

# OpenTheo

## The Feast of Tabernacles (Part 1)



### The Life and Teachings of Christ - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg focuses on John 7:1-53 and explores Jesus' decision to attend the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem. Gregg emphasizes that Jesus' public teaching often elicited mixed opinions, with some considering him a good man and others thinking the opposite. He notes that Jesus did not need institutional training to be wise and that cultural literacy was essential to understanding Jesus' teachings. Gregg encourages listeners to study the Scriptures with an underlying desire to know God's will.

### Transcript

At this time, we'll turn to John chapter 7 and we'll take this entire chapter. Now, after all my false predictions of how much material we'll take in any given session, you might have reason to doubt that we will, especially in view of the fact that it's got 52 verses. But we don't really have time in our schedule to dilly-dally, and we do need to move along, so we've got to take this whole chapter in one session.

It's on the schedule to do so. There's essentially three parts to it, although depending on the edition of the Bible you're looking at, you may have subtitles dividing it into more parts than that. I'd say there are essentially three parts.

The first part has to do with his brother's unbelief. That's verses 1 through 9. And then the last part, verses 44 through 52, I would say, or 53, that last part has to do with the unbelief of the Sanhedrin and the Jewish leaders. And the middle part, from verse 10 till about verse 43, gives the various opinions of the general populace of Judea.

And among them, some were believers, some were unbelievers, some spoke well of him, some spoke against him. And we see quite a variety of ideas canvassed there among the common people. Now, the setting is going to be in Judea, but not until verse 10.

In the first nine verses, Jesus is still in Galilee, where he's been spending most of the time for the previous year in his great Galilean ministry. Of course, that has somewhat collapsed prior to this. We don't know how many months prior.

But, well, actually, we can fairly deduce it about six months earlier than this, because

the setting of this particular chapter is the Feast of Tabernacles. We're told that in the very second verse of this chapter. Now, the Feast of Tabernacles was at hand, and it was because of this feast that Jesus finds himself in Jerusalem.

The Feast of Tabernacles is one of the three feasts for which Jewish males were expected to come to Jerusalem. It was a week-long feast, as was Passover and Pentecost. Tabernacles was a week long.

It began on the 15th day of the Jewish month of Tishri. Now, that's exactly six months after or before, depending on which way you want to look at it, Passover. Passover began on the 15th or 14th day of Abib, which was just six months earlier.

So, in the middle of Abib, they had Passover. In the middle of Tishri, which was the seventh month, which was six months later, obviously, they had Tabernacles. So, Tabernacles and Passover were exactly six months apart.

Now, when Jesus had fed the multitudes, and then spoken about eating his flesh and drinking his blood, and all the multitudes had dissipated and ceased to follow him, that was, we are told in John chapter 6, that was around Passover time. So, now there's, between chapter 6 and chapter 7, a six month gap. And in those six months, as we have seen, Jesus went to Caesarea Philippi with his disciples.

He went up on the Mount of Transfiguration. He went over to the other side of Jordan, did some ministry, fed the 4,000 and so forth. And now he's confronted by his brothers, because it's Tabernacles time.

And for the last six months, Jesus has not been really being very public. Ever since defeating the 5,000, Jesus had pretty much concentrated his efforts outside of Galilee, outside of the country. Over in Perea, he had fed the multitudes, but that's the wrong place to be if you want to represent yourself and advertise yourself as the Messiah.

His brothers felt that since pilgrim Jews from all over the world would be coming to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus, if he thought himself to be the Messiah, ought to go down there and do some kind of spectacular thing to dazzle them. And yet we're told that Jesus' brothers didn't believe in him. So it's clear that they were just trying to goad him, or they were trying to mock him with these comments.

We'll read the verses. It says, After these things Jesus walked in Galilee, for he did not want to walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill him. Now the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles was at hand.

His brothers, therefore, said to him, Depart from here and go into Judea, that your disciples also may see the works that you are doing. Meaning, apparently, his disciples are potential disciples down in Judea. Obviously, the disciples who were with him in Galilee were already seeing the works he was doing.

So they're essentially saying, you know, if you want Israel to follow you, you're going to have to get your disciples out of the capital, out of Jerusalem, in Judea. This is where the power brokers are in the country. And you want your future disciples to see these works, why don't you go on down to Jerusalem and do something where the population is going to be concentrated.

For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world. Now, if you do these things, suggested his brothers, we're not sure that Jesus really was doing these things.

It says in verse 5, for even his brothers did not believe in him. Now, if his brothers, if by his brothers we mean Mary's other children, and if every time they are mentioned in the Gospels, it means the same people, then it would seem that these people were doubting even whether miracles were being done. If you really do such things, they say, why don't you do them down there where people can see it.

We sometimes hear criticism of miracles, modern day miracles, that are reported because they say, well, these haven't been documented. Why are these things always done back in some jungle? Why are these things always done in some place where there's no reporters? I mean, if people can really work these miracles, why don't they come out and do it at Madison Square Garden in New York City or somewhere? The fact of the matter is, of course, a great number of people do those kinds of things. Many of them fake them on television and in other ways, and that only adds to people's cynicism.

But it does seem that the criticism would make sense. If there are miracles being done, why does God do them in these little backwater places and doesn't do them out in Los Angeles in front of the TV cameras? Well, Jesus' answer was probably the answer that belongs to that question as well, and he said this. Jesus said, and my time has not yet come, but your time is always ready.

The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify of it that its works are evil. You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come.

When he had said these things to them, he remained in Galilee. Now, there's a couple things that Jesus said in answer. One is it wasn't the right time for him to go down.

His brothers could do whatever they wanted to do at any time. They were not subject to God's direction. They were not concerned about the leading of the Holy Spirit or what the Father would have them to do.

Their time was always now. I mean, they could do it whenever they wanted to. There was no higher transcendent governing will that they were subjecting themselves to.

Therefore, they could go when it was convenient to them. Jesus, on the other hand, did

not act on his own convenience or on his own volition. He waited for the appropriate time in leading from his Father.

And so he says, my time has not yet come, but yours is always ready. That means any time you want to go, you can. But he says also at the end of verse 8, my time has not yet fully come, which implies that he had to wait for such a time as his Father would give him the signal that he should go down there.

The other thing he says about why he isn't doing these things down there is because the world hates him. He says in verse 7, the world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify of it that its works are evil. The fact is that when miracles are done, at least in the Bible, in the book of Acts, they're usually done to confirm the preaching of a messenger.

And the preaching of the messengers of God are that the world is evil. And that's not the kind of thing that draws big crowds. That kind of preaching isn't drawing people to stadiums to hear.

And the television cameras don't come out to hear that kind of preaching. They don't like the message. Therefore, they don't show up in great numbers to hear it.

And that's where the miracles take place because God confirms the message with signs following. And so perhaps one of the reasons that you don't see miracles happening in the most obvious place, at the most newsworthy places, newsworthy things happen, is because the miracles happen where the preaching is taking place. The miracles happen where the world is being confronted, and it doesn't get a lot of publicity when that happens.

As a matter of fact, there have been a great number of supernatural things, miracles done by Christians in places where they could have been covered by the media, and the media doesn't really show an awful lot of interest in them. I know of a number of cases where people were supernaturally healed dramatically, and the media paid no attention to it, partly because the miracles happen as part of a whole context of preaching the gospel. And to give notoriety to the miracle, and publicity to it, would be to give publicity to the gospel.

It would be hard to know how to tell of the miracle without making reference to the context in which it took place. And that is very possibly why we don't see miracles, real miracles, taking place in the places where the news is being recorded. Jesus said to his brothers he could go down only when his father wanted him to.

He didn't say it in those words, but that's what he meant. And he said also, he doesn't just go down there to incur popularity with people. As a matter of fact, his words were not calculated to make him popular.

He was not, as his brothers thought, just looking for a popular movement. They thought he was a false messiah. They thought he was seeing himself as a messiah, and wanting to promote himself as a messiah, but they didn't believe he really was the messiah.

So they goaded him and mocked him a little bit, saying, well, you know, if you really want to be the messiah, you're going to have to get some popular support. Here's the best place. All these Jewish people coming from all over the world, they'll all be in one place.

