

UNDERSTANDING THE FAULTY JEWISH HERMENEUTIC
IN JOHN 7

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This study concerns the Jewish hermeneutic at the time of Christ. The investigation is taken from the seventh chapter of John during the public Feast of Tabernacles, which drew Jews from many different places. In this chapter various viewpoints are expressed concerning Jesus and messianic prophecies. Christ responds to the differing views and provides answers as to why the Jews did not understand He nor the scriptures as they should have.

First a study of the background scenery will be made. This includes: Where Christ was in His ministry, the purpose for John's gospel, and the meaning and events of the Feast of Tabernacles. Next a study of the theological climate prevailing at the time of Christ will be presented. Basically, this will be covered in the two main movements of thought then influential. These are the rabbinic thought where stress was on the ethical, and the apocryphal and pseudopigraphical literature where stress was on the apocalyptic (or prophetic). Views of the Messiah will be considered from these and other perspectives of influence. Lastly, the dialogue in John seven will be exegetically examined with great weight being given to the words of Christ.

From the responses of Christ, underlying principles for a proper Biblical hermeneutic will be given, so that both teachers and hearers today might not fall into the same errors as did the Jews.

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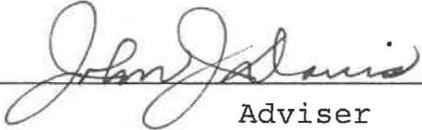

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INTRODUCTION

As one reads through the historical accounts of the New Testament as recorded in the Gospels and Acts, a question comes to mind. Why was Jesus of Nazareth so widely rejected as Messiah by His own people, the Jews? Considering the many Old Testament prophecies about a coming King who was to be born in Bethlehem of the seed of David, who was to rule His people, and be a light to the Gentiles, it seems incredible that the majority of the Jews, particularly Jewish religious leaders, should reject the claims of this one who did so many miraculous works. Though Jesus the Nazarene was "delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23a NASB), it seems incredulous that the Jews did not understand their own scriptures, but rather ended up nailing Him "to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death" (Acts 2:23b NASB).

Many have offered scripturally based suggestions as to why the Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah. The author of this work would like to examine the thoughts of this people in light of the scriptures available to them to try and discern some basic reasons as to why the Jews misread the prophetic scriptures and misunderstood Jesus Christ. The Gospel of John particularly stimulated an investigation of this subject. Reading through chapter seven, which records Jesus' trip to

Jerusalem at the public Feast of Tabernacles, differing points of view are expressed as to who this man from Galilee was. Not only were the Jewish people in Jerusalem at that time diverse in their opinions of Jesus, but they also expressed varying viewpoints concerning Messianic prophecies. One can see that they were confused about the revelation of the scriptures and the Word Incarnate. Why? Were not the scriptures given by the Lord clear enough for them to have understood? What hermeneutical blunders were responsible for their twisting the prophetic truths which resulted in crucifixion of the Lord of Glory?

Realizing that although we have the advantage of hind-sight, we also have the responsibility to interpret the prophetic scriptures with greater precision than these Jews. Therefore, a study of John seven is helpful in identifying some problems in the Jewish hermeneutic and seeing how Christ addresses these erroneous points of view. Hopefully, some general principles will be gathered so that we who interpret the prophetic scriptures today might not fall into the same errors as did the Jews.

In explanation of the boundary lines in which this paper will be written, it needs to be stated that the topic of Jewish hermeneutics covers a very expansive field of study. The writings of the ancient Jews, even the Palestinian Jews near the time of Christ, is voluminous enough to write endlessly on their scriptural interpretations and theology. Also, we must understand that their ways of interpreting the

scriptures were possibly as varied as are the numerous interpretations of prophetic scriptures offered in Christianity today. Therefore, this project will limit itself, after an extensive background study, to the seventh chapter of John's gospel. Also, Christ's responses to the viewpoints which the crowd expresses will weigh heavily in the investigation. Actually, a picture of the dialogue which was taking place in this portion of scripture can be painted for the mind's eye. Jesus of Nazareth can be seen interacting with the crowd as they are expressing various viewpoints concerning Himself, the man from Galilee. The picture as we hope to visualize it, is a scene of tremendous color and activity. Wherever Christ went, His person and words divided people. This occasion was no exception. First, the background for this scene is painted.

CHAPTER I

A MOVING PANORAMA OF THE PALESTINIAN CLIMATE

Everett F. Harrison in his book on the life of Christ begins by stating, "Some religions, both ancient and modern, require no historical basis, for they depend upon ideas rather than events. Christianity is not one of these."¹ It is true that Christianity is not only vitally rooted in the Old Testament, but is also indispensably dependent upon the historicity of its events. The Bible states that in the "fulness of time...God sent forth His Son" (Gal. 4:4 NASB). In God's progressive program to redeem a people for Himself, He sent His Son at a precise and suitable time. In accordance with the promises of God, the Lord had warned His people what would befall them if they were not obedient to Him. In judgment of their sin, He allowed the nation to go into captivity. From the final fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians, Palestine was brought under the control of Gentile nations. The Jews were waiting with great expectation the coming of the Messiah, "who, according to popular opinion, would throw

¹Everett F. Harrison, A Short Life of Christ, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), p. 11.

off the yoke of the oppressor and restore the throne of David."¹ The Jews, like Zacharias and Simeon, were looking for salvation, and God, in His perfect timing sent forth His Son to fulfill all that the scriptures promised.

Coming to the seventh chapter of John, one must realize at what stage Christ was in His ministry. Christ followed the plan of His Father, and every step He took was one of purpose. Nothing took Him by surprise. Dwight Pentecost, in an excellent outline of the life of Christ, places John seven as the beginning of the period of time which he labels, "Opposition to the King."² He does not mean to infer that Christ was not opposed until this Feast of Tabernacles, he only categorizes Christ's ministry by certain characteristic trends or periods. John seven marks the beginning of a period of time when Christ was to be continually badgered and refuted by the main Jewish religious leaders of the day. After this Feast of Tabernacles the religious leaders openly determined to oppose Christ at every step, earnestly seeking an opportunity to put Him to death. A.T. Robertson, although organizing his outline of Christ's life somewhat differently than Pentecost, still places John seven as the beginning of a new period in Christ's life. He calls

¹William Hendriksen, Survey of the Bible, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1947), p. 133.

²J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, A Study of the Life of Christ, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1981), p. 16.

this period of time "The Later Judean Ministry."¹ Up to this point of time, Christ, having been announced by John the Baptist, had introduced Himself to Israel by many wonderful words and works. He conducted a tremendous ministry in Galilee, experiencing a period of overwhelming popularity followed by a great departure of many of His disciples. Just prior to this He had spent a period of time in Galilee specifically training His twelve disciples. Now, starting in John seven, Christ conducted a ministry in Jerusalem and the surrounding provinces of Judea. This period in Christ's ministry lasted about three months, from the Feast of Tabernacles to the Feast of Dedication.² Farrar in describing this period of time states, "...it was now autumn, and all Galilee was in the stir of preparation which preceded the starting of the annual caravan of pilgrims to one of the great yearly feasts...."³ Some men, like Ellicott, have stated that this private trip by Christ to the feast of Tabernacles was the same one recorded in Luke's account when He passed through Samaria (when the Samaritan's would not receive Him).⁴

¹A.T. Robertson, A Harmony of the Gospels, (New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco, London: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1922), p. xxiii.

²J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, A Study of the Life of Christ, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1981), p. 275.

³Frederic W. Farrar, The Life of Christ, (New York: A.L. Burt Company, 1958), p. 288.

⁴Charles John Ellicott, Historical Lectures on the Life of our Lord Jesus Christ, (Boston: Gould & Lincoln, 1863), p.229.

