered (viao) and said (viaa) to him, “Surely you are (vipa present tense) not also from Galilee, (are you)? Search (vmaa)(imperative) and see⁹⁴ (vmaa) that out of Galilee there arises (vipp) no prophet.”

Never did a man speak as Jesus. The religious leaders of the Jews had ordered the temple guards to go and arrest Jesus. These guards first listened to the teaching of Jesus and the diverse opinions of the people. Although some wanted to arrest Jesus, no one laid hands on him, because they were utterly amazed at the teaching of Jesus. They said, “No one ever spoke the way this man does”. His teaching was so different from the teaching of the teachers of the Law (1:16-17)⁹⁵.

Intimidation of the religious leaders and teachers. The religious leaders were angry and accused the temple guards of being deceived by Jesus. They tried to intimidate the guards by claiming that none of the religious leaders of the Jews had ever believed in Jesus and that questions with regard to the Messiah should be left to the experts (the theologians and the teachers of the law). Their view was that if someone had not made a special study of the law he had no right to have a personal opinion! So the religious leaders and teachers scolded the believers in Jesus as the mob (rabble) that do not know the Old Testament law and they cursed them!

Nicodemus warns the religious leaders and teachers. However, one of the religious leaders and member of the Sanhedrin called Nicodemus, called their attention to a particular teaching of the law. The law teaches that no man may be condemned without first giving him a trial to find out what he has done⁹⁶. Yet, the Jewish religious leaders were condemning Jesus without giving him a trial! Thus, although the Jewish religious leaders and teachers claimed that they *knew the law, they did not obey the law!* The same people, who a moment ago denounced the crowd as ‘rabble’ because of their ignorance of the law, now had their own ignorance exposed! And if they were not ignorant of what the law said,

⁸⁸ Isaiah 44:3

⁸⁹ Luke 24:49; Acts 2:17

⁹⁰ G: ginóskó

⁹¹ G: eparatos

⁹² G: par autou

⁹³ G: ginóskó

⁹⁴ G: horaó, eidon

⁹⁵ Matthew 7:28-29

⁹⁶ Exodus 23:1; Deuteronomy 1:16-17; 16:18-20

they were guilty of unwillingness to obey the law! Then the religious leaders and teachers turned on Nicodemus who was one of their own and in a denigrating tone asked him whether he also came from Galilee.

Also in Matthew 23:3, Jesus accuses the Jewish religious leaders and teachers of not practising what they preached. Therefore, it is important that a Christian *must practise what he preaches!* He *must obey what he knows about the Bible!*

APPLICATIONS

- 7:1. Often it is wise to stay away from places where people want to harm or kill you.
- 7:5. Do not be surprised when some of your own family members, parents, brothers and sisters or children do not believe and even ridicule your faith in Jesus Christ.
- 7:7. Do not be surprised that the world will hate you when you expose the evil of this world⁹⁷.
- 7:8. There is a right time for everything⁹⁸. A time to wait and a time to act. There is also a time for God to wait and a time for God to act. *It is not man who determines the course of history on earth! It is the sovereign God in heaven who determines the course of history on earth!*
- 7:12. Do not be surprised that people are divided in their view about who Jesus Christ is. Even today many see Jesus as only a Prophet, while in reality he is the Messiah (7:40-43)⁹⁹.
- 7:14. Jesus taught in places where people sought religion, where people were interested in religious matters. Give special attention to people who are seeking God.
- 7:15-16. A person may receive a good education at an official institution. But a person will always find the best education in the world by sitting at the feet of the Greatest Teacher, Jesus Christ.
- 7:17. If you want to understand and evaluate the teaching of Jesus Christ, you must first have the right attitude and willingness to obey him.
- 7:18. If you want to understand and evaluate the teaching of Jesus Christ, you must first have the right motive and seek only the honour of God.
- 7:20. Do not be surprised when people say that you are demon-possessed.
- 7:24. Stop judging people and situations by mere appearances and make just judgments.
- 7:37-39. Know that when you believe in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit in you will not only transform your own life, but also use your life to bless many other people.
- 7:47-51. Be careful not to condemn other people that they do not know the law when you yourself fail to keep the law.

QUESTIONS

- 7:1. What happened during the Great Galilean Ministry?
- 7:2. What was the Feast of Tabernacles?
- 7:6. Why is there a right or proper time for everything. Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8; 8:5-6)?
- 7:11-13. Why all the secrecy among people with respect to Jesus?
- 7:15-18. How did Jesus get such learning without having studied?
- 7:17. What is the relationship between knowledge and obedience?
- 7:17-18. What qualifications are necessary to evaluate the teaching of Christ?
- 7:24,51. How should Christians judge?
- 7:25-32,40-44. What are the different opinions about Jesus Christ today?
- 7:33-34. What is the implication of the warning of Jesus Christ in this passage?
- 7:37-39. What do the streams of living water represent?

⁹⁷ Ephesians 5:11-14

⁹⁸ Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8; 8:5b-6a.

⁹⁹ Read Luke 2:34.