

Dr. David L. Turner, John, Session 9, Tense Times in Jerusalem 1: John 7:1-52 6-Min. Video Overview

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Today, we're going to dive into what might be one of the most tense, most chaotic chapters in the entire Gospel of John. See, chapter 7 isn't really about a neat sermon or a straightforward miracle. No, it's all about a city just thrown into absolute turmoil.

People whispering in the streets, arguing in the temple, all over one central mystery. Who is this guy Jesus? You know, one scholar, Dr. David Turner, he puts it perfectly. He says it's a very unsettling chapter.

And it's unsettling because nothing really gets resolved. You've got all these opinions flying around, tensions are just ratcheting up, and pretty much nobody can agree on what they're seeing. So let's set the scene.

We're in Jerusalem, and the city is absolutely packed with people for the Feast of Tabernacles. It's this huge fall festival. But for Jesus, this is no party.

He has a massive target on his back. The authorities, they're not just annoyed with him; they're actively looking for a way to arrest him and, yeah, to execute him. He's basically a wanted man in the most hostile city he could possibly be in.

And that brings us right to our first section. This is a city completely on edge. But what's really surprising is that the tension doesn't start with Jesus' enemies.

It starts way closer to home, with his own family. Yeah, the division starts right at his own dinner table. His brothers, they see the crowds that used to follow him in Galilee starting to thin out, and they basically challenge him.

They're mocking him, saying, hey, if you're so great, why don't you go to the capital city during the biggest festival of the year and show yourself to the world? But the author John, he jumps in right there to tell us this wasn't some friendly encouragement. It was a scoff, because as he says, even his own brothers did not believe in him. So what does Jesus do? He tells his brothers he's not going up, but then he goes anyway.

But he doesn't march in with a big entourage. No, he goes in secret. He travels furtively, kind of slipping into the city under the radar, because he knows the religious leaders have lookouts posted, just waiting to grab him.

So the whole chapter kicks off with this feeling of clandestine movement and imminent danger. Okay, so once Jesus is actually in the city, that's when the whispers start. And this leads us to our second section, where we see this whole spectrum of opinions just explode.

Jerusalem basically becomes this chaotic focus group with everybody debating his identity. And this is the million-dollar question that's driving the whole chapter. I mean, the leaders, they've already made up their minds about him, but the regular people, they are completely and totally divided.

And you can see the main fracture line right here and what the crowd's whispering. You've got one group saying he is a good man. They were probably blown away by the miracles they'd seen or heard about.

But then you've got this other group arguing, no, he deceives the people. They thought he was some kind of charlatan, you know, leading everyone astray. The city was split right down the middle.

And the labels, oh man, they didn't stop there. The confusion was just immense. When they heard him talking about a plot to kill him, some people just straight up accused him of being demon-possessed.

Others start wondering, could he be the prophet? This figure, like Moses, they were all expecting. A few even dared to whisper that maybe, just maybe, he was the Messiah. But you know, a lot of people just dismissed him out of hand.

They knew where he was from: some uneducated guy from Galilee. How could he be anyone important? Then about midway through the festival, Jesus stops hiding. He goes public and starts teaching.

And this leads us to the theological climax of the whole chapter, where he makes one of the most profound and frankly puzzling statements in the entire gospel. Now, to really get what Jesus says next, you need a little context. During this particular festival, Sukkot, there was this incredibly important water ritual.

The priests would go down to the pool of Siloam, carry water all the way up to the temple, and pour it out. It was this powerful symbol of God's provision for them in the wilderness. And it was also a prayer for rain.

So water was on everybody's mind. So on the very last, most important day of the festival, probably right as this water ritual is happening, Jesus stands up and just shouts over the entire crowd. Can you imagine? He declares, "Are you celebrating water? Is anyone thirsty? Well, I'm the source you've been looking for."

Come to me. It's an unbelievably bold, almost shocking thing to do. So what on earth does he mean by living water? Well, the author, John, actually steps in right after this and gives us a little editor's note.

He tells us that Jesus was talking about the Holy Spirit, which his followers were going to receive. But not yet. It would only happen after Jesus's death, his resurrection, and his ascension.

The whole event that John calls his glorification. Now here's something fascinating. There's a little debate about the original Greek grammar here.

Is the Spirit supposed to flow out of the believer to bless other people, or, and this is the view Dr. Turner points to, does it flow from Jesus himself into the believer? This second idea really fits with the rest of the gospel of John, which always, always portrays Jesus as the ultimate source, the true wellspring of the Spirit. Now you might think that such a profound statement would clear things up, right? Well, it did the exact opposite. And in our final section, we're going to see how this declaration just poured gasoline on the fire.

This big speech doesn't unite anyone. It just gives them more stuff to argue about. Now some are even more convinced he's the Messiah, while others are more certain than ever that he's a blasphemer.

And for the authorities, this is the last straw. They hear all the buzz going through the crowd, and they finally send the temple guards to go and arrest him. And what happens next is one of the most stunning moments in the whole chapter.

The guards go to arrest Jesus, and they come back empty-handed. When their bosses, the chief priests and Pharisees, demand to know why, their only explanation is this: no one ever spoke the way this man does. They were so mesmerized, so completely captivated by his words that they just couldn't bring themselves to follow their orders.

I mean, you can imagine, this is a complete humiliation for the leadership. They can't even get their own guards to do what they're told. They are furious.

And so the debate moves from the public square, behind closed doors, and into the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish council. And inside that council, the contempt is just staggering. They turn to their own guards and ask, "You mean he's deceived you too? They dismiss the entire crowd of pilgrims as an ignorant mob who knows nothing of the law, even saying there's a curse on them.

Their minds are completely, 100% made up. But then, a single voice speaks up for a bit of justice. It's Nicodemus, a Pharisee we actually met way back in chapter 3, the one who came to Jesus by night.

He doesn't even defend Jesus directly. He just appeals to their own legal principles, asking, hey, does our law condemn a person without giving them a fair hearing first? He's just asking for a moment of basic fairness. The council's response is so revealing: they don't have a legal answer for Nicodemus.

And because they can't refute his point, they just attack him personally with a regional slur. They say, "Are you from Galilee too? It's basically the ancient version of calling him an ignorant country bumpkin, a cheap shot to shut down debate when they had no real argument. And that's how the chapter ends.

Not with a resolution, but with a total stalemate. You've got the guards who are awestruck, the people who are still arguing, and the leaders who are just seething with rage. The text says it as plainly as possible.

Thus, the people were divided because of Jesus. And that really leaves us with a final question to think about. Has anything really changed?