

The Arrival and The Departure of The Christ
Pastor Ty Blackburn
John 7:25-36
September 30th, 2012

That was a beautiful medley. *Holy, Holy, Holy* and *Be Thou My Vision*. What a great song to hear with a violin. We're so grateful to the Lord for His goodness, and giving us music, and giving us the instruments, and giving us the hearts and voices to join in and rejoice before Him. Our elder that normally leads worship, Ted Guthrie, is here but he's not leading worship today, because he had ankle surgery this week, and we're glad he's here and gets to take a day of just worshipping and not having to lead. Continue to pray for him and his healing. I think Miranda is here as well. Praise God for her being back for her first Sunday since she started College. What a blessing it is to worship the Lord together.

I want to invite all of you now to turn with me in your Bibles to John 7. We've come to another section in this wonderful drama that we see unfold before us in the 7th Chapter of John's Gospel. The title of this passage is: *The Arrival and The Departure of The Christ*. Now, we don't see Jesus, of course, depart in this passage, but His arrival and His departure are both focal in the passage.

The question around which this book is all focused is the question: *Who is Jesus?* The most important question in any of our lives is: *Who is Jesus?* That is the one question, the defining question of all eternity for every single human being that has ever breathed. *Who is Jesus?* The way that you answer that question will not only affect your life in this world, but it will determine your eternal destiny.

So John's Gospel is aimed at helping us to come to the Biblical, and right, and true conclusion to answer the question: *Who is Jesus?* In each chapter, he unfolds another window into the Person and work of Jesus of Nazareth, and in this passage, as Jesus is teaching at the Feast of Booths or the Feast of Tabernacles, and people are wondering, "Who is Jesus? Who is this man?" two aspects of His work and His Person come into being, and that is His arrival and His departure.

We're going to see that His arrival is brought up when we read the passage, by the people in Jerusalem. We have a number of different groups of people that the text here in John 7 calls our attention to. Of course, the main focus is Jesus, and He speaks seven different times in the passage, but then you have a host of other speakers, other gatherings of people. You have the crowd, the multitude. You have some of the people of Jerusalem which our passage opens with in Verse 25. You

have the Jews, which is a phrase to refer to the leadership of the Jewish people: the religious leadership, the Pharisees, the Scribes, the temple authorities. You have the rulers referred to, which is a subset of that other group, and that is the Sanhedrin, the 70 rulers made up mostly of priests and chief priests, but also some Pharisees.

So we have these different groups speaking at different times. The guards that work for the temple priests, we're going to see are also called on here. The dialogue is all concerning, "Who is this man? Who is He?" And as they consider that question, Jesus comes onto the scene in this passage, and His coming sort of takes them by storm and they're grumbling. The word is used a couple times in the passage. We're going to see it here in our passage as well. They're grumbling. They're muttering among themselves and talking about who Jesus is, and as they do that, the Jews from Jerusalem, the people of Jerusalem, begin to define why they know He's not the Christ, and they bring up this point: "We know where He is from. We know where He is *from*," and unwittingly, they state a real fundamental truth that at the essence of who Jesus is, is: *Where is He from?* This passage drips with irony. When we read it carefully and thoughtfully, John is unfolding for us this amazingly ironic scene. It bleeds irony.

They're dismissing Him because they know where He's from, but if they really understood as John and as the readers of his Gospel understand, it's exactly right. You're asking the right question. You're just coming up with the wrong conclusion. It is all about where He's from, and it's also about where He's going. It's about His departure. It's about His arrival and His departure, and these two things are book ends to the passage and show us the glory of Jesus Christ. We can see Him that He is unique, that He is supreme, and that He is God Himself when we understand correctly where He came from and where He's going.

This morning, we're going to look at the first message in this series on this passage: *The Arrival*. Next week, we'll look at *The Departure*, Lord willing. But today we'll look at *The Arrival*. So let's read John 7, beginning with Verse 25:

John 7:25-36

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 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?’”

Let’s pray together...

Father, as we bow before You right now, we ask that Your Spirit might give us clarity of thought, openness of heart, that You might open the eyes of our heart to behold wonderful things from Your Law, and that we might see Your glory, and that we might submit more completely to You. We pray this in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

The most important question in your life is: *Who is Jesus?* Today, the subtitle of our message this morning would be *A Stunning Arrival*. The arrival of Jesus is something that when you look at it carefully, it is stunning, and the irony is they think that when the Christ comes, there will be a stunning arrival. “Therefore, this man is not the Christ,” they conclude, because they’re blind. They miss the fact that right before their eyes is the stunning arrival, and it’s even more ironic when you really consider the context of where exactly they are and what they are celebrating.

What I want to do is briefly survey the scene, and then we’re going to consider the question. When we survey the scene, when we get it back in context here, we realize that we are at the Feast of Booths, the Feast of the Jews from Verse 2. This is the third great pilgrimage feast in the Jewish year, the Jewish calendar. There were three great feasts that God gave them after He delivered them from Egypt.

