

Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles

MEMORY VERSE: “*And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power*” (Luke 4:32).

“Jesus knew the wants of the soul. Pomp, riches, and honor cannot satisfy the heart. ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto Me.’ The rich, the poor, the high, the low, are alike welcome. He promises to relieve the burdened mind, to comfort the sorrowing, and to give hope to the despondent.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 454.

Suggested Reading: *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 31–35. (At the bottom of this page)

1. THE HOME LIFE OF JESUS

Sunday, Apr 13

a. What serious challenge did Jesus face in His own home? John 7:5.

John 7:5

For neither did his brethren believe in him.

“At a very early age, Jesus had begun to act for Himself in the formation of His character, and not even respect and love for His parents could turn Him from obedience to God’s word. ‘It is written’ was His reason for every act that varied from the family customs. But the influence of the rabbis made His life a bitter one. Even in His youth He had to learn the hard lesson of silence and patient endurance.

“His brothers, as the sons of Joseph were called, sided with the rabbis. They insisted that the traditions must be heeded, as if they were the requirements of God. They even regarded the precepts of men more highly than the word of God, and they were greatly annoyed at the clear penetration of Jesus in distinguishing between the false and the true. His strict obedience to the law of God they condemned as stubbornness. They were surprised at the knowledge and wisdom He showed in answering the rabbis. They knew that He had not received instruction from the wise men, yet they could not but see that He was an instructor to them. They recognized that His education was of a higher type than their own. But they did not discern that He had access to the tree of life, a source of knowledge of which they were ignorant.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 86.

- a. What suggestion did Christ's brothers make to Him in anticipation of the annual Feast of Tabernacles? John 7:3, 4.

John 7:3, 4

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.

“[Christ's] brothers thought it a mistake for Him to alienate the great and learned men of the nation. They felt that these men must be in the right, and that Jesus was at fault in placing Himself in antagonism to them. But they had witnessed His blameless life, and though they did not rank themselves with His disciples, they had been deeply impressed by His works. His popularity in Galilee was gratifying to their ambition; they still hoped that He would give an evidence of His power which would lead the Pharisees to see that He was what He claimed to be. What if He were the Messiah, the Prince of Israel! They cherished this thought with proud satisfaction.

“So anxious were they about this that they urged Christ to go to Jerusalem. ‘Depart hence,’ they said, ‘and go into Judea, that Thy disciples also may see the works that Thou doest. For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If Thou do these things, show Thyself to the world.’ The ‘if’ expressed doubt and unbelief. They attributed cowardice and weakness to Him. If He knew that He was the Messiah, why this strange reserve and inaction? If He really possessed such power, why not go boldly to Jerusalem, and assert His claims? Why not perform in Jerusalem the wonderful works reported of Him in Galilee? Do not hide in secluded provinces, they said, and perform your mighty works for the benefit of ignorant peasants and fishermen. Present yourself at the capital, win the support of the priests and rulers, and unite the nation in establishing the new kingdom.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 450.

- b. Describe the problem that has always been faced by the meek. Psalm 86:14.

Psalm 86:14

O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul; and have not set thee before them.

“These brothers of Jesus reasoned from the selfish motive so often found in the hearts of those ambitious for display. This spirit was the ruling spirit of the world. They were offended because, instead of seeking a temporal throne, Christ had declared Himself to be the bread of life. They were greatly disappointed when so many of His disciples forsook Him. They themselves turned from Him to escape the cross of acknowledging what His works revealed—that He was the Sent of God.”—*Ibid.*, p. 451.

a. What contradictory opinions were raised about Jesus? John 7:11, 12.

John 7:11, 12

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.

“From Jerusalem the report of Christ’s miracles had spread wherever the Jews were dispersed; and although for many months He had been absent from the feasts, the interest in Him had not abated. Many from all parts of the world had come up to the Feast of Tabernacles in the hope of seeing Him. At the beginning of the feast many inquiries were made for Him. The Pharisees and rulers looked for Him to come, hoping for an opportunity to condemn Him. They anxiously inquired, ‘Where is He?’ but no one knew. The thought of Him was uppermost in all minds. Through fear of the priests and rulers, none dared acknowledge Him as the Messiah, but everywhere there was quiet yet earnest discussion concerning Him. Many defended Him as one sent from God, while others denounced Him as a deceiver of the people.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 451, 452.

b. How did Jesus silence the contradictory opinions concerning Himself? John 7:14–18; Luke 4:32.

