

# JESUS AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

Luke 9:51-62; John 7:11 - 8:59

## STRUCTURE

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

**Key-location:** Jerusalem

**Key-repetitions:**

- Father: Jesus referred to God the Father (Jn 8:16, 18, 19, 27, 28, 42, 49, 54) and the devil as the father of the Jewish leaders (Jn 8:38, 39, 41, 44, 56).

- Confrontations and arguments between Jesus and the Jewish leaders: the Pharisees argued that Jesus' testimony was not valid (Jn 8:12-30); the Jews argued that they were children of Abraham (Jn 8:31-47); the Jews accused Jesus of being demon-possessed (Jn 8:48-59).

- Arguments between the people about Jesus (Jn 7:12, 25-27, 30-31, 40-43).

- Jesus was rejected by: Jewish leaders who wanted to kill him (Jn 7:1); would-be followers (Lk 9:57-62); Pharisees and priests who ordered guards to arrest Jesus (Jn 7:32); Pharisees who argued that Jesus' testimony was not valid (Jn 8:12-30); Jews who accused Jesus of being demon-possessed (Jn 8:48-59).

- During the Feast of the Tabernacles, people were confused about who Jesus was (Jn 7:12, 25, 30-31, 40-44; 8:21-30).

**Key-attitudes:**

- Confrontation and arguments.

- The confidence Jesus had in the words he spoke.

- The compassion of Jesus for the woman caught in adultery in contrast to his distaste for her accusers.

- The confusion of the people in not knowing if Jesus was a good man or a deceiver.

**Initial-situation:**

The third year of Jesus ministry is called the **Year of Passion**. During the first semester of that year, Jesus went on three retreats seeking to be alone with his disciples. During the first retreat, Jesus performed the miracle of feeding five thousand men. Afterwards, the people wanted to make Jesus king by force.

Jesus' refusal to lead revolutionary forces against Herod was the decisive point that ended his popularity and began a series of painful rejections. Jesus began to warn his followers that in Jerusalem he would be mistreated and killed. But the disciples did not understand and argued among themselves about who would be the greatest in Jesus' kingdom.

During the second semester of the **Year of Passion**, Jesus made three trips to Jerusalem to participate in three religious festivals.

**Initial-problem:**

When it was time for the annual Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus set out for Jerusalem where there were Jews who wanted to kill him.

**Final-situation:**

There was a confrontation between Jesus and the Jewish leaders at the Feast of the Tabernacles. The Jews picked up stones to stone Jesus, but he slipped away from the Temple grounds.

## BIBLE STORY

### **Jesus, Rejected by Would-Be Followers** Lk 9:57-62

Jesus with his disciples were going to Jerusalem for the annual Jewish Feast of Tabernacles.

As they were walking along the road, a man said to Jesus, "I'll follow you wherever you go."

Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place of his own to sleep."

Jesus invited another man, "Follow me."

But the man replied, "Lord, I will follow you after my father is dead and buried."

Jesus told him, "Let the dead bury their own dead. You go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

Another man said, "I'll follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and tell my family good-bye."

Jesus replied, "Anyone who starts plowing and then keeps looking back is unfit for service in the kingdom of God" (Lk 9:57-62).

## **Jesus Arrived at the Feast of Tabernacles** Jn 7:11-36

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

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

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

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

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

## **Jesus Is Living Water** Jn 7:37-39

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

## **The People Were Divided because of Jesus** Jn 7:40-52

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

Others said, "He is the Christ."

Still others said, "The Christ will not come from Galilee! Scripture says that the Christ will come from the descendants of David and from the town of Bethlehem where David lived." The people were divided because of Jesus. Some wanted to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him (Jn 7:40-44).

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

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

The Pharisees retorted, "He deceived you also! Not one of the rulers or one of the Pharisees believes in him. No! But this people that knows nothing of the Law of Moses, they are damned!"

A Pharisee named Nicodemus was present. He had gone to visit Jesus earlier. Nicodemus asked, "Does our law allow us to condemn a person without first listening to him and finding out what he has done?"

They replied, "Are you from Galilee, too? Study the Scriptures; you will find that no prophet comes from Galilee!" (Jn 7:45-52).

## **The Woman Caught in Adultery** Jn 7:53 - 8:11

Everybody else went home. But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Jesus returned to the Temple courts early the next morning. People gathered around Jesus and he sat to teach them.

The teachers of the Law of Moses and the Pharisees brought in a woman who had been caught in bed with a man who wasn't her husband. They stood her before the crowd and questioned Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. The Law of Moses commanded us to stone such women. What do you say?" They used this question to trap him into saying something incriminating so they could bring charges against him.

Jesus bent over and wrote on the ground with his finger. They kept on questioning him. Finally, Jesus straightened up and told them, "If any one of you is without sin, go ahead and throw the first stone at her." Again Jesus bent over and again wrote on the ground.

The people who heard this began to go away, one by one, beginning with the oldest. Finally Jesus and the woman were left alone. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where did they go? Does anyone condemn you?"

