



Opinions & Truth

John 7

The setting for the story in John 7 is the Festival of Tabernacles.¹ This festival provided Jesus further opportunity to reveal truths about himself. But opinions about him varied.

What People Thought

❑ Read John 7:1-13.

1. Jesus' brothers² had opinions (7:2-4). What did they expect Jesus to do, and why?
 - ❑ Jesus told his brothers, "My time³ is not yet here... You go to the festival. I am not going up to this festival [until the God-appointed time]" (7:6, 8). Jesus later went to the festival, but he went according to God's time and purpose, *not* his brother's time and purpose.
 - ❑ Though Jesus' own brothers "did not believe in him" (7:4), they apparently later believed (*Acts 1:14*) and James became a leader in the church (*Acts 12:17; 15:13*).

2. People in the crowds had opinions (7:12-13). What did they think about Jesus?

What Jesus Said

- ❑ About half-way through the festival, Jesus went to the temple courts and began to teach (7:14). The Jews had opinions about Jesus. They wondered how he could teach with such knowledge and authority since he had not received formal training. How did Jesus respond?
- ❑ Read John 7:14-18.

3. How could Jesus teach with such knowledge and authority? (7:16)

4. How could Jesus' hearers know that his teaching was God's truth? (7:17-18)⁴ How does this apply to us today?



¹ The Festival (Feast) of Tabernacles (Booths) was an annual 7-day festival in the month of Tishri (mid-September to mid-October), celebrating the autumn harvest and remembering God's provision in the wilderness after Israel's escape from Egypt. A closing festival took place on the 8th day. Many Jews built temporary booths (tabernacles) in which they lived during the week. The festival included a water-pouring ceremony and a lamp-lighting ceremony.

² 'Jesus' brothers' include his half-brothers James, Joseph, Judas, Simon (*Mark 6:3*). Jesus also had sisters (6:3).

³ 'time' (*kairos*) – right time, suitable or opportune time. In this context, Jesus likely means it is not the right time for him to go the festival. It is possible that Jesus's response is similar to his saying, 'My hour (*hōra*) has not yet come' (*John 2:4; cp. 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1*) which points to his death and resurrection. In any case, the 'right time' is God's appointed time. Jesus lives according to God's will and schedule, which the world rejects (7:7).

⁴ 'If there be a readiness to do the will of God, the capacity for discerning God's message will follow.' (F.F. Bruce, *The Gospels & Epistles of John* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], 175-176) Verses 19-24 continue Jesus' thought. The Jews had *not* chosen to do the will of God, obvious in their desire to kill Jesus following his earlier healing of the invalid (*John 5:1-18*). The law of Moses said, 'You shall not murder' (*Exodus 20:13*)!

What People Thought

- ❑ People had different opinions about Jesus. Some wondered if he was the Messiah,⁵ but they knew “where Jesus was from” (that is, Galilee) whereas they expected the Messiah to be hidden until he appeared suddenly and strongly (7:25-27).⁶ So they reasoned he couldn’t be the Messiah. Others thought he must be the Messiah because of the miracles he did (7:31).
- ❑ Many people “believed in [Jesus]” (7:31) while others attempted to seize (take) him (7:30).⁷ The Jewish leaders sent temple guards to arrest him (7:32). But they did not succeed.

What Jesus Said

- ❑ On “the last and greatest day of the festival,”⁸ Jesus stood and spoke in a loud voice. What did he say? Read John 7:37-39.
5. What does Jesus invite people to do? What does Jesus give to those who believe in him?⁹

What People Thought

- ❑ On hearing Jesus’ words, people had different opinions about him. Read John 7:40-52.
- ❑ Some of the people thought Jesus was “the Prophet” (7:40).¹⁰ Others thought he was the Messiah (7:41a). Still others thought Jesus couldn’t be the Prophet or the Messiah because he came from Galilee (7:41, 52).¹¹ The people were divided about Jesus (7:43). People still are.
- ❑ The temple guards were impressed by Jesus (7:45-46) so the Jewish leaders tried to make them feel stupid (7:47-49). They said, “Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? No!” (7:48-49a) But Nicodemus,¹² one of their fellow leaders, spoke up (7:50-51).

6. How did Nicodemus correct and advise them? How might this apply to people today?

What Jesus Said = the Truth

- ❑ Jesus said he was a “man of truth” and there was “nothing false about him” (7:18). He later said, “I am the truth” (14:6).

The Light & You

- What do *you* believe about Jesus? Are you truly hearing him? Ask God to give you “ears to hear” (Luke 8:8), “choose to do the will of God” (John 7:16), and keep listening to Jesus.
- Brothers and sisters, continue to proclaim the Truth with your lives and words. Jesus is the Prophet! He is the Messiah! He is the Source of living water!

⁵ ‘Messiah’ means ‘anointed one.’ The Old Testament prophecies said *the* Messiah (a great king) would deliver God’s people and establish God’s rule (kingdom). The Greek word for Messiah is *Christos*, translated ‘Christ.’

⁶ People had different ideas concerning the Messiah’s background. Many understood that he would be born in Bethlehem (John 7:42) but Jesus from Galilee did not meet their expectations for the Messiah.

⁷ Jesus escaped their attempts because ‘his hour had not yet come’ (7:30). God was in control.

⁸ This was likely the 8th day. On the previous 7 days, priests carried water from the pool of Siloam back to the temple where the water was poured out before the LORD. This reminded the Jews of the LORD’s provision of water in the wilderness (Exodus 17:1-7), celebrated the LORD’s provision of rain for the harvest, and also anticipated the LORD’s pouring out of the Spirit in the last days (Isaiah 44:2-4; 55:1). This provided setting for Jesus’ proclamation.

⁹ Jesus’ words remind us of what he told the Samaritan woman (see John 4:10, 13-14).

¹⁰ ‘the Prophet’ – ‘a prophet like [Moses]’ (Deuteronomy 18:15) who would come in the last days.

¹¹ Yet Jesus was a descendant of David and was born in Bethlehem (Luke 1:26-2:12). And speaking of the Messiah, Isaiah said Galilee would be honored (Isaiah 9:1-6; Matthew 4:12-16). They should have ‘looked into it’ (7:52)!

¹² Nicodemus had earlier heard Jesus (John 3:1-15). He later assisted in anointing the body of Jesus (19:38-40).