We read about that earlier, remember? There's Moses' encounter with the Lord, where the Lord has come down and He's heard the cries of His people. Now, I want you to think about this. The people of Israel at that time had been in Egypt for over 400 years. In fact, Abraham had been told by the Lord that they would be in bondage for 430 years. That's 430 years of darkness, and 430 years of silence. Remember how God had walked with Abraham, had walked with Isaac, had walked with Jacob, had met with them and talked with them? And not every day did they see Him. They didn't see Him every day, but He would appear to them and talk to them.

Then He was with Joseph in the prison, and then they become slaves and there's no word from God for 400 years until one day Moses is out tending the flock of his father-in-law, out in Midian. This is the Jew Moses who had been protected miraculously, remember? He was put in the basket to protect him from the Egyptians who wanted to kill all the little male babies. When he gets older, he kills an Egyptian he sees beating a Jewish friend, and he kills the Egyptian. Then he finds out that word has spread that it's widely known, and he flees for his life to Midian.

While he's out there, the Lord appears to him. The Lord comes to him and says, "I have heard their cries, I have seen their misery, and I have come down to save them." The Lord has come down to save them, and what He does, of course, as we follow through Exodus, is He brings about a great salvation. He brings about the ten plagues, and the tenth plague is, remember, the plague of the firstborn, where all of the firstborn in Egypt die. But remember, the people of Israel are protected by the blood of the Passover lamb. A lamb without fault or blemish is slain, and the blood is wiped over the door of every Hebrew home, every Jewish home, and they are delivered. No death comes to their house, and in this, they're delivered from slavery. They're delivered from darkness, and God takes them out of Egypt with a mighty hand, so that... Do you remember the last words we read from that passage? *So that even they would plunder the Egyptians.* There was no hope of victory, but God miraculously delivers them so that they come out as victors with the spoils.

Then they go through the Red Sea. Remember that? The Lord kills the Egyptian army. He hardens Pharaoh's heart so that he goes after them, and the army is chasing them down, and God is between them and the people, the Lord manifesting His glory in a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day. The pillar of fire gets in the way to protect them, and the Egyptian army cannot close in because God's glory is shining there. The people make it through the Red Sea. God's glory

follows them through the Red Sea. As soon as they get to the other side, Moses lifts his arm, the waters come in, the Egyptian army is all the way in the bottom of the Red Sea, and they are destroyed. What a mighty deliverance, and the story continues.

Then the Lord leads them. He's going to lead them from there, back to the mountain, just like He told Moses. They go back to Mount Sinai and spend a year there receiving the Law, and we see as the drama unfolds that God has taken up His presence among them. That pillar of fire is there. That pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night is there testifying to His presence in the center of His people, and leading His people. For that year, they live in tents, and they're going to live in tents until they get into the Promised Land. Remember, it was supposed to be just about a year and a half or two years and they should have been in the Promised Land, but they rebelled, remember? God's going to take them in and deliver into the land of Canaan. The same God that can deliver from the Egyptians can certainly deliver them into Canaan, but they harden their hearts in unbelief and don't go in.

So 40 years they spend in the wilderness, but in all those 40 years, God's presence does not leave them, and His presence never leaves His people again from then on (not in the truest sense of the word), but His manifest presence, His visible presence is there just during the time of the wilderness wanderings until they get into the land of Canaan. So I instruct you to think about that, that the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud were there to get them from the Exodus in Egypt to the land of Canaan, and then God's presence is still there with them at the tabernacle, but they don't see it anymore.

Now, think about that and what an amazing thing it would be to see the presence of God there every day. What a great celebration. I mean, just to understand out of all the nations of the earth, the God of heaven has taken up residence among this people. That is the significance of the Feast of Tabernacles.

I mentioned that the three feasts all celebrate that reality. The Feast of Unleavened Bread associated with the Passover, celebrates the Passover, the deliverance. The Feast of Pentecost celebrates the giving of the Law when they got to Sinai. The Feast of Tabernacles celebrates the fact that in God bringing them out, giving them His covenant, He's taking up residence among them, and so, "Every year, you're to gather together before Me where My presence is, and celebrate these three feasts: Passover in March/April, Pentecost in May/June, and then the last feast in

September/October, the Feast of Tabernacles, and in this feast, you're celebrating the fact that I have come to dwell among you."

Now, with that background, we've seen that that's the particular feast that is being celebrated when our passage unfolds. And remember from the previous passage that Jesus is up in Galilee up in the North of Israel, the Northern territory as it were, where the Jews lived, far removed from Jerusalem, the place of God's glory where the tabernacle became permanent in the form of a temple. Jesus is up in the North and His half brothers prod Him into going into Jerusalem. "Why aren't You heading up to the feast? There are going to be a lot of people there. Go do Your miracles. Go do Your signs in front of them. Anybody who wants to be known widely would not keep themselves shut up in private."

