

General Comments on John 7-10

Feast of Tabernacles

Chapters 7:1-10:21 occur together in time surrounding the Feast of Sukkot, or Tabernacles, as follows:

- 7:1-9 A few days preceding the Feast, at home in Galilee
- 7:10-13 The opening days of the Feast, at Jerusalem
- 7:13-36 "about the midst of the feast", in the Temple
- 7:37-8:59 The last day of the Feast, in the Temple
- 9:1-10:21 The last day of the Feast, just outside the Temple

This great Feast obviously dominates the physical setting and provides the context for the symbols employed by Jesus through these chapters. The Feast of Tabernacles is similar to the American tradition of Thanksgiving in that it is a harvest festival of thankfulness for the earth's bounty. Regarding the Feast of Tabernacles, Easton's Bible Dictionary states:

Tabernacles, Feast of - the third of the great annual festivals of the Jews (Lev. 23:33-43). It is also called the "feast of ingathering" (Ex. 23:16; Deut. 16:13). It was celebrated immediately after the harvest, in the month Tisri, and the celebration lasted for eight days (Lev. 23:33-43). During that period the people left their homes and lived in booths formed of the branches of trees. The sacrifices offered at this time are mentioned in Num. 29:13-38. It was at the time of this feast that Solomon's temple was dedicated (1 Kings 8:2). Mention is made of it after the return from the Captivity. This feast was designed (1) to be a memorial of the wilderness wanderings, when the people dwelt in booths (Lev. 23:43), and (2) to be a harvest thanksgiving (Neh. 8:9-18). The Jews, at a later time, introduced two appendages to the original festival, viz., (1) that of drawing water from the Pool of Siloam, and pouring it upon the altar (John 7:2, 37), as a memorial of the water from the rock in Horeb; and (2) of lighting the lamps at night, a memorial of the pillar of fire by night during their wanderings.

"The feast of Tabernacles, the harvest festival of the Jewish Church, was the most popular and important festival after the Captivity. At Jerusalem it was a gala day. It was to the autumn pilgrims, who arrived on the 14th (of the month Tisri, the feast beginning on the 15th) day, like entrance into a silvan city. Roofs and courtyards, streets and squares, roads and gardens, were green with boughs of citron and myrtle, palm and willow. The booths recalled the pilgrimage through the wilderness. The ingathering of fruits prophesied of the spiritual harvest.", Valling's Jesus Christ, p. 133.

Jesus makes use of the symbols of pouring out of the water (cf. 7:37-38), the light from the lamps (cf. 8:12), and Moses' shepherding of the Exodus and Wandering in the Wilderness (cf.

10:11). Jesus also draws heavily on the tradition of Simchat Torah, the end and beginning of the Law, which John calls "the last day, that great day of the feast" (cf. 7:37), to point out the Pharisees' hypocrisy when it comes to the Law (cf. 7:19).

Shemini Atzeret, meaning "eighth day of assembly," is the day after the seven day festival of Sukkot. Shemini Atzeret marks the beginning of the rainy season following the harvest in Israel, adding to the water symbolism.

On Shemini Atzeret is observed the Simchat Torah, meaning "Rejoicing of the Torah." Simchat Torah focuses on the Law of Moses, the Pentateuch, the Torah. The annual cycle of weekly Torah portions, or readings, is completed on Simchat Torah with the final Torah portion, and then immediately proceeded with the first chapter of Genesis. Thus the end and the beginning of the Torah in the Jewish religious year, a never ending cycle. The considerable emphasis on the Law is what Jesus draws on in his castigation of the Pharisees, and what John draws on to build irony.

