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John 7:1-39 -- Jesus' Teaching at the Feast of Booths

Notes:

Vs. 1 - A reminder of how dangerous it was for Jesus to go to Judea. *because the Jews were seeking to kill Him.* -- This provides important setting information for Jesus' actions.

Vs. 2 - *the Feast of Booths was at hand* -- This was one of three great annual feasts instituted at Mt. Sinai. They were to be observed as reminders of the spiritual history of the Jews, a celebration and renewal of their relationship with God. Every adult male Jew was to attend the observance of these feasts in Jerusalem (Ex. 23:14-17; Lev. 23:1-44). Despite the danger, Jesus was not about to disregard His obligation to observe the Feast of Booths. This particular feast, also called Ingathering, occurred in the seventh month of the Jewish lunar calendar, reckoned from Passover in March-April. This would fall in October after the fall harvest, five days after Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. In the midst of the great abundance produced by this end-of-the-year gathering in of their crops, Jewish families were to construct "booths", shelters made of sticks and leafy branches, and to live in them for this week long celebration. In this way, they were to remember that their ancestors had lived in such temporary shelters when God brought them out of the land of Egypt. They were to remember God's provision for them in the wilderness, and that He has provided them with all the blessings that they now enjoy. It is interesting that the Feast of Booths is the only OT feast that is mentioned as being observed in the Messianic kingdom to come (Zech. 14:9-21). In that time, all nations, not just Israel, will be required to come up to Jerusalem to observe this yearly celebration.

Vss. 3-5 - *His brothers* -- Other sons of Mary by Joseph. There is no record that Joseph had any older children before marrying Mary, nor is there any other explanation offered in Scripture than to think that they are natural half-brothers of Jesus. There was a specific word for "cousin" (e.g., Col. 4:10) and for "kinsman" or "relative" (Lk. 1:36,58) available, had John and the other Gospel writers been intending to write about other close blood relations of Jesus. The NT descriptions consistently represent them as brothers of Jesus (cf. Matt. 12:46,47; 13:55; Mk. 6:3; Acts 1:14; I Cor. 9:5; 15:7; Gal. 1:19). They are even recorded by name. Jesus also had sisters, though we do not know their names nor even how many sisters He had (Matt. 13:55,56). *go into Judea, that Your disciples... may behold Your works* -- His brothers were mocking His approach. They thought He should be more aggressive and open, if He wanted public attention. *For not even His brothers were believing in Him* -- They did not understand Him, nor recognize who He really was. This brings up the question, "What must it have been like to be the younger brother of Jesus?" They could never measure up to His performance. Apparently, He was not terribly close to any of them, at least none of them respected and admired Him enough to become a follower. Mark 3:20-35 suggests that they may have thought He had gone mad.

Vss. 6-8 -- *My time is not yet at hand* -- It is not the appropriate time for Me to go up to Jerusalem, or to more aggressively put Myself forward. *your time is always opportune* -- This seems to mean, "You can always do what you want, without considering an issue of timing." *The world cannot hate you; but it hates Me* -- The question of timing seems to relate to personal safety. *I testify of it, that its deeds are evil* -- Jesus' confrontation of the world's motivations and activities were the basis of its hate toward Him. *Go up to the feast yourselves* -- Jesus tells them to go ahead. *I do not go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come* -- Jesus is not deceiving them. He is not saying that He does not intend to come at all, but that He is not going just yet. The Greek allows for it to mean, "I am not going up" in the present tense. It is not an absolute statement, as indicated by the qualifying statement, *because My time has not yet fully come*. Jesus, being a devout Jew, never missed attending the feasts. His brothers would have known that He was not intending to stay behind in Galilee. They were ready to go right then, and He was not, so they went ahead without Him.

Vs. 10 -- After they had gone, *then He Himself also went up... in secret* -- For the moment, this was the prudent way of dealing with the dangers.

Vss. 11-13 -- Note the controversy that surrounded Him, and the intimidating influence of the religious leaders.

