

The Gospel of John (7:1-53)

A House Church Outline



1. Praise *(Purpose: To worship God)*

- What are you thankful for this week? *(let the group's secretary write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)*
- Song Service
 - Sing a few songs of praise to God

2. Pray *(Purpose: To carry each others' burdens and to seek the Lord)*

- What challenges did you have this week? *(write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)*
- Go into a season of prayer

3. Review *(Purpose: To learn accountability)*

- Tell us how it went with what you promised to do in last week's meeting? *(e.g. Who did you share your faith with this past week? Who did you minister to? How did actioning your I WILL STATEMENT go?)*
- *Where people have failed to fulfil what they said they would, do not be harsh with them but gently encourage them to try again in the coming week. Give them more support by phoning or joining them in the week.*

4. Give *(Purpose: To be good stewards of our monies)*

- This is the time to return tithes and offerings. If done electronically, kindly ensure that you get the bank account details of your local church from your treasurer. Don't forget to complete an envelope and to send the breakdown to him/her.

5. Discover *(Purpose: To learn to listen to God, and be obedient to His Word)*

- **Notes for the facilitator**

- Read *Desire of Ages (DA)*, p. 447-456
- **"The Feast of Tabernacles was the closing gathering of the year. It was God's design that at this time the people should reflect on His goodness and mercy.** The whole land had been under His guidance, receiving His blessing. Day and night His watchcare had continued. The sun and rain had caused the earth to produce her fruits. From the valleys and plains of Palestine the harvest had been gathered. The olive berries had been picked, and the precious oil stored in bottles. The palm had yielded her store. The purple clusters of the vine had been trodden in the wine press" (DA 447.2)
- **"This feast was not only the harvest thanksgiving, but the memorial of God's protecting care over Israel in the wilderness.** In commemoration of their tent life, the Israelites during the feast dwelt in booths or tabernacles of green boughs. These were erected in the streets, in the courts of the temple, or on the housetops. The hills and valleys surrounding Jerusalem were also dotted with these leafy dwellings, and seemed to be alive with people" (DA 448.2).
- **"With sacred song and thanksgiving the worshipers celebrated this occasion.** A little before the feast was the Day of Atonement, when, after confession of their sins, the people were declared to be at peace with Heaven. Thus the way was prepared for the rejoicing of the feast. "O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth forever" (Psalm 106:1) rose triumphantly, while all kinds of music, mingled with shouts of hosanna, accompanied the united singing. **The temple was the center of the universal joy.... The multitude of worshipers, waving their branches of palm and myrtle, took up the strain, and echoed the chorus; and again the melody was caught up by voices near and afar off, till the encircling hills were vocal with praise"** (DA 448.3).

