



Turning Lost Students into Christ-Centered Laborers

## THE MESSIAH HAS COME • Rivers of Living Water

### What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

John 7

#### The Feasts of Israel

The Jews hosted seven primary holidays in Jerusalem. Four occurred in the Spring and three in the Fall. Passover was the first feast of the year, and it celebrated God's miraculous deliverance of Israel from Egypt. On the second night of the Passover feast, they began to serve the Unleavened Bread which symbolized purity. The Feast of Firstfruits came right on the heels of the Passover. The Jews dedicated best of their new crops to the Lord. Several weeks later they celebrated the summer harvest with a feast called Pentecost,

Later in the Fall the Jews celebrated the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

### The Feasts of Israel

|        |                                                        |
|--------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Spring | The Feast of Passover - <i>Salvation</i>               |
|        | The Unleavened Bread - <i>Purity</i>                   |
|        | The Feast of Firstfruits - <i>God's Provision</i>      |
|        | The Feast of Pentecost - <i>God's Provision</i>        |
| Fall   | The Feast of Trumpets - <i>Worship</i>                 |
|        | The Day of Atonement - <i>Confession</i>               |
|        | The Feast of Tabernacles - <i>Presence of the Lord</i> |

#### The Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles (also known as the Feast of Booths) was the last celebration of the year. It took place in Jerusalem each fall. As part of the festival, which lasted 8 days, the Jews erected temporary shelters all over the city and the hill called the Mount of Olives. The shelters served as reminders of the days of Moses when Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years. The festival included a lot of singing and dancing and a tremendous feast. For the first seven days, 70 bulls were offered for the nations of the world but everything built toward the last day, when 1 bull was offered for Israel.

### What's the Big Idea?

Everyone is challenged by the claims of Jesus.

### What's the Problem?

We often view Jesus as a great leader or teacher, but miss the fact that he is the Messiah of God.



### The Ceremony at the Feast of Tabernacles

The last day of the Feast of Tabernacles was the greatest day of the celebration. Early in the morning on that day the chief priest led a procession from the altar in Jerusalem down to the pool of Siloam. Once he got there he filled a golden pitcher with water then headed back toward the temple. The masses waved palm branches and cheered him on. Three series of trumpet blasts announced his arrival into the city. When he entered the Temple area, he circled the altar seven times before ascending it. Once atop the altar, he poured out the water at the base of the altar signifying that the nation was still in bondage and waiting for the messiah. Then he raised his hand and the priests began singing choruses which the people repeated. "Oh Lord, send salvation" "Oh Lord, bring prosperity" "Oh give thanks to the Lord."

It was at this point in the Feast that Jesus cried out "If anyone is still thirsty let him come to me and drink! Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water!'"

With this announcement, Jesus formally presented Himself as the Messiah to Israel, and he stunned the crowd. Some people believed in him. Others called him a prophet. The Pharisees and their guards stumbled all over themselves, and a controversy arose.

Many people knew that Jesus was from Galilee and the Messiah was supposed to be born in Bethlehem. These people didn't know, of course, that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and only moved to Galilee later in his life.

This is another passage where we see Nicodemus, an elite Pharisee and member of the ruling Sanhedrin, continue to wrestle with the identity of Jesus. But many of the other Jewish leaders were too prideful to believe in Jesus and they were jealous of his popularity. They copied the crowd, saying "a prophet does not come from Galilee." Sometimes people grasp at anything they can to deny the truth regarding Jesus.

### A Great Opportunity

The Apply Section of this study starts off with the questions, "What are some of the different opinions of Jesus today? What are some reasons people give for not believing in him?" Try to use these questions to surface any doubts people in your group have about Jesus, the Bible, or faith in general. You don't need to know the answers. Just take some notes.

Then do a little research between this week and next. Consider using the websites suggested on the next page. You might choose to discuss the topics further with individuals or your whole group.

This is a great opportunity because there are great answers to every question about the Christian faith. Consider the journey of Lee Strobel. Lee Strobel graduated from Yale Law school and worked for 14 years as a research journalist for the Chicago Tribune. He was also a strong atheist. So it initially bugged him when his wife Leslie came to Christ. But over time, he saw an attractive change in her character. He began to research the Christian faith. As a world-renowned journalist, he had access to all the leading people in the fields of science, philosophy, history, and more. And the more research he did, the more he became convinced of the truth of Christianity. Over time, he gave his heart to Christ. You can read his research yourself in his best selling books entitled The Case for Christ, The Case for a Creator, and The Case for Faith.

### What's Our Response?

You will want your group to understand that many people are confused about Jesus, and it's important to know who he really is.

## What Are the Questions?

John 7

### LAUNCH

Do you remember when you first heard about Jesus? When did He become meaningful to you?

### EXPLORE

Read 7:1-13.