Jesus answers them in kind of a mysterious, veiled way, and says, "I'm not going up to the feast. It's not yet My time. (Not *My hour* but *my time*) It's not the right time for Me to go up to the feast yet. I'm not going up. My time is not yet." They think maybe He's not going up at all. They wonder. They go on up to the feast. Sure enough, Jesus later goes up to the feast. In fact, if you look at it, just notice this in Verse 10:

John 7:10 ~ But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as if, in secret.

If no word of God is wasted, why did He say, "in secret"? Well, He goes up in secret, and Verse 11 kind of tells us one of the reasons that Jesus went up in secret:

John 7:11 ~ So the Jews were seeking Him at the feast and were saying, "Where is He?"

They're not the Jews. That's one of the groups we were talking about earlier of the different groups that were represented. This is the leadership of the Jewish people. This is the Sanhedrin plus the Pharisees and the Scribes, other priests. They're not seeking Him to have Him teach. It's not, "Hey, we want Him to teach." The text makes clear and has made clear since Chapter 5 that they're seeking Him because they've got problems with Him, and they want to do away with Him. They want to know if He's here, because they want to get more ammunition to destroy Him. But there in Verse 12, you see that question. As I said, the defining question of the Gospel of John in general, and this passage in particular, is there in Verse 12:

John 7:12 ~ 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.

That shows you that why the Jews were seeking Him wasn't to have Him teach. “We have an opening on our card, our platform, for speakers at the feast, and we need you to come teach.” No, they were not going to have Him teach.

So you get the sense as you're reading, “Boy, Jesus needs to keep a low profile.” There are people looking around, thinking, “Where is He? Where is He? Where is He?” Nobody's seen Him. He didn't come up with a throng of people following after Him. He orchestrated things. By the providence of God in His wisdom, in Jesus' wisdom in following His Father's direction, He comes up almost unseen, secretly, and then in Verse 14:

John 7:14 ~ But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach.

They're looking for Him and they can't find Him. “Did He come? Did He go?” His brothers don't think He came. “Where are His disciples? We don't see them on the scene.” Suddenly He's in the middle of the feast teaching in the temple, and He's teaching, which is in itself a stunning arrival. It's sudden, if you read the passage as it unfolds. Nobody knows where He is. They don't see Him on the outskirts of Jerusalem like they did when He came in earlier in Chapter 5, and He healed the man at the pool of Siloam just inside the gates. No, they don't see Him until He's in the temple courts and He is teaching. “The Messiah, when He comes, will come suddenly. He can't be the man. We know where He's from.” There's irony, and it just gets deeper and thicker as we go through the passage. So that's surveying the scene. That's setting the scene.

Now let's consider the question. He begins teaching in Verse 14, and the people are immediately saying, “How can He have become learned having never been educated? He never went to any of the seminaries that we went to,” and so Jesus begins to talk to them about the Sabbath and the healing. Now skip ahead to Verse 25. All that He'd said up until this point has lead the people of Jerusalem to now say what they say in Verse 25:

John 7:25 ~ So some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, “Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill?”

They're sitting there and they see Jesus teaching in the temple courts front and center, the centerpiece of instruction for all of Israel. There He is, and the people of Jerusalem. Remember, we talked about the crowd last week. Jesus is talking to the multitude, and He says, "Why are you trying to kill Me?" In Verse 20, they say, "Who's trying to kill you? You must have a demon." That's the multitude. The multitude is people from all over the empire. All over the Roman Empire, Jews have come to Jerusalem. They don't know what's been happening in Jerusalem, the word that's going around in Jerusalem that the rulers want to kill Him. but here you have in Verse 25 a subset of that multitude who are people from Jerusalem. Do you see that in Verse 25?

John 7:25 ~ So some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, "Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill?"

They know, "Oh yeah, He's the one they're seeking to kill," and they're astonished that He's teaching. "I mean, they're seeking to kill Him. How is He teaching? How can He be up there doing that?" They're trying to understand that, so they say:

John 7:26 ~ Look, He is speaking publicly, and they are saying nothing to Him. ...

They begin to wonder, "Does this mean that the rulers think that He's the Christ? We know the rulers have been out to kill Him. If they're letting Him teach, does this mean they're now acknowledging that He's the Christ? Have they done more research, and have they concluded that He's the Christ?" Their hearts began to open, but just as quickly, they close.

John 7:27 ~ However, we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from."

They immediately dismiss it. Isn't it amazing how when God speaks to us, we can feel the call, but how even as a Christian, when the Lord is speaking to you, you can shut it out? The heart begins to open. The eyes begin to open. You begin to get a glimpse of God speaking to you, and especially this is true of those of you who still remain in your sins, who have not repented and believed. The Lord has opened your eyes to see something of His Gospel, and you begin to see it, you begin to reach out, and then something closes, and you say, "No." That is a perilous place to be. Today is the day of salvation. Make that right today. As He opens your eyes to see Him today, call out to Him. Today, respond to Him.