Methods of the Pharisees

One of the major themes in these chapters is the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees. The Pharisee's motives and tactics are exposed to full view herein. They are self-promoting, they find fault where there is none, they rationalize and falsely justify. When backed into a corner and proven to be wrong, they retaliate with ad hominem arguments, personal attacks, insults, and intimidation in an effort to silence those who prove them wrong (cf. 7:35, 7:52, 8:22, 8:48, 8:52, 9:22, 9:28, 9:34, 10:20). Thus, an extreme example of unrighteous dominion. This is held up in sharp contrast to Jesus and his disciples (cf. 10:10).

Power and Powerlessness

Throughout John's Gospel (cf. JST 4:1-2, 5:16), but more specifically in these chapters, we see the lack of power Jesus' enemies have and the great power Jesus has (cf. 7:1, 7:30, 7:44, 8:20, 8:59, 10:31, 10:39). It is not until Jesus submits to them when his time is come (cf. 7:8, 10:17-18) and relinquishes his power that his enemies are able to do anything to him.

When he does submit to them, the tenor of John's Gospel completely changes. In the present text we see Jesus defiantly standing up to the Sanhedrin and its crony Pharisees, publicly attacking them, exposing them as frauds. They go around scheming to kill him, but are powerless to accomplish it. When Jesus

finally submits he becomes quiet and passive, and the Sanhedrin successfully pulls all of its strings to have him executed by the Romans.

The irony is classically that of John. Jesus has all power in heaven and earth but never abuses it, he uses it only to heal others physically and spiritually. The Sanhedrin and ruling Pharisees have earthly power and abuse it all they can, but are still powerless to accomplish their goals, until Jesus submits. The power struggle is classically OT in tenor. The Lord has all the power and men struggle against him. He engineers history as He needs, and men fight against Him to accomplish their own will, but only end up doing so when it fits His will.

Comments on John 7

1 AFTER these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him 2 Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. 3 His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest. 4 For [there is] no man [that] doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world. 5 For neither did his brethren believe in him 6 Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready. 7 The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. 8 Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come. 9 When he had said these words unto them, he abode [still] in Galilee.

v1-9 Because of the murderous opposition of the Pharisees in Judea, Jesus stays in Galilee (v. 1, 9). The Feast of Tabernacles is imminent (v. 2), so the Galileans, who in general are not accepting Jesus for what he claims himself to be (v. 5, cp. 6:60-66), prod Jesus to go to Jerusalem to be with those who accept him (v. 3) and to show off (v. 4). Jesus responds saying it is not yet time for him to go up to Jerusalem (v. 8) because they hate him for his testimony against them (v. 7), but their time to go up is present (v. 6) because the world doesn't hate them.

v1 "he would not walk in Jewry", a poor translation. A better translation would be "he would not walk in Judea", as supplied by the Concordant Literal New Testament (CLNT).

"the Jews", John is referring to Pharisees in specific and not Jewish people in general. There were obviously "Jews" in Galilee per 6:41 and 6:52, but only in Jerusalem did they have sufficient power and motive to seek Jesus' death.

v3 Up to this point in John's Gospel most of the prominent public miracles were performed in and around Galilee (e.g., the wine to water in ch. 2, the healing of the nobleman's son in 4:46-54, the loaves and fishes in ch. 6; the exception being the healing of the paralytic in ch. 5) yet he still wasn't particularly popular, especially after the fallout from ch. 6. So, his hometown people, the same ones who have given him a hard time from the very start (cp. 4:44, Luke 4:23), are prodding him to go and make a name for himself in the capital of Judea.

"thy disciples", the Galileans are telling Jesus to go and hang around with those who believe in him. The implication being they are not his disciples. John is using the general rejection occurring at the end of ch. 6 to frame their current skepticism and lack of acceptance.

v4-5 They are challenging Jesus to go up to Jerusalem to try and make a name for himself there. He has failed to gain acceptance there in Galilee, and they themselves are not believers, so they are taunting him to go up to the religious capital of Jerusalem to see if he can have any better luck there.

v5 "his brethren", the Greek "adelphos" has both literal and figurative usage in the NT. Here, the usage appears to be literal in reference to his relatives. We are later informed they are believers in Acts 1:14, but at present they are not believers.

v6-7 Implicit in Jesus' statement is the fact that his brethren are worldly, and so they can go with the other worldly people up to the feast without fear. Jesus rails against the evil of the world, and so the world hates him. But, his brethren do not do this so they are socially acceptable, where he is socially rejected.

