

JESUS AT THE FEAST OF THE TABERNACLES

John 7:11 - 8:59

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Jesus, the people in Jerusalem, and the Pharisees

Key-location: Jerusalem

Key-repetitions:

- Father: Jesus referred to God the Father (Jn 8:16, 18, 19, 27, 28, 42, 49, 54) and to the devil as the father of the Jewish leaders (Jn 8:38, 39, 41, 44, 56).
- Confrontations and arguments between Jesus and the Jewish leaders: the Pharisees argued that Jesus' testimony was not valid (Jn 8:12-30); the Jews argued that they were children of Abraham (Jn 8:31-47); the Jews accused Jesus of being demon-possessed (Jn 8:48-59).
- Arguments between the people about Jesus (Jn 7:12, 25-27, 30-31, 40-43).
- Jesus was rejected by: Pharisees and priests who ordered guards to arrest Jesus (Jn 7:32); Pharisees who argued that Jesus' testimony was not valid (Jn 8:12-30); Jews who accused Jesus of being demon-possessed (Jn 8:48-59).
- During the Feast of the Tabernacles, people were confused about who Jesus was (Jn 7:12, 25, 30-31, 40-44; 8:21-30).

Key-attitudes:

- Confrontation and arguments.
- Jesus' confidence in the words he spoke.
- People's confusion in not knowing if Jesus was a good man or a deceiver.

Initial-situation:

The third year of Jesus' ministry is divided into two halves. During the first half of the year, Jesus went on three retreats seeking to be alone with his disciples.

During the second half of the third year, Jesus made three trips to Jerusalem to participate in three religious festivals. The first trip was for the Feast of the Tabernacles.

It was time for the annual Jewish Feast of the Tabernacles and Jesus set out for Jerusalem where some Jews wanted to kill him.

The Feast of the Tabernacles commemorated the wilderness journey after the Israelites were freed from slavery in Egypt. The Israelites lived in tents during that journey. Therefore, during the Feast, people lived in improvised tents made of tree branches.

Initial-problem:

The Feast of the Tabernacles was half over when Jesus went up to the temple courts and started teaching.

Final-situation:

During the confrontation between Jesus and the Jewish leaders at the Feast of the Tabernacles, Jews picked up stones to stone Jesus, but he slipped away from the temple grounds.

BIBLE STORY**Jesus Arrives at the Feast of the Tabernacles**

The Feast of the Tabernacles was half over when Jesus went up to the temple courts and started teaching. Jews were amazed and asked, "How does he know so much without having studied in school?"

Jesus answered, "My teaching isn't my own. It comes from God who sent me. Why are you trying to kill me? Why are you angry with me for healing a man on the Sabbath?" (Jn 7:14-24).

Some of the people asked, "Isn't this the man they want to kill? Yet, he's speaking publicly, and they're not arguing with him. Many in the crowd put their faith in Jesus and said, "When the Christ comes, will he perform more miracles than this man?" (Jn 7:25-31).

The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering about Jesus. So the chief priests and Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest Jesus (Jn 7:32-36).

Jesus Is the Living Water

Each day during the Feast of the Tabernacles, water was poured from a pitcher of gold onto the altar of the morning sacrifice. This reminded people of the water that flowed from the rock in the desert. (See Num 20:2-13.) On the last and most important day of the Feast, Jesus stood and shouted out, "If anyone thirsts, come to me and drink. As Scripture says, 'Streams of living water will flow from deep within anyone who believes in me.'" Jesus was talking about the Holy Spirit who would later be given to everyone who believed in him (Jn 7:37-39).

People Are Divided Because of Jesus

Many in the crowd heard Jesus' words and said, "This man must be the Christ."

Others said, "The Christ won't come from Galilee! The Christ will be a descendant of David and come from Bethlehem." People were divided because of Jesus (Jn 7:40-44).

The temple guards reported back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who demanded, "Why didn't you bring Jesus with you?"

The guards declared, "No one has ever spoken the way this man speaks."

The Pharisees retorted, "He deceived you also! Not one of the rulers or Pharisees believes in him. No! These people know nothing of the Law of Moses; they're damned!"

The Pharisee Nicodemus had previously visited Jesus. Nicodemus asked the Pharisees, "Does Moses' Law allow us to condemn a person without first hearing his side of the story and finding out what he's done?"

The Pharisees replied, "Study the Scriptures; you'll find that no prophet comes from Galilee!" (Jn 7:45-52).

Jesus Is the Light of the World

During the Feast of the Tabernacles, at the temple, fire was made within enormous lamps of gold that reflected light upward like a large spot light. This was to remind the people of the column of fire that led their ancestors in the desert. (See Exodus 13:21.) Jesus taught the people in the temple area and said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have a life filled with light" (Jn 8:12).