They saw, and they had an opportunity to look at this Man teaching with the authority that He's teaching with in this place, against this incredible, organized opposition. "How can it be that one unarmed man with no bodyguard is standing there teaching like this? Maybe He's the Christ. No, He can't be, because we know where He's from." The door closes. Now, what do they mean by that? They're people of Jerusalem. They mean, "We know He's from Galilee. He's one of those Galileans." And even you can hear some derision, some disdain, in the way they say it:

John 7:27 ~ However, we know where this man is from;

In the Greek, it's really "this one". "Hey, we know where this one is from." There were lots of people that would come on the scene and stir up a kind of Messianic fervor. It's always been Satan's way to send false christs along. When you look at first century Judaism, there were a lot of different people who came on the scene, because Satan was trying to obscure the glory of God. He sensed it was about to come, and he sends all of his false christs out to disguise Jesus. What a foolish thing, because when you look at all of those false christs and you survey carefully, you see the glory shining only in one place, and it is shining brightly and is burning with a burning that will not stop, over one Man, the Man Jesus Christ.

So they say, "Where is this man from? Well, we know where He's from. When the Christ comes, we won't know where He's from." They were really, I think, saying two things. One, "We know He's from Galilee," and remember the readers of this book how they would be thinking about that and what they've read previously? We've noted that this book is written to Jewish proselytes, that is, Gentiles who are now worshiping in synagogues around the Mediterranean and various places where there are Jewish synagogues, instructed in the Law. They know about the feasts. They know about all of God's great deliverance. Many of them have been to Jerusalem at some point for these festivals. They know all of this background, and they know the Old Testament. And with all of that in mind, they read through the Gospel of John, and as they come to this point, the readers, we know something that the crowd doesn't know.

Do you know how you watch a movie or you read a play, and the narrator has told you things that the characters don't know? It creates an element of irony and excitement, and it makes a powerful impact on you as a viewer. "I wish they knew what I know." There's something of that going on here, because John 7 is exactly that. John 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 have already been read.

One of the things that you remember when you look at this in context is in John 1, remember when Jesus comes on the scene, bursts on the scene, the impact He has on John the Baptist? Not John the writer of this book. That's another John. That's John the apostle. Remember John the Baptist has some disciples, and when he says, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" then they begin to follow Jesus? One of them, Peter, goes and gets his brother Andrew, and the Philip goes and gets a friend of his, Nathanael. And when he goes to Nathanael, he says, "We have found the Christ, the One about whom Moses and the prophets wrote, and He's from Nazareth." Remember what Nathanael said? "Sorry, you may think you found the Christ, but can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" "We know where He's from. He cannot be the Christ." And in fact, that issue of where He's from dominates this chapter.

Look with me at the last verses of John 7. Look at Verse 50. Interestingly enough, here we have Nicodemus again. This is a dialogue among the rulers and the Pharisees, that is, the Pharisees and the temple authorities, a dialogue among the high priests and the other priests, the Sanhedrin. They're talking.

John 7:50 ~ 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?"

They're wanting to kill Him, and he said, "Shouldn't we hear from Him and give Him a fair hearing?" Look what they say:

John 7:52 ~ They answered him, "You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee."

They're almost right. There's really only one prophet that was born in Galilee, a prophet that probably wasn't their favorite either: Jonah, the prophet who God made clear at the very beginning of the prophet's writing ministry, that he was going to go after Gentiles for salvation. Remember Jonah's message? He goes to the Ninevites. He goes to the most unattractive of all Gentiles, for the Israelites, and he was from Galilee. But anyway, they make a mistake here, because they probably don't read Jonah very much. It's not on their regular devotional reading, because they hate the Gentiles and want to keep hating the Gentiles. So they say: ***"Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee."*** So this issue of where He's from is very big.

It's also instructive that John doesn't deal with that question. We're going to see this a little bit later, too, but I want to go ahead and touch on it now. As we read through John 7, you need to ask yourself questions. "Okay, they think He's from Galilee. That's a problem for them. The Pharisees think He's from Galilee. That's a problem for them. Why don't you mention, John, the fact that He really was born in Bethlehem? Why don't you mention that?" That's a good question to ask as you read the Bible. Not only notice what it says, but sometimes ask yourself, "What does it not say? Why does John not mention that He was born in Bethlehem?" Well, he knows that we know that from Luke. I mean, remember I've mentioned before that John's Gospel was the last Gospel written. It was written about 85 A.D., Luke was written around 60-65 A.D., but I think beyond that, it's not so much that we already know it, but it's that he doesn't want to focus on the particular point of origin. That's not the most important answer to the question: *Where is He from?* He's got one strong message throughout.

Now, where is He from? Look with me at John 6 and see how this is building. See stuff that we know, that the people that are on the scene in John 7 don't know. Look with me at John 6. This is after Jesus has fed the 5,000, after He's walked on the water. He's teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. Look at Verse 41:

John 6:41 ~ Therefore the Jews were grumbling about Him,...

There's that word 'grumbling' again. They were muttering, talking under their breath, trying not to be heard by them or heard by others, but just the people they're talking to.