- **“At night the temple and its court blazed with artificial light.** The music, the waving of palm branches, the glad hosannas, the great concourse of people, over whom the light streamed from the hanging lamps, the array of the priests, and the majesty of the ceremonies, combined to make a scene that deeply impressed the beholders. **But the most impressive ceremony of the feast, one that called forth greatest rejoicing, was one commemorating an event in the wilderness sojourn [viz., the water ceremony]”** (DA 448.4).
- Feast of Tabernacles:
 - It was a celebration of blessings of harvest. In this context it was known as the ‘Feast of Ingathering’ (Ex. 23:16, 34:22) – i.e., of olives, dates, grapes... (DA 447)
 - With reference to Israel’s history, it commemorated God’s protection of His people during their wilderness journey, during their ‘tent life’. As such it was known as the ‘Feast of Booths’ (Lev. 23:34, 43; Deut. 16:13, 16; 31:10). During this time Israel dwelt in temporary booths or huts made of branches of leafy trees. “It was a reminder that just as God provided for Israel’s needs in the wilderness, so He would continue to provide for their present needs.” (Jon Paulien, *John*, pg 151)
 - During the Feast, after the evening sacrifice, all the lamps were kindled, shedding their light over Jerusalem. This ceremony was in commemoration of the pillar of light that guided Israel in the desert, and was also regarded as pointing to the coming of the Messiah. At evening when the lamps were lighted, the court was a scene of great rejoicing. In the illumination of Jerusalem, the people expressed their hope of the Messiah's coming to shed His light upon Israel (DA 463). It was in the context of all the light imagery of the Feast of Tabernacles that Jesus said, "I am the light of the world..." (John 8:12)
 - This feast will reach its fulfillment at the end of time after the ‘harvest’ of the earth has been completed. Notice the following in the book of Revelation:
 - ⇒ Rev. 21:3: God **tabernacles** with His people, the ultimate sign of His presence and protecting care.
 - ⇒ Rev. 7:9ff; 19:1-10; 21-22: The end-time celebrations are filled with images of feasting, palm branches, music, and rejoicing before the Lord
 - ⇒ Rev 21:23-25 cf. 22:5: Light imagery
 - ⇒ Rev. 22:1-2: Water imagery
- Vs 3-4: **“The ‘if’ expressed doubt and unbelief. They attributed cowardice and weakness to Him. If He knew that He was the Messiah, why this strange reserve and inaction? If He really possessed such power, why not go boldly to Jerusalem, and assert His claims? Why not perform in Jerusalem the wonderful works reported of Him in Galilee? Do not hide in secluded provinces, they said, and perform your mighty works for the benefit of ignorant peasants and fishermen. Present yourself at the capital, win the support of the priests and rulers, and unite the nation in establishing the new kingdom”** (DA 450.2)
- **“These brothers of Jesus reasoned from the selfish motive so often found in the hearts of those ambitious for display. This spirit was the ruling spirit of the world. They were offended because, instead of seeking a temporal throne, Christ had declared Himself to be the bread of life.** They were greatly disappointed when so many of His disciples forsook Him. They themselves turned from Him to escape the cross of acknowledging what His works revealed—that He was the Sent of God” (DA 451.1).
- **“From Jerusalem the report of Christ's miracles had spread wherever the Jews were dispersed; and although for many months He had been absent from the feasts, the interest in Him had not abated. Many from all parts of the world had come up to the Feast of Tabernacles in the hope of seeing Him. At the beginning of the feast many**

inquiries were made for Him. The Pharisees and rulers looked for Him to come, hoping for an opportunity to condemn Him. They anxiously inquired, ‘Where is He?’ but no one knew. The thought of Him was uppermost in all minds. Through fear of the priests and rulers, none dared acknowledge Him as the Messiah, but everywhere there was quiet yet earnest discussion concerning Him. **Many defended Him as one sent from God, while others denounced Him as a deceiver of the people”** (DA 451.4).