Notice Jesus is only alluding to their worldliness, he does not directly attack them. This suggests they are in fact his family and relatives as Jesus has no qualms whatsoever about rebuking the Galileans in general for their lack of faith (cf. ch. 6). Here, dealing with his family he is much more gentle with them despite their present lack of faith and acceptance.

10 But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret. 11 Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he? 12 And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people. 13 Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.

v10-13 After his family leaves for Jerusalem, Jesus goes up

separately and discreetly (v. 10). We learn why he does this: the Sanhedrin and Pharisees are actively looking for him (v. 11). A great deal of gossip is circulating among the people concerning Jesus (v. 12), but everyone does it quietly out of fear of the Pharisees (v. 13), as it must be well known they are out to get him.

v10 This verse suggests Jesus was well known, so much so that he had to travel separately from his family in order to avoid recognition. We have to recall that when people went up to the Feasts in Jerusalem they usually traveled in large caravans, cp. Luke 2:44. If the Pharisees were keeping an eye out for Jesus, as v. 11 suggests, they would be watching very closely for the caravan from Galilee in which Jesus' family was traveling.

While Jesus is avoiding being associated with his family at present to avoid recognition, we also have to consider that Jesus is sparing them any possible repercussions of the Pharisee's hatred of him. In such a hostile setting Jesus' family could be subjected to all sorts of unpleasantries from the Pharisees and the public in general. His not traveling with them would diffuse a lot of the tension on their arrival in Jerusalem. Verse 13 suggests there was considerable gossip among the people in general about Jesus, so there must have been considerable anxiety about his arrival.

v11 This verse could easily be read as the Pharisee's reaction to them not finding Jesus among the caravan his family was traveling in. They are watching and when his family arrives he is not among them, so they ask "Where is he?"

v12-13 Jesus is obviously a well known character given the number of very public miracles performed, but public opinion is still divided. This is not surprising given the general rejection he suffered in Galilee. While he appears to be the center of the conversation at the Feast, everyone is keeping it quiet out of fear of the Sanhedrin and ruling Pharisees.

We are informed in 9:22 the Pharisees had already agreed among themselves to expel anyone who called Jesus the Messiah, and it must have been common knowledge among the people as well.

14 Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. 15 And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? 16 Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. 17 If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or [whether] I speak of myself. 18 He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

19 Did not Moses give you the law, and [yet] none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me? 20 The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee? 21 Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel. 22 Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man. 23 If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day? 24 Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

25 Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill? 26 But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ? 27 Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is. 28 Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not. 29 But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me.

30 Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come. 31 And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this [man] hath done? 32 The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him.

33 Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and [then] I go unto him that sent me. 34 Ye shall seek me, and shall not find [me]: and where I am, [thither] ye cannot come. 35 Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? 36 What [manner of] saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find [me]: and where I am, [thither] ye cannot come?

v14-36 Mid-week of the Feast Jesus goes into the Temple and teaches the people (v. 14). Neither the people nor the Pharisees recognize him, and the Pharisees are surprised that someone who wasn't educated by themselves knows "letters", or in other words, is educated in the Law (v. 15).

Jesus replies to them the doctrine he teaches is not of man, but is of his Father. If anyone will actually do the Father's will, then they will know the doctrine (v. 16-18). He then questions the Pharisee's knowledge of "letters" by asking them why they violate the Law of Moses in seeking to murder him (v. 19).

The people, still not realizing it is Jesus, don't understand what Jesus is alluding to so they think he is crazy as nobody is presently trying to kill him (v. 20).