***...because He said, "I am the bread that came down out of heaven."
42 They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?"***

He's up in Galilee. He's close to home. He's in Capernaum, which is His home at that time. Mary and her sons now live in Capernaum. They had lived in Nazareth, but it's kind of like moving from Duluth to Snellville. Why would you want to do that? I don't know. Can any good thing come out of Snellville? He's moved from Nazareth to Capernaum, and so people know Him. They know His family. And now He's done this healing, and here He is in Capernaum, in the synagogue which He has been in many times before, and they're talking about what He said yesterday and what He's been teaching. "I am the bread that came down out of heaven." They say in Verse 42:

John 6:42 ~ “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, ‘I have come down out of heaven’?”

What does John want you to know about where Jesus came from? Bethlehem, yes, but more than that. The place He’s from is He came down out of heaven. That’s the point. There’s never been another man that came down out of heaven, and there never will be another man besides Him when He comes again. Nobody comes down out of heaven except the One from God. That’s his message. So where is He from?

Back to our passage to Verse 27: ... ***but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from.***” They had this popular notion, this popular theology of the day, that where He is from makes all the difference. There was in fact a Messianic expectation that we find written in literature of the day, and this is a quote:

The Messiah will truly be born of flesh and blood, but will be wholly unknown until He redeems Israel.

That was kind of a popular notion among the people. It was kind of like the popular theology of today. There’s a lot of popular theology. Most of it’s not that great. Occasionally, just like this, a blind squirrel finds an acorn. Occasionally. They were right that the Messiah, His arrival, will be veiled in mystery. His arrival will be something entirely unique. It’s kind of like the popular notion I hear people say, “The Lord will not put on you more than you can bear.” Do you hear that? Unbelievers say that to me when you’re talking at a funeral or something to people afterwards, or they’re going through difficult situations. “You know the Good Lord will not put on you more than you can bear.” And if I have opportunity to really talk to them about it, I try to help them with that, because yeah, that’s true if you understand it rightly. You really need to dig a little deeper, but the fact is the Lord has a way of putting on you more than *you* can bear, but He will with that give you the grace to bear up under it if you are His. The way He brings you to Himself is often putting on you more than you can bear so that you look to Him.

So it’s not really kind of the way they understand it, you see? But it’s the same example here. “The Messiah, when He comes, is going to be born of flesh and blood, but He’ll be wholly unknown until He redeems Israel. We won’t have a clue about Him until He redeems Israel, and therefore, since we know this man’s from Galilee, He cannot be the Messiah.”

The readers of John's Gospel not only have the insights that we share from John 6 and John 1 (Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?) but they also have the way John has introduced Jesus onto the scene. Think about that. You have in John 1 the prologue where we're told that Jesus was in the beginning with God and He was God, that all things have come into being by Him, and apart from Him, nothing has come into being that has come into being, that He has created all things, that He was with God and is God. You have His appearance on the scene, though John tells you nothing of the birth narrative. John tells you nothing of His early life.

In fact, let me just point this out too. Even the things that we know about Jesus, think about all that we know about Jesus from His early life. That's intentional. We have Luke 1 that tells us some pre-birth narrative, doesn't it? Remember Luke 1? That's where you have the story of John the Baptist's conception and birth. Before he's born, though, remember he's visited? His mother Elizabeth who is like maybe four or five months pregnant is visited by Mary, the mother of our Lord, who's just conceived. She's probably just weeks along, and remember what happens? Mary comes in and Elizabeth hears her voice in the house: "Hello, I'm here! Is anybody here?" You've gone into a house like that, haven't you? "Hello! Is anybody here?" When Mary's voice carries to Elizabeth's ear, the moment that her words are processed, her eardrum sends a signal to her brain, her brain signals that somehow... And I bet it's not even like that. Let me change that.

John the Baptist is inside the womb. His little ears hear Mary's voice, and that little embryo leaps in the womb. Why? Because he's been born of God for this purpose, to say, "That's the One!" He hears the mother of his Lord, and he's saying, "That's the One! That's the One! That's the One!" and Elizabeth's filled with the Holy Spirit and begins to prophecy. She has no idea. All she knows is that an angel visited her husband and she's having a baby for some extraordinary reason and he's got a high calling, but she doesn't know what's really going on. She has no idea that her cousin is the mother of her Lord, but she prophesies and she says, "What an amazing blessing that the mother of my Lord should visit me."

You have that and you have Mary then dealing with the pregnancy. In Matthew 1, you have Joseph being visited by the angel. Then you have the birth narrative in Luke 2. The shepherds are coming. In Matthew 2, you have the wise men coming from the east. "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?" And then at the end of Luke 2, you have one story about Jesus when He was 12 years old, and His family visits the temple. Do you remember that? It was for Passover. They leave and go back, and they think He's with them. There's a large group of people. Everybody's going to Passover.

It's like all of us going to some place together. You know, we all make a trip to the Creation museum and we're getting on a bus together. This would be a great trip, actually. We go to the Creation museum in Kentucky. Answers in Genesis. Look it up. Make a plan to go. But anyway, let's say we all went, and we're all getting back on the buses. Well, some of our kids are playing with each other, and so my kid's with your kid, and his kid's with her kid, and so we're getting on the buses.