John 7:14–18

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.

Luke 4:32

And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.

“In the midst of the feast, when the excitement concerning Him was at its height, He entered the court of the temple in the presence of the multitude. Because of His absence from the feast, it had been urged that He dared not place Himself in the power of the priests and rulers. All were surprised at His presence. Every voice was hushed. All wondered at the dignity and courage of His bearing in the midst of powerful enemies who were thirsting for His life.

“Standing thus, the center of attraction to that vast throng, Jesus addressed them as no man had ever done. His words showed a knowledge of the laws and institutions of Israel, of the sacrificial service and the teachings of the prophets, far exceeding that of the priests and rabbis. He broke through the barriers of formalism and tradition. The scenes of the future life seemed outspread before Him. As one who beheld the Unseen, He spoke of the earthly and the heavenly, the human and the divine, with positive authority. His words were most clear and convincing; and again, as at Capernaum, the people were astonished at His teaching; ‘for His word was with power.’ Luke 4:32. . . . All wondered at His knowledge of the law and the prophecies.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 452, 453.

a. What did Jesus perceive in the rabbis and what question did He put to them? John 7:19.

John 7:19

Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?

“Jesus gave the rabbis an evidence of His divinity by showing that He read their hearts. Ever since the healing at Bethesda they had been plotting His death. Thus they were themselves breaking the law which they professed to be defending. ‘Did not Moses give you the law,’ He said, ‘and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill Me?’ ”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 456.

b. In their response to Christ, of what did the rabbis accuse Him—and how did He respond in turn? John 7:20–23.

John 7:20–23

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?

“To this insinuation [that His wonderful works were instigated by an evil spirit] Christ gave no heed. He went on to show that His work of healing at Bethesda was in harmony with the Sabbath law, and that it was justified by the interpretation which the Jews themselves put upon the law. He said, ‘Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision. . . . and ye on the Sabbath day circumcise a man.’ According to the law, every child must be circumcised on the eighth day. Should the appointed time fall upon the Sabbath, the rite must then be performed. How much more must it be in harmony with the spirit of the law to make a man ‘every whit whole on the Sabbath day.’ ”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 456, 457.

c. Explain the broad significance of Christ’s next warning. John 7:24.

John 7:24

Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

“The rulers were silenced; and many of the people exclaimed, ‘Is not this He, whom they seek to kill? But, lo, He speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto Him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?’ ”—*Ibid.*, p. 457.

“[Christ] looks not on the outward appearance; He judges not as man judges. He does not value man according to his rank, talent, education, or position. ‘To this man will I look,’ he declares, ‘even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.’ ”—*The Signs of the Times*, October 21, 1897.

a. How does Scripture depict the mental state of society in this world—often as seen in ancient times, but especially today? Isaiah 59:14, 15.

Isaiah 59:14, 15

And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. **15** Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no judgment.

“The agencies of evil are combining their forces and consolidating. They are strengthening for the last great crisis. Great changes are soon to take place in our world, and the final movements will be rapid ones. . . .

“The enemy has succeeded in perverting justice and in filling men’s hearts with the desire for selfish gain. . . . The cries of starving humanity are coming up before God, while by every species of oppression and extortion men are piling up colossal fortunes.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 11, 12.

b. Amid the turmoil, why can we trust the ways of God? Isaiah 55:8, 9.

Isaiah 55:8, 9

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. **9** For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

“Though the finite minds of men are inadequate to enter into the counsels of the Infinite One, or to understand fully the working out of His purposes, yet often it is because of some error or neglect on their own part that they so dimly comprehend the messages of Heaven. Not infrequently the minds of the people, and even of God’s servants, are so blinded by human opinions, the traditions and false teaching of men, that they are able only partially to grasp the great things which He has revealed in His word.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 344, 345.

“God’s ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. He has given in His holy law a transcript of His character.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 63.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

Friday, Apr 18

1. Describe the home environment where Jesus was reared.
2. How is the attitude shown by Christ’s brothers often repeated today?
3. What contradictory opinions were circulated about Jesus?
4. Explain the spirit that the rabbis manifested toward Jesus.
5. Describe the huge contrast between man’s ways and those of God.

Suggested Reading: *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 31–35.

