

Tense Times in Jerusalem: Who is This Man? (John 7:1-52)

Author: Dr. David Turner

Session 9

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Abstract

This lecture by Dr. David Turner explores John 7, focusing on the escalating tensions and diverse opinions surrounding Jesus during the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) in Jerusalem. Dr. Turner examines the debates regarding Jesus' authority, origin, and Messiahship among his family, the crowds, and the religious leaders attempting his arrest. A central focus is placed on the theological significance of Jesus' invitation to thirsty believers and the identification of Jesus as the source of the Holy Spirit, illustrated by the historical context of the Pool of Siloam water ritual. The session concludes with an analysis of the growing hostility of the religious authorities and Nicodemus' defense of legal fairness for Jesus on the Sanhedrin.

Outline

I. Introduction to John Chapter 7

- A. Contextual Transition from John Chapter 6
 - 1. Jesus' Galilee debates with crowds and disciples
 - 2. Peter's affirmation and Jesus' warning about Judas
- B. Chronological Context in Jesus' Ministry
 - 1. Fall festival: Feast of Tabernacles (Feast of Booths / Sukkot)
 - 2. Progression of feasts: Sukkot (John 7), Dedication/Hanukkah (John 10), and the final Passover
 - 3. John's thematic focus rather than strict chronological sequence

II. The Family Debate and Secret Journey to Jerusalem (John 7:1-13)

- A. Unbelief of Jesus' Brothers
 - 1. Suggestion to go to Judea to showcase miracles publicly
 - 2. Sarcastic or scoffing attitude of the brothers
 - 3. Editorial comment: "even his own brothers did not believe in him"
- B. Jesus' Furtive Journey to the Feast
 - 1. Jesus stays behind initially because "my time has not yet fully come"

2. Secret departure to Jerusalem after his brothers left

C. Mixed Expectations and Whispering in the Crowds

1. Leaders actively searching for Jesus
2. Divisive opinions: "He is a good man" versus "He deceives the people"

III. Jesus' Public Teaching and Sabbath Authority (John 7:14-24)

A. Temple Discourse Midway Through the Feast

1. Public amazement at Jesus' learning without formal rabbinical training
2. Jesus affirms his teaching is from the Father

B. Conflict over Sabbath Healing and the Law

1. Jesus' reference back to the Pool of Bethesda healing (John 5)
2. Argument from the lesser to the greater: Circumcision is allowed on the Sabbath, so healing a whole body should be too
3. Appeal to "stop judging by appearances, but judge correctly"

IV. Escalating Tension, Identity Debates, and Attempted Arrests (John 7:25-36)

A. Debate on the Origins of the Messiah

1. Crowd's belief that Messiah's origin would be mysterious
2. Objection: Jesus is known to be from Galilee/Nazareth
3. Jesus' counter-claim: Sent by the Father, whom they do not know

B. Failed Arrest and Sign-Based Faith

1. Leaders attempt to seize him, but fail because "his hour had not yet come"
2. Crowd's belief based on Jesus' signs: "will the Messiah perform more signs than this?"
3. Chief priests and Pharisees dispatch temple guards to arrest Jesus

C. Prediction of Departure

1. "I am with you for only a short time... where I am, you cannot come"
2. Crowd's confusion: Speculation about traveling to the Jewish Dispersion among the Greeks

V. The Greatest Day of the Feast: Rivers of Living Water (John 7:37-39)

A. Jesus' Public Proclamation

1. Proclaimed on the last and greatest day of Sukkot
2. "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink"

B. Theological and Translation Debates

1. Grammatical phrasing options in verse 38
 - a. Standard view: Living water flows out of the heart of the individual believer
 - b. Alternate view: Living water flows out of the heart of Jesus himself

2. Christocentric focus of the Holy Spirit in John's Gospel
 - a. Jesus as the ultimate source and giver of the Spirit
 - b. Echoes John the Baptist (John 1) and Jesus breathing the Spirit (John 20)

C. Historical Background: The Water Libation Ritual

1. Mishnah tractate Sukkot (4:8-10): Priests drawing water from Pool of Siloam
2. Symbolic significance of water in OT prophets (Ezekiel, Isaiah, Zechariah)

VI. Continued Division and the Sanhedrin Council Debate (John 7:40-52)

A. Multiple Interpretations of Jesus' Identity

1. Some believe he is "the Prophet" (Deut 18)
2. Others declare him "the Messiah"
3. Objections based on geography: Messiah must come from Bethlehem, not Galilee

B. Return of the Officers Empty-Handed

1. Officers declare: "No one ever spoke the way this man does"
2. Pharisees' arrogant dismissal of the crowd as an ignorant "mob" (Am-haretz)

C. Nicodemus' Legal Intervention

1. Nicodemus appeals to basic legal fairness and the Sanhedrin's own procedural rules
2. Leaders' hostile response: Slur Nicodemus as a Galilean "country bumpkin"
3. Assertion: "A prophet does not come out of Galilee"

VII. Conclusion and Broader Narrative Context

A. Support for Jesus among Jewish Leaders

1. Joseph of Arimathea as another secret supporter
2. Believers among the priesthood and leaders in early Acts
3. Caution against anti-Semitism in reading John

B. Continuity of Conflict in John Chapters 7-10

1. John 7 sets the template for escalating hostilities
2. Parallel themes in John 8, John 9 (Pool of Siloam healing), and John 10 (Good Shepherd conflict)

C. Final Reflections

1. The ultimate question: "Who is this man?"
2. Personal invitation to belief and life