However, Andrews states, "...a careful comparison shows so many points of difference that it is very difficult to believe them the same."¹ He believes that this trip through Samaria which Lukes records takes place at a later time. Anyway, as a result of attending this feast, teaching the crowds, and dialoguing with the Jews, the antagonism of His enemies grew intense. He could no longer work safely in the city, so He withdrew into the surrounding country, "visiting the various towns and country places wither He had sent the seventy disciples two by two in order to prepare the way before Him."² After the close of this campaign Jesus again went to Jerusalem, where at one point His enemies tried to stone Him. Shortly after this, we see the final events of His three year ministry: the raising of Lazarus, the final Feast of Passover, and His crucifixion. This is the point of time in the life of Christ where the events of John chapter seven occur.

Also in consideration of the life of Christ, it is necessary to set forth the unique purpose of the Apostle John as he states it in this particular Gospel account. He very plainly writes in 20:30, 31: "Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written

¹Samuel J. Andrews, Life of our Lord Upon the Earth, (Mpls: James Family Christian Publishing: 1906), p.341.

²J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, A Study of the Life of Christ, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1981), p. 275.

that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." As one reads this gospel it becomes very clear that the Apostle had this stated purpose in mind throughout the book. The sign miracles recorded in John are of fundamental importance.

Westcott states the following:

"He makes it his purpose to show that Jesus, who is declared by that human name to be truly and historically man, is at once the Christ, in whom all types and prophecies were fulfilled, and also the Son of God, who is in virtue of that divine being, equally near to all the children of God-His Father and their Father (xx. 17)-scattered throughout the world (xi. 52; comp. 1.49). The whole narrative must therefore be interpreted with a continuous reference to these two ruling truths..."¹

These sign miracles, carefully selected by John were given to pointedly show the Jews, in particular, who Jesus was.

"These signs were seen by witnesses (His disciples) and therefore are true and valid."² It is interesting to note that with few exceptions, the events recorded in this gospel describe Christ's work not in Galilee, but in Judea.³ Apparently John wanted this gospel to clearly communicate to the Jews of his day that Jesus was not only the Christ but also the Son of God.

Viewing the picture presented in John seven, one hue

¹B.F. Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), p. xi.

²Warren W. Wiersbe, Expository Outlines on the New Testament, (Covington, Kentucky: Calvary Book Room, 1965), Introductory notes to John's Gospel.

³William Hendriksen, Survey of the Bible, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1947), p.423.

remains to be colored as part of the setting for the action which occurs. It is necessary to describe the Feast of Tabernacles. This festival was one of three great feasts celebrated yearly by the Jews. The other two feasts occurred during Passover and Pentecost. This particular festival drew pilgrims not only from all parts of Judea, but also from many distant countries. Edersheim presents a very colorful description of all the festal activities and costumes these various countries must have occasioned.¹

The feast began on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (Tisri) and lasted seven days. On the eighth day, according to Lange, it was closed with an after-celebration which was greater than any of the preceding days.² This great feast had been commanded by the Lord in Leviticus twenty three. According to the scriptures, it was a celebration meant to commemorate the Lord's leading and providing for His people while they wandered in the wilderness. When the pilgrims came to Jerusalem, everyone constructed leafy booths in which they "tabernacled" for the week. Booths were constructed everywhere: on the housetops, in the streets, and in the courts. Both morning and evening the entire city was in tremendous merriment. The Israelites "marched around in processions, bearing branches of fruit-trees, especially

¹Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971), p.148.

²John Peter Lange, The Life of the Lord Jesus Christ, vol. 2, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), p. 344.

of palms and citrons, as if they were on a pilgrimage, and were eating of the trees they met on their way."¹ Another factor which increased their joy, was that just five days earlier the national Day of Atonement had occurred. They, no doubt, felt a release from their guilt as the high priest had entered the Holy of Holies and presented the atonement for their sins. During this week seventy bullocks were to have been sacrificed, supposedly representing the seventy nations of the world.² On the eighth day one was offered for Israel itself. Each morning during the week, a priest would lead a procession of worshippers to the pool of Siloam where water was taken in a golden pitcher. This priest would march to the sound of music, and the procession was to be so well timed that he should arrive just as others were laying the pieces of the sacrifice on the great Altar of Burnt-offering.³ The procession proceeded through the Water-Gate and was saluted with sounding trumpets as it came into the courts of the temple. When the priest came into the Court of the Priests he was joined by another who carried the wine for the drink offering. The two priests ascended the rise of the altar, and turned to the left where there were two silver funnels, with narrow openings, leading down to the base of the altar. The wine was poured into the funnel on the east,

¹Ibid., p. 345.

²J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, A Study of the Life of Christ, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1981), p. 279.

³Ibid.

and the water was poured into the funnel on the west. "Then the great Hallel was sung, and when they came to the verse 'Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endureth forever,' each of the gaily-clad worshipers, as he stood beside the altars, shook his lulab (i.e. palm branch) in triumph."¹ Lightfoot, in commenting on the festivities of these days, says there was "great joy, and singing, and dancing; such as was not all the year besides."² And again he quotes a rabbi who said, "...whoever hath not seen the rejoicing that was upon the drawing of this water, hath never seen any rejoicing at all."³

All of this celebration by the Jews was not merely shallow emotionalism. The drawing of water clearly had meaning for them. They understood it to be a representation of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit as well as God's provision of water for them in the wilderness. Also, since this feast was uniquely connected with their in-gathering at harvest, the rabbis by their tradition stated that presenting a drink-offering of water at the Water-Feast would insure beautiful rains for the coming year.⁴ Andrews poses a question of

¹Frederic W. Farrar, The Life of Christ, (New York: A.L. Burt Company, 1900), p. 294.

²John Lightfoot, A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica, Matthew-I Corinthians, vol. 3, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979), p. 311.

³Ibid., p. 320.

⁴John Peter Lange, The Life of the Lord Jesus Christ, vol. 2, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), p. 345.

whether or not these festivities of offering water occurred on the eighth day of the feast, which many consider to be "that last great day of the feast."¹ One meaningful explanation proposed maintains that at first water was probably not carried in on the eighth day since this final day was to represent Israel's coming into the promised land where springs were abundant. However, there were no fountains in the temple area, which symbolically must have pricked the minds of the Jews. The prophecies of water flowing out from the threshold of the temple (Exek. 48) as well as the pouring out of the Holy Spirit (symbolized by water, Isa. 58:11) had not yet taken place.² Therefore, water apparently and regretfully had to be brought in on the eighth day as well. Edersheim points out the time in the ceremonies when Christ must have cried out His invitation in John 7:37, 38. He states that after the outpouring of water and the chanting of the Hallel there must have been a short pause to prepare for the festive sacrifices:

"It was then, immediately after the symbolic rite of water-pouring, immediately after the people had responded by repeating those lines from Psalm cxviii.- given thanks and prayed that Jehovah would send salvation and prosperity, and had shaken their Lulab towards the altar, thus praising 'with heart, and mouths, and hands,' and then silence had fallen upon them-that there rose,

¹Samuel J. Andrews, Life of Our Lord Upon the Earth, (Minneapolis, Minnesota: James Family Christian Publishing, 1906), p. 345.

²John Peter Lange, The Life of the Lord Jesus Christ, vol. 2, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), p. 355.

so loud to be heard throughout the Temple, the Voice of Jesus. He interrupted not the services, for they had for the moment ceased: He interpreted, and He fulfilled them."¹

It seems that it is a principle of life that whenever the world shouts the loudest strains of joy during its holidays, that the emptiness and shallowness of life without Christ is heard even louder. Such was the case during this glad holiday where the Jews had not as yet seen their scriptural promises of the coming redeemer fulfilled. The Jews acknowledged that the latter Redeemer was to procure water for them, just as their former redeemer Moses had done.² In the midst of their festivities two tremendous towers of strength stood high and exalted. One was the fierce castle, Antonia, which frowned upon the Temple with an ever watchful eye as it housed the domineering, Roman garrison.³ The other tower, which stood on that last day of the feast, was the one greater than Moses who not only could have granted them deliverance from their oppressors, but also could have brought forth springs of living water.

¹Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971), p. 160.

²John Lightfoot, A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica, Matthew-I Corinthians, vol. 3, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979), p. 320.

³Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971), p. 149.

