

John 7

Responding to Jesus

Since chapter 5, Jesus has performed several signs only to be rejected by the multitude. That narrative continues, but now the scene shifts from Galilee to Jerusalem. Initially, Jesus decides against the trip, but ultimately travels to the capital city. From the beginning, “his brothers” (vs. 3) reject him as the promised Messiah, but they are not alone. John explains that “there was much muttering about him among the people” with some excited about his presence while others feared he was “leading the people astray” (vs. 13).

Despite the increased threats around him, Jesus begins to teach publicly in the Temple – a temple he once threatened to destroy (John 2:19). The people are amazed. How can an uneducated man teach with such wisdom and insight (vs. 15)? Christ explains he comes from the Father and speaks for him while his critics claim he has a demon (vs. 20).

Regardless, word spreads that Jesus might be the promised messiah. Here we see the tension that has filled John’s Gospel. To some, like Nicodemus and the Woman at the Well, Jesus must be of divine origin and calling whereas others, like those fed in the wilderness (John 6), he is a fraud. The question in verse 31 is significant, “When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?”

As the feast concludes, Jesus stands up and returns to a theme well developed by this point. As the Life, Jesus gives eternal life to all who go to him. “If anyone thirsts,” he announced, “Let him come to me and drink” (vs. 37). This, of course, mirrors what Jesus said in both chapters four and six. To drink, according to Jesus, is to believe in him (vs. 38).

In the end, no one seems to know what to do with him. Some believe (“this really is the Prophet” in vs. 40), while others want to believe but can’t make sense of everything (see vs. 42). Then there were those who rejected him without listening to his message or observing his signs. Jesus was nothing more than a threat and needed to be removed. No wonder “there was a division among the people over him” (vs. 43).

In the end, the reader is invited to consider who this Jesus is. In this one chapter, we’ve seen how, as the Logos, he speaks with an authority that comes from God himself. It is worth noting that he is teaching in the Temple where God is believed to dwell. John had stated earlier (John 1:14) that Jesus came as the Temple. As the Life, he offers living water to a spiritually thirsty world. As Light, he exposes the motives of his audience and divides the crowd. To some, the Light of the World enlightens, but for most, it blinds and exposes. Finally, he stands in the Temple awaiting his “hour” (vs. 30) as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29).