Jesus replies by referencing his public miracles, the ones

over which the Pharisees seek to kill him (v. 21-22). He then exposes their justifications for seeking to murder him as fraudulent (v. 23), and rejects their judgements as unjust (v. 24).

The people then realize that it is Jesus, the very one who the Pharisees are in fact trying to dispose of (v. 25). However, he boldly condemns them in public, and they do nothing to stop them! The people wonder if the ruling Pharisees of the Sanhedrin know whether Jesus is Messiah or not (v. 26), because they themselves are uncertain because of apparently conflicting messianic predictions (v. 27).

Jesus replies to the people by rejecting the apparent conflict they use to reject him as Messiah. He tells them they know he is from Galilee but they do not know his Father, who sent him. Thus, they do not know him either (v. 28-29). The nonbelievers are insulted by Jesus, and want to harm him, but cannot do so (v. 30).

Some of the people are taken by Jesus' words and are generally persuaded to the point where they begin reasoning among themselves that if he isn't the Messiah, then how could the Messiah possibly show Jesus up by performing even more miracles than him? (v. 31) When the Pharisees see public opinion swaying in Jesus' favor, they send the Temple officers to take Jesus (v. 32). However, the officers do not lay hands on him, out of awe (v. 46).

Jesus concludes the present discourse by stating he is presently among them, but will be leaving them shortly to return to the Father (v. 33). They will later seek the Messiah but not find him, because where he is they cannot go (v. 34).

The Pharisees respond by insulting Jesus, suggesting that his lack of acceptance among the Jews will force him to go among scattered Israel and the Gentiles (v. 35). They take advantage of the ambiguity of Jesus' statements, deliberately ignoring all of the explicit ones, in order to mock and ridicule him (v. 36).

v14-15 The people and the Pharisees apparently expected Jesus to make some kind of very public appearance at the Feast, perhaps proclaiming himself Messiah. When he doesn't even show up at the beginning of the Feast, they forget about him quickly enough to not even realize it is him when he shows up in the Temple.

v15 Jesus is teaching with knowledge and authority, and when he does so the Pharisees are stunned that one who hasn't been educated by them knows anything about the Law. They see themselves as the only ones properly educated in "letters". John's intent is to contrast the learning of the Pharisees with the learning Jesus has received from the Father. Both are scholarly knowledge per se, but they are used to completely

different ends.

v26 "they say nothing to him", in the Semitic context the underlying issue of failing to respond when overtly challenged represents tacit approval. The people don't understand why the Pharisees are standing there failing to stop him, and so they wonder if it is indicative of their being aware he is in fact the Messiah.

The passage is classical Johannine irony. The Pharisees do in fact know Jesus is Messiah, and that is precisely why they want to kill him. The people recognize the Pharisee's inability to rebuke him and they are aware they seek to kill him, yet they don't seem recognize their underlying motives.

"Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?", a poor translation. Here is the CLNT:

And are they saying nothing to him, lest at some time the chiefs truly get to know that this is the Christ?

The CLNT translates it such that the people are accusatorially asking if the Pharisees are deliberately avoiding questioning Jesus so as to not come to a knowledge that he is the Messiah. The KJV and most other modern translations present the people as trying to figure out if the Sanhedrin has concluded that he is the Messiah, and this is why they haven't answered him. The CLNT is more literally accurate as the others paraphrase the Greek "mepote" or ignore it altogether. The fairest translation of "mepote" to English would be "not at any time" or "lest at any time" as occurs in Matt. 4:6.

v27-29 The people cite a prediction that the Messiah's origin would be unknown, yet they are aware of where Jesus is coming from, namely Galilee. However, their own ignorance of Jesus' true origin betrays them later in v. 41-42.