Go down there and do some of these so-called miracles we hear you do. And, you know, why wouldn't you do that if you really want to be known? And he answers that that's not his, his priority is not to be popular. He speaks things that don't make him popular.

The world hates him because he says his works are evil. And then it says he remained in Galilee. It doesn't say how long.

And it almost seems awkward that in the very next verse, verse 10 says, but when his brothers had gone up, meaning to Jerusalem, then he also went up to the feast, not openly, but as it were, in secret. Now, the reason this makes it seem kind of awkward is because it sounds as if Jesus went instantly, as soon as they were gone. As he had just said, it's not time for me to go yet.

They left, and then as soon as they were out of sight, he snuck down secretly, as if he deceived them about his plans. In fact, in some manuscripts, the Alexandrian text doesn't even have the word yet in verse 8, where Jesus says, I am not going up to the feast. Actually, in this, there's a textual difference.

The Textus Receptus and the Jordi text say, I am not yet going up to the feast, which would suggest he would go a little later. But in the Alexandrian text, which some people prefer, he just says, I'm not going up to the feast. But even if that were his actual words, it is implied I'm not going up yet, because he says it right afterwards, for my time has not yet fully come, the implication being that when the right time came, he would.

Now, there may have been some period of time, you don't guess it from the way it's worded, but between verses 9 and 10, there was apparently at least three days' gap. We would assume that his brothers went down there at the time that Jews normally did, that would be in order to be in Jerusalem by the 15th of Tishri. But we read a little later, in verse 14, that about the middle of the feast, Jesus went up to the temple and taught.

That would be about three or three and a half days later, sometime in the middle of that week. So we assume that he may have waited several days after his brothers had left, and then the time was to go. Now, why would he wait? Would it be so that he wouldn't have to accompany his brothers? They were apparently on their way down and invited him to go with them.

And their unbelief could be a bit of a quenching sort of an experience. I mean, it must have been depressing to him that his brothers didn't believe in him. We know that there was a time earlier in Mark, chapter 3, that says that they even sought to come and take him into their custody, because they thought he was mad.

Certainly, rejection is easier to take from most people than from your own family. And Jesus was subject to loneliness and other things that human beings are subject to. It was not, for him, any different than for us when people rejected him and hated him, and that his own brothers that he grew up with in the same home as their older brother, as they would make fun of him and mock him, it must have been a rather depressing thing.

They preferred not to go down in their company. It may be. Or it may be that he decided to come down at a time when no one could anticipate his arrival.

We find that in verse 11 and 12, he was expected down there. Both his enemies and those who were curious were looking for him to appear. Now, the last time he had been in Jerusalem, as far as we know, was in John, chapter 5. That was an occasion when he had healed a man at the Pool of Bethesda.

And he did that on a Sabbath day, and Jesus got criticism for that. And in John 5, it says the Jews actually sought to kill him because he broke the Sabbath. And there was a confrontation he had with them through the entirety of John, chapter 5. Now, this was apparently his next visit down there.

In fact, he even makes reference to that as the last thing that his critics knew him to do. In verse 21, we'll work on these earlier verses in a minute, but verse 21, Jesus answered and said to them, I did one work and you all marvel. In case you wonder what the work is he's referring to, verse 23 says, If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath? He's obviously referring to the last time he was in Jerusalem and he healed that man.

Now, the Jews were seeking to kill Jesus. It says in verse 1 of this chapter. He had been down there, he had broken the Sabbath as far as they were concerned.

They tried to kill him then and he somehow escaped. They were still wanting to kill him. And so it says in verse 11, Then the Jews sought him at the feast and said, Where is he? Now, these Jews who sought him were probably, were to understand, the chief priests and the scribes and the Pharisees or the Sanhedrin.

In Galilee, the Jews had really no jurisdiction. There were a lot of Jews living up there, Jesus and his disciples included, and their families. But that was under Herod, who was, strictly speaking, a Roman official and wouldn't be too concerned about the things Jesus was doing.

Jesus was not, as John the Baptist was, confronting Herod about his adultery. He was not getting politically involved. Jesus was just wandering around teaching about the kingdom of God on the hillsides and telling parables.

