

Jesus was teaching in the Temple Courts during the last half of the Feast of Succoth of 32 AD. He had defended His previous healing on the Sabbath and told them that His teaching was from God. (John 7:16) Our passage today begins with the Jews wondering why the Jewish leadership is letting Jesus make these shocking claims. Contrary to what the crowd said earlier, they now admit that they are aware of plots on Jesus' life.

Commented [notes1]: 16 Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me.
John 7:16 (NIV)

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? "not saying a word to him" is a rabbinic expression describing the importance of confronting what is not true. It is a good principle. If one does not say a word to someone, they are in essence approving of what the person is saying. (Leviticus 19:17) The crowd wondered if their leaders had decided not to kill Jesus but instead concluded that He is the Messiah?

Commented [notes2]: 17 "Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt.
Lev 19:17 (NIV)

Then the people said something that sounds strange to our ears. *27 But we know where this man is from; when the Christ comes, no one will know where he is from.* I find it fascinating that the rabbi would look at the Scriptures and, though they were so entrenched in extra-biblical teachings, would still often come to the right conclusions. The teaching of the first century was that the Messiah would be flesh and blood but not known until He set out to redeem Israel. The crowd took that teaching and interpreted it as not knowing the hometown of the Messiah. Yet, everyone knew Jesus came from Nazareth. But if we look at the actual teaching, it is exactly what we would say. No one recognized Jesus as the Son of God from heaven until He began His work to redeem Israel. The unrecognized God-man walked the earth for 30 years. Amazing!

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." John remembered these strong declarations decades later because the Holy Spirit brought them to his memory. (John 14:26) Jesus declared that they indeed knew His hometown was Nazareth, but then He took it to a spiritual dimension. Jesus is not just here by Himself. The One who sent Him, Truth, is with Him. God the Father is with the Son. (John 14:9) Then He declared that He knew God and they did not! That was bold and provocative!

Commented [notes3]: 26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.
John 14:26 (NIV)

Commented [notes4]: Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"
John 14:9 (NIV)

That would be very hard for a first century Jewish person to hear. It is hard for us to hear today. Do you know God? If you are thinking about the answer, you don't know Him. You may be listening to the sermon like they were, but not know God. He is truth. He is with Jesus. He is one with Jesus. (John 14:6) They didn't know Jesus because they didn't realize that, though He was born to Mary, He was sent from heaven. They did not yet fully realize Truth is with Him and He is Truth. Are Jesus' words the truth you accept?

Commented [notes5]: 6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.
John 14:6 (NIV)

A few weeks ago, we read of Jesus saying that we should not work for food that perishes but for the food that endures to eternal life. (John 6:27) Is that truth? Since that Sunday we saw the stock market lose 30% of its value. Are Jesus' words the truth

Commented [notes6]: 27 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."
John 6:27 (NIV)

we live by? When Jesus says, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven," (Matthew 6:19-20) is it the truth we accept?

The crowd knew what He was saying. For the listening hungry souls it was life-giving water. The poor in spirit were inheriting the Kingdom. (Matthew 5:3) To the proud religious Jews that thought they knew God it was arrogant and rude. ³⁰ *At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his time had not yet come.* What constrained them? Fear of the crowd, perhaps, but ultimately, it was God Almighty. Our times are in His hands. (Psalm 31:15)

There is a comforting application for us. Certainly Jesus could not die before the conditions came together for Him to fulfill the destiny of redeeming mankind. But you and I have a God given destiny too. As the body of Christ, we have a part to play in God's grand design. We will not perish until we have fulfilled that purpose. We know loved ones that were in Christ that have gone before us. We usually think it is too soon, but I believe that, for those in Christ, our time is appointed by God.

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?"* Later in the passage, the religious leaders will call these believers "simpletons". But their simple reasoning was pretty solid and irrefutable. Jesus did everything the prophets said He would do, at least all that He was to do in the first coming. (Isaiah 35:5-6) He gave sight to the blind and caused the lame to walk. He brought the dead to life. He fed the multitudes. He was gentle and meek (Isaiah 42:3), yet He spoke with authority. What more could one do?