CHAPTER II

THOUGHTS BEHIND THEIR WORDS

Having painted the background for this portrait of action expressed in John seven, it is now necessary to introduce the people in the painting. It is always the tendency when studying scripture to read the text through the tinted glasses of one's own time period and theological viewpoint. Instead of assuming such a position, this next chapter will attempt to expose the Jewish thought and theology which lay behind the words expressed in John seven. Just as there are many influences today which affect our viewpoints of scripture, so it was with the Jews of the first century.

If we are to understand Jewish theology of that century we must trace the development and writings of Judaism from the time of Ezra. Van Til states:

"For centuries Israel had lived as though the Torah had never been given them. The Torah was forgotten in Israel. The exile was God's punishment upon His people for this forgetting of His way. Ezra saw that the people must obey the teaching already divinely given and obey it with deliberate intention which they had never shown before. In the 'great assembly,' of which Nehemiah speaks, was signed a covenant promising to obey the Torah anew. Practice did not readily follow theory. Ezra wanted a voluntary acceptance of the Torah. Even¹ so, with the signing of the covenant Judaism was born."

¹Cornelius Van Til, Christ and the Jews, (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1968), p. 65.

Actually the Jews who returned from Babylon had been affected and changed by the Lord's dealing with them. It is a "... striking fact that the Jews of the period of the second temple manifested an altogether different religious spirit from those of the first. Out of the fiery furnace of the Babylonian captivity emerged a new people, no longer prone to idolatry."¹ It was among these Jews that some new forms of worship and teaching were introduced to the Jewish people.

Before the exile, the prophets like Isaiah had issued scathing messages on the hypocrisy of the Jewish worship with the multitude of ritualistic and meaningless sacrifices. We see perhaps a new trend in Ezekiel's time, where it is recorded, "Now it came about..., that certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the Lord, and sat before me (Ezek. 20:1 NASB)." But most certainly we see a new beginning with Ezra as scripture states, "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments (Ezra 7:10 KJV)." It was most likely at this time that the foundations of the synagogue and the writings of the rabbis were laid. All of the oral and written law from Moses to the rabbis during Jesus' time is said, according to the Rabbinic tradition, to have been bridged by a body of men known as the men of the Great Synagogue. This group of one hundred and twenty men included the last three prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and

¹Kaufman Kohler, The Origins of the Synagogue and the Church, (New York: Arno Press, 1973), p. 14.

Malachi, and the first generation of scribes with Ezra and Nehemiah at their head.¹ The following rulings were attributed to the men of the Great Synagogue: "(1) They included the books of Ezekiel, Daniel, Esther and the twelve Minor Prophets into the Biblical canon... (2) They introduced the triple classification of the oral law, dividing the study of the Mishnah into the three branches of midrash, halakot, and haggadot, ...(3) They introduced the Feast of Purim and determined the days on which it should be celebrated... (4) They instituted the "Shemoneh 'Esreh," as well as the benedictions and other prayers,"² These men therefore were said to have provided a bridge for the preservation of the Torah in its oral and written form. These men passed it on to others who in turn committed it to others for centuries. As one writer stated, "...it was natural that the Great Synagogue should be regarded as the connecting link in the chain of tradition between the Prophets and the scholars."³ The Great Synagogue, therefore, could be labeled as the starting point in understanding the theology and doctrines which prevailed four hundred years later during the time of Christ.

The development of the synagogue as the focal point for Jewish worship and education is an amazing occurrence.

¹Ibid., p. 4.

²Singer, Isidore, editor. The Jewish Encyclopedia. New York and London: Funk and Wagnalis Co., 1905. pp. 642-643.

³Ibid., p. 642.

"The importance of the synagogue cannot be overestimated....

In the synagogue there was no altar, and prayer and the reading of the Torah took the place of the sacrifice."¹

It also served in a social aspect as the Jews would congregate together to take counsel and pronounce decisions in regard to community affairs and issues. It grew to world-wide importance as it took the place of the Temple in the lands where the Jews were dispersed.² In studying the synagogue activities, one cannot help but be impressed by the devotion demonstrated by the Jewish people.

If the Jews in John seven were accustomed to the regular schedule of synagogue services, they must have had abundant exposure to the teachings of the scriptures and to prayer. Following the example of the Psalmist (Ps. 55:18) and that of Daniel, "the men of the Great Synagogue decreed that worship in the synagogue should correspond to that of the temple."³ In line with this they stated that every Jew should offer private worship three times a day: at 9AM, 3:30PM and at the time of the evening sacrifice which lasted as long as it took for the burning to be completed (which sometimes lasted all night). The times of public worship were Monday and Thursday, which were two market-days in the week, along with the weekly Sabbath, and

¹J.D. Douglas, organizing editor. The Illustrated Bible Dictionary, vol. 3. England: Intervarsity Press, Tyndale House, 1980. p. 1499 Hereafter cited as TIBL).

²Ibid., p. 1499.

³Strong, James and McLintock, John. Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1881. p. 77.

the feasts and fasts. "But though not obligatory, yet it was deemed specially acceptable if the prayers were offered even privately in the synagogue, since it was inferred from Malachi 3:16 that the Shechinah is present where two or three are gathered."¹

During a worship service in the synagogue, the Jews would have the liturgy, the reading of the law and the prophets, and the homilies. Regularly they recited together eighteen benedictions, most of which would have been rehearsed in the synagogues during the first century. One benediction (perhaps compiled after 70 A.D.) stated:

"The branch of David, thy servant, speedily cause to flourish, and exalt his horn with thy help, for we look to thy help all day. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who causest to flourish the horn of David!"²

There were different positions of service in the synagogue requiring different qualifications. Certain positions such as the interpreter could be any person in the congregation who was capable of interpreting the Hebrew language. Whereas the rabbins or heads of the synagogue needed a diploma from the Sanhedrin or certain Jewish schools. They were then chosen by the different congregations to be their spiritual heads with the consent of the assembly. These men selected other qualified members to also administer justice for the assembly in both civil and religious questions. They issued all legal transactions such as marriage

¹Ibid., p. 77.

²Ibid., p. 79.

and divorce certificates and business contracts. "They had the power of inflicting corporal punishment on any offender, or to put him out of the synagogue altogether."¹ More difficult cases or appeals were tried by higher assemblies of priests, and the Sanhedrin was considered the Supreme Court of the land. Within this system it came to be that the Torah gained a greater measure of authority for the people than the prophetic writings. The Pharisees, in particular, in following the maxims of the men of the Great Synagogue, "Make a fence around the Law," added numerous provisions or prohibitions to the law on their own.² These additions or omissions were all a normative part of their way of thinking concerning scriptural revelation and interpretation. So, for the Jews, not only did the synagogue play a major part in their system for learning the scriptures and administering justice, but it, with certain schools of the day, was the place where the teaching of the scribes and rabbis developed as it did.

Basically, there were two movements of thought within Judaism during the time of Christ. The first was the movement expressed in the apocryphal and pseudigraphical writings. In these, the stress was upon apocalyptic matter (i.e. the future and hidden things). The second movement of rabbinical teaching was at first oral and then written down in the

¹Ibid., p. 80.

²Kaufmann Kohler, The Origins of the Synagogue and the Church, (New York: MacMillan Co., 1929), P. 135.

Talmud and Midrash. The stress of this movement was upon ethics.¹ By and large, however, though the Jews recognized the Prophets, they didn't put them on the same level with the Torah. First, therefore, let us take a glimpse at their way of thinking concerning the Torah.

What we would understand as the Torah today would not have been the clear concensus of all the Jews in Jesus' day. We would hold that the Torah was basically the law of Moses, highlighted perfectly in the Decalogue. However, according to the party of the Pharisees, the Torah, by necessity, had to be more inclusive than the law of Moses. In short, to them the Torah also included the oral form. Today, having personal access to the scriptures and other books, we would certainly have a tendency to devalue the importance of tradition. This was not so with the Jews. Not all had the scriptures available to them. "They were mainly in the hands of scholars, teachers, Rabbis and their disciples. For most people, all that was known from the Bible was what was learned in the School and Synagogue."² Interpretations of the scriptures were transmitted to pupils by means of oral tradition and rote memorization. They mastered the "Sayings of the Fathers" by constant repetition and use of memory catch-words.³

¹Cornelius Van Til, Christ and the Jews, (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1968), pp. 63, 64.

