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John 7:25-8:12 -- Disputing About Jesus' Identity

If there is a common theme in the seventh chapter of John, it would have to be the varied beliefs about who Jesus truly was. In vs. 5, we were told that his own brothers did not believe in Him. At the feast, there was much questioning about who He was, and whether or not He was even going to show up, since the religious leaders had it in for Him. Some thought He was good, others thought He was a bad influence on the people (vs. 12). As the chapter progresses, it is interesting to observe what the thought processes of some of the various factions were regarding Jesus.

Notes:

Vss. 25-27 - After the crowd of pilgrims in the temple had verbally minimized Jesus' claim that His life was in danger as the ravings of a demonized crazy man (vs. 20), in their own discussions the common people who lived in Jerusalem acknowledge that Jesus is the one the rulers were seeking to kill. Their intentions had leaked out as rumor to the people of the city, who were expecting Him to be arrested as soon as He appeared. The fact that He was not at all detained gave rise to the speculation that maybe the rulers realized that He truly was the Christ-king. They balk at that conclusion, however, because they know where He is from (Galilee - cf. vs. 41), and they suppose that the Christ will suddenly come from a mysterious unknown origin.

Vss. 28-32 - *Jesus therefore cried out* -- Jesus seems to challenge some of their reasonings by acknowledging that on the one hand they do know something about Him, but on the other hand He has been sent by the Father, whom they do not know. This angered some, who wanted to seize Him, while others were believing in Him because of the miraculous signs they had seen Him do. The rulers, hearing these discussions, send the temple officials to seize Him.

Vss. 33-36 - The Lord now adds a different twist to His message, i.e., He would be among them only a little while more, and then He would return to the One who sent Him. They would look for Him, and not find Him. He was going to some place that they would not be able to come. He was beginning to talk about His death and resurrection, but these words only produced confusion in their minds. *Where does this man intend to go...* Their attempt to answer the question led them to ask if Jesus was going to leave Palestine to teach Greeks somewhere else in the Roman Empire. *What is this statement... "You will seek Me, and shall not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come."* This comes up again later. They could make no sense of it.

Vss. 40-46 - Jesus' bold claim in vss. 37,38 created more controversy. *Some of the multitude... were saying -- Again, varied opinion. This certainly is the Prophet* -- Cf. notes for Jn. 1:21; Dt. 18:15; 34:10-12. *Others... "This is the Christ"* -- Cf. notes for 1:20; I Sam. 10:1; Lk. 23:2. *Still others... "Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He?"* -- This group disagree with the former group, citing as evidence, *"the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and from Bethlehem...* -- Those of us who are looking back at this discussion are tempted to say, "But He did come from the royal line of David, and He was born in Bethlehem" (Mt. 1,2; Lk. 1,2). That is precisely the point that John wants us to see by leading us through all of the various opinions of these people. They were making their decisions and judgments based on the incomplete, partial information that they had. In a way, all of this confused thinking illustrates Jesus' admonition from vs. 24, "Do not judge according to appearance...". There was more to really understanding who Jesus was than first met the eye. These people were willing to pontificate based upon their partial information, instead of checking things out more thoroughly. How often are we guilty of similar shortsightedness in relation to people in our lives? *some wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him* -- This is the third time in this chapter that it mentions that someone intended to seize Him, but didn't (cf. vss. 30,32). Why? Vs. 30 states "because His hour had not yet come". The officers that returned to the chief priests and Pharisees empty-handed gave the explanation, "Never did a man speak the way this man speaks" (vs. 46). Part of it was the protection of God, and part of it was the stunning impact of His words.

Vss. 47-52 - The Pharisees' reaction to the temple guards' reluctance to take Jesus into custody. *No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he?* -- Another unfounded assumption. Nicodemus (vs. 50,51)

probably already did, as possibly did Joseph of Arimathea (19:38-42; cf. Lk. 24:50-54). Both of these men, though members of the rulers and Pharisees, were secretly believers in Jesus because of the fear of the ridicule and possible retribution of these other leaders. *This multitude which does not know the Law is accursed.* -- We see their arrogance toward the common people, when actually their own "great learning" did not help them make any better conclusions. *Nicodemus said to them* -- This Pharisee had been wise enough to talk to Jesus first hand and had been convinced by Him. This was the advice He attempted to offer the group: *Our Law does not judge a man, unless it hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?* -- Good advice. Check things out clearly from the original sources before jumping to conclusions. *They answered...*, *"You are not also from Galilee, are you?"* -- Summarily dismissing good intentioned counsel with ridiculing comments does not encourage an open sharing of perspective. The arrogant attitudes of fools dominated the quiet wisdom of the more rational men in this group. *Search and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee.* -- Their "learned" conclusion was the same as that of some whom they considered "accursed" (vs. 41). The ironic thing was that the Scripture does indicate that something glorious will come from Galilee, something even having to do with the Messiah (cf. Isa. 9:1-7). They did not know the Scriptures as well as they thought they did, nor did they follow their own counsel and "search" them. Cf. Acts 17:10-12.

Vss. 7:53-8:11 -- These verses are not a part of the original Gospel of John. They are not found in most of the oldest manuscripts. Of those manuscripts that include this story, it "floats", meaning it is not found in the same location. It is sometimes found after Lk. 21:38, after Lk. 24:53, or after Jn. 7:36. The problem with including it here is that it breaks up the context, which is meant to continue directly from this controversy in chapter seven right into 8:12ff. There is not supposed to be a break in the flow of thought.

Vs. 8:12 - *Again therefore Jesus spoke to them* -- A good rule of thumb when examining any writing is that when you see a "therefore", ask yourself, "What is it there for?" The word "therefore" is a logical connector indicating causality, or stating a conclusion. Here, Jesus is responding to the crowd in the temple at the Feast of Booths. The scene is unchanged from chapter 7. *I am the light of the world* -- The second of seven "I am" sayings like this in the book. Cf. 6:35. This particular statement has special significance in light of the discussion about the Christ and Galilee. The image of light has many positive connotations on its own, e.g., it is life-giving, it provides warmth, it enables one to see clearly, which, in turn, means safety and comfort, etc. Being in darkness is frightening. A person is very vulnerable when they cannot see. They stumble over little things that they could easily step over or avert, if they could see them. All the time, as they grope along, they feel anxiety, tension, and apprehension as they strain their senses to make their way, hoping that they don't get lost in the dark. *he who follows Me* -- Lit., "the (one) following/accompanying with Me". The emphasis is on the continual action. You are not issued a flashlight once you make a decision for Jesus, so you can go off and do your own thing. The light is in Jesus' presence. If you are with Him, you have light. If you wander off, the shadows creep in upon you the farther from Him you go. *shall not walk in the darkness* -- The Greek is most emphatic, "not never might he walk about in the darkness". As long as you are accompanying Jesus, you will always have light to see by. His light never fails. Therefore, it will never happen that you might walk about in darkness, if you are with Him. *but shall have the light of life* -- Not just any physical light, rather it is "the light of the life" that the follower of Jesus has. This phrase could mean either the light that pertains to the life, i.e., possibly that the light directs one to the life; or, it could mean that the light to see by radiates from the life itself, i.e., "life's light". Cf. Jn. 1:4,5,9.

To see the OT prophetic connection, Isa. 9:1,2,6,7 says, "But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of the Jordan, **Galilee** of the Gentiles (nations). The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them... for a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore." Cf. Isa. 49:5-8. Unquestionably, Jesus' words were an allusion to this passage, and another claim to being the Messiah-king.