“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you.”—**Matthew 5:11.**

Ever since his fall, Satan has worked by means of deception. As he has misrepresented God, so, through his agents, he misrepresents the children of God. The Saviour says, “The reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon Me.” Psalm 69:9. In like manner they fall upon His disciples. **(MB 31.2)**

There was never one who walked among men more cruelly slandered than the Son of man. He was derided and mocked because of His unswerving obedience to the principles of God’s holy law. They hated Him without a cause. Yet He stood calmly before His enemies, declaring that reproach is a part of the Christian’s legacy, counseling His followers how to meet the arrows of malice, bidding them not to faint under persecution. **(MB 32.1)**

While slander may blacken the reputation, it cannot stain the character. That is in God’s keeping. So long as we do not consent to sin, there is no power, whether human or satanic, that can bring a stain upon the soul. A man whose heart is stayed upon God is just the same in the hour of his most afflicting trials and most discouraging surroundings as when he was in prosperity, when the light and favor of God seemed to be upon him. His words, his motives, his actions, may be misrepresented and falsified, but he does not mind it, because he has greater interests at stake. Like Moses, he endures as “seeing Him who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:27); looking “not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen” (2 Corinthians 4:18). **(MB 32.2)**

Christ is acquainted with all that is misunderstood and misrepresented by men. His children can afford to wait in calm patience and trust, no matter how much maligned and despised; for nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest, and those who honor God shall be honored by Him in the presence of men and angels. **(MB 32.3)**

“When men shall revile you, and persecute you,” (Matthew 5:11) said Jesus, “rejoice, and be exceeding glad.” (5:12) And He pointed His hearers to the prophets who had spoken in the name of the Lord, as “an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.” James 5:10. Abel, the very first Christian of Adam’s children, died a martyr. Enoch walked with God, and the world knew him not. Noah was mocked as a fanatic and an alarmist. “Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment.” “Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.” Hebrews 11:36, 35. **(MB 33.1)**

In every age God’s chosen messengers have been reviled and persecuted, yet through their affliction the knowledge of God has been spread abroad. Every disciple of Christ is to step into the ranks and carry forward the same work, knowing that its foes can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. God means that truth shall be brought to the front and become the subject of examination and discussion, even through the contempt placed upon it. The minds of the people must be agitated; every controversy, every reproach, every effort to restrict liberty of conscience, is God’s means of awakening minds that otherwise might slumber. **(MB 33.2)**

How often this result has been seen in the history of God’s messengers! When the noble and eloquent Stephen was stoned to death at the instigation of the Sanhedrin council, there was no

loss to the cause of the gospel. The light of heaven that glorified his face, the divine compassion breathed in his dying prayer, were as a sharp arrow of conviction to the bigoted Sanhedrist who stood by, and Saul, the persecuting Pharisee, became a chosen vessel to bear the name of Christ before Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. And long afterward Paul the aged wrote from his prison house at Rome: “Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife: ... not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds.... Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached.” Philippians 1:15-18. Through Paul’s imprisonment the gospel was spread abroad, and souls were won for Christ in the very palace of the Caesars. By the efforts of Satan to destroy it, the “incorruptible” seed of the word of God, “which liveth and abideth forever” (1 Peter 1:23), is sown in the hearts of men; through the reproach and persecution of His children the name of Christ is magnified and souls are saved. **(MB 33.3)**

Great is the reward in heaven of those who are witnesses for Christ through persecution and reproach. While the people are looking for earthly good, Jesus points them to a heavenly reward. But He does not place it all in the future life; it begins here. The Lord appeared of old time to Abraham and said, “*I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.*” Genesis 15:1. This is the reward of all who follow Christ. Jehovah Immanuel—He “in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” in whom dwells “all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:3, 9)—to be brought into sympathy with Him, to know Him, to possess Him, as the heart opens more and more to receive His attributes; to know His love and power, to possess the unsearchable riches of Christ, to comprehend more and more “what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:18, 19)—“this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the Lord.” Isaiah 54:17. **(MB 34.1)**

It was this joy that filled the hearts of Paul and Silas when they prayed and sang praises to God at midnight in the Philippian dungeon. Christ was beside them there, and the light of His presence irradiated the gloom with the glory of the courts above. From Rome, Paul wrote, unmindful of his fetters as he saw the spread of the gospel, “I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.” Philippians 1:18. And the very words of Christ upon the mount are re-echoed in Paul’s message to the Philippian church, in the midst of their persecutions, “Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.” Philippians 4:4. **(MB 35.1)**