²Daniel Patte, Early Jewish Hermeneutic in Palestine, (Montana: Society of Biblical Literature, 1975), p. 28.

³Ibid., p. 16.

Early in synagogue worship, during the time of Ezra, the only authoritative base was the written Torah. However, the Oral Torah was an "adjustment of Torah to life."¹ The Jewish community apparently desired a manual for living which they sought in the written Torah of Moses. However, as conditions of life changed in their changing cultures, an interpretation or application of the Law of Moses had to be given. In matters of jurisprudence, in particular, the Jews desired decisions to be made, which were given to them in the "Halakah." For our understanding, Edersheim writes:

"From the outset, Jewish theology divided into two branches: the Halakah and the Haggadah. The former was (from halakh, to go), so to speak, the Rule of the Spiritual Road, and when fixed, had even greater authority than the Scriptures of the OT, since it explained and applied them. On the other hand, the Haggadah (from hagad, to tell) was only the personal sayings of the teacher, more or less valuable according to his learning and popularity, or the authorities which he could quote.... The father of Halakhic study was Hillel, the Babylonian, and among the popular Haggadists there is not a name better known than that of Eleaser the Mede, ..."²

However, concerning the view that the Torah contained not only writings but also the oral messages given by the Fathers, the Sadducees adamantly disagreed with the Pharisees. Josephus writes of the dispute and states how the Sadducean group held that only the regulations which were written down

¹Ibid., p. 89.

²Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), p. 11.

(in Scripture) should be considered valid.¹ Early the Sadducees were the more orthodox group, but eventually they drifted away to become almost a sect. The Pharisees and Sadducees differed in their viewpoint of life. With the Sadducees, there was a distinction between the secular and the religious. For the Pharisees, Torah was co-extensive with life. Patte states, "In order that Torah might be really co-extensive with life, it had to include even more, viz. traditional customs and laws which were followed and carried out by the people."² These were adopted to meet new cultural situations as they arose. We could say that culture gave birth to these oral teachings in order that the law might be totally relevant to their lives. The Pharisees relied upon the writings of the former priestly leaders in good faith that what they were setting forth actually came from the Lord. For them, there could be no more conflict between the oral and written Torah than between the Pentateuch and the rest of the Bible.³ They tenaciously believed that these traditional laws and customs which arose to meet cultural situations, were nothing less than Torah.

In describing the beliefs of the Sadducees, Pharisees or other groups, it becomes difficult to draw clear lines of distinction. As is true of John seven there was a "diversity

¹Flavius Josephus, Complete Works of Flavius Josephus, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publ., 1960), Ant. XIII, 10, 6.

²Daniel Patte, Early Jewish Hermeneutic in Palestine, (Montana: Society of Biblical Literature, 1975), p. 97.

³Ibid., p. 97.

of opinions or doctrines of individuals and a whole community, and when we come to consider the parties in Jewry in our Lord's time we find things even more difficult."¹ In general, Nahum Levison states that the "Sadducees did not believe in the coming of the Messiah, ...nor had the Essenes a Messianic doctrine (as far as we know). What there was of Messianic doctrine...was...taught by the Pharisees."²

Before discussing further on the varied viewpoints of the Messiah, let us consider the other movement of thought within Judaism during the time of Christ, namely that expressed in the apocryphal and pseudipigraphical writings. These included a number of books which, although they were not included in the OT canon, were considered to be valued for private study and edification. They dealt mainly with historical and eschatalogical subjects and were written in post-exilic times as an encouragement to the Jews. With the Jews being under the dominion of the Gentiles, these works sought to stress God's sovereignty over history. They taught that God would bring about the end of world history, judging the pagan nations and restoring the nation of Israel as the center for the establishment of His kingdom.³ In comment on the writers themselves, the Illustrated Bible Dictionary states:

"The apocalyptists, then, are interpreters of OT prophecy.

¹Levison, Nahum, "Jewish Thoughts of Christ." The Messiahship of Jesus: What Jews and Christians Say, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), p. 250.

²Ibid., p. 250.

³TIBD, vol. I, pp. 74-75.

This does not mean they do not claim inspiration. There is good reason to think that the visionary experiences attributed to the pseudonym often reflected the real experience of the apocalyptist himself. The apocalyptist's inspiration, however, was the source not so much of fresh prophetic revelation as of interpretation of the revelation already given through the prophets."¹

Having now set forth, therefore, this other movement of thought in Judaism which stressed apocalyptic matters, we can move ahead to the Jewish understanding of the Messiah. As stated previously, the viewpoints on this subject as well were very numerous and divergent. Bonsirven states that the first century in particular was a period of transaction and gestation. He remarks, "The messianic doctrines adopted a classical and definitive form only at the end of the century; previously, as is evident from a study of the Apocrypha, the ideas were varied and changeable."² These various viewpoints are certainly seen in John seven at the Feast of Tabernacles. Though there were varying viewpoints concerning the person and work of the Messiah, there seemed to be a national hope of the appearance of a deliverer. The Jews were familiar with the promises given to David, and they looked throughout history for the ideal King to reign. However, their history recorded King after King who failed to live up to the nation's expectations. "The ideal of kingship became something which haunted everyday reality as the object

¹Ibid., p. 74.

²Joseph Bonsirven, Palestinian Judaism in the Time of Jesus Christ, (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1964), p. 173.

of dreams, wishes and longings, something for whose realization the people would hope in every new king and prince, or at least something which would at some time be fulfilled."¹ For those who were looking for such a Messianic figure, what were the beliefs concerning Him?

First, Judaistic thought differed as to whether or not the Messiah would be a divine being. The rabbis did much to eliminate the idea the God could actually be a man. The rabbis in the Talmud spoke of the invisibility of God. They believed God would never be looked upon by a mortal man because of His blazing glory.² They would have nothing to do with the thought of an incarnation. It was affirmed by rabbinical writings that God could have neither brother nor son.³ Therefore, these Jews, and many following since that time, have held that "the worship of Jesus Christ as God is, ..., pure idolatry."⁴

However, though the rabbis did all that was possible to deprive the Messiah of any divine halo, writers of apocryphal books taught differently. The book of Enoch describes the Son of Man as being chosen by God before the

¹Sigmund Mowinckel. Translated by G.W. Anderson. He That Cometh, (Nashville, New York: Abingdon Press, 1954), p. 97.

²Jocz, Jacob, "The Invisibility of God and the Incarnation." The Messiahship of Jesus: What Jews and Christians Say, Kac, Arthur W., Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), p. 189.

³Ibid., p. 191.

⁴Cornelius Van Til, Christ and the Jews, (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian and REformed, 1968), p. 65.

creation of the world (xlviiii, 2-6), whereas the writer of 4 Ezra sees Christ, the Son of God, ruling in glory during the four hundred years of the messianic Kingdom (vii, 28). In another vision the same writer sees a human form rising from the sea to fly upwards to the clouds. At the sight of him, everything trembles, and his voice makes objects melt as wax before fire. He disperses his enemies with the burning breath of his mouth, and God explains that this is His Son whom He has kept in reserve for a long time (xiii, 3, 10, 26, 32, 37). One is amazed when one reads some of the apocalyptic statements concerning the Messiah, and yet most of their insight really is taken from the prophecies found in scripture. The Rabbis concentrating more on the ethical teachings of the Torah, used an allegorical system for interpreting these prophecies of the OT. Apparently, however, all agreed that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (John 7:42; Matt. 2:5-6).

Though the writers of the apocrypha saw the reign of the Messiah, there does not seem to be any mention of the fact that he might die.¹ The passages concerning sufferings and death were dealt with differently. Some rabbis held to a suffering Messiah, but in reaction against Christianity, these ideas were said to be applied to another Messiah, other than the son of David. The thought of a Messiah being shamefully crucified in apparent failure just didn't appeal to the

¹Joseph Bonsirven, Palestinian Judaism in the Time of Jesus Christ, (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1964), p. 192.