Vss. 14-18 -- Jesus as Teacher. *in the midst of the feast* -- Jesus remained in obscurity until the fourth day. *Went up into the temple and began to teach* -- He unabashedly went to the most public place of all and openly made His presence known. *How has this man become learned, having never been educated?* -- The religious leaders could obviously see the skill and accuracy with which He taught. *My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me.* On the one hand, He humbly ascribes the glory to God, not His efforts or innate ability, on the other hand He reasserts His claim that He has been uniquely sent by God. Here again Jesus gives us a glimpse into His modus operandi. Just as the works He had done were not from Himself, so also the teachings He delivered originated from His Father (cf. Jn. 5:19,20,30). In fact, Jesus delineates two kind of teachers in the next couple of verses: (1.) One who speaks "from himself", whose motivation is to seek "his own glory"; and (2) One whose teaching is from God, whose motive is to seek the glory of God who sent him. This one is a true, genuine, dependable messenger of God, one not affected by unrighteous or unjust motives. The difference will be discerned by those who genuinely wish to do God's will.

Vss. 19-24 -- Jesus confronts their reasons for wanting Him dead. Vs 19 completes the thought of 17,18. The religious leaders were evidently not "willing to do His will", because they did not carry out the law of Moses. It should not be surprising that they would not recognize Jesus' teaching. *Why do you seek to kill Me?* -- Direct, public confrontation. *You have a demon!* -- The multitudes dismiss this as crazy talk. *I did one deed...* -- What is Jesus referring to? Vs. 23; cf. 5:1-18. The argument in vss. 22, 23 points out the ridiculous shortsightedness and inconsistency of their anger at Him for healing the feeble man on the Sabbath on His last visit to Jerusalem. If they break the Sabbath to circumcise a baby, could it possibly be wrong for Him to make a man entirely well on the Sabbath? *Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.* -- The word translated as "appearance" means "a sight, face". Therefore Jesus is saying not to make judgments based on first glance impressions, or "on the face of things". Snap decisions and surface evaluations are often wrong. Judging with righteous judgment requires a little more thought and investigation. This is an obvious allusion to a famous Messianic prophecy, "He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make a decision by what His ears hear; but with righteousness He will judge..." (Isa. 11:3,4; cf. Jn. 5:30). Jesus' argument has not only the strength of good sense, but a solid basis in OT precedent.

Vss. 25-53 -- Most of the rest of the chapter recounts the confusion and varying opinions about Jesus. We will come back to this later.

Vss. 37-39 -- In the midst of all this confusion and debate about who He was, Jesus once again stirred them up by making a very bold proclamation. *on the last day, the great day of the feast* -- The feast lasted eight days, beginning and ending with a solemn assembly (Lev. 23:34; Neh. 8:18). This final day would have been when the pilgrims gathered in the temple to observe the final ceremonies and receive the benediction before returning to their homes. It would have been one of the most crowded times of the year, with many more people packed into the temple than on regular days. *Jesus stood and cried out* -- He would have had to shout to be heard, but He would have been heard by many more people than at virtually any other time. To help understand the significance of His proclamation, one aspect of their celebration was that each day during the feast a golden pitcher of water was drawn from the pool of Siloam and brought in procession through the streets of Jerusalem to the temple to remember the provision of water from the rock that God had given Israel in the desert. On this eighth day, they were commemorating the entrance into the promised land, where there were an abundance of springs. Historically, there was no more need for water from the rock, or the daily manna that they ate, so it ceased to be provided. Therefore, in their celebration of that event, they no more sent to Siloam for the water. At this point, Jesus stood and made His proclamation. *If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.* -- Jesus is implying that there is another kind of thirst that He can satisfy that physical water cannot. *He who believes in Me* -- Literally, "the (one) believing/trusting into/unto/towards Me". The emphasis is on ongoing action or a continuous state of being. *as the Scripture said* -- Jesus does not quote any particular verse verbatim, so we cannot be certain what passage He may have had in mind. Jer. 2:13, Isa. 44:3 and 58:11 are good possibilities. *From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water* -- An abundant, limitless source of water from within. Water represented life, for wherever it went, the ground would quickly produce green foliage. Cf. Ps. 1:1-6; Jer. 17:5-8. Very similar word picture as He had shared with the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4:10,13,14). *But this He spoke of the Spirit* -- John explains for us the meaning of Jesus' utterance. *the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.* -- Cf. Jn. 14:16-26; 15:26; 16:7-15; Acts 2:33,37-39. When one believes that Jesus was glorified will determine how one understands the coming of the Spirit.