Regardless, Jesus ignores the messianic proof-text and instead focuses on spiritual knowledge. They know where he is from physically, but they do not know his Father in the spiritual sense as he does spiritually know the Father. And, so, the people know neither the Father or the Son.

v28 "whom ye know not", Jesus is referring to the Semitic concept of "knowing", not of intellectual knowledge but of experiential knowledge. On Gen. 4:1 the Jewish Publication Society's Torah Commentary on Genesis (Sarna, 1989) states:

"Knowing" in the Bible is not essentially intellectual activity, not simply the objective contemplation of

reality. Rather, it is experiential, emotional, and, above all, relational. Thus, in [Gen.] 18:19, when God says of Abraham, "I have singled him out" or to Israel, in Amos 3:2, "You alone have I singled out of all the families of the earth," the true connotation is "I have entered into a special relationship with you." For that reason, the Hebrew stem y-d-` can encompass a range of meanings that includes involvement, interaction, loyalty, and obligation. It can be used of the most intimate and hallowed relationships between man and wife and between man and God. Significantly, the verb is never employed for animal copulation.

Jesus is saying these people never knew God, and so they cannot know the one whom God sends.

v30 Jesus' implicit claim of divinity by association with the Father in v. 28-29 coupled with an accusation in v. 28 angers the nonbelievers and they seek to harm him.

John presents an almost inexplicable powerlessness on the part of the nonbelievers and later the Pharisees as well; it simply wasn't time yet. They plot and scheme, yet it never avails them. In v. 45-46 we learn something of a more natural explanation, but even that one isn't particularly clear. Why are the officers overwhelmed by what Jesus says? Does the Spirit strike their consciences? Are ministering angels intervening? The reader is left uninformed.

John's intent is simply to present the power and will of the Lord as being, at times, inviolable. When it simply isn't suitable for the eternal scheme of things, those who oppose God's will are not permitted to succeed. The mechanics of how are irrelevant at that point, even if we would like to know the details. The fact is God is engineering events at a particular point in time because it is expedient to Him.

v31 Those who do believe Jesus is Messiah hold up his miracles as evidence. How could anyone possibly do more miracles than Jesus has done? They can't, so he must be the Messiah.

v32 The Pharisee's hear the people, at least in part, are calling Jesus the Messiah so they take action against him.

"officers", these are probably the Temple Levites and not Roman soldiers as they are presently within the Temple precinct. No Romans would have been permitted within the Temple.

v33-34 These verses form a parallelism, as follows:

A - Yet a little while am I with you, and

B - then I go unto him that sent me.

A - Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and

B - where I am, thither ye cannot come.

Jesus is expanding on the thought of v. 28. Jesus is presently seeking them and offering them salvation, he is with them. However, they do not know the Father, and so they do not know the Messiah, the Son of the Father. So, later, when they seek the Messiah, they will not find him because he is with his Father, someplace and someone they are not acquainted with, because they are murderers and liars.

v35-36 The Pharisees completely ignore what Jesus says in v. 33 and twist what he says in v. 34 in order to insult him.

The Pharisees intend to insult Jesus by saying he could only find acceptance among the heathen nations. The irony of this is they do not realize that the ministry to the Gentiles is imminent and the Spirit is promised to them per v. 39. They mock Jesus, but the mockery turns on them because of their own ignorance.

37 In the last day, that great [day] of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. 38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. 39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet [given]; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

40 Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. 41 Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? 42 Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? 43 So there was a division among the people because of him. 44 And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him.

v37-43 On the last day of the Feast Jesus stands up and pronounces himself the source of living water (v. 37-38), referring to the Spirit (v. 39). The people realize that Jesus has made some kind of a statement, but division results (v. 43) as some people say he is the Prophet like Moses (v. 40), while others say he is Messiah (v. 41), while others cast doubt on it all saying he doesn't fit the predictions concerning Messiah (v. 41-42).

v37 "In the last day, that great day of the feast", two or three days after the events detailed in v. 14-36. The last day of the Feast of Tabernacles is Simchat Torah, discussed above in the general comments.