1. Why were Jesus' brothers urging him to go to the feast? What do they assume about Jesus' motivation? Why?
2. Sometimes believers face opposition or ridicule for their faith from family members. Do you know anyone who has been in that situation? How does this passage encourage you?
3. According to verses 12-13, what rumors were circulating in Jerusalem about Jesus?
4. Why do you think Jesus waited to go to Jerusalem until later?

Read 7:14-36.

5. The Feast of Tabernacles was the climax of all the feasts of Israel, and Jesus went right into the Temple and started teaching. How did people receive at first?
6. How did people receive him later? Why did many believe in him?
7. Did the people understand Jesus' statement in vs. 33-34? What was Jesus talking about? Where was he going?

### The Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles lasted 8 days. Seventy bulls were sacrificed for the nations on the first 7 days, and one special bull was sacrificed for Israel on the 8th. An elaborate ceremony accompanied this special day. The High Priest marched into the city amidst trumpet blasts and cheering crowds. He was carrying a golden pitcher. But when he ascended the altar, he poured the offering out beside the altar, instead of on it. This act symbolized the nation's prayers, and the fact that they were still awaiting the coming Messiah.

Read 7:37-52

8. What did Jesus cry out at this point in the ceremony? How did the crowd react?
9. Look back at the whole chapter. What are the various ways that people reacted to Jesus?
10. What are some of the different opinions of Jesus today?
11. Why did the temple guards report back without apprehending Jesus?
12. Nicodemus, a top Jewish leader, argued for a fair trial for Jesus. How did the rest of the leaders respond? Why did it matter where Jesus was from?

### APPLY

13. What are some of the different opinions of Jesus today? What are some reasons people give for not believing in him?
14. Have you ever seen someone grasp at anything they can grab in an effort to avoid Jesus? When?
15. Are there people in your life who discourage your belief in Jesus? How so?
16. Why do you believe in Jesus?

## What Are the Answers?

1. Jesus' "brothers" were actually his half-brothers. Jesus was born only of Mary, and these brothers were born later as children of Mary and Joseph. Jesus had four brothers overall. - James, Joseph (Joses), Simon and Judas (not the same Judas who betrayed Jesus). Jesus' brothers did not initially believe in him. In this passage they told Jesus he needed to be visible if he wanted to be a political leader. But at least two of his brothers came to faith later. James became the leader of the first Christian church in Jerusalem- see Acts 15:6,13. He wrote the N.T. book of James. Judas (again- not Jesus' betrayer) wrote the N.T. book of Jude.
2. Discuss
3. By this time, there were a wide variety of opinions about Jesus. Some people thought he was a good man, others thought he was a prophet, and some knew him to be the Messiah. Others thought he was a false teacher or an evil man. This passage just summarizes the various positions.
4. Jesus said, "It is not my time" to his brothers. But his time came soon after his brothers left. He obviously didn't want to go to Jerusalem with them.
5. At first they said, "You have a demon" and "Who is trying to kill you?" They didn't know that Jewish leaders were plotting to kill him.
6. See vs. 26-31. Some people were beginning to believe in him.
7. Nope, they didn't understand. Jesus was speaking about his death, when he would go back to Heaven to be with his Father.
8. This ceremony was Israel's way of asking God to send the Messiah. Jesus basically said, "Here I am."
9. Jesus' brothers seemed to think he was an ambitious political leader. Some people said he had a demon. Some believed he was the Christ, or The Prophet like Moses - another name for the Christ. Still others considered him a criminal or a charlatan.
10. Discuss
11. They found him too credible.
12. Most of the leaders didn't want to give Jesus a fair hearing. People understood that the Messiah was supposed to come from Bethlehem. And of course, Jesus was born in Bethlehem. More importantly, however, he has always existed. He is the  $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma$  (logos) of God (John 1).

### Questions 13-16.

Use these questions to surface reasons people don't believe in Jesus. You may encounter some common arguments like "the problem of evil" or "how can there be just one way." If so, take notes. You don't have to have all the answers. But in just a few minutes you can find great articles on all these topics at websites like the ones listed to the right.

## Memorize

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"

John 7:37-38

### On Apologetics

The word "Apologetics" does not mean "an apology." It's related to the Greek word  $\alpha\pi\omicron\lambda\omicron\gamma\iota\alpha$ . It means, "a rational defense of the Christian faith."

### 7 great Apologetic websites

**www.everystudent.com**  
this sight has great articles and connects you with staff members who can answer questions.

**www.carm.org**  
click on "Questions" then "Skeptics Ask"

**www.reasonablefaith.org**  
click on "Writings" then "Popular Articles"

**www.probe.org**  
check out the first article, entitled "Reasons to Believe"

**www.apologetics315.com**  
check out the list of topics on the left

**www.leestrobels.com**  
use the search bar

**www.bethinking.org**  
easy-to-find topics and articles

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