Not the kind of thing that made the Romans too upset. But the Jews, the Sanhedrin in Judea, they were sort of the chief office of Jewish affairs in that region. And they had tremendous power.

And they found Jesus to be a threat because people were regarding him to be the Messiah. And they, no doubt, not only had seen him violate the Sabbath in John chapter 5 when he healed the man of the pool, but in the six months, or actually more than that, which had transpired since then, they probably had heard about the feeding of the 5,000 and many of the other things Jesus had done. So they figured Jesus was a force to be reckoned with.

And they were looking for him, saying, where is he? There's no question but that they wanted to kill him, and we'll see that as the chapter progresses. But it's possibly because of that, and because the popular sentiments in Jerusalem were so much concerned with him, that he chose not to go down at the expected time at the beginning of the feast. People might have been watching for him along the roads so that they could have something like a triumphal entry, as they later did, six months after this, when he came to Jerusalem on a donkey.

If that had happened at this time, it would have been premature. And he didn't want a popular uprising at this time to happen. He wanted to come secretly, and it was easier to do so in the middle of the week, when the festivities were in full bore.

You know, as people were just arriving at the beginning of the feast, they might be watching the roads to see if this famous guy, Jesus, was going to be coming down from Galilee. But once he had not arrived, and several days had passed, they'd probably just get into their activities and not be watching so carefully. It would be easier for him to come undetected and not cause a stir.

Both for his own safety, and also to avoid a premature popular uprising on his behalf. We have in verse 11, the Jews, meaning the Jewish leaders, seeking him, and saying, where is he? And there was also much murmuring among the people concerning him. This would be the crowds that had come from all over the place.

Now, verses 10 through 43, as I mentioned, are pretty much about the people, the general people, and how they felt about him. We see in verse 12, for example, some said, he is good. Others said, no, on the contrary, he deceives the people.

Now this is probably just sort of a sampling of the kind of different opinions that there were about him. Everyone was talking about him. Even in his absence, he was the

conversation point.

But not everyone had the same opinion of him. There were those who agreed with the Jewish leaders that he was a deceiver. There were others who saw the kind of works he was doing and said, well, how could he be bad? He must be a good man.

And at the end of this section, verse 43, it says, so there was a division among the people because of him. Now that's an understatement, especially as we read through this entire section, which I'd like to do, first of all, without comment, so we can just get the whole drift of it. You'll certainly see that verse 43 is a summary statement of this entire statement.

There was great division. There was division among them as to where the Messiah was supposed to come from, whether Jesus could be the Messiah or not, whether he had a demon or not, whether people were really trying to kill him or not, whether he was just paranoid. All these things were being bandied about.

Let me read to you, or with you, verses 13 through 43, and you'll see what I mean. However, no one spoke openly of him for fear of the Jews. Now, about the middle of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and taught.

And the Jews marveled, saying, how does this man know letters, having never studied? Jesus answered them and said, my doctrine is not mine, but his who sent me. If anyone wants to do his will, he will know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on my own authority. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keeps the law? Why do you seek to kill me? The people answered and said, you have a demon. Who is seeking to kill you? Jesus answered and said to them, I did one work, and you all marveled. Moses therefore gave you circumcision, not that it's from Moses, but from the fathers, and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath.

If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry at me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath? Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment. Then some of them from Jerusalem said, is this not he whom they seek to kill? But look, he speaks boldly, and they say nothing to him. Do the rulers know indeed that he truly is the Christ? However, we know where this man is from, but when the Christ comes, no one knows where he is from.

Then Jesus cried out as he taught in the temple, saying, you both know me, and you know where I am from. And I have not come for myself, but he who sent me is true,



whom you do not know. But I know him, for I am from him, and he sent me.

Then they sought to take him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come. And many of the people believed in him and said, when the Christ comes, will he do more signs than these which this man has done? The Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring these things concerning him, and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him. Then Jesus said to them, I shall be with you a little while longer, and then I will go to him who sent me.