This was threatening to the Jewish leaders, because if the crowds hailed Jesus as Messiah, the Romans would come charging in and take away their positions and freedoms. (John 11:48) ³² *The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about him. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest him.* The temple guards were priests who were religiously trained but also trained in security. Things were getting too out of control for the authorities to put off arresting Jesus.

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.* Jesus is trying to tell these new believers that He will be going away. Many of the parables He told during this time were about Him leaving and coming back later. (Luke 19:11) He was trying to change their expectations. They saw a conquering king with an eternal kingdom. That is coming, but first Jesus must go away.

Their response shows a bit of egotism. 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?"* The Jewish people were scattered around the known world in little enclaves. They thought perhaps He would go to these outlying parts of the known world, but notice who they thought He was going to teach, the Greeks. "Greeks" is used synonymously with Gentiles during this time. They thought He would go to teach those who were not Jews. After all, the Jews already know

Commented [notes7]: 19 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. Matt 6:19-20 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: 3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Matt 5:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: 15 My times are in your hands; deliver me from my enemies and from those who pursue me. Psalms 31:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes10]: 5 Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. 6 Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. Isaiah 35:5-6 (NIV)

Commented [notes11]: 3 A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; Isaiah 42:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: 48 If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." John 11:48 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: 11 While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. Luke 19:11 (NIV)

the Old Testament, or so they thought. They thought Jews did not need to be taught, but the rest of the world did.

There were several ceremonies that took place during the Feast of Sukkoth (Tabernacles). Steve Herzig described one of them in an article for Israel My Glory magazine. *"Here is a brief explanation of the water ceremony. A priest would take a golden pitcher out of the south gate or Water Gate of the Temple and go to the pool of Siloam in musical procession. (The steps between the two places were only discovered a few years ago.) He filled it as he quoted Isaiah 12:3. When people asked about the significance of the ceremony, they were told that it was symbolic of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. Returning to the Temple, the priest would join with another priest who had a pitcher of wine. They poured them out on the altar through silver funnels while women sang the Hallel psalms 113-118. The priests marched around the altar with willow branches reciting Psalm 118:25. Then everyone fell silent to consider the symbolism and sense their personal need of refreshment from God. This went on for seven days, but on the seventh day there was a greater intensity (called the Great Praise Day). This time the priests would go around the altar seven times before the drink offering was poured out. (The priests would climb the steps to the altar and raise their pitchers. The people would shout, "higher". The higher the pitcher, the more joy the people had experienced that year. "Higher!" and then when they could raise their pitchers no higher, the water and wine was poured out. When the pitchers were emptied into silver bowls, the crowd grew silent in contemplation of God fulfilling His promises of pouring out His Spirit upon them bringing the refreshing, rejoicing, and rest that only He can truly give. pdw) It was probably at this time that Jesus shouted (the words of) John 7:37." Israel My Glory by Steve Herzig volume 59 number 5 Sept/Oct 2001.*

Commented [notes14]: 25 O LORD, save us; O LORD, grant us success.
Psalms 118:25 (NIV)

Imagine the crowd standing silently considering their need for spiritual refreshment and suddenly, 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."* It would have been startling! What a declaration that He is the One that will dispense the Holy Spirit on every thirsty soul that comes to Him. What a promise of streams of living water that would flow from within us! (Isaiah 58:11) This feast was about being refreshed in the Lord. Jesus was telling them they would continually receive that refreshing if they came to Him. We call that refreshing presence of the Holy Spirit that continually springs up within us, "the fruits of the Spirit". The priests must have been furious at the interruption but even more so at the claim that was made.

Commented [notes15]: 11 The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.
Isaiah 58:11 (NIV)

Are you thirsty? (Psalm 42:1) That is a gift from God! We wouldn't have a thirsty soul if God didn't help us. We'd just keep trying to be satisfied with this world, trying this thing and that. If you are thirsty, thank God for that thirst and go to Jesus to have it quenched. If you aren't thirsty, ask God to give a thirst deep within your soul for Jesus. Like a loving father wanting to give his children good things, God wants to pour out the Holy Spirit on those who ask. (Luke 11:13) Are you experiencing that refreshing daily? That is supposed to be the normal Christian life.

