

“Following God’s Timetable”

April 12, 2026

John 7:1-13

I. Introduction

God established 3 festivals or celebrations that all Jewish males were required to attend. [Deut. 16:16](#) says, “Three times a year all your men must appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles.” As you may remember from the celebration of Palm Sunday and Easter, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which begins with Passover, remembered or celebrated Israel’s deliverance from Egypt and how the Lord brought the Israelites out of Egypt in haste. The Feast of Weeks—also called Pentecost—occurred 50 days after Passover. It was a celebration of thankfulness to God for the beginning of the wheat harvest. Finally, the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths, also called the Feast of Ingathering, looked back to Israel’s 40-year journey through the wilderness and their need to live in tents or tabernacles. It also celebrated the harvest of the grapes and olives.

Following on the heels of the Feast of Trumpets or Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year’s day) and the solemn Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur, the Feast of Tabernacles was a festive time for the people. During this 7-day feast, the people built and lived in shelters made of branches just as their ancestors had done as they wandered through the wilderness for 40 years following their escape from Egypt. City dwellers built their booths or “tabernacles” on the roofs of their houses, or in the streets or town squares. Those in the country built them in their fields. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, at the time of Christ, the Feast of Tabernacles was the most popular of the 3 major Jewish festivals.

During the Feast of Tabernacles, the temple area itself was illuminated by large candlesticks to remind the people of the pillar of fire that guided the Israelites during their 40 years of wandering in the Wilderness. Also, each day of the feast, the priests would carry water from the Pool of Siloam and pour it out using a golden vessel, reminding the Jews of the miraculous provision of water from the rock. [Turn to Exodus 17:1-7.](#)

This particular time and feast may have been a jubilant time for the people, but it was a difficult time for Jesus—it marked the beginning of the open and violent opposition to Him and His ministry. Ever since He had healed the paralytic on the Sabbath (as recorded in John 5), the Jewish leaders had grown in their desire to kill Jesus—John 5:18 says, “But for this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him, not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own father, making himself equal to God.” So, John wrote that “Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to take his life.” But there was a problem—He couldn’t remain in Galilee and also observe the Feast of Tabernacles as required by God.

John 7 can be divided into 3 sections: the beginning of the feast (vv. 1-13); the middle of the feast (vv. 14-36); the end of the feast (vv. 37-52). This morning, we’ll consider the first section: the beginning of the feast, where we see the wrong time and the right time.

II. The Beginning of the Feast

A. The Wrong Time As he has done before, John made a jump in time with the phrase “after this.” According to John 6:4, the events described in chapter 6 occurred when “the Jewish Passover was near,” i.e. in April. Chapter 7 occurred “when the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles or Booths was near.” Since the Feast of Tabernacles occurs in October, there is a gap of about 6 months between chapters 6 and 7 of the Gospel of John. Matthew chapters 15-18, Mark chapters 7-9, and Luke chapter 9 recorded miracles and teachings of Jesus during this time, but John didn’t. He wasn’t writing a biography of Jesus. John’s purpose was to show that Jesus was the Son of God and the Messiah, so he picked and chose those things that were proofs of this (John 20:30-31).

During the months between Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus spent most of the time discipling the Twelve. It was during this time that, for the first time, Jesus taught about His crucifixion and resurrection—turn to part of Matthew’s record of this 6-month period--turn to Matthew 16:21. Jesus also revealed to the inner circle, that is to Peter, James, and John, a glimpse of His divine glory at the Mount of

Transfiguration recorded in [Matthew 17:1-8](#). Jesus knew God's timetable. He knew He had less than a year to train these men to carry out the Great Commission before He would ascend to heaven.

Now was the wrong time for Jesus to go openly to Jerusalem. As God's Passover Lamb, Jesus' death had to be at Passover and not at any other time. Jesus knew that the Jewish leaders wanted to kill Him now. If He went openly to the Feast of Tabernacles, He would be killed at the wrong time. Jesus had come to die but as Paul wrote in [Romans 5:6](#), "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly." "At just the right time," this was the wrong time in God's Timetable.

B. The brothers' challenge. Mary had had other children with Joseph as their natural father—[turn to Mark 6:1-6](#). Jesus was their half-brother. Since the Feast of Tabernacles was near and since all Jewish males were required to attend, Jesus' brothers assumed that He would soon leave Galilee and go to Judea to celebrate it. They challenged Jesus to perform His miracles openly on the grand stage of Jerusalem. Here He would become "*known*" and He could recoup the disciples that had left Him. Their statement, "No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret," would have made perfect sense if Jesus were the political Messiah everyone was waiting for. To remain secluded in Galilee seemed to be inconsistent with His claims of being the Messiah. Just like the crowd that wanted to make Jesus king, the brothers, also, misunderstood His mission. Their final statement, "Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world," demonstrated their doubt and unbelief. It sounded a lot like Satan's challenge to Jesus in the Wilderness in [Matthew 4:1-7](#) when Satan said, "IF you are the Son of God . . ."