You will seek me and shall not find me, and where I am you cannot come. Then the Jews said among themselves, where does he intend to go, that we shall not find him? Does he intend to go to the dispersion, that's the diaspora among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks? What is this thing that he said? You will seek me and not find me, and where I am going you cannot come. On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, if anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. But this he spoke concerning the spirit, whom those believing in him would receive, for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, truly this is the prophet.

Others said, this is the Christ. But some said, will the Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the scripture said that the Christ comes from the seat of David and from the town of Bethlehem where David was? So there was a division among the people because of him. Now, you can see the variety of conflicting opinions that there are.

First of all, in verse 20 we see when Jesus says in verse 19, why do you seek to kill me? The people answered and said, you have a demon, who is seeking to kill you? Now, you have a demon is another way of saying you're crazy. Of course, I'm not saying that what we call mental illness is what they call demon possession. You know that I believe in demon possession.

But anyone who is crazy would have been considered to have a demon or a lunatic. And they felt like this guy was out of touch with reality. Either that, or the people who raised the question, who is trying to kill you, are the very people who were trying to kill him, but were trying to renounce any claims of being after him like that.

Now, there were certainly people who knew that there was an attempt on Jesus' life, because in verse 25 it says some of them from Jerusalem said, is this not he whom they seek to kill? So obviously there were some who were privy to what the plots were of the Sanhedrin. Whether verse 20 was uttered by those who were from outside town, the pilgrims from other areas, who knew nothing about the plot against Jesus. Or whether it was the leaders themselves who were trying to sort of disarm Jesus of any fear or any

caution, and say, what do you mean? We're not trying to kill you.

Lighten up. There was certainly a difference of information going around. Some were implying that no one is trying to kill you.

Others said, well, this is the one they're trying to kill. Another area where they had some disagreement is in verse 27, some of them were saying, however, we know where this man is from, but when the Christ comes, no one knows where he's from. Yet, over in verses 41 and 42, others said, this is the Christ.

But some said, will the Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the scripture said that the Christ comes from the seat of David and from the town of Bethlehem where David was? Now, some of them knew the scripture well enough to know that Micah, the prophet, had predicted that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem. Others apparently didn't know that passage in verse 27. Their tradition was the Messiah is going to appear from out of nowhere, and no one will know where he came from.

No one will be able to trace his roots. No one will be able to find his hometown. He'll just kind of, as it were, appear from heaven or something.

And no one will be able to trace his background. Well, obviously, we have here a reflection of different traditions. There's one group of people who knew something about the scriptures on this.

Others simply reflect some Jewish tradition that they held, which was not very well informed from the scripture. We can see also that as early as verse 26, there are some saying, do the rulers know that this is indeed the Christ? And down in verse 40, it says, many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, truly this is the prophet. And others said, this is the Christ.

Now, some said he couldn't be the Christ. Some said he couldn't be the Christ because they knew where he was from, and the Christ would come from who knows where. Others said, no, he couldn't be the Christ because the Christ is supposed to come from Bethlehem, not Galilee.

Now, you can see all the confusion that's underlying these statements. First of all, they claim to know where Jesus came from. And they thought, because they thought they knew where he came from, that he couldn't be the Christ.

In verse 27. His answer to them in verse 28 was, you both know me and you know where I'm from? Now, many commentators would put a question mark at the end of that. The punctuation is not found in the Greek.

The punctuation is entirely at the discretion of the translator. And some would say he's basically kind of asking rhetorically, you think you know where I'm from, do you? You

know me and where I'm from? The fact is, you haven't got a clue where I'm from. You probably think I'm from Nazareth.

You probably think I'm from Galilee. As a matter of fact, I come down from heaven. I didn't come from myself.

He who sent me is the one that I've come from. And, of course, the implication is they don't know, really, his origins at all. Although they're objecting to his messiahship on the basis that they think they know where he's from.

He says, you don't know my origins. But then, ironically, those who do know something about his origins and don't hold that same doctrine, those who say, but the messiah is supposed to come from Bethlehem. They don't apparently know that Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

Jesus was, of course, born in Bethlehem and then whisked away to Egypt as an infant without very many people learning of his birth. And then, after his infancy, he spent his whole life in Nazareth and grew up in Galilee. So, those who thought they knew where he was from, thought he was from Galilee.