Jews. Some rabbis, however, did point out in their writings that the Messiah would suffer. Other rabbis, in discussing suffering, attributed it as a characteristic of the Messianic times, but the Jews would be the ones to suffer just prior to the advent of the Messiah.¹ Concerning the coming of the Messiah, Kac points out that according to rabbinic teaching in the Talmud, the Messiah was supposed to be revealed quickly.² When the Messiah came, it was held by tradition that Elijah would annoint him.

The major work attributed, of course, to the Messiah was that of military deliverance, as God's annointed priest-king. Mowinckel writes:

"This historical association of ideas is further corroborated by the fact that the Messiah was not only an eschatological figure, but always had a measure of political significance. The Messiah is he who shall restore Israel as a people, free her from her enemies, rule over her as King, and bring other nations under her political and religious sway.... According to the express testimony of the evangelists it was against this political conception of the Messiah, present in the minds and thoughts of the disciples and of the multitude, that Jesus had to contend."³

So it was concerning Messianic doctrine, the major feature and concern for most Jews was not the appearance of a person, but the restoration of the Jewish nation. This was the sum and substance for Messianism in the minds of many Jews. The

¹Ibid., p. 180.

²Arthur Kac, The Messiahship of Jesus: What Jews and Christians Say, "Divine Self-Disclosure in the Old Testament." (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980).

³Sigmund Mowinckel. Translated by G.W. Anderson. He That Cometh, (Nashville, New York: Abingdon Press, 1954), p. 7.

restoration of Israel in the land could be labeled "messianic" to some even if the Messiah himself did not appear.¹

Finally, having considered the mainline movements in Judaism and their thoughts concerning the Messiah, mention should be made concerning Hellenism and Essene influences on Jewish thought. Both areas are very broad and therefore will not be dealt with extensively in this paper. Concerning Qumran studies, though they no doubt would be interesting and helpful, they perhaps are not as directly related to mainline Judaism as were the rabbinical writings and apocryphal literature. As one writer stated, "...until we can show that the Dead Sea sectarians are typical of the Judaism of their time, we cannot use them to prove anything about other groups."²

However, though such may have been true concerning the Essene influence, that certainly could not be stated concerning the influence of Greek philosophy. The Jews were profoundly affected by the Greek philosophers. Perhaps it was the superiority of intellect which Greek philosophy silently assumed or some other reason, but whatever, the Jews adopted a hermeneutic which would appeal to the rest of the world that understood Greek thought. According to Patte "...the Sages could no longer be satisfied with the 'simple' exegesis, ... but being molded by Hellenism, the Jews could not but think

¹Joseph Bonsirven, Palestinian Judaism in the Time of Jesus Christ, (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1964), p. 174.

²Lawrence H. Schiffman, The Halakhah at Qumran, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), p. 21.

in the logical categories of Greek rhetoric."¹ He goes on further to say that each of the seven of their hermeneutical rules found its equivalent in Hellenistic rhetoric. Furthermore, he states shockingly that the distinction between the written Torah and the oral Torah found its equivalent in Hellenism where the Romans succeeded in latinizing the rhetorical notions they used (so the 'classical' Tannaitic Rabbis succeeded in hebraizing them).² The chief artisan of this type of approach had to have been the well-known, Hellenistic Jew, Philo. The tenants of Philo consisted of:

(1) the unknowability of God, (2) the Negative Mystical theology, (3) the Logos theology, (4) the Allegorical theology, (5) the God of Mystery, (6) the Higher Law, (7) the Torah, (8) the Mystic Moses, and (9) the Alexandrian Apologetic.

Without going into detail on the meaning of these tenants and the ultimate influence of Philo let us close with a quote from Van Til:

"...on the whole, Philo's system can only be understood in terms of its Greek presuppositions. The Jews were conscious of their mission as teachers of all mankind in the revelation of the only true God to Moses. In Alexandria, and at the beginning of the common era, Philo undertakes to give a fuller and more self-articulated statement of this world mission than any Jew before Him had given. But since he does not read the OT in terms of its fulfillment in Christ, he must needs demythologize it and thereby reduce its message to that which the higher regions of the East and the best philosophy of the Greek

¹Daniel Patte, Early Jewish Hermeneutic in Palestine, (Montana: Society of Biblical Literature, 1975), p. 113.

²Ibid., p. 113.

already knew."¹

¹Cornelius Van Til, Christ and the Jews, (Nutley, New Jersey: Presbyterian and REformed, 1968), pp. 21, 22.

CHAPTER III

OUT OF THE ABUNDANCE OF THE HEART, THE MOUTH SPEAKS

As we have viewed the scene in John seven thus far, we examined the background scenery in which the action occurred. Next we took an x-ray glimpse of the thoughts of Jews at the time of Christ, particularly in relation to the Messiah. In this section, we shall deal with the words and actions themselves as presented in this chapter. So, our characters come alive in this portion, and we shall begin to focus upon reasons men believed as they did about Christ. Though Christ was not directly discoursing on the subject of Jewish hermeneutic in this chapter, He was addressing the varied viewpoints toward Him. As usually is the case, Christ does not deal with the superficial issues, but He, as the Great Physician, bypasses the symptoms to deal directly with the root problems. He sees past the flak and façade in men's words and searches the thoughts and intents of the heart. Yes, we see varied hermeneutic presented in the various viewpoints in this chapter, but we shall rely upon Christ's words to give us, not merely superficial corrections, but underlying causes for these various myopic maladies.

The spiritual nearsightedness of the Jews is basically seen in two areas in this chapter. First, there is a

mis-understanding of this person from Galilee, named Jesus. Secondly, there is a mis-understanding of the scriptures concerning the Messiah. Much research could be done in comparing their thoughts with the Old Testament prophetic texts, but that will not be undertaken here. We will limit our study to the way Christ addresses their thoughts in this chapter.

As one studies this seventh chapter, it can be seen that John uses different words to signify different groups of people. Early in the chapter John describes a group of Christ's brethren, which absolutely must refer to His brothers according to the flesh who were born after Him from Mary and Joseph. Additionally, "John, in the Gospel, distinguishes between 'the multitude' (ὁ ὄχλος) and 'the Jews' (Ἰουδαῖοι)."¹ By the former he means the group of Jewish inhabitants of Judaea and Galilee; by the latter he refers to the leaders in Judaism, in particular, who were in opposition to Jesus. In general, the multitude varied in their viewpoints of Christ, whereas the Jewish leaders had a settled conviction and hatred against Him. In John seven, we see a divided crowd, which expresses diverse opinions. We shall examine the dialogue of each group and Christ's words in relation to their respective views.

¹M.R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, (Wilmington, Delaware: Associated Publishers and Authors, 1972. p. 398.

Jesus and His Brothers

The first verse of John seven records a type of policy Jesus decided upon after the events recorded earlier and in chapter six: He determined that He would conduct His ministry in Galilee, for the Jews (i.e. the Jewish leaders) were seeking to kill Him. With the coming of the Feast of Tabernacles, His brothers, apparently unsatisfied with His determinatives, voiced their opinions as to what He should do. The two imperatives used in verse three, *Μετὰ βῆθι* and *Ἵναγε*, could be seen in the sense of commands or exhortations, which is the most common use of the imperative.¹ His brothers here seem to speak to the Lord of Glory with an air of superiority. No doubt their familiarity with Him didn't bring proper respect. The *ἵνα* clause in the same verse must be telic or purpose, indicating the reason why Jesus should leave from Galilee and go to Judea: that His disciples there could behold His works which He was doing. Lenski states, "The implication in the *ἵνα* clause is that if all these disciples gathered in one mass they could really do something for Jesus...."² The 'works' used here by the brothers refers to the miraculous doings of Christ. It is interesting that the brothers are impressed not by Christ's words but by His works, which was apparently what impressed the fickle crowds rather than His committed disciples (see

¹Ernest DeWitt Burton, Syntax of the Moods and Tenses in New Testament Greek, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1898), p. 80.

²R.C.H. Lenski, Interpretation of St. John's Gospel, (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1942), p. 530.