- “Meanwhile Jesus had quietly arrived at Jerusalem. He had chosen an unfrequented route by which to go, in order to avoid the travelers who were making their way to the city from all quarters. **Had He joined any of the caravans that went up to the feast, public attention would have been attracted to Him on His entrance into the city, and a popular demonstration in His favor would have aroused the authorities against Him. It was to avoid this that He chose to make the journey alone”** (DA 452.1)
- “Standing [in the court of the temple], the center of attraction to that vast throng, Jesus addressed them as no man had ever done. **His words showed a knowledge of the laws and institutions of Israel, of the sacrificial service and the teachings of the prophets, far exceeding that of the priests and rabbis.** He broke through the barriers of formalism and tradition. The scenes of the future life seemed outspread before Him. As one who beheld the Unseen, He spoke of the earthly and the heavenly, the human and the divine, with positive authority. His words were most clear and convincing; and again, as at Capernaum, the people were astonished at His teaching; ‘for His word was with power.’ Luke 4:32. Under a variety of representations He warned His hearers of the calamity that would follow all who rejected the blessings He came to bring them. **He had given them every possible proof that He came forth from God, and made every possible effort to bring them to repentance. He would not be rejected and murdered by His own nation if He could save them from the guilt of such a deed”** (DA 452.3).
- Vs 14: “All wondered at His knowledge of the law and the prophecies; and the question passed from one to another, ‘How knoweth this Man letters, having never learned?’ **No one was regarded as qualified to be a religious teacher unless he had studied in the rabbinical schools, and both Jesus and John the Baptist had been represented as ignorant because they had not received this training.** Those who heard them were astonished at their knowledge of the Scriptures, ‘having never learned.’ **Of men they had not, truly; but the God of heaven was their teacher, and from Him they had received the highest kind of wisdom”** (DA 453.1)
- Vs 17: “**The perception and appreciation of truth, He said, depends less upon the mind than upon the heart.** Truth must be received into the soul; it claims the homage of the will. If truth could be submitted to the reason alone, pride would be no hindrance in the way of its reception. **But it is to be received through the work of grace in the heart; and its reception depends upon the renunciation of every sin that the Spirit of God reveals. Man's advantages for obtaining a knowledge of the truth, however great these may be, will prove of no benefit to him unless the heart is open to receive the truth, and there is a conscientious surrender of every habit and practice that is opposed to its principles.** *To those who thus yield themselves to God, having an honest desire to know and to do His will, the truth is revealed as the power of God for their salvation.* These will be able to distinguish between him who speaks for God, and him who speaks merely from himself. The Pharisees had not put their will on the side of God's will. They were not seeking to know the truth, but to find some excuse for evading it; Christ showed that this was why they did not understand His teaching” (DA 455.3)
- Vs 18: “He now gave a test by which the true teacher might be distinguished from the deceiver: “He that speaketh from himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh the glory of Him that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.”

John 7:18, R. V. He that seeketh his own glory is speaking only from himself. The spirit of self-seeking betrays its origin. But Christ was seeking the glory of God. He spoke the words of God. This was the evidence of His authority as a teacher of the truth" (DA 456.1)

- Vs 19: **"Jesus gave the rabbis an evidence of His divinity by showing that He read their hearts.** Ever since the healing at Bethesda they had been plotting His death. Thus they were themselves breaking the law which they professed to be defending.... **Like a swift flash of light these words revealed to the rabbis the pit of ruin into which they were about to plunge. For an instant they were filled with terror.** They saw that they were in conflict with Infinite Power. But they would not be warned. In order to maintain their influence with the people, their murderous designs must be concealed. Evading the question of Jesus, they exclaimed, 'Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill Thee?' They insinuated that the wonderful works of Jesus were instigated by an evil spirit" (DA 456.3).
- Vs 27: A popular misconception about Messiah that confused the people.
- "Day after day He taught the people, until the last, 'that great day of the feast.' The morning of this day found the people wearied from the long season of festivity. **Suddenly Jesus lifted up His voice, in tones that rang through the courts of the temple: 'If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink.** He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.' The condition of the people made this appeal very forcible. **They had been engaged in a continued scene of pomp and festivity, their eyes had been dazzled with light and color, and their ears regaled with the richest music; but there had been nothing in all this round of ceremonies to meet the wants of the spirit, nothing to satisfy the thirst of the soul for that which perishes not. Jesus invited them to come and drink of the fountain of life, of that which would be in them a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life"** (DA 453.4).
- **"The priest had that morning performed the ceremony which commemorated the smiting of the rock in the wilderness. That rock was a symbol of Him who by His death would cause living streams of salvation to flow to all who are athirst. Christ's words were the water of life. There in the presence of the assembled multitude He set Himself apart to be smitten, that the water of life might flow to the world.** In smiting Christ, Satan thought to destroy the Prince of life; but from the smitten rock there flowed living water" (DA 454.1).
- Vs 33: Christ gave them a prediction of what would later happen. This would afterwards confirm His words and prove His Messiahship.
- Vs 37: "Jesus knew the wants of the soul. Pomp, riches, and honor cannot satisfy the heart. 'If any man thirst, let him come unto Me.' **The rich, the poor, the high, the low, are alike welcome. He promises to relieve the burdened mind, to comfort the sorrowing, and to give hope to the despondent.** Many of those who heard Jesus were mourners over disappointed hopes, many were nourishing a secret grief, many were seeking to satisfy their restless longing with the things of the world and the praise of men; but when all was gained, they found that they had toiled only to reach a broken cistern, from which they could not quench their thirst. **Amid the glitter of the joyous scene they stood, dissatisfied and sad. That sudden cry, 'If any man thirst,' startled them from their sorrowful meditation, and as they listened to the words that followed, their minds kindled with a new hope. The Holy Spirit presented the symbol before them until they saw in it the offer of the priceless gift of salvation"** (DA 454.2).
- Vs 39: The Holy Spirit is the agent for satisfying people's spiritual thirst with Christ, the Water of Life.

