

Lesson 7
John 7:1 – 53
FEAST FIGHT

Memory verse: “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” (John 7:37-38 NIV)

The Feast of Tabernacles looked back to Israel’s journey through the wilderness, and looked forward to the promised kingdom of Messiah. The Jews lived in booths made of branches to remind them of God’s providential care of the nation for nearly forty years (Lev. 23:33–44).

The Feast of Tabernacles (“Booths”) occurred six months after Passover (6:4). (Matthew 12—17 and 21 record some events that happened during this six-month period, which John passed over without comment.) That year the Feast of Tabernacles fell on September 10-17, A.D. 32. It was a fall grape and olive harvest festival (Exod. 23:16; Lev. 23:33-36, 39-43; Deut. 16:13-15). In Jesus’ day it was the most popular of the three required Jewish feasts. It commemorated the Israelites’ sojourn in the wilderness. Many devout Jews built temporary shelters out of branches and lived in them for the week, in order to simulate the wilderness conditions in which their forefathers had lived.

Following the Feast of Trumpets and the solemn Day of Atonement, Tabernacles was a festive time for the people. The temple area was illumined by large candlesticks that reminded the people of the guiding pillar of fire, and each day the priests would carry water from the Pool of Siloam and pour it out from a golden vessel, reminding the Jews of the miraculous provision of water from the rock.

The feast may have been a jubilant time for the people, but it was a difficult time for Jesus, for it marked the beginning of open and militant opposition to Him and His ministry. Ever since He had healed the paralytic on the Sabbath day, Jesus had been targeted by the Jewish leaders who wanted to kill Him (John 7:1, 19–20, 25, 30, 32, 44; and note 8:37, 40). He remained in Galilee, where He would be safer, but He could not remain in Galilee and also observe the feast.

Chapter 7 relates the reaction of another significant group of people to Jesus. Generally they were the Jews, including Jesus’ brothers. It is a brief reference to Jesus’ later Galilean ministry that the Synoptics describe more fully and also prepares the reader for the presentation of Jesus’ ministry in Jerusalem that happened at the Feast of Tabernacles.

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!

Scripture Reading: John 7:25-39

To learn in this lesson: 1) Minds blinded by Disbelief 2) Submission to God 3) The Promise of the Holy Spirit

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What happened before the Feast of Tabernacle in the passage of John 7:1-10?

- 2) In the midst of the Feast, there was a public debate about Jesus (John 7: 11-36). What was it all about and how should people even today respond when presented with the person of Jesus?

- 3) At the end of the feast celebration, the people were divided (John 7:37 -52) over Jesus’ declaration and invitation. What do you think about this event, the promise from Jesus and the people’s (including Nicodemus’) decision?