

Exegetical Notes, John 7:1-24

“A Good Man or One Who Deceives the People?”

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Verse 1

After this, Jesus went around in Galilee. He did not want to go about in Judea because the Jewish leaders there were looking for a way to kill him.

- John 6:4 says that “the Jewish Passover Feast was near.” John 7:2 says, “The Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near.” There are about six months between these two feasts. Thus, Jesus had limited his travel to the province of Galilee for about six months.
- The reason that Jesus confined his travels to Galilee was that the Jewish authorities were seeking to kill him. Strong opposition was developing to Jesus’ teaching. While Jesus knew that he would eventually lay down his life, that time had not yet come. (see verse 6)

Verses 2-5

² But when the Jewish Festival of Tabernacles was near, ³ Jesus’ brothers said to him, “Leave Galilee and go to Judea, so that your disciples there may see the works you do. ⁴ No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world.” ⁵ For even his own brothers did not believe in him.

- Jesus’ brothers, meaning the other sons of Mary and Joseph, challenge Jesus to leave Galilee and go to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. They argue that Jesus should show his works to the world for no great man keeps such things secret. If Jesus intended to be a public figure, he should act in public.
- Mark 3:21 says that Jesus’ brothers thought he was out of his mind. These verses tell us that they did not believe in him. They hoped that he would expose himself and so show everyone that he was not all that special.

Verses 6-9

Therefore Jesus told them, “My time is not yet here; for you any time will do.

⁷ The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that its works are evil. ⁸ You go to the festival. I am not going up to this festival, because my time has not yet fully come.” ⁹ After he had said this, he stayed in Galilee.

- Jesus explained to his brothers that he was not going to Jerusalem for the feast, because “my time is not yet here.” He meant that it was not yet time for him to become the sacrifice by which the world would be saved.
- Jesus said that his brothers were not confronted with the same responsibilities as was he. They were not sent to earth from God to open the doors of Heaven. He suggested that the world’s reaction to them would be different than it was to him because of the specific role he played in God’s plan to bring us salvation. He told them to go to the feast if they wanted to, but that he was not going with them, and he remained in Galilee until after they had left for Jerusalem.

Verse 10

¹⁰ However, after his brothers had left for the festival, he went also, not publicly, but in secret.

- After his brothers had gone to Jerusalem without Jesus, Jesus also went to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast. He did not go publically as his brothers had urged. He went in secret, quietly.

Verses 11-13

¹¹ Now at the festival the Jewish leaders were watching for Jesus and asking, “Where is he?” ¹² Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, “He is a good man.” Others replied, “No, he deceives the people.” ¹³ But no one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the leaders.

- Jesus went to the feast secretly because he knew that “the Jewish leaders were watching for him” in order to kill him. When they could not find him, they were asking people who knew him where he was.
- People were also looking for Jesus and talking about him. Some were saying that Jesus was a good man, but others were accusing him of deceit. But no one would express their opinions openly because the situation was too charged with emotion.

Verses 14-20

Not until halfway through the festival did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach. ¹⁵ The Jews there were amazed and asked, “How did this man get such learning without having been taught?” ¹⁶ Jesus answered, “My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me. ¹⁷ Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. ¹⁸ Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory,

but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him. ¹⁹ Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?"

- The feast of Tabernacles lasted for seven days. The crowds would have been at their peak by the second day and would not have begun to decline until after the fifth day. So, when the crowds were at their peak, Jesus appeared publically in the Temple. There, he began to teach.
- Those who heard Jesus' teachings were amazed at his learning.
- Jesus explained that he did not present his own teachings so he could not claim any personal "glory" for them. He only told them what he had received from God, "The one who sent him." Since he was not doing what he did for personal glory, as his brother's thought, it must be assumed that he was a man who told the truth.
- And then he asked the Jewish leaders why they felt free to break the law of Moses, which says, "thou shalt not commit murder" (Exodus 20:13), by seeking to murder him.

Verses 20-24

"You are demon-possessed," the crowd answered. "Who is trying to kill you?"

²¹ Jesus said to them, "I did one miracle, and you are all amazed. ²² Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a boy on the Sabbath. ²³ Now if a boy can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing a man's whole body on the Sabbath? ²⁴ Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly."

- The Jewish leaders said that Jesus was "out of his mind;" that no one was trying to kill him.
- Jesus then refers them to their actions after he had healed the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda. (See John 5) In John 5:16 it says that "because Jesus was doing these on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him." The tense of the verb, "was doing" is durative, suggesting a pattern of behavior. Apparently, Jesus had been doing things of the Sabbath Day for some time and that this on-going behavior upset the Jews. The type of "persecution" Jesus experienced from them as a result is not specifically spelled out. However, Jesus' words here suggest that they began to plot his murder.
- He went on to show their hypocrisy. The Law of Moses requires that circumcision must occur on the eighth day after the birth of a baby boy. (See Exodus 12:44, and 48.) If that day was the Sabbath, circumcision still occurred because not to circumcise on the eighth day would break the law of

Moses. He asked them to explain why circumcision was allowed on the Sabbath Day, but not healings.

- He then pleaded with them to stop making judgments by appearances and to make right judgment according to the truth of God.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *A Good Man or One Who Deceives the People?* They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by *Cornerstone Fellowship* & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen. They are used here by permission.)