It seems unbelievable that Jesus' brothers could have lived with Him all those years and not realize the uniqueness of Jesus. They knew of His miracles. They had grown up with Him. They had the best opportunity to watch Him and test Him and yet they were still unbelievers. John wrote that "**his own brothers did not believe in Him**" and this explains why they spoke to Him, really challenged Him, the way they did. Earlier in His ministry, their unbelief had led them to think He had lost His mind--[Mark 3:21](#) says, "When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him for they said, 'He is out of his mind.'" And nothing Jesus had done or said since then had changed their hard hearts. Miracles don't lead necessarily

to faith. It would take Jesus' resurrection from the dead to finally persuade them that He was the Son of God. Acts 1:14 says that, after Jesus ascended into heaven, disciples of Jesus gathered in an upper room where "They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers." *The Books of James and Jude were written by Jesus' brothers after His resurrection and their salvation.*

C. Following the brothers' challenge, there was **Jesus' Response** and it wasn't what they expected. Jesus didn't take their advice. Jesus resisted the pressure from His family to "reveal Himself." He said, "The right time for me has not yet come." He wasn't following the wisdom of the world but the wisdom of God. He was following God's Timetable.

In comparison, Jesus said that for His brothers "any time is right." As part of the unbelieving world, they weren't concerned about following God's Timetable. They knew nothing of God's plans or purposes. Any time would do for them to go to the feast. Unlike Jesus, they wouldn't face any hostility at Jerusalem from the Jewish authorities. As Jesus said, the "world could not hate" them, since they were part of the world, and the world loves it own.

On the other hand, the world hates Jesus. The reason is that Jesus is the Light of the World. John 1:9 says, "The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world." Jesus reveals sin. 1 John 5:19 says, "We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one." And since the world is controlled by Satan, the activities and priorities of the world are inherently sinful. When believers testify against the world and confront its wickedness, like Jesus did, they arouse hostility and hatred as well. Turn to John 15:18-20.

Since the time was not yet right, Jesus refused His brothers' challenge and told them to "go to the Feast" without Him. Jesus chose not to go with them in a large caravan of people. Such an entry would cause a confrontation with the Jewish authorities and could result in Jesus' death before the proper time which was 6 months later at Passover. So, Jesus stayed in Galilee a little longer.

D. The Right Time “However, after his brothers had left for the Feast, at just right time, he went also, not publicly, but in secret.” This way He wouldn’t call attention to Himself. Luke 9:51-56 seems to imply that He went through Samaria, which few Jews were willing to do. This, too, allowed Him to avoid unnecessary publicity. Meanwhile, the events in Jerusalem confirmed the wisdom of Jesus’ caution. John wrote that many were seeking Jesus. The first group seeking Jesus was “the Jews”—i.e., the Jewish leaders—the Sadducees, the Pharisees, and the Sanhedrin. These men may have disagreed theologically, but they agreed on one thing, Jesus Christ had to die.

The second group was “the crowds.” This would be the festival crowds that were in Jerusalem to worship and celebrate. Those that lived in Jerusalem knew where the Jewish leadership stood. But those from outside the city were not necessarily up to date on all news but they soon learned that Jesus was considered a lawbreaker by the officials. “Some said, ‘He is a good man.’ Others replied, ‘No, he deceives the people.’” Actually, both views of Jesus were incorrect. Jesus wasn’t merely a “good man” since good men do not claim to be God. Nor did He deceive others—deceivers do not perform the supernatural miracles that Jesus did.

Sadly though, it was the second view—the view that Jesus was a deceiver—that became the opinion of the majority. But whether they thought He was good man or a deceiver, “no one would say anything publicly for fear of the Jews.” Although the Sanhedrin had not yet issued a formal judgment regarding Jesus, it was clear that the authorities rejected Him. So, the people were careful with how and where they spoke. To contradict their religious leaders could lead to severe consequences, including excommunication from the synagogue.

III. Conclusion

As this account in John’s Gospel shows, Jesus followed God’s timetable perfectly. He always performed God’s will exactly as the Father wished. Those who are true followers of Christ also have the ability to follow God’s will—it’s been given both in His Word and by His Spirit. His Word informs believers as to what His will is—David wrote in Psalm 40:8, “I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is

within my heart.” The Bible tells of God’s will. God’s Spirit—the Holy Spirit—gives believers the power to obey His will—Psalm 143:10 says, “Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.” Turn to 1 Peter 2:9-12. If you are to know the will of God, if you want to live the life He has called you to, you need to study His Word. 2 Timothy 2:15 says, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” Regarding the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 5:18 says, “Be filled with the Spirit.” Romans 8:9 adds, “You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.” As in so many other things, it’s up to you. If you want to hear the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21), you need to study and obey the Word of God and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.

There is another lesson in these verses—it is rather naïve for Christians to think that the “Good News” of the Gospel is going to be warmly accepted whenever and wherever it is given in the world. As we read earlier, Jesus said that the world hates Him and will hate His disciples because they “testify that what the world does is evil.” The Gospel will not be warmly accepted everywhere. 2 Tim. 3:12 says, “In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” Just like the Jewish leaders and many of the crowd, the world is in rebellion. When the Gospel is preached, Jesus and His Word go on trial. Every hearer must choose which voice he or she will embrace, which “side” he or she will choose—there is no middle ground. In Luke 11:23 Jesus said, “Whoever is not with me is against me.” But regardless, Jesus gave us the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 3:7, we are to sow the seed, “but only God, who makes things grow. Romans 10:14 says, “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” This is why 1 Peter 3:15 says, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have.” True disciples must share the Gospel.