She answered, "No one, sir."

Jesus declared, "I don't condemn you either. Go, and leave your life of sin" (Jn 7:53 - 8:11).

### **Jesus Is the Light of the World Jn 8:12**

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

### **Confrontation Between Jesus and the Pharisees Jn 8:13-59**

The Pharisees challenged Jesus, "You are testifying as your own witness; your testimony is not valid."

Jesus answered, "My testimony is valid, even if I testify on my own behalf, for I know where I came from and where I'm going. But you don't know where I came from or where I'm going. In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two men is valid. I testify for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me."

Jesus accused the Pharisees, "You are from this world below; I am from above. You are from this world; I'm not from this world. I told you before that you'll die because of your sins if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be."

While Jesus was speaking, many put their faith in him (Jn 8:13-30).

Jesus told the Jews who had believed, "If you live by my teaching, you are truly my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

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

Jesus replied, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do what Abraham did. I am a man who told you the truth that I heard from God; however, you are determined to kill me. Abraham did no such things. You're doing what your own father does" (Jn 8:31-40).

They protested, "We're not illegitimate children. God himself is our only Father."

Jesus told them, "If God were your Father, you would love me. You belong to your father, the devil. You want to please him. The devil was a murderer from the beginning. He couldn't stand the truth. He's never been truthful. When he lies, he is doing what comes natural to him. He's a liar and the father of lies. I tell the plain truth, yet you don't believe me! If I am telling the truth,

why don't you believe me? He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you don't belong to God" (Jn 8:41-47).

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

Jesus said, "I am not demon-possessed. I honor my Father and you dishonor me. I don't seek my own glory, but there is someone who seeks it. I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never die."

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

Jesus replied, "My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one gives me glory. Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad."

The Jews said, "You are not yet fifty years old; how could you have seen Abraham!"

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born, I Am!" At this, they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus slipped away from the Temple grounds (Jn 8:48-59).

## GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

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

## SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did different kinds of people reject Jesus?
2. What were some of the different opinions expressed about who Jesus is?
3. What accusations did Jesus make against the Jewish leaders?
4. What does Jesus' claim that he is "Living Water" signify to you?
5. What does Jesus' claim that he is "The Light of the World" signify to you?

## LIFE-LESSONS

1. The follower of Jesus must be willing to pay the cost of discipleship without delay. The would-be followers of Jesus wanted to choose the time when they would begin to follow him (Lk 9:57-62).
2. Jesus fulfilled the meaning of the miracle in which Moses brought water from the rock. Every day during the Feast of Tabernacles, water was poured from a pitcher of gold on the altar of the morning sacrifice. This reminded the people of the water that flowed from the rock in the desert. (See Num 20:2-13, Ne 9:15; Ps 78:20.) Jesus became like the rock from which living water flows (Jn 7:37-42). Jesus is the spring from which the Holy Spirit flows; the believer in Jesus becomes a pipe through which the Spirit flows. Jesus called the Holy Spirit "Living Waters" and he promised that rivers of Living Waters will flow from within the person who believes in him (Jn 7:38-42).
3. Religious leaders, who are concerned about protecting privilege, position and power, are capable of:
  - Joining forces with enemies. The Pharisees and Sadducees were vicious enemies; however, they joined together to arrest Jesus (Jn 7:32);
  - Dishonoring the Bible they claim to exalt. The Pharisees and priests claimed to exalt the Scriptures; however, they violated Scriptural Law by judging Jesus without hearing him (Dt 1:16-17; Jn 7:50-52).
4. Jesus offers the sinner forgiveness instead of condemnation. Jesus, who had never sinned (Jn

- 8:46), forgave the adulterous woman (Jn 8:10-11). On the cross, Jesus took the sinners' sins upon himself (Rom 8:1, 3).
5. Jesus fulfills the meaning of the miracle of the pillar of fire which led the Israelites when, after leaving Egypt, they traveled through the desert on their way to the promised land. Jesus is the Light of the World (Jn 8:12). During the Feast of the Tabernacles, at the Temple, fire was made within enormous lamps of gold which reflected light upward like a large spot light. This was to remind the people of the column of fire which led their ancestors in the desert. (See Exodus 13:21.) Jesus, as the Light of the World, brings God's presence, protection and guidance.
  6. Each person is a sinner. Jesus taught about the sinfulness of people:
    - The person who commits sin is a slave to sin (Jn 8:34);
    - The sinner doesn't recognize that he is in slavery (Jn 8:33; 9:41);
    - The sinner desires to eliminate anyone who tells the truth regarding his sins (Jn 8:40);
    - The sinner becomes unable to understand the Word of God (Jn 8:43);
    - The Devil is the source for satisfaction and values of the sinner. The Devil gives the sinner his own desires: to lie (Jn 8:44), to murder (Jn 8:40) and to have personal glory (Jn 8:50; 5:44);
    - The consequence of sin is death (Jn 8:51; Rm 5:12; 6:23).