Because that's where he was associated with. And they didn't know he was born in Bethlehem, which is in Judea, near Jerusalem. And they used that as a basis for rejecting him.

So, all these mixed-up opinions are represented. And John doesn't give any correction, except insofar as Jesus gives any corrections to them. And I think there's three summary statements.

One is verse 12. There was much murmuring among the people concerning him. A lot of talk back and forth.

Some say he's good, some say he's bad, in verse 12. Also, the closing verse of that section, verse 43. So, there was a division among the people because of him.

We certainly see that to be true. And we also see a reference to the murmuring in verse 32. The Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring.

Yes, Jim. Do you think it's possible that... Could Jesus' brothers and sisters have been born in Egypt? I don't know that they were there long enough for that to be the case. I would say that they returned to Palestine from Egypt when Herod died.

Herod died, as we now know from history, I think it's 4 B.C. So, the wise men came to see Jesus before they fled to Egypt. And the star had been in the air for two years at that time, according to the figure that they gave to Herod. On the basis of which Herod killed all the male children under two years old.

What I'm saying is, if Herod died in the year 4 B.C. And Jesus was maybe born for two years before they fled into Egypt. Even if their Egyptian stay was overnight. Even if they went to Egypt and came back the next day.

That put the birth of Jesus as early as 6 B.C. Now, probably they were in Egypt longer than a day. You know, maybe a few months, maybe a few years. But we can't make it very long without putting Jesus' birth considerably earlier than 6 B.C. And the reason that that's a problem is because Jesus began his ministry in 27 A.D. In the 15th year of Tiberius.

And he was about 30 years old, the Bible says. So, in 27 A.D., a person who was born in 6 B.C. would be what, 33 years old? That's about 30 years old. It's not exactly 30 years old, but it would be about 33.

If he was born much before that, you get further and further away from about 30. So, I would say the time in Egypt, I just based kind of instinctively on those considerations. I doubt that they spent more than a year or so in Egypt.

If they spent as much as a year, it's possible that one of Jesus' brothers could have been born down there. But it's possible they might have only stayed a few months until Herod died. It's saying that they were two... Well, right.

The people in... Yeah, Mary and Joseph went directly from Egypt, actually back to Judea, but they didn't stay there. Probably their appearance in Judea was not registered officially or known notice. When they found that Archelaus was ruling instead of Herod, the great Joseph decided to go up to Galilee.

So, they returned to where Joseph had grown up and where he'd been working before he and Mary were married. So, basically, those in Judea didn't know that Jesus had been born down there in their own precincts. They just knew that he was a man of Galilee.

They hadn't done enough research to find out where his birth had actually taken place. Okay, well, let's go over this middle section then, having pointed out the basic arguments that the people had among themselves. I'd like to talk about the things Jesus said on these occasions.

Even though there was a great deal of murmuring about him, verse 12 tells us, some pro and some con, yet in verse 13 we're told that the people did this in hushed tones. They knew that Jesus was a controversial figure and that the Judean leadership would possibly hold in suspicion anybody who claimed to know too much about Jesus. After all, Jesus was being searched for, according to verse 11.

The leaders were looking for Jesus. They may have been making discreet inquiries around, has anyone seen Jesus? And the crowd, that might have even gotten the crowd wondering, you know, is Jesus a good man, is he a bad man? These people are after him.

However, it was known to many, at least, perhaps to all, that the Jewish leaders were after him.

And therefore, if they were going to talk about him, they didn't want to let on that they had strong opinions about him, lest it may convey the notion that they know more than they do about him and arouse suspicions that they might be in cahoots with him in some respect or privy to his whereabouts. So they spoke quietly and not openly for fear of the Jews. Verse 14, now about the middle of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and taught.

So he comes right out in public now. He waited until the middle of the feast. Now he's in Jerusalem, he's apparently entered Jerusalem secretly, it says in verse 10, so whether he's been there for any period of time before he comes out in public, I don't know, but he just decided not to hide, he came out in public and began to teach.

Now the first impression his teaching gave was that he had a tremendous amount of knowledge for never having had formal education. When they asked, how does this man know his letters, they don't mean, how is it that this man is literate, although it may sound like that's what it means. Most Jews were literate.