Well, they get back on the caravans, and they realize about a few miles up the road, "Wait a minute. Where's Jesus? We thought he was playing with David." They turn around and they go back, and they find Him teaching in the temple. He's sitting there holding court with the teachers of the Law. They're asking Him questions and He is confounding them. His parents say, "What are you doing here? We left and you were supposed to be with us. What's going on?" He says, "Don't you know I have to be about My Father's business?" And then that's it until He's age 30. There's nothing else.

Then you have suddenly John the Baptist after he's 30. He's a strange, little, eccentric guy doing a lot of camping, probably, and eating grasshoppers, learning how to like that, and then he bursts on the scene and he's got a message God has told him. I imagine if he was in the womb wanting to say, "There He is! There He is!" then it must have been like his whole life was like a horse in the stall before the Kentucky Derby. They put him in, and boom! He takes off. So finally God says, "Take off!" and he says, "I'm here to tell you to repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." And John's Gospel picks up at that point. Look with me at John 1:19.

John 1:19 ~ This is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?"

He starts preaching, "Repent, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," and they say, "Look, are you the Messiah?" Isn't it amazing that they ask him, but they were so slow to really ask Jesus? I mean, they do ask Him later, but they're asking from a position of unbelief. "Tell us plainly so that we can kill You," is what they're basically saying. They send the Jews, the rulers. They send Him priests and Levites to ask Him, "Who are you?"

John 1:20 ~ And he confessed and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." 21 They asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" And he *said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." 22 Then they said to him, "Who are you, so that we may give an answer to

those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?” 23 He said, “I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as Isaiah the prophet said.”

Now they ask Him a further question:

John 1:25 ~ They asked him, and said to him, “Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” 26 John answered them saying, “I baptize in water, but among you stands One whom you do not know. 27 It is He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie.”

John 1:29 ~ The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

Do you see the suddenness of that? That’s the picture that we have. Suddenly the Lamb of God is here! This man who’s been waiting, chomping at the bit, apparently they didn’t have a lot of family reunions back then, or even if they did, it’s interesting as you read on down, that he didn’t know that Jesus was the Christ. Look with me at Verse 31:

John 1:31 ~ I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water.” 32 John testified saying, “I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. 33 I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.’

He said, “I did not recognize Him.” That’s interesting. The word is really ‘know’. “I did not know Him.” The same word used in John 7 when they say, “We know where this man is from.” There are a couple different words for ‘know’ in the New Testament. This is the one that means ‘fullness of knowledge’. “We know beyond a shadow of a doubt where this man’s from, and He’s not the Christ.” John says, “Listen, I want to tell you something. I didn’t know just by looking at Him.” So if they had a family reunion, he didn’t know just by looking at Him. Now, he did know in the womb, because God gave him grace. I think he hadn’t seen Him. I don’t think they had family reunions like we do. Anyway, forget that. Just move on to the next point.

But he says twice, “I did not know Him.” He said, “I did not recognize Him,” in Verse 31. He said, “I did not recognize Him,” in Verse 33. How did he know then? “Because the One who sent me to baptize said, ‘You will know when you see the Spirit descend and remain upon Him.’” That is, He’s unrecognizable until when? Until the day He sets to save. “You will not know Him until the Spirit who’s going to empower His ministry descends upon Him and anoints Him for the work as our great Christ, the Prophet, the Priest, the King.” The Spirit comes down upon Him, and then John says, “He’s the One!” And that’s what you have him saying there all throughout this passage. “Behold, the Lamb of God!” Every time Jesus comes around the corner, that’s all John the Baptist can say. “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world! Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world! Look! That’s Him! That’s the One!” That’s why his disciples say, “We’re not going to walk with you. We’re going with Him. We heard your message. We’re following Him.”

So back to John 7, the readers of John’s Gospel sitting here hearing these people saying, “We know where He’s from. When the Christ comes, it’ll be a stunning kind of arrival, and you won’t know it until He comes to save,” and are thinking, “You guys are blind. It’s right before your eyes.” One of the reasons they were blind is they were looking for the wrong kind of salvation. “You won’t know Him until He comes to save.” They were looking for a military deliverance. They were looking for some kind of earthly kingdom. So, “You won’t know Him until He comes and defeats Rome,” is what they were looking for, but Jesus says, “My Kingdom is not of this world.”

Why has He come? He’s come to save us from sin. He’s come to save us from hell. He’s come to save us from the real issues that we face that will send us to an eternity apart from God. So He was unrecognizable until the moment that He was sent to save, and that moment is His baptism. Think about His baptism. John the Baptist is baptizing and preaching a baptism of repentance. His message is, “Repent. Turn from your sin, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Get ready. God is coming. You need to get right. Stop all of your evil. The Lord is here. I don’t know where He is, but He’s close. You don’t know Him yet, but He’s going to be here soon. Get ready.”

