

CHAPTER 7

In this chapter we have,

I. Christ's declining for some time to appear publicly in Judea (v. 1).

II. His design to go up to Jerusalem at the feast of tabernacles, and his discourse with his kindred in Galilee concerning his going up to this feast (v. 2-13).

III. His preaching publicly in the temple at that feast.

1. In the midst of the feast (v. 14, 15). We have his discourse with the Jews,

(1.) Concerning his doctrine (v. 16-18).

(2.) Concerning the crime of sabbath-breaking laid to his charge (v. 19-24).

(3.) Concerning himself, both whence he came and whither he was going (v. 25-36).

2. On the last day of the feast.

(1.) His gracious invitation to poor souls to come to him (v. 37-39).

(2.) The reception that it met with.

[1.] Many of the people disputed about it (v. 40-44).

[2.] The chief priests would have brought him into trouble for it, but were first disappointed by their officers (v. 45-49) and then silenced by one of their own court (v. 50-53).

JOHN 7:1-13

CHRIST'S DISCOURSE WITH HIS BRETHREN

We have here,

I. The reason given why Christ spent more of his time in Galilee than in Judea (v. 1): *because the Jews*, the people in Judea and Jerusalem, sought to *kill him*, for curing the impotent man on the sabbath day, ~~John~~ John 5:16. They thought to be the death of him, either by a popular tumult or by a legal prosecution, in consideration of which he kept at a distance in

another part of the country, very much out of the lines of Jerusalem's communication. It is not said, He *durst not*, but, He *would not*, walk in Jewry; it was not through fear and cowardice that he declined it, but in *prudence*, because his hour was not yet come. Note,

1. Gospel light is justly *taken away* from those that endeavour to extinguish it. Christ will withdraw from those that drive him from them, will hide his face from those that spit in it, and justly shut up his bowels from those who spurn at them.

2. In times of imminent peril it is not only *allowable*, but *advisable*, to *withdraw* and *abscond* for our own safety and preservation, and to choose the service of those places which are least perilous, ^{<1623>}Matthew 10:23. *Then*, and not till *then*, we are called to expose and lay down our lives, when we cannot save them without sin.

3. If the providence of God casts persons of *merit* into places of obscurity and little note, it must not be thought strange; it was the lot of our Master himself. He who was fit to have sat in the highest of Moses's seats willingly walked in Galilee among the ordinary sort of people. Observe, He did not sit still in Galilee, nor bury himself alive there, but *walked*; he went about doing good. When we cannot do *what* and *where* we *would*, we must do *what* and *where* we *can*.

II. The approach of the *feast of tabernacles* (v. 2), one of the three solemnities which called for the personal attendance of all the males at Jerusalem; see the institution of it, ^{<1623>}Leviticus 23:34, etc., and the revival of it after a long disuse, ^{<1684>}Nehemiah 8:14. It was intended to be both a *memorial* of the tabernacle state of Israel in the wilderness, and a *figure* of the tabernacle state of God's spiritual Israel in this world. This feast, which was instituted so many hundred years before, was still religiously observed. Note, Divine institutions are never antiquated, nor go out of date, by length of time: nor must wilderness mercies ever be forgotten. But it is called the *Jews' feast*, because it was now shortly to be *abolished*, as a mere Jewish thing, and left to them that *served the tabernacle*.

III. Christ's discourse with his *brethren*, some of his kindred, whether by his mother or his supposed father is not certain; but they were such as pretended to have an interest in him, and therefore interposed to advise him in his conduct. And observe,

1. Their ambition and vain-glory in urging him to make a more public appearance than he did: “*Depart hence,*” said they, “*and go into Judea* (v. 3), where thou wilt make a better figure than thou canst here.”

(1.) They give two reasons for this advice:

[1.] That it would be an encouragement to those in and about Jerusalem who had a respect for him; for, expecting his temporal kingdom, the royal seat of which they concluded must be at Jerusalem, they would have had the disciples *there* particularly countenanced, and thought the time he spent among his Galilean disciples wasted and thrown away, and his miracles turning to no account unless those at Jerusalem saw them. Or, “That *thy disciples*, all of them in general, who will be gathered at Jerusalem to keep the feast, may *see thy works*, and not, as here, a few at one time and a few at another.”

[2.] That it would be for the advancement of his name and honour: *There is no man that does any thing in secret* if he himself *seeks to be known* openly. They took it for granted that Christ sought to make himself known, and therefore thought it absurd for him to conceal his miracles: “*If thou do these things*, if thou be so well able to gain the applause of the people and the approbation of the rulers by thy miracles, venture abroad, and *show thyself to the world*. Supported with these credentials, thou canst not fail of acceptance, and therefore it is high time to set up for an interest, and to think of being *great*.”

(2.) One would not think there was any harm in this advice, and yet the evangelist noted it is an evidence of their infidelity: *For neither did his brethren believe in him* (v. 5), if they had, they would not have said this. Observe,

[1.] It was an honour to be of the kindred of Christ, but no *saving* honour; they that hear his word and keep it are the kindred he values. Surely grace runs in no blood in the world, when not in that of Christ's family.

[2.] It was a sign that Christ did not aim at any secular interest, for then his kindred would have struck in with him, and he would have secured them first.

[3.] There were those who were akin to Christ according to the flesh who did believe in him (three of the twelve were *his brethren*), and yet others, as nearly allied to him as they, did not believe in him. Many that have the

same external privileges and advantages do not make the same use of them. But,

(3.) What was there amiss in the advice which they gave him? I answer,

[1.] It was a piece of presumption for them to prescribe to Christ, and to teach him what measures to take; it was a sign that they *did not believe him* able to guide them, when they did not think him sufficient to guide himself.

[2.] They discovered a great carelessness about his safety, when they would have him go to Judea, where they knew the Jews sought to kill him. Those that believed in him, and loved him, dissuaded him from Judea, ~~John~~ John 11:8.

[3.] Some think they hoped that if his miracles were wrought at Jerusalem the Pharisees and rulers would try them, and discