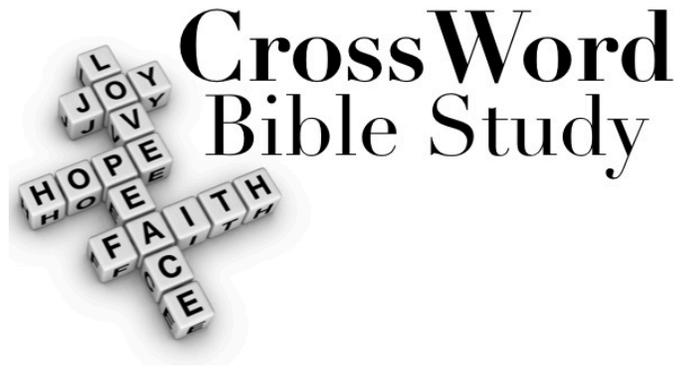




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St. John's Gospel

Packet #10

Review of: John 7:1-52

Preparation for: John 7:53-8:59

Lecture Date: Dec. 12, 2018

REVIEW OF LECTURE ON JOHN 7:1-52

Introduction

We are informed at the beginning of Chapter 7 that the Jews are now seeking to kill Jesus. His frequent miracles and claims that He was actually divine were simply too much for the leading religious authorities to bear, and as a result of this, He now travels in secret. In chapter 7, Jesus travels in secret to the Feast of Booths, the feast where the Israelites remember the years they spent in the wilderness living in tents. Jesus reveals Himself at the feast and on the last day proclaims salvation to all who turn to Him and believe.

In this chapter, St. John is concerned with drawing a connection between the experience of the Israelites in the wilderness and Jesus as the source of their relief and salvation. The Law was given to the Israelites in the wilderness to help them maintain a covenant relationship with their God, and in Chapter 7 Jesus tries to remind them that the true intent behind the law is to show love and compassion, not strict legalism.

My Time Has Not Yet Come

In response to His brothers' wishes for Jesus to accompany them to the feast in Jerusalem, Jesus replies: "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here" (John 7:6). Jesus made a very similar statement to His mother in Chapter 2 after she informed Him that the wine at the wedding celebration had run out (John 2:4). The message here is that Jesus alone will choose the time in which He will be glorified. But whereas Mary asked out of faith in her son, Jesus' brothers simply wanted more signs.

If Jesus made it public that He was going up to the feast, it's likely that His enemies would have been ready for Him and laid a trap to kill Him (remember, many people were following Jesus around at this point). Jesus instead went secretly in order to surprise His enemies, but also so that He could continue to spread His message of salvation to any who would hear Him.

The Feast of Booths

The Feast of Booths, or Tabernacles as it is sometimes called, was a seven day celebration by the Jewish people where they commemorated the time they spent wandering in the wilderness and living in tents following their escape from Egypt (Leviticus 23:33-43, Deuteronomy 16:13-17). During this week of celebration, the Jews gathered in Jerusalem would live in makeshift shelters like their ancestors and offer appointed sacrifices at the temple as appointed by the law. The feast was bookended by two solemn days of convocation where all of Israel would gather and worship. No work was allowed on the days of holy convocation.

By this period the Feast of Booths had also developed into a celebration of the dedication of the Temple which was considered to be the place where God dwelt among His people. St. John is here drawing a strong parallel between the Temple in Jerusalem and Jesus who refers to His body as the temple (John 2:19-20). At the temple, sacrifices were always taking place.

We will learn as John's gospel continues that Jesus is at once: the Temple, the High Priest who makes the sacrifice, and the sacrifice itself. When Jesus is crucified, all elements of Jewish worship find their completion.

There is a ton of confusion among the people of the crowd over who Jesus is. He keeps saying that He is from above, and yet they know His parents and His hometown. He keeps insisting that He is revealing great truths about the law and the prophets, and yet they know that He has had no formal education. He says He upholds the law, and yet He heals people on the sabbath. He insists that we are trying to kill Him, but they're not sure what He's talking about. Chapter 7 is a chapter that is full of confusion and arguments back and forth between Jesus and several groups of people. It's helpful to know that people were confused, if we are just trying to make sense of what John is saying!

Do Not Judge by Appearances, But With Right Judgment

Jesus, knowing what was in their hearts (John 2:24-25), and knowing what would eventually happen to him (John 6:51), knew that these people who were trying to understand His words now would eventually cry out for His crucifixion later (John 19:15).

Jesus points out that their unwillingness to believe in Him comes from a misunderstanding of the law of Moses. If they would rather circumcise a baby on the sabbath than make a sick man well, then they are completely missing the point of God's law. And they're completely missing the point about Him as well. Jesus is about healing and love not about a rigorous legalism.

Jesus is pointing out that they misunderstand the nature of God. In effect, He asks them, "is the law of God meant to harm and exclude or is it meant to show love and compassion?" Obviously we know the answer to that question. We know that God's desire is to include all people. We know that God's desire is for all of us to live lives that always communicate love.

The people also want to judge Jesus by their societal standards. They question Him based on His lack of formal education. Sometimes we put people in a box and miss the opportunity to learn from them because we've pre-judged them. In Jesus' case, the people partially heard the wisdom of His words and His message of faith and hope. Shouldn't that have been enough?

Rivers of Living Water

The last day of the feast was a day of holy convocation, a solemn day of prayer and worship in which no one worked. Imagine then the shock that passed through the crowd when Jesus decided to stand up and cry out: "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believers heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" (John 7:37-38) There is no specific text in the Old Testament to which Jesus is referring here, but it is generally agreed by Scholars that He is referring to the prophecies found in the 47th chapter of Ezekiel (read Ezekiel 47:1-12).

The prophecy in Ezekiel refers not to the Temple of Solomon, nor to the restored Temple of Herod, but to a restored heavenly temple from which waters of life flow out in every direction. This Temple is the body of Christ to which He has already made reference. But in this instance, He is specifically referring to His spiritual body which

consists of all who believe in Him. It is Christ's body, both spiritual and physical, that gives life to the world. This life-giving water is, specifically, the Holy Spirit given in baptism.

Baptism

Baptism is the sacrament whereby the life of Christ is made to dwell within us through the special gifting of the Holy Spirit. In Baptism, we receive forgiveness of our sins so that we may share in the eternal, life-giving life of Christ. The life-giving waters are here associated with the waters of Baptism that accompany belief in Jesus. In John 7:39, St. John specifically explains to us that Jesus' living water refers to the Holy Spirit that has come upon believers. St. Paul also teaches this in 1 Corinthians 3:16, when he writes that the Holy Spirit dwells within us. So, when we are baptized and come to faith in Jesus Christ, God is not far but near: He is within us.

This association with Holy Baptism is supported by the presence and specific mention of Nicodemus who comes to Jesus' defense in John 7:50. Remember back to John 3:5, where Jesus tells Nicodemus during their nighttime conversation: "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit." The presence of Nicodemus in Chapter 7 is meant to remind the reader of the important discussion on baptism that occurred between Jesus and Nicodemus just a few chapters earlier. Baptism is a moment of grace that begins a journey of being nourished and having our thirst quenched by our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Questions on John 7:1-52

Read Notes and References again and answer questions 1-3.

1. Why does Jesus deny His brothers' request that He accompany them to the feast in Jerusalem? What are some similarities and differences between this occasion and the wedding feast at Cana?

2. Why does Jesus accuse the crowd of seeking to kill Him? What does Jesus know that they don't?

3. How does Jesus' teaching on the last day of the feast relate to the conversation He had with Nicodemus back in John 3:1-15?

Preparation for John 7:53-8:59

Read John 7:53-8:59, Philippians 3:4-7, Romans 9:7-8

Memory verse for the week ahead

"When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." (John 8:7)

The Woman Caught in Adultery

John 8:2-11

1. What was the legal penalty for being caught in adultery, according to the Old Testament (see Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:22)?

2. In John 8:1-6, why are the scribes and the Pharisees testing Jesus?

3. In John 8:7, Jesus clearly doesn't believe that any of the scribes and Pharisees who have brought the woman to Him are without sin. What do you think the scribes and Pharisees think about their own sinfulness?

4. In John 8:11, Jesus tells the woman caught in adultery to “go, and do not sin again.” Think of the sins you find yourself repeatedly committing. Why is it so difficult for you to avoid these sins? When you confess your sins, are you truly resolved to “sin no more”? What are some ways you can work on ridding your life of these sins?

5. Sometimes we struggle to respond to the sin of others. We don’t want to condemn others but we also don’t want to excuse damaging behavior. How does Jesus, in this passage, provide a model for us of how we can respond to the sin of others?

I Am the Light of the World

John 8:12-20

6. In John 8:12, why does Jesus refer to himself as “the light of the world”?

I Am Not of This World

John 8:21-30

7. In John 8:23, Jesus says “you are of this world.” What does it mean to be “of this world”? (see also Mark 8:36 to help with your answer)

Children of Abraham or Children of the Devil

John 8:31-47

8. The Jews repeatedly claim in this section that Abraham is their father, but Jesus disputes this. In John 8:39, what does Jesus say is the distinguishing characteristic that identifies children of Abraham? What do you think Jesus means?

Before Abraham Was, I Am

John 8:48-59

9. Jesus attempts to explain His connection to Abraham by telling the Jews: "Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58), but this only increases the Jews' hostility and clinches their desire to kill Jesus. What two words in Jesus' statements put the Jews over the edge? (see Exodus 3:14) Why is this so offensive to them?