How do you get ready? “You need to repent. You need to be washed. You need to be baptized.” The baptism was a picture of ritual washing, and it was something that when John the Baptist starts doing this, it was really an amazing statement to the Jewish people. He was calling the Jewish people to do something that only Gentiles here to fore had to do. Remember, a Gentile is a non-Jew. They’re the

nations. They're most of all of us. A few of us have Jewish lineage, but not many. Most of us are filthy Gentiles. We were at that time aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, separate from God, without God, without hope, lost. He was working among one people. He had redeemed one people for Himself, but as His revelation unfolds, it shows that His one people were to be an avenue to reach out to all nations, to people of every tribe, and tongue, and race, and kindred. He was going to reach out and save people from every corner of the globe, and bring them into the presence of His glory, but He was going to do it through one people, the people of Israel. But the people of Israel had to come to understand that they themselves were just as filthy and dirty as you and me, and so John comes preaching a baptism, "Listen, the Lord is about to come on the scene right now, and you need to get ready. How do you get ready? You need to acknowledge your utter and complete sinfulness."

He made them endure the ritual baptism that Gentiles had to endure when they become a Jew. If they were a man, they would have to be circumcised, and they would also have to be baptized. The women also would have to be baptized. What is that? Washed. You can't come into the presence of Holy God with all the filth on you. Now, that's what baptism was about, and John is doing that. He's preaching and he's baptizing.

One day he's sitting there, and he must have hundreds of people. He's been preaching, and now he's just baptizing one after another, and sending them on their way, and encouraging them, "Be ready. The Lord is coming." He's baptizing, saying, "Be ready. The Lord is coming," and then he looks up at a Man coming down in the water, and he sees the Spirit descend out of heaven as a dove and rest upon that Man, and he recognizes Him. "I didn't know Him. I didn't recognize Him, but now I do." Remember what he says to Jesus when Jesus comes to him and basically walks up to him and says, "You need to baptize me, John"? John said, "How can I baptize You? You must baptize me. You're not filthy. I'm filthy."

John was one of the holiest people in Israel at that time, but when he stood beside Christ, he saw how incredibly unholy and wicked he was. And what did Jesus say? "It is necessary to fulfill all righteousness, because I understand I don't have a need to be baptized. No one can convict me of sin. I'm a Lamb without spot or blemish, but you see, I've come to save, and the way I've come to save is to identify with the sins of My people. I have to be treated as if I were a filthy, wicked sinner. That's My mission. That's what the cross is all about. So though I'm spotless, now baptize Me,"

In that moment, what Jesus was doing is He was identifying with His mission. He was accepting the mission. “I’ve come to seek and to save.” That’s the moment when suddenly Messiah was on the scene. Out of nowhere, out of Nazareth, He’s come. When you step back, you realize the context even more. It was the Feast of Booths, and remember how I mentioned that there was a suddenness of arrival? They’re looking for Him and they can’t find Him, and suddenly He’s in the middle of the temple teaching, and they’re like, “How can He be there? I would have thought they would have got Him at the gate of the city, but here He is teaching. Surely the rulers must have put down their vendetta against Him, because He couldn’t be here doing this.” Suddenly He’s teaching. Suddenly He is in the place of authority. Suddenly the Christ is on the scene.

Think about how we started out looking at Exodus, and I was talking with you about the story of the Feast of Tabernacles. I want you to look at a couple of passages with me, and I encourage you to look at these in more detail later. Turn with me to the book of Exodus. We were in Chapter 3, but we’re going to move on to Chapter 13:

Exodus 13:17 ~ Now when Pharaoh had let the people go, God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, even though it was near; for God said, “The people might change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt.”

Then look down to Verse 21:

Exodus 13:21 ~ The Lord was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. 22 He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

They had this perpetually before then. Then turn over to Chapter 23. He gives them manna from heaven (remember that), water from a rock, and then He gives them the Law. And one of the last things He tells them in the first giving of the Law is to keep the three national feasts. He tells them, “There are three feasts that you’re to keep,” and He tells them in Verse 16 about the Feast of Tabernacles. It’s the second part of the Verse:

Exodus 23:16 ~ Also you shall observe the Feast of the Harvest...

That's actually the Feast of Pentecost.

... of the first fruits of your labors from what you sow in the field; also the Feast of the Ingathering...

This is another name for the Feast of Tabernacles. Then turn over now to Leviticus 23. Let me just tell you what it says for the sake of time. He says, "The reason you are to celebrate this feast is because I delivered you from Israel, and I dwelt in tents among you, and every year you're supposed to gather together, and you're to take branches of trees, make little tents, and you're to come before Me in Jerusalem, to My presence, and dwell there." What's happening is the whole feast is aimed at remembering the time when God Himself pitched His tent among His people and they all had tents. So they pitched their tents in Jerusalem. It's the most loved feast of all the feasts of Israel. They love this. I mean, it sounds like kind of fun, doesn't it? "We're all going camping."

That's something about our church is that we have a lot of folks that love camping. This would have been your favorite feast. They all come together and they camp around the temple now, because the temple is now no longer a tent. It's the house of the Lord, and they come to celebrate the fact and think about what happened in the Exodus. Remember, I mentioned 400 years of silence between Joseph and Moses. There was 400 years of darkness between Joseph and Moses. 400 years of wondering. 400 years of misery. 400 years of lostness.