John 6:2, x-ref. John 6:68).

In verse four His brothers continue in their reasoning, seen in the explanatory *γάρ*, which gives the reason for what they are saying. Their words, "For no one does anything in secret, when he himself seeks to be known publicly (John 7:4 NASB)" presents an interesting contrast of words. The words *ἐν κρύπτῳ* and *ἐν παρρησία* suggest this contrast of two spheres. The words *ἐν κρύπτῳ* are used in the gospels by Jesus when He instructs His disciples that their alms should "be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you." The idea is clearly that of a very private sphere of service. Whereas, the words *ἐν παρρησία* are elsewhere in the NT translated adverbially as "openly," "boldly," "plainly," and "freely." Strangely enough *παρρησία* is used later in verse twenty-six as some Jews from Jerusalem were describing the fashion in which Christ was speaking. This statement of His brothers, though it is said to be a kind of proverbial saying,¹ expresses their viewpoint of how the true Messiah would act. Their idea is that the signs of a "messianic claimant must be wrought in the holy city, and not simply in remote places."² Their words of unbelief stated that only as a Messiah openly performs the messianic signs is he considered to be the true Messiah. The remainder

¹J.C. Ryle, Ryle's Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, vol. 3. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1977) p. p.8.

²Leon Morris, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, The Gospel According to John, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), p. 395.

of their statement in verse four presents a first class conditional which introduces a supposition. The idea behind their statement could be expressed this way, "For the sake of debate, let us assume that you are doing these works. Since that is true, show yourself therefore to the world." Clearly we can see in their statement an improper attitude, which the Apostle quickly labels unbelief in verse five. The words he uses, *ἐπίστευον εἰς αὐτόν*, are the salvation formula in NT. The imperfect tense is also suggestive. Vincent states "the verb is referring not to a single act of faith, but to a faith continual and controlling."¹ Clearly His brothers were not saved.

In their words, we can see what Jesus' brother's viewpoint was of how the Messiah should behave. They, like so many others, were looking for an assertive man of power, who would overthrow the pagan dominion to elevate their nation to the place of power and prestige.

It is noticeable in Jesus' answer that He does not debate with them on the reasonableness or orthodoxy of their statements. Instead of dealing with the 'what' of the matter, He expresses the 'why' of their viewpoint. He presents to them the reason He does not think the same way as they. First, He tells them they are not living according to a time plan. Secondly, He tells them they are not testifying truthfully as they should.

¹M.R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, (Wilmington, Delaware: Associated Publishers and Authors, 1972), p. 444.

In verse six and elsewhere in the chapter, we see an interesting usage of $\sigma\tilde{\nu}$. Dana and Mantey categorize it as a responsive $\sigma\tilde{\nu}$.¹ Its effect here shows that Jesus' answer is in direct response to the words of His brothers. Jesus has the proper prescription for every malady. In His answer Jesus deliberately sets forth two contrasts. The first contrast can be seen in the words 'my time' ... 'your time.' Jesus walked not as He willed but in accordance with His Father's plan. These men thought He should go to Judaea at this time because any time was acceptable in their purposeless life. The second contrast Jesus sets forth is seen in verse seven. He starts with the words $\sigma\tilde{\nu}$ $\delta\tilde{\nu}\nu\alpha\tau\alpha\iota$, used frequently by John, expressing an inherent impossibility.² But notice the pronouns $\tilde{\upsilon}\mu\tilde{\alpha}\varsigma$ $\tilde{\epsilon}\mu\tilde{\epsilon}$ placed in juxtaposition, with $\tilde{\epsilon}\mu\tilde{\epsilon}$ occupying an emphatic position in the clause. Once again, He was setting forth a strong contrast: "The world cannot hate you, but I it hates," The $\tilde{\sigma}\tilde{\tau}\tilde{\iota}$ which immediately follows is casual and expresses the reason the world would not accept Him even if He did openly show forth His miracles. It hated Him because He testified that its works were evil. Notice Jesus uses the same word $\tilde{\epsilon}\tilde{\rho}\tilde{\gamma}\tilde{\alpha}$ for the world's works as the brothers used for His works. Though Jesus' works were indeed miraculous, Peter described the nature of Christ's works in Acts 10:38

¹H.E. Dana and Julius R. Mantley, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, (Canada: the Macmillan Company, 1927), p. 254. (hereafter cited as D & M).

²M.R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, (Wilmington, Delaware: Associated Publishers and Authors, 1972), p. 445.

when he said "how He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil (NASB). The world didn't hate Jesus for His works, but only because He testified to the truth that their own works were contrastingly wicked.

In closing this section on the dialogue between Jesus and His brothers, objections have been raised with verse eight. Some cannot understand how Christ could state that He was not going up to the feast, but yet does go up later (v. 14). Was Christ lying? From the textual apparatus, we can see that there is a variant reading. In some very reliable manuscripts we can see that *οὐπω* was found instead of *οὐκ*. In this case it would read, "I am not yet going up to this feast," We can also see that the translation committee of the United Bible Societies was divided in its consensus as well, as to which reading was the most reliable. We can say, however, from the sense of the verse, that even if the true reading was *οὐκ*, an understood "yet" would be perfectly in order. We do know positively that God does not lie.

Jesus and the Jews

The next group of persons introduced in this chapter are the Jews. Once again we must be careful to understand the terminology John uses. All the people at this feast are Jewish, (with perhaps the exception of a few proselytes among the crowd), but by the term 'the Jews' John refers to the

leaders of the nation, Jesus' enemies.¹ They are introduced in this chapter in verse eleven, and they are described as seeking Him at the feast. As early as chapter five we see that the Jews were seeking to kill Jesus (5:18). In verse eleven the imperfect is used to suggest that they had been continually seeking Him and continually saying, "Where is He?" 'He' in the Greek is 'ἐκεῖνος.' The question could be translated as, "Where is that one?" This word ἐκεῖνος could here be used in a derogatory sense to mean "that fellow."² The verse started with another οὖν. This word is often used differently in this book than it is in Paul's writing. In John's gospel οὖν is often used in a transitional sense rather than the usual inferential manner. In this usage it carries the meaning 'then' rather than 'therefore.' We can understand that the Jews were not seeking Jesus as a consequence of His coming to the feast (which the 'therefore' usage would suggest), but they had been desiring to kill Him for a time. This feast, which drew most faithful Jews to Jerusalem might provide them with their opportunity (which the 'then' usage would infer).

The Apostle tells of the whispering that was among the crowd as they, too, were expecting to see this one who

¹Leon Morris, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, The Gospel According to John, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), p. 411.

²C.K. Barret, The Gospel According to St. John, (New York: the Macmillan Co., 1955), p. 259.

had gathered such a reputation. We will consider their views shortly, but notice the statement which gives the reason why they whispered: "Yet no one was speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews (John 7:13 NASB)." We know the penalty that intimidated the people, namely that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, they should be excommunicated (9:22). We have studied the synagogue system and can better understand why the people were afraid. The synagogue, as we recall, was not fashioned as our churches are today, for they exercised authority in civil as well as religious matters in the Jewish community. Upon this decision they could require the chazzan (in Greek *ὑπηρέτης*), who were the lowest servants in the synagogue structure, "to administer stripes to offenders."¹ With these threats they were understandingly feared by the people.

Verse fourteen tells us that in the middle of the feast Jesus came up into the temple and taught. The verb for teach here can be understood as an Ingressive Imperfect, meaning that Jesus "began to teach."² Notice the Jews reaction to His teaching: "they were marveling" and were saying, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated (7:15 NASB)?" The New American Standard Bible gives a good rendering for the verb *μεμαθηκώς* here. In translating it

¹John McLintock and James Strong, Cyclopaedia of Biblical Theology and Ecclesiastical Literature, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1881), p. 79.