The average Jewish boy went to synagogue school and learned not only to read but to read scripture and had the equivalent of what would be like a sixth grade education today and therefore be quite able to read and write. We know that Jesus was literate and that his education was not exceptional. I mean, he read from the book of the prophet Isaiah in the synagogue of Nazareth and no one said, wow, how can this man read? The question is not how can he read, most Jews could read.

The question is how is it that he could know the writings as well as he does. How is it that he's so versed and authoritative in his treatment of the writings, probably of Moses, as opposed to the rabbinic traditions. The writings of Moses would be the letters that the rabbis would study and then they'd also study the oral traditions that were not written, which were the traditions of the rabbis and the traditions of the elders.

Now Jesus didn't say much about the traditions of the elders, so they didn't say, how does this guy know so much about the traditions of the elders? They just wondered how he knew so much about the written scripture since he'd never been to one of the rabbinic schools, he was a layman. It was probably not much more than a year after this, possibly even less, that the same Sanhedrin was marveling over two of Jesus' disciples, which was, of course, Peter and John, who were, well, in Acts chapter 4, Acts 4.13 says, Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled and they realized that they'd been with Jesus. Now, the Sadducees, excuse me, I'm talking about the Sanhedrin, most of them were Sadducees, it was the dominant party in the Sanhedrin, but the Sanhedrin were all educated men.

They were all highly educated men. So to them, someone like Jesus, or like the disciples, were regarded as low and uneducated men. In fact, if you'll look a little later in John chapter 7, verses 48 and 49, the Sanhedrin says, Have any of the rulers of the Pharisees believed in him? But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed.

Anyone who hadn't been trained by the rabbis like they had didn't know the law as far as they were concerned. They're accursed for their ignorance. Jesus was one of the crowd.

He was a peasant. He wasn't an educated rabbi. John and Peter weren't educated either.

Although I think it ironic and quite telling of the mentality of scholars generally that in Acts 4.13 it says that they perceived Peter and John that they were uneducated and untrained men. Really? They'd spent three and a half years being trained by Jesus, the best rabbi that ever was, and yet after three and a half years of seminary training under Jesus himself, they regard them to be untrained and uneducated? It just depends on what kind of education the scholars are willing to acknowledge. They acknowledged that they had been with Jesus, it says in Acts 4.13, and that's where they got their training and their education.

Yes, they were untrained in the institutions, but they weren't untrained. They just learned another way. Persons who need to be trained in institutions, some of them might well have learned without the institution.

There are self-starters. There are people who are self-motivated and study. Some of them go through institutional education and do well.

Many of them would have done well without the institutional training. There are others who can only do well with the discipline of an institution. There are those who simply don't have, I guess, the interest or the thirst for knowledge or whatever to study hard without having the regimen of a course or of a teacher or of some discipline that's imposed upon them.

No doubt, the members of the Sanhedrin had learned, but they'd learned that way. They had learned under rabbis. They'd learned in formal training, but they had no love of truth.

They jumped through the educational hoops to get to where they wanted to get, that is, to places of authority and power. That happens today, too. Men will sometimes go through seminaries and so forth just to get a position in a church or a denomination so they can get security and influence.

Others go through seminary for the same reasons that I didn't, or the same reasons I study on my own. They want to know God. They want to know the Bible.

I think those who go to seminary because they want to know God and want to know the

Bible would have learned it without the seminary anyway because all it takes is a thirst and a hunger for those things. The Bible is accessible. People can read it if they will.

What's amazing to me is how many Christians there are that don't have any interest in it. And I'll tell you one thing. I've always marveled at the way some people have marveled at me because I don't see anything marvelous about me.

But I remember when I was 16, when I went back after being in the Jesuit movement, I went back to the Baptist church I came from, that I grew up in. I spoke to the college careers group, the high school group, the college group. I gave them some kind of Bible study or something, I don't remember what.

And one of the guys there, the father of one of the girls in the group, who was himself an ordained minister and we were in his home, he came up to me afterwards and said, Steve, where did you learn so much about the Bible? I said, well, I grew up right in this church. I must have learned it here. He said, no, you didn't learn it here.