- *Read John 7:1-53. Preferably let one person read it. Let everyone then put down their Bibles and get the group to reconstruct the passage in their own words. This teaches the group to be careful in quotation Scripture correctly and to use it as the basis of their discussions.*
- **Discussion Questions** (use only a few). *The notes in italics after some of the questions below are for the facilitator, and not to be read out to the group.*
 - The Feast of Tabernacles closed the year with a celebration of what God had done for His people the past year. Why is thanksgiving such a vital part of the Christian journey?
 - What are some of the challenges of living out one's faith within the family setting, especially if most members don't support that belief system?
 - What do you think was Jesus' brothers' motivation for asking Him to present Himself to the leaders in Judea?
 - Why do you think it was so important for Jesus to live according to heaven's timetable? (see vs 6, cf. John 2:4, 8:20, 12:23, 13:1, & 17:1)? Is it possible for us also to live such daily purposeful lives, and if so, how? (*ask one question at a time*)
 - Jesus went secretly to Jerusalem to avoid the public attention He would have received by the crowds travelling to the Feast of Tabernacles – which would have aroused the authorities against Him. Give examples when Christians have to do things secretly, and under cover in order to follow God's purposes?
 - Why does the world hate Jesus and those who follow Him? Is an un-persecuted church a sign of worldliness? (*ask one question at a time*)
 - What are some of the reasons people are afraid of openly speaking about Jesus today?
 - Share your understanding of the powerful principle of vs 17? How do you think vs 19 illustrates this principle? (*ask one question at a time*)
 - What verses seem to indicate that people's hearts were a battle ground between good and evil, a place where they were wrestling between the teachings of the Jewish leaders on the one hand, and the life & teachings of Jesus on the other? What lesson is there in this for us? (*ask one question at a time*)
 - Referring to the healing of the man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5), what point is Jesus trying to make in vss 21-24?
 - During the Feast of Tabernacles there was a water ceremony, symbolising how God had provided water out of the rock during their wilderness wanderings. Why do you think Jesus at this occasion offered Himself as the Water of Life? In which way can Christ's offer to humanity be compared to water? (*ask one question at a time*)
 - It is fascinating that the hearts of hardened temple guards were melted under the influence of Jesus' words (vs 46), yet the leaders hearts were not? How can we ensure that our hearts 'remain soft'?
- **Application Questions** (*select a few depending on your time. One has to be the I WILL STATEMENT*)
 - Share an experience of how you were hated (persecuted) for your faith in Jesus?
 - Have you ever been afraid of openly sharing your faith in Jesus? Elaborate.
 - Share a story of a bold or fearless thing that God helped you do for Him (see vss 25-26)?
 - What gives you the greatest confidence to believe that what Jesus taught was true?
 - How has Christ, as the Water of Life, brought refreshment to your soul?
 - I WILL STATEMENT: Formulate an I will statement in response to what you have discovered in the Word. Let the group's secretary also record these in an A4 notebook. Ensure that everyone gets a chance to give their I WILL STATEMENT. You have to be specific. E.g. "Although shy by nature, I will boldly share my conversion experience with 2 friends this week."

6. Share (Purpose: To be witnesses of our faith)

- Do you have anyone you could share today's lesson with this week? *Be specific.*

7. Closing prayer