v38-39 "rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit", see Ps. 42:1-2, Isa. 29:8, and Isa. 44:3 for passages equating water with the Spirit.

v38 "as the scripture hath said", there is no present Scripture which says what Jesus then says in the rest of the verse. If Jesus is paraphrasing and not quoting missing Scriptures, then possible or related sources would be Ps. 114:8, Ps. 78:15-16, Jer. 2:13, Isa. 12:3, Isa. 58:11, Zech. 13:1, Zech. 14:8.

v39 The IV/JST differs from the KJV, as follows:

KJV

(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given;

because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

IV

(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive:

for the Holy Ghost was promised unto them who believe, after that Jesus was glorified.)

The verse is making reference to the promised Holy Spirit referenced in Acts 1:4-8, which is making reference to the times of the Gentiles (cf. Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4, Acts 2:33, Acts 10; for the times of the Gentiles cp. Gen. 49:18, Rom. 11:25, D&C 45:28-29; and with regard to the dispensation of the Spirit to the Gentiles, cp. John 16:7, 1 Ne. 10:11-14, 3 Ne. 15:23, 3 Ne. 16:6, 3 Ne. 20:27, 3 Ne. 30:2, D&C 88:4, Abr. 2:10-11).

v40-41 "this is the Prophet...this is the Christ", at least some of the people appear to have differing views on the Prophet like Moses (cf. Deut. 18:15) and the Christ. John 1:25 also presents the Pharisees as seeing the two characters as separate. However, these two characters are considered the same by the true believers, cf. John 1:45, John 6:14, Acts 7:37. John appears to present these differing views to indicate how poorly the people in general understood the Law, which we would assume was largely a result of the faulty teachings of the Pharisees. Note John contrasts the Pharisees in 1:25 with Philip in 1:45 on this point of doctrine.

v41-42 The prediction cited in v. 27 is unwittingly fulfilled by themselves as they are not aware Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

They assume that since he grew up in Nazareth of Galilee then he was born there too.

45 Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? 46 The officers answered, Never man spake like this man. 47 Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived? 48 Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? 49 But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.

50 Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) 51 Doth our law judge [any] man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth? 52 They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. 53 And every man went unto his own house.

v44-53 The Pharisees, more specifically the members of the Sanhedrin, are still seeking to have Jesus disposed of (v. 44). When the Temple officers return to the Sanhedrin they ask him why they have not taken him (v. 45). The officers reply that his speech was overwhelming, unlike anything they have heard before (v. 46). The Sanhedrin revile the officers telling them they are deceived, unlike they themselves, and cursed because they do not know the Law (v. 46-49). Nicodemus takes advantage of the reference to the Law by appealing to it in Jesus' defense (v. 50). The others ignore Nicodemus' appeal using a seemingly unfulfilled prediction of the Messiah, and combine it with an insult aimed at him (v. 51-52). The result is they break up and leave (v. 53).

v51 Nicodemus is making reference to Exod. 23:1 and Deut. 1:16-17, which the others conveniently ignore.

v52 Rather than acknowledge they are violating the Law, as Nicodemus has pointed out, the members of the Sanhedrin use a piece of prediction as proof-text for their conclusion that Jesus is not Messiah. They then add a personal attack on Nicodemus by accusing him of being from Galilee and therefore a dowdy follower of Jesus, as opposed to an aristocratic member of the ruling elite, as he is willing to defend him. Their real interest is silencing Nicodemus and ending the debate, which they accomplish.

The irony again lies in their ignorance. The common people are ignorant of Jesus' origin in v. 41-42 and the result is division in v. 43. The identical thing happens here with the Sanhedrin disagreeing amongst themselves being divided. The irony being the Sanhedrin curses the "common people" in v. 47-49 for not knowing the Law, yet they are just as ignorant of it. And, when faced with it, as Nicodemus did, they rebel against it.

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