Commented [notes16]: Psalm 42:1 (NIV)
1 As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.

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.*

Commented [notes17]: 13 If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"
Luke 11:13 (NIV)

Jesus interpreted the water ritual to be symbolic of the Spirit poured out from heaven. (Isaiah 44:3) The Spirit of God came upon people at different times in the history of Israel for prophecy or power to do a God given task, but the Spirit would not be poured out upon all who will receive Him until Jesus was glorified. (John 14:17) Jesus had to present Himself as our sanctification so that God could pour out His Holy Spirit upon us. He could not indwell unsanctified vessels. That is why Jesus had to be glorified first before the Spirit could be given to indwell believers.

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? In the first century, many believed that the Prophet like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15) and the Messiah or Christ, would be two different people. The Qumran community even believed in three special people to come, the Prophet, a priest in the order of Aaron, and a kingly Messiah. They were all correct in foreseeing these characters would come. They just didn't foresee that it was all fulfilled in one person. Jesus is the Prophet like Moses. He is our great High Priest but after the order of Melchizedek, not Aaron. (Hebrews 5:6) Jesus is also the King of kings descended from David. (Revelation 19:16) He is our prophet, priest, and king.

They responded that Jesus was "that prophet" because having our thirst quenched by Him again pictured Moses in the wilderness. They came to Moses and he struck the rock and water gushed out to quench the thirst of the nation. (Exodus 17:6) Again we see the fulfillment of that shadow in the substance of Jesus, the water for thirsty souls.

They asked, ⁴² "Does not the Scripture say that the Christ will come from David's family and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?" Like the rabbi that Herod asked about the birthplace of Messiah (Matthew 2:4-5), the crowd knew that Micah predicted He would be born in Bethlehem. (Micah 5:2) I have wondered why Jesus didn't just tell them that He was indeed born there. They assumed that since He was from Nazareth, He must have been born there.

⁴³ Thus the people were divided because of Jesus. ⁴⁴ Some wanted to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him. Jesus always divides. (Acts 14:4) He predicted it would be that way. (Matthew 10:34-36) Some will take Him at His word. Some will accuse Him of blasphemy. Some will think He was just a great teacher. He still brings division today. He has divided our society today. On the one hand you have secularists who refuse to believe there are absolutes and instead believe that truth is in the eye of the beholder. They consider Judeo-Christian ethics to be repressive. On the other you have those who believe in Jesus as the way, the truth and the life. (John 14:6)

The temple guards returned to their leaders without Jesus. 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. The Temple guards were priests who were trained in the Scriptures but also trained to fight to protect the Temple property. The teaching of Jesus struck a chord with them. They were unwilling or afraid to arrest a man that spoke like Jesus.

Commented [notes18]: 3 For 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.
Isaiah 44:3 (NIV)

Commented [notes19]: 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.
John 14:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: Deuteronomy 18:15 (NIV)
15 The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.

Commented [notes21]: 6 And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."
Heb 5:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes22]: 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.
Rev 19:16 (NIV)

Commented [notes23]: 6 I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel.
Ex 17:6 (NIV)

Commented [notes24]: 4 When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born.

5 "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:
Matt 2:4-5 (NIV)

Commented [notes25]: Micah 5:2 (NIV)
2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."

Commented [notes26]: 4 The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with the apostles.
Acts 14:4 (NIV)

Commented [notes27]: 34 "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.
35 For I have come to turn "a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law--
36 a man's enemies will be the members of his own household."
Matt 10:34-36 (NIV)

Commented [notes28]: 6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.
John 14:6 (NIV)

⁴⁷ "You mean he has deceived you also?" the Pharisees retorted. ⁴⁸ "Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? ^{49a} No!" The Pharisees were the ones who studied the Law in all its detail. They were convinced that the Sadducee priests were deceived because they didn't know the Law like they did.