²John A. Sproule, Intermediate Greek Notes, An unpublished syllabus for Intermediate Greek. (Winona Lake: Grace Theological Seminary, 1979). pp. 28-29.

as 'having been educated,' they have captured well the significance of what the Jews were saying. Though the lexicon gives other usages for this word to mean 'learn,' 'find out,' or 'come to know,' the best rendering here is 'to learn from someone' as a teacher.¹ The usage of the perfect tense signals completed action in past time. The question was: how did Jesus quote the scriptures so extensively, not having completed the required Rabbinic indoctrination? The word the Jews use here for 'know' is οἶδα which means 'intuitive, absolute knowledge.'² Jesus' knowledge clearly was not gained by the normal path of learning in a school. He quoted the scripture flawlessly, understood them precisely, and taught them with absolute authority. It is uncertain whether the Jewish leaders had recognized Jesus yet. However, it is certain that they did recognize this teacher as one who had not been properly accredited.

Notice the dialogue now by which Jesus answers their question of amazement. The οὐκ in verse sixteen is labeled as Responsive by Dana and Mantey.³ This is significant. To the viewpoint that the Jews had of how a man gained proper understanding of the scriptures, Jesus answers in direct response. He states:

¹Walter Bauer's, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 490.

²W.E. Vine, An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1940), p. 298.

"My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak of Myself. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the one who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him. Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you carries out the law? Why do you seek to kill Me (John 7:17-19)?"

This is truly an amazing portion of scripture and absolutely crucial to our understanding of how a man develops a proper Biblical hermeneutic. Christ once again, in answering the Jews and speaking to the entire crowd, presents a contrast. On the one hand He explains why His teaching is true. On the other hand He explains why the Jewish hermeneutic is faulty.

Verse seventeen starts with a third class conditional clause. The significance of this 'if' clause is that the performance stated is somewhat doubtful. Jesus sets forth the uncertainty that anyone would desire to do the will of God. Morris suggests that whenever the verb *θέλω* is used with a present infinitive continuity is stressed.¹ Jesus is not referring to a one-time performance of the will of God but a continual manner of life which strives to do God's will. Jesus states that such a person shall know, *γνώσεται*, the teaching. This word for know differs from *οἶδα*. It refers to an acquired, experiential knowledge, which is not necessarily as absolute as is the *οἶδας* knowledge. The person who desires to do God's will shall grow in his discerning

¹Leon Morris, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, The Gospel According to John, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), p. 395.

faculties. This is exactly the concept which is set forth in Hebrews 5:12-14. The word for teaching here, used with the definite article, seems to point out the specific teaching in view, namely true teaching as distinguished from false.

Such an obedient person, will be able to discern whether this teaching has its source, ἐκ, from God, or proceeds from, ἀπ', merely human viewpoint. Jesus hits the nail squarely on the head in setting forth the criteria necessary for a man to maintain the true Biblical hermeneutic. According to Christ the matter does not lie in the intellect but in the will. It is not a matter of higher academic attainment, but rather of greater obedience.

Jesus goes on to explain this principle further in verse eighteen. We can once again notice the present tense verb forms in this verse: λαλῶν, γητεῖ, and γητῶν. Once again a continuous process is in view here. Notice the order of these verbal ideas in the first half of the verse in comparison to the latter half. In this first half of the verse we see that the man who speaks from his own resources is motivated and energized by the search to glorify himself. Whereas the person who at first concentrates on seeking the glory of the one who sent him (the aorist particle suggests the fact that he is sent), this one resultingly is true without any injustice in him. On one hand we have a person who is doing, being motivated selfishly. On the other hand we have a person who is unselfishly motivated and resultingly becomes something. This person need not be concerned about

the doing aspect, speaking, for it shall naturally follow out of a pure heart. Jesus is clearly speaking in general terms of any teacher. What motivates the teacher is of utmost importance. The only true Biblical hermeneutic has its source in God, and if a man is not seeking God's glory his hermeneutic will spring from himself and necessarily be erroneous.

In verse nineteen Jesus explains the outcome for these Jews who were seeking their own glory. Lenski says of the Jewish rulers: "They are notorious seekers after their own glory and honor. They oppose Jesus for the very same reason that they fear to lose their position of honor and power among their people."¹ These religious men, particularly the Pharisees, emphasized the Torah, the ethical aspect. Yet as unbelievable as it sounds, Christ is telling them they have not kept the simplest and most basic teaching, that recorded in the decalogue. These "Jews, boastful exponents of the law, were breaking the law in the most horrible manner."² Namely, they were seeking to kill Jesus. This is the outcome for the one who has an improper Biblical hermeneutic, because he seeks to bring glory to himself. Given the right set of circumstances such a man would even murder anyone who would get in his way.

Christ has further words for the Jewish leaders in verses twenty-one through twenty-four, but since His response

¹R.C.H. Lenski, Interpretation of St. John's Gospel, (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Bible Concern, 1942), p. 546.

²Ibid., p. 546.

is in answer to the words of the crowd, we will consider these in the next section. Later in this chapter we see the Jewish leaders both taking action and making erroneous statements. In verse thirty-two the Pharisees, in hearing the murmuring of the crowd, gain enough courage to send the temple helpers (chazzan) to seize Christ. In verses thirty-five and thirty-six we see them totally confused as to the meaning of Jesus' statement when He said He was going away and they would seek Him but would not be able to find Him or come to Him. They think He is going to the dispersed Jews, but they are in total confusion. Then in the final scene we see these Jewish leaders pose some intimidating questions to the temple helpers and Nicodemus who have both expressed wonder at Christ. The questions are asked in a mocking way, where negative answers are obviously expected. Their ultimate reasoning to disprove that Jesus is the Messiah is that He comes from Galilee. We will consider this charge also when we consider the crowd's viewpoint. However, many have pointed out the utter ignorance of their statement in verse fifty-two. Several prophets in the OT, like Jonah and Elijah, did in fact come from the region of Galilee. There is no blindness as dark as that which is willingly so.

Jesus and the Crowd

The last group with whom Jesus reacts in this chapter is the crowd (οἱ ὄχλοι). The crowd is characterized by their whispering (or murmuring) and their contrasting points

of view concerning Messianic scriptures and this teacher, Jesus. Verse twelve states that some said, "He is a good man," but others contradicted them saying, "No, but he deceives the crowds." We know that some of the multitudes mimicked the Pharisees viewpoint (v. 12), some were familiar with the Pharisees plans since they were from Jerusalem (v. 25), and some believed on Christ (v. 31). As we studied the customs of the Feast of Tabernacles, we know that there were pilgrims of Jews from many different places.

It is because of this that the crowd stated what they did in verse twenty: "You have a demon! Who seeks to kill you (John 7:20 NASB)?" It is apparent that the crowd in so speaking was not familiar with the plans of the Jewish leaders. Westcott makes this observation: "the same phrase (i.e. thou hast a devil) is used of John the Baptist, as one who sternly and, in men's judgment, gloomily, and morosely withdrew himself from the cheerfulness of social life."¹ He states that perhaps the words mean no more than "thou art possessed with strange and melancholy fancies; thou yielded to idle fears."² In any case the answer reflects the shock of Jesus question of murder. Jesus continues with His discussion and cites the incident which originally stimulated the Jews in determining to kill Him. Apparently, Jesus was addressing the entire

¹Brooke Foss Westcott, The Gospel According to St. John, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1954), p. 119.

²Ibid., p. 119.

crowd, and these Jewish leaders and their sympathizers were in the crowd as a group of vultures lodging in the branches of a huge tree.

Jesus states in verse twenty-one, "I have done one work, and ye all marvel (KJV)." The word πάντες for 'all' in the NT can mean 'all without exception' or 'all without distinction.' When we consider the episode in chapter five and the fact that some did believe on Him, the sense of this 'all' is probably best understood as 'all without distinction.' Not only did the Jewish leaders marvel, but all who were indoctrinated in the rabbinical teachings. Concerning δὲ τούτο which begins verse twenty-two, we can see from the textual apparatus that different translators have disagreed on the punctuation between verses twenty-one and twenty-two. Though δὲ τούτο normally comes at the beginning of a sentence, it seems to make better sense if these words are placed at the end of verse twenty-one. In doing so the translation would read, "I have done one deed, and you all are marveling because of it." When placed with verse twenty-two, the reason which δὲ τούτο suggests seems to disappear. If we place these words with twenty-one, greater emphasis is placed on the word Μωϋσῆς in the next verse. Moses was the one they exalted to such a high position. Jesus states:

"...Moses has given you circumcision (not because it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and on the Sabbath you circumcise a man. If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath that the Law of Moses be not broken, are you angry with me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath? Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment (John 7:22-24 NASB).

