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~ **Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles** ~

You can learn much more about this story by doing these three things:

1. Read John 7.
2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.
3. Answer the reflective questions.

1. Read the text of the story.

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John 7 NASB	John 7 NLT
<p>After these things Jesus was walking in Galilee, for He was unwilling to walk in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him. ² Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near. ³ Therefore His brothers said to Him, "Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. ⁴ For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be <i>known</i> publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." ⁵ For not even His brothers were believing in Him. ⁶ So Jesus *said to them, "My time is not yet here, but your time is always opportune. ⁷ The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil. ⁸ Go up to the feast yourselves; I do not go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come." ⁹ Having said these things to them, He stayed in Galilee.</p> <p>¹⁰ But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as if, in secret. ¹¹ So the Jews were seeking Him at the feast and were saying, "Where is He?" ¹² There was much grumbling among the crowds concerning Him; some were saying, "He is a good man"; others were saying, "No, on the contrary, He leads the people astray." ¹³ Yet no one was speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews.</p> <p>¹⁴ But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and <i>began to</i> teach. ¹⁵ The Jews then were astonished, saying, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?" ¹⁶ So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. ¹⁷ If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or <i>whether</i> I speak from Myself. ¹⁸ 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.</p> <p>¹⁹ "Did not Moses give you the Law, and <i>yet</i> none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?" ²⁰ The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?" ²¹ Jesus answered them, "I did one deed, and you all marvel. ²² For this reason Moses has given you circumcision (not because it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and on <i>the</i> Sabbath you circumcise a man. ²³ If a man receives circumcision on <i>the</i> Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on <i>the</i> Sabbath? ²⁴ Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."</p> <p>²⁵ So some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill?" ²⁶ Look, He is speaking</p>	<p>After this, Jesus traveled around Galilee. He wanted to stay out of Judea, where the Jewish leaders were plotting his death. ² But soon it was time for the Jewish Festival of Shelters, ³ and Jesus' brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, where your followers can see your miracles! ⁴ You can't become famous if you hide like this! If you can do such wonderful things, show yourself to the world!" ⁵ For even his brothers didn't believe in him.</p> <p>⁶ Jesus replied, "Now is not the right time for me to go, but you can go anytime. ⁷ The world can't hate you, but it does hate me because I accuse it of doing evil. ⁸ You go on. I'm not going to this festival, because my time has not yet come." ⁹ After saying these things, Jesus remained in Galilee.</p> <p>¹⁰ But after his brothers left for the festival, Jesus also went, though secretly, staying out of public view. ¹¹ The Jewish leaders tried to find him at the festival and kept asking if anyone had seen him. ¹² There was a lot of grumbling about him among the crowds. Some argued, "He's a good man," but others said, "He's nothing but a fraud who deceives the people." ¹³ But no one had the courage to speak favorably about him in public, for they were afraid of getting in trouble with the Jewish leaders.</p> <p>¹⁴ Then, midway through the festival, Jesus went up to the Temple and began to teach. ¹⁵ The people were surprised when they heard him. "How does he know so much when he hasn't been trained?" they asked.</p> <p>¹⁶ So Jesus told them, "My message is not my own; it comes from God who sent me. ¹⁷ Anyone who wants to do the will of God will know whether my teaching is from God or is merely my own. ¹⁸ Those who speak for themselves want glory only for themselves, but a person who seeks to honor the one who sent him speaks truth, not lies. ¹⁹ Moses gave you the law, but none of you obeys it! In fact, you are trying to kill me."</p> <p>²⁰ The crowd replied, "You're demon possessed! Who's trying to kill you?"</p> <p>²¹ Jesus replied, "I did one miracle on the Sabbath, and you were amazed. ²² But you work on the Sabbath, too, when you obey Moses' law of circumcision. (Actually, this tradition of circumcision began with the patriarchs, long before the law of Moses.) ²³ For if the correct time for circumcising your son falls on the Sabbath, you go ahead and do it so as not to break the law of Moses. So why should you be angry with me for healing a man on the Sabbath? ²⁴ Look beneath the surface so you can judge correctly."</p> <p>²⁵ Some of the people who lived in Jerusalem started to ask each</p>

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publicly, and they are saying nothing to Him. The rulers do not really know that this is the Christ, do they? ²⁷ However, we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from.” ²⁸ Then Jesus cried 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. ²⁹ I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me.” ³⁰ So they were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come. ³¹ But many of the crowd believed in Him; and they were saying, “When the Christ comes, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?”

³² The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about Him, and the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to seize Him. ³³ Therefore Jesus said, “For a little while longer I am with you, then I go to Him who sent Me. ³⁴ You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come.” ³⁵ The Jews then said to one another, “Where does this man intend to go that we will not find Him? He is not intending to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks, is He? ³⁶ What is this statement that He said, ‘You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come?’”

³⁷ Now on the last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’” ³⁹ But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

⁴⁰ Some of the people therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, “This certainly is the Prophet.” ⁴¹ Others were saying, “This is the Christ.” Still others were saying, “Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He? ⁴² Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?” ⁴³ So a division occurred in the crowd because of Him. ⁴⁴ Some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

⁴⁵ The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, “Why did you not bring Him?” ⁴⁶ The officers answered, “Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks.” ⁴⁷ The Pharisees then answered them, “You have not also been led astray, have you? ⁴⁸ No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he? ⁴⁹ But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed.” ⁵⁰ Nicodemus (he who came to Him before, being one of them) *said to them, ⁵¹ “Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?” ⁵² They answered him, “You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee.”

other, “Isn’t this the man they are trying to kill? ²⁶ But here he is, speaking in public, and they say nothing to him. Could our leaders possibly believe that he is the Messiah? ²⁷ But how could he be? For we know where this man comes from. When the Messiah comes, he will simply appear; no one will know where he comes from.”

²⁸ While Jesus was teaching in the Temple, he called out, “Yes, you know me, and you know where I come from. But I’m not here on my own. The one who sent me is true, and you don’t know him. ²⁹ But I know him because I come from him, and he sent me to you.” ³⁰ Then the leaders tried to arrest him; but no one laid a hand on him, because his time had not yet come.

³¹ Many among the crowds at the Temple believed in him. “After all,” they said, “would you expect the Messiah to do more miraculous signs than this man has done?”

³² When the Pharisees heard that the crowds were whispering such things, they and the leading priests sent Temple guards to arrest Jesus. ³³ But Jesus told them, “I will be with you only a little longer. Then I will return to the one who sent me. ³⁴ You will search for me but not find me. And you cannot go where I am going.”

³⁵ The Jewish leaders were puzzled by this statement. “Where is he planning to go?” they asked. “Is he thinking of leaving the country and going to the Jews in other lands? Maybe he will even teach the Greeks! ³⁶ What does he mean when he says, ‘You will search for me but not find me,’ and ‘You cannot go where I am going?’”

³⁷ On the last day, the climax of the festival, Jesus stood and shouted to the crowds, “Anyone who is thirsty may come to me! ³⁸ Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, ‘Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.’” ³⁹ (When he said “living water,” he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him. But the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory.)

⁴⁰ When the crowds heard him say this, some of them declared, “Surely this man is the Prophet we’ve been expecting.” ⁴¹ Others said, “He is the Messiah.” Still others said, “But he can’t be! Will the Messiah come from Galilee? ⁴² For the Scriptures clearly state that the Messiah will be born of the royal line of David, in Bethlehem, the village where King David was born.” ⁴³ So the crowd was divided about him. ⁴⁴ Some even wanted him arrested, but no one laid a hand on him.

⁴⁵ When the Temple guards returned without having arrested Jesus, the leading priests and Pharisees demanded, “Why didn’t you bring him in?”

⁴⁶ “We have never heard anyone speak like this!” the guards responded.

⁴⁷ “Have you been led astray, too?” the Pharisees mocked. ⁴⁸ “Is there a single one of us rulers or Pharisees who believes in him? ⁴⁹ This foolish crowd follows him, but they are ignorant of the law. God’s curse is on them!”

⁵⁰ Then Nicodemus, the leader who had met with Jesus earlier, spoke up. ⁵¹ “Is it legal to convict a man before he is given a hearing?” he asked.

⁵² They replied, “Are you from Galilee, too? Search the Scriptures and see for yourself—no prophet ever comes from Galilee!”

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2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.

- The Feast of Tabernacles celebrated the ripening of the vine and fruit trees. The harvest was dates, grapes, olives, pomegranates, and figs.
- This was the third great festival of Israel which men were required to attend and was called Sukkoth. The First was Passover (Pesach), the second was Pentecost (giving of Law on Sinai).
- It would begin the 15th day of Tishri five days after the Day of Atonement and it lasted seven days.
- All Israel was to live in shelters made from the wild branches of olive, myrtle, palm and other leafy trees. Those with permanent homes would often put branches on their rooftops. This was to commemorate Israel living in shelters in the wilderness.
- Sometimes, farmers would build these kinds of temporary shelters during the fall harvest to watch over crops to prevent theft.
- Entire families would come to Jerusalem to celebrate the harvest. They would wrap the branches of palm, myrtle, and willow trees. It was joined with a citrus fruit called a citrog, and they would wave it during the festival as a sign of joy.
- In the temple, men with burning torches would dance in front of the branches singing songs of praise. Levites with harps, lyres, cymbals, and trumpets would descend the 15 steps from the court of the men to the court of the women.
- The first day of the feast, the priests would sacrifice 13 oxen, fourteen lambs, two rams, and a male goat for the sin of the people and for an act of worship and devotion to God. Each day the number of oxen would be reduced by one until the festival was over.
- The Water ceremony – the summer drought would soon end
 - There had been no strong rain since spring
 - Cisterns were low, springs weak, the hills parched
 - The water ceremony was a prayer for water to replenish the land
 - Each day priests would descend to the south of the city to the Gihon Spring (which flowed into the Pool of Siloam). A priest filled a golden pitcher as a choir chanted from Isa 12:3, “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” The water was carried back up the hill to the “Water Gate” followed by crowds carrying a lulave in the right hand a citrog in the left. They would sing from Psa 122-135.
 - The priest climbed the altar steps and poured the water onto a large bowl on the altar while the crowd circled and sang. Another priest would pour wine into another larger bowl on the altar and both would drain simultaneously. This would happen every day and on the last day of this happened seven times.
 - The water on the altar was a prayer for God to send rain and a reminder of God giving water from the rock in the wilderness. And it reminded people of the great prophecy of Ezekiel of the water coming from the temple and giving life to the world.
- The Light ceremony
 - Tabernacles took place during the fall equinox when the nights would become longer. With darkness increasing the Jews had a light ceremony. Four large stands held four golden

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bowls filled with oil and wicks made from old priests' garments. The Levites sang, the men danced, carried torches, and sang. The Levites descended the 15 steps, stopping on each one blasting trumpets. They walked through the Women's Court to the Eastern Gate and when they reached it they would turn their back to the East, face west, and say, "Our Fathers, when they were in this place, turned with their backs toward the Temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east, and they worshipped the sun toward the east. But as for us, our eyes are turned toward the Lord." This was a rejection of paganism and a full embracing of the God of Israel.

These insights were gleaned from Jesus and Jewish Festivals by Gary Burge

- In the ancient world, people had great expectations for those born into wealthy families of status. Those born into small villages, like Nazareth, would have low expectations from others. For Jesus to do his works upended this way of viewing people and caused questions to arise. How could a man who grew up in a place like Nazareth do such deeds?
- In the ancient world, rhetoricians instructed pupils on how to write encomiums, pieces in praise of someone. They were first to look for their place of birth to see if it had status. If it did not, then they must look to his country or his people. Is it a great country and people? Then they were to look at his education. Jesus fit none of these requirements, growing up in Nazareth and not receiving formal education in Jerusalem.

These insights gleaned from A Social Science Commentary on the Gospel of John by Bruce J. Malina

Answer these reflective questions.

In the beginning of the story, Jesus refused to go up to the feast with his brothers. Then he went up later. Why do you think Jesus went up, after all?

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Jesus said, “If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.” Are you willing to do God’s will? Do you know what God’s will is for your life?

In the ancient world, a humble origin and a lack of education would normally disqualify any man from being considered great or one who would achieve great things. Jesus’ humble origin in Nazareth and lack of education (7:15, 27-29) caused many to doubt him, yet they could not deny that he did great works and had great wisdom. What does this say about how the world values people’s potential? Should a person be limited because of where they grow up or how much formal education they have received?

Jesus said he was going away from the people. What was he referring to? Why did he say they could not follow him?

Jesus said, “if any man is thirsty let him come to me and drink.” He was speaking of the coming of the Spirit of God. In what ways has the Spirit of God quenched the thirst in your soul?