I guess I didn't, but it never occurred to me that I didn't. I guess I learned it while I was with them. I learned it while I was going to the church.

It's just that I read the Bible on my own and I don't know where I got it. In fact, I didn't then and I don't now. Consider that there's anything exceptional about the way I know the Bible.

Anyone could learn it the same way I did, just read it. That's all it takes is reading the Bible. It's just that many people couldn't care less.

They want to get a little sermon or they're a little spoon-fed from the pulpit on Sunday mornings. That'll give them a little shot in the arm to make it through the week. It's about as much truth as they can handle.

Or else, if they're more than ordinarily interested, for instance, they're interested in a career in ministry, then they can go through the Bible schools and Bible seminaries and so forth and learn that way. But you know what? I really don't think that anybody who is motivated to know the Scriptures and who has God, who has a relationship with God, needs formal training. You're getting something like formal training here.

Some of you will benefit from it. But some of you would have benefited probably as much without coming here, if you had the same thirst and so forth. You could read everything you're hearing from me on your own.

Jesus, no doubt, from his boyhood, had been reading the Scriptures. They were available. He didn't have a copy, but they were at the synagogue, chained to the pulpit.

He probably availed himself of it in synagogue school. That's what they learned to read

from, the scrolls of the Scripture. And he knew his Scriptures.

He also knew God. And that's where he got what he had to say. Now, he hadn't jumped through all the institutional hoops the others had.

And so they marveled that anyone who hadn't done what they did, hadn't gone through the courses they'd been through, and sat under human teachers like they had, that they could know as much as Jesus did. But Jesus said, he answered them. They didn't ask him.

They just asked among themselves, how did this man know letters having never studied? But Jesus knew what they were thinking. He answered in verse 16, Jesus answered them and said, My doctrine, which means teaching. The word doctrine just means teaching.

My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. If anyone wants to do his will, he shall know concerning the doctrine or the teaching, whether it is from God or whether I speak on my own authority. Now Jesus says, I am not, the reason you're amazed by what I'm saying is because it's not me.

I didn't have to be educated. It's what God has to say. It's my Father speaking through me.

And you can know that if you want to know the truth. If you want to know God's will, if you're open to that, then you will know instinctively. You'll recognize, you'll discern it.

If you look over at John 14, John 14, Jesus says something very much like this in the private company of his disciples in the upper room. Verse 10, he says, Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I speak to you, I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does the works. Now here he speaks of his words and his works.

It's the Father who does the works and who speaks through Jesus. Jesus doesn't speak on his own authority. He says here in John 7, in verse 17, Anyone who wants to know the will of God, if you want to do the will of God, then God will let you know concerning his teaching, whether it's from God or whether Jesus is speaking on his own authority.

Now, that point is an important one because there are some people who study the Bible out of curiosity without any concern to obey it. There are those who study it as literature. There are those who study it to be culturally literate.

There are people who study it because they want to impress somebody. But unless you want to do the will of God, Jesus said, there's no promise to you that you will get any revelation from it. Many people read the Bible and they never meet God.

In fact, the impression they get is that the Bible is a bunch of hooey, that the Bible is not real, that it's not true. It's a bunch of myths. To them it just reads as an untrue thing.



And the reason is because they have not made any commitment to do the will of God. Now, a lot of people probably who are studying the Scripture have never examined themselves to see whether they have made such a commitment or not. But the commitment basically means this.

I want to do the will of God, whatever it may be. Even before I make a judgment about the Scriptures or about what Jesus said, even before I make any judgments about whether this is from God or not, I have an underlying desire to do the will of God, whatever that may prove to be. Now, if that is what I have as my motivation, then when I read the Scripture, I will know that these words are from God.

How will I know? Jesus promised it. Jesus promised it, that's all I can say. I think you get an inner witness of it.

And therefore, what it takes is for someone, as Jesus said, to want to do God's will. Many people kind of want to do God's will, that is if it's not too costly. There are people who would like to be known as people who do the will of God.

They'd like to even think that on the day of judgment they could be included in that class who have done the will of God.