Then suddenly, God appears in a flame, in a bush miraculously, an ordinary bush but an extraordinary power. Moses says, "What's that bush doing? It's just like every other bush, but why is it burning and it's not consumed? When bushes burn, they burn up. This one's not." It's because the Lord is there. I Am who I Am is on the scene. "I'll be with you. I'm going to help you. I'm going to deliver them." He continues. That burning bush becomes a pillar of fire. "Camp around Me." He tells them in Numbers, "You're to camp around Me. My place will be in the center. The tabernacle will be in the center when we camp. Now, at the Feast of Tabernacles, once a year, You remember the time of your visitation, the one time in your history as a nation, the one time when God made His glory manifest for an extended period of time. The pillar of fire. The pillar of cloud. Celebrate that one time, the glory days."

Now you're celebrating that feast. Remember, you're celebrating God's sudden deliverance. Suddenly after 400 years, He's on the scene. "Where's Jesus? Where's that man?" Suddenly He's on the scene. Where is He? In the tabernacle.

In the temple. In the courts of the temple. When? 400 years after the last prophet was speaking. 400 years of silence. 400 years of darkness. 400 years of bondage to the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Romans. 400 years of misery, and suddenly the Messiah has come and He's in the tabernacle. He's in the temple, and He's preaching, and do you see? He's an ordinary man just like that ordinary bush, but there's a glory about Him. There's the flame that comes out of Him. They hear Him teaching. "How can He be learned when He's never studied? How can this man speak with such authority?" The glory is shining out, and here in the midst of that place when they celebrate glory days, how can it be that they reject all that that pointed to? The fulfillment of every part of the Feast of Tabernacles is right in front of their eyes. They came out of their tent. They got out of that little tent that they celebrate, and they walked up to the temple, and there the glory cloud was right in front of them.

Remember back in Zechariah, Haggai, after the temple was destroyed and rebuilt? Do you remember when they rebuilt Solomon's temple? It had been destroyed by the Babylonians and they rebuilt it and finished it in 516 B.C. Do you remember when they laid the foundation? They laid the foundation, and the people let out this great cry. The young people who were born since they left for Babylon 70 years before, were, "Hurray!" The old people were letting out a cry of mourning. The people that were old enough, the 80-year-old men, the 80-year-old women, they were mourning, because they saw the footprint of this new temple – it's only the foundation – but the footprint of this new temple is going to be so much less glorious than the former, and God tells Haggai or Zechariah (I forget which one) to get up and to preach, and you tell them that though it looks like small things, that the glory of this latter temple will far surpass the glory of the previous temple.

And those words have suddenly come true in the hearing of these people at the Feast of Tabernacles. The glory is there, and now the Word has become flesh. Remember John 1:14. He told us in the prologue, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Literally He "pitched His tent" σκηνώω (*skēnoō*) among us, and we beheld His glory. Jesus Christ's arrival testifies He is like no other. There is no other man that ever existed that is worthy to untie the thong of His sandal. He stands alone. In Jesus Christ, a man, yes, an ordinary man like an ordinary bush, but an extraordinary glory. The flame that burned in that Man was divine – every word that He spoke, every act that He did, every sign that He performed, and ultimately His offering of Himself identifying for our sins, paying for your sins, and then rising from the dead. He got up out of the grave.

People are worshiping all kinds of gods in this world. They're worshiping in Hindu temples. They're worshiping in Muslim mosques. They're worshiping in Buddhist

temples, but they're worshipping at the feet of men who are still in the tomb. But if you are worshipping Jesus Christ, you are worshipping One who stands enthroned in the very Heaven of heavens right now, above all power, and rule, and authority. He has overcome everything, and there is none like Him. And let us know that by His coming and by His departure, He is Lord, and God has made it so. The most important question in the world is: *Who is Jesus to you? Have you bowed before Christ? Have you given your heart? Have you repented and let Him wash you with His blood?* He will wash you this morning. If you don't, know this: You will spend eternity in agony, in unending misery by your own free will, and you will rue the day that you turned from the Gospel. May God help you. May God help all of us.

Let's pray...

Our Father, we thank You and we praise You for glorious salvation. We thank You for making known Your glory in such a magnificent way, in a way that we can see and understand, a man like us, flesh and blood, who was able to sympathize with us in our weaknesses, who's been tempted in every way, and yet without sin, who has suffered every kind of pain that we could ever suffer, only in greater measure, and who is a Friend to everyone who will turn to Him. How grateful we are that Your word is always, "Come. Come unto Me and be saved."

Father, we pray that You would help us to come more completely, more regularly, more continually to You, and those who know Christ, that we would abide in Your presence, and those who do not know Christ that are in this room, Lord, grant them grace. Open their eyes. Let them see that everything else is emptiness and darkness, but there is a Light, and He is Jesus Christ. We pray this in His Name, Amen.

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