"But this mob that knows nothing of the law--there is a curse on them." The Pharisees are using an Old Testament term (2Kings 11:18), the people of the land (mob in NIV). It meant the common people of Israel. Over time, the meaning changed to the mixture of people like the Samaritans that lived on the land of Israel. Later still, it meant the ignorant masses that did not study Scripture. This is how they applied it. Yet, it seems that the people understood the Law better than the Pharisees.

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?" The Pharisees are rebuking the people for not knowing the Law, and one of their own asks why they are not basing a decision about Him based on a hearing of what He has to say for Himself according to the Law? John is pointing out the irony of the situation. Hearing a person out before judging them was a universally accepted right. Even the Romans would not try Paul without hearing his defense. It's ironic that the Pharisees are rebuking the crowd as ignorant while they ignore this most basic right.

The retort to Nicodemus is typical of those who base a decision on personal bias or gain instead of the issues at hand. ⁵² They replied, "Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee." First they insult him with the suggestion that he likes Jesus because he is also from Galilee. The Judean leaders held some animosity toward the Galileans. The Galileans were very studious, but they were also hotheaded. They were usually the ones that started the uprisings that got the leadership in Judea in trouble.

Actually, prophets did come from the Galilean region. Jonah (2Kings 14:25), Nahum (Nahum 1:1), and possibly Elijah (1Kings 17:1) had come from that area. Again, the answer was ironic, since they are claiming the people that accept Jesus are the ignorant ones. They were trying to insult Nicodemus and shut him up, because they didn't want to go in the obvious direction of truth.

We get the same mindless rhetoric today from secular elites. "The stupid Christians don't understand that morals are relative, that we are the product of blind chance, and Jesus was a good teacher but not God." That kind of illogical diatribe is what is pushing our country ever further from the blessings of God. Our nation is hanging in the balances. Minds are made up, and they don't want to be confused by the facts. Only God can stir hearts and bring us to repentance and revival.

In closing, I'd like to take us back to that water ceremony. See the priests with the pitcher of water and wine marching around the altar. See the excitement in the Temple as the musicians play and the priests march up the steps of the altar with pitchers in hand. See the hush come over the crowd as the pitchers are poured and they think about how God has provided the rain for the parched fields and would one day provide the living water for their parched souls. Then in the silence hear the voice

Commented [notes29]: 18 All the people of the land went to the temple of Baal and tore it down. They smashed the altars and idols to pieces and killed Mattan the priest of Baal in front of the altars. Then Jehoiada the priest posted guards at the temple of the LORD. 2 Kings 11:18 (NIV)

Commented [notes30]: 25 He was the one who restored the boundaries of Israel from Lebo Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, in accordance with the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, spoken through his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath Hopher. 2 Kings 14:25 (NIV)

Commented [notes31]: 1 An oracle concerning Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. Nahum 1:1 (NIV)

Commented [notes32]: 1 Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word." 1 Kings 17:1 (NIV)

of Jesus suddenly ring out. *"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink!"* Some faces are aghast and others are smiling in hope that they have finally found the answer for their thirsty soul. Are you thirsty? Will you come to Jesus? There is no other place to satisfy that spiritual thirst. There is no other source of those springs within. Jesus is God's only provision for the thirst of your soul. Will you come to Him?

- 1 How did the teaching of the rabbi and Jesus' life line up in verse 27?
- 2 What did Jesus say about the crowd's relationship with God?
- 3 Why couldn't they arrest Him? Application?
- 4 How did their response to Jesus leaving reveal their egotism?
- 5 Describe the Water Ceremony during Sukkoth.
- 6 When may Jesus have interrupted it? The affect?
- 7 What did Jesus promise?
- 8 How do you experience that promise?
- 9 How did Jesus interpret the Water Ceremony?
- 10 What were the various opinions of who Jesus was? Who was right?
- 11 Why does Jesus bring division?
- 12 Discuss the sting in Nicodemus' question.