Confrontation Between Jesus and the Pharisees

Many Jews heard Jesus and put their faith in him (Jn 8:30). Jesus told those who had believed, "If you live by my teaching, you are truly my disciples. Then you'll know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

The Jews answered, "We're Abraham's descendants. We've never been anyone's slaves. How can you say that we'll be set free? Abraham is our father!"

Jesus replied, "If you were Abraham's children, you'd do what Abraham did. You're determined to kill me. You're doing what your own father does. You belong to your father, the devil. The devil was a murderer from the beginning. He's never been truthful. When he lies, he's doing what comes natural to him. He's a liar and the father of lies. I speak the plain truth, yet you don't believe me! The person who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you don't hear me is that you don't belong to God" (Jn 8:31-47).

The Jews answered him, "We were right when we called you demon-possessed!"

Jesus said, "I'm not demon-possessed. I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he'll never die."

The Jews exclaimed, "Now we know that you're demon-possessed! You say that if anyone keeps your word, he'll never die. Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?"

Jesus replied, "Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad."

The Jews said, "You're not yet fifty years old! How could you have seen Abraham?"

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born, I Am!"

At this, the Jews picked up stones to throw at Jesus, but Jesus slipped away from the temple grounds (Jn 8:48-59).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who did Jesus claim to be?
2. What were some of the different opinions expressed about who Jesus was?

3. What accusations did Jesus make against the Jewish leaders?
4. What does Jesus' claim that he is "Living Water" signify to you?
5. What does Jesus' claim that he is "The Light of the World" signify to you?
6. What does Jesus' claim about his relationship with the Father?
7. What false assumptions did the Jewish leaders have as descendants of Abraham?
8. Do people today have false assumptions as a result of their religious heritage?
9. What would you say to the confused seeker who honestly wants to know the truth about Jesus?
10. Who do you claim that Jesus is?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **Jesus fulfilled the meaning of the miracle in which Moses brought water from the rock.** Every day during the Feast of the Tabernacles, water was poured from a golden pitcher onto the altar of the morning sacrifice. This reminded the people of the water that flowed from the rock in the desert. (See Num 20:2-13, Ne 9:15; Ps 78:20.) Jesus became like the rock from which living water flowed (Jn 7:37-42). Jesus is the spring from which the Holy Spirit flows. The believer in Jesus becomes a pipe through which the Spirit flows. Jesus called the Holy Spirit "Living Waters" and he promised that rivers of Living Waters will flow from within the person who believes in him (Jn 7:38-42).
2. **Religious leaders who are concerned about protecting privilege, position and power, are capable of:**
 - **Joining forces with enemies.** The Pharisees and Sadducees were vicious enemies; however, they joined together to arrest Jesus (Jn 7:32).
 - **Dishonoring the Bible they claim to exalt.** The Pharisees and priests claimed to exalt the Scriptures; however, they violated Scriptural Law by judging Jesus without hearing him (Dt 1:16-17; Jn 7:50-52).
3. **Jesus fulfills the meaning of the miracle of the pillar of fire which led the Israelites when, after leaving Egypt, they traveled through the desert on their way to the Promised Land.** Jesus is the Light of the World (Jn 8:12). During the Feast of the Tabernacles, at the temple, fire was made within enormous golden lamps which reflected light upward like a large spotlight. This was to remind the people of the column of fire which led their ancestors in the desert. (See Exodus 13:21.) Jesus, as the Light of the World, brings God's presence, protection and guidance.
4. **Each person is a sinner.** Jesus taught about the sinfulness of people:
 - The person who commits sin is a slave to sin (Jn 8:34).
 - The sinner doesn't recognize that he is in slavery (Jn 8:33; 9:41).
 - The sinner desires to eliminate anyone who tells the truth regarding his sins (Jn 8:40).

- The sinner becomes unable to understand the word of God (Jn 8:43).
- The devil is the source for satisfaction and values of the sinner. The devil gives the sinner his own desires: to lie (Jn 8:44), to murder (Jn 8:40) and to have personal glory (Jn 8:50; 5:44).
- The consequence of sin is death (Jn 8:51; Rm 5:12; 6:23).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Twitter Prayers (short, concise prayers):

Invite listeners to pray about the story in “twitter” length prayers. Tell God:

- How they feel about Jesus calling himself “The Light of the World” and “Living Water.”
- Decisions they need to make as a result of hearing the story.
- How the story helps them face personal life-issues.
- How the story helps them to know God better.