

**Sent:** Wednesday, February 04, 2015 1:53 PM

**Subject:** Last Nite's MOB Study

Last nite, we completed Lesson #17, covering John 7:14-36. Jesus' "time had come" to make the journey from Galilee "up" to Jerusalem to celebrate--and actually fulfill the symbolism inherent in the Feast of Booths (or Tabernacles)--following His Father's will and direction. As our lesson opens, we find Him in the temple, in the midst of the feast, and He's "teaching." And while John doesn't tell us what Jesus taught at this particular time, He does write that what He said "astonished" those gathered there to hear Him! As it always does! And, as a result, many questions were raised again about who He was and where He came from, and how they were to deal with what He said!

Jesus claimed that His teaching came "from His Father who sent Him," and that if "anyone was willing to do His will, they would know of His teaching" (vs. 16-17). He said, in essence, as the outline for this text suggests, that (1) His authority for saying the things He said came from His Father (vs. 14-24); (2) that His origin, in fact, came from the Father (vs.25-31); and (3) that His coming departure would be back to the Father (vs. 32-36)! John writes that "many of the crowd believed Him," but others were totally confused and doubtful! And the Jewish religious leaders were committed to "seizing" Him and having Him killed!

Why were the Jewish religious leaders so committed to having Jesus killed? Basically, it went back to Jesus' earlier visit to Jerusalem, recorded in Chapter 5 (which we studied) when they concluded that Jesus had broken Jewish law by healing the paralytic man on the Sabbath--and also because He "called God His Father, making Him equal with God" (5:18). And so, when Jesus returned to Jerusalem, they were waiting to carry out their plan to take Him out!

Jesus knew their plan even before He came, and He addressed it directly, as we saw in 7:19-24--showing how their self-righteous legalism and hardness of heart, in effect, prevented them from exercising "righteous judgment"--and, more importantly, being able to see and believe Him for who He was and why He came! Jesus' point was that if it's okay for a boy to be circumcised on the Sabbath (kind of a small thing), why wouldn't it be okay, even good, to heal and restore a whole man's body that had been diseased and confined for 38 years? That He raised the issue of "circumcision" in making His point poses even greater implications for the spiritual condition of the nation!

Jesus wasn't in any way minimizing the practice of circumcision! It was, in fact, a special rite that God had given to Abraham (before Moses, as Jesus notes in vs. 22) as a "sign" of the "Abrahamic covenant." God (in Genesis 12) had called Abraham to "leave his country" and go to a land that He "would show him"--promising that he would become of the father of a great nation (Israel) through whom "all the families of the earth would be blessed" (through the coming of Christ, of course)! Genesis 15:6 says that "Abraham believed God and that He (God) reckoned it (or credited it) to him (Abraham) for righteousness!" Then later, in Genesis 17, God reaffirmed His covenant with Abraham, and promised him a son (in his old age!), and decreed that he, and all male descendents, be circumcised--"on the eighth day"--as a "sign" of His covenant for generations to come! You know the story, as so beautifully told by Jesse just last

Sunday (by pure coincidence, of course!) of how God later instructed Abraham (in Genesis 22) to "offer" his son--his only son--as a sacrifice, but then provided him with a "substitute" ram!

And as Jesse said on Sunday, the story of Abraham prepares us, in six ways, for the story of Christ in the New Testament! God requires a sacrifice for sin. It required His Son! It produces worship! God provides the sacrifice. It will be a substitute! It comes with a new covenant! And so Jesus fulfills the Abrahamic covenant by giving His life as the supreme sacrifice for sin--or as we refer to it as His "substitutionary atonement!" And a "new covenant"!

And so--getting back to our text for last nite--we can see the connection, and irony, of Jesus referring to the practice of circumcision? Circumcision was, of course, a great gift of grace to the children of Israel both because of its health implications but even more so because of its spiritual implications! God was always more concerned about circumcision of the "heart" than of the body! In Deuteronomy 10, God, through Moses, instructed Israel to "circumcise their hearts" and "walk in His ways," and serve Him with all their hearts and souls." Jeremiah, the prophet (in Jer. 4:4) called on Israel to "circumcise yourselves to the Lord and remove the foreskin of your heart." And Paul would later write, in Rom. 2:28-29, that "...he is not a Jew who is one outwardly in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, and not by the letter..."

Isn't it ironic that Jesus would raise the issue of circumcision to illustrate how far off the Jewish religious leaders were in their understanding and practice of "true religion!" They were so concerned about following the "letter of the law" but seemed to have no sensitivity to the real "spirit" of the law and, basically, issues of the heart! What they needed was to have their hearts "circumcised" and cleansed, so that they could see and believe Jesus for who He was and why He had come into the world!

This lesson reminds us of the great plan and purpose God had for the world, and for us personally, by sending His Son--and by "picturing" it so clearly, in retrospect, through the Scripture. It's something, one would think, that we'd want to pass on to others! And then there's the challenge to examine our own motives and attitudes as we strive to live out our faith day by day in a culture, and sometimes even in the name of religion, that still doesn't get it! Much like it was back there in Jesus' day!

Well, next week, we're going wind up our study of John 7 by seeing how Jesus actually fulfilled the symbolism of the Feast by presenting Himself as the "living water" and the "Light of the world." I would encourage you to get into the study of verses 37-53 by completing the questions in the study guide, a copy of which most of you already have, or can download from our IBCmob.net web site. And we'll see you back again next week to talk about it!

It was good to welcome Alex into our small group last nite!

Have a great week, men!

Lowell