Notice that circumcision is spoken of as a gift. The perfect tense *δέδωκεν* carries the sense of completed action with continuing results. The giving of the law was completed but the Jews were still practicing that law. That circumcision is a gift is also inferred by the usage of *λαμβάνει*, 'receive,' in verse twenty-three. This fact eliminates the possibility that circumcision is a work on the Sabbath day. "Jesus takes it that the rite is thus received as a blessing, and His hearers certainly agree with Him."¹ The rabbinic writers taught that circumcision made a man complete, and therefore the act override the Sabbath.² Now Jesus argues from the lesser to the greater. If circumcision (which made a man perfect as it did Abraham, Gen. 17:1), was necessary in order not to break the law, how much more was it necessary to make an infirm man whole on the Sabbath. Verse twenty-three uses a first class conditional, and perhaps we could perceive the implied meaning if we translated it as, "Since a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath in order not to break the law...." This clause is a standard type of prosthesis, and His greater argument is presented in the apodosis, which He starts with an emphatic pronoun. "With ME are you angry because I made an entire man whole on the Sabbath?"

It is interesting how culture affected the way the

¹R.C.H. Lenski, Interpretation of St. John's Gospel, (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1942), p. 553.

²C.K. Barret, The Gospel According to St. John, (New York: the Macmillan Co., 1955), p. 264.

rabbis interpreted the Torah. Patte points out how the Pharisees were not servants to the Torah but masters of it. For their own convenience they called the Sabbath a 'gift' of God. In this way they could be free to relax from an absolute obedience to the writings of Moses when a law was hard to obey in their culture. However, in order that the Torah be not disregarded, they would balance the 'gift' interpretation by adding numerous petty laws in the Oral Torah which the people had to observe. This addition of laws was called "making a fence around the Torah."¹ It is understandable why Christ dealt so exactingly with these teachers who boldly tampered with God's revelation to His people.

Christ finishes this discussion with a command to them not to judge according to appearance but to judge rightly. A present imperative with $\mu\tau$ is a command to stop doing something already in progress.² He is saying, "Stop judging according to appearance" The preposition, $\kappa\alpha\tau'$, used with the accusative case invariably means norm or standard. Therefore the standard by which these Jews judged was according to outward appearance. The strong adversative conjunction, establishes the contrasting way they ought to judge, which is 'righteous judgment.'

¹Daniel Patte, Early Jewish Hermeneutic in Palestine, (Missoula, Montana: Society of Biblical Literature and Scholars Press, 1975), pp. 96, 97, 107.

²John A. Sproule, Intermediate Greek Notes, An unpublished syllabus for Intermediate Greek, (Winona Lake: Grace Theological Seminary, 1979), p. 40.

After Christ had made reference to His healing of the man on the Sabbath, some of the ones from Jerusalem began to recognize that this teacher was the very one the Jewish leaders had been seeking to kill. Since Jesus was speaking 'openly,' (*παρρησία*), and no leaders were opposing Him, they wondered if perhaps the rulers were changing their minds and recognizing Him as the Messiah. But they reflect what they had been taught and therefore reject the possibility. They say, "However, we know where this man is from (John 7:27 NASB)." This teaching apparently was taken from the book of Malachi where God's messenger of the covenant would come suddenly to His temple (Malachi 3:1). Morris alludes to the possibility that Christ did fulfill this OT passage in verse fourteen.¹ It is interesting once again to see the interplay of *οἶδα* and *γινώσκω* in their statement. They knew absolutely where Jesus was from; his Galilean accent gave it away. Of the Galileans it is recorded:

"They were easily recognized as such, for the Galileans spoke a dialect of the vernacular Syriac different from that of Judaea, and which was of course accounted rude and impure as all provincial dialects are considered to be, in comparison with that of the metropolis.... The Galilean dialect was of a broad and rustic tone, which affected the pronunciation not only of letters but of words."²

¹Leon Morris, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, The Gospel According to John, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1930), p. 430.

²R.C.H. Lenski, Interpretation of St. John's Gospel, (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1942), p. 559.

Yet what they stated no man would know (by experience) would be where the Messiah was from. This they believed disqualified Jesus.

Once again we see Jesus responding in consequence of statements made of Him. This time He loudly cries out in the Temple, teaching and saying:

"You both know Me, and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. I know Him because I am from Him, and He sent Me (John 7:28-29 NASB)."

These words of Christ give us one remaining principle which is necessary for a proper understanding of Biblical truth. These Jerusalem citizens knew absolutely some minor and external facts about Jesus, but with their shallow knowledge they couldn't really understand about Christ and His mission. To know these they would have to know God, as God actually revealed Himself-and Him they do not know. The proof of their ignorance of God was their rejection of this one who came in the express image of God. They would crucify their Lord of Glory because they just didn't know what He was like.

After these words of Christ, the crowd was divided even more over Him. On one hand, some wanted to arrest Him. On the other hand, some believed on Him, having been thoroughly persuaded by His credentials, the sign miracles which He performed.

This concludes the end of Christ's responsive dialogue with the crowd. Other than words of His leaving in verses

thirty-three and thirty-four, He makes one more plea to the crowd at this feast. That invitation, which He cried out on the last day of the feast, was related in the background material. In this invitation, Christ once again uses a third class conditional (v. 37). The uncertainty of the Jews coming to Him is clearly held in view. What the Jews were seeking and needing, He could have given to them, but only a few received His offer. In verses forty through forty-two we see the crowd still remains diverse in their viewpoint. Some hold Him to be the prophet, some hold Him to be the Messiah, but others maintained He didn't fit the qualifications. However, in regard to their varying viewpoints, Christ has already addressed Himself. In this chapter He has laid down the underlying reasons why most in the crowd, the Jewish leaders, and His brothers could not arrive upon the proper Biblical hermeneutic.

CONCLUSION

In light of the background setting and Jewish education and theology prevalent during the time of Christ, we have considered the diverse viewpoints which were expressed in John seven at the public Feast of Tabernacles. We have endeavored to answer the question of why the Jews failed to understand revelation properly. We have considered primarily Christ's responses to the viewpoints which they expressed and have seen that Christ, instead of dealing with symptomatic issues, immediately exposed the root causes for these misinterpretations of He and the scriptures. Hopefully, these principles which were stated and shall now be enumerated will cause us today to consider our own hermeneutical approach to the scriptures, dealing both with ethical and prophetic passages.

First, we must understand that if we are to realize God's plan and purpose for His Kingdom, we ourselves must be saved and evidence a purposeful life and a truthful (and sometimes offensive) message. We see these principles in the response Jesus gives to the viewpoints of His brothers in the flesh.

Secondly, we must understand that any teacher or hearer of scriptural truths must have as his primary motive the glory of God in Christ. As a man continually wills to

do the will of God, his discerning faculties will grow so that he will be able to understand more of the teaching of truth. Stated concisely, obedience is the main requisite for understanding truth, not education or intelligence. We see this principle in the responses Christ gives to the Jewish leaders.

Thirdly, we must stop judging persons, situations or scriptures according to appearance. Instead, we must be careful to judge cases with fair and righteous judgment. We must cautiously understand the principles, motivations, and other influencing factors behind what seems outwardly apparent.

Lastly, we must not be ignorant, but must understand what God is like. We need to know how He thinks and how He acts. Today, of course, God is revealed ultimately in Jesus Christ, who perfectly exegetes God His Father. We see these last two principles in Jesus' dialogue with the crowd, the Jewish leaders also being present.

These principles which we find in Christ's words are imperative for us today. The scriptures are rich in revelation and we ought to understand them completely. In Christ, we have been given the Holy Spirit which He promised at the Feast of Tabernacles He would give to those who would trust in Him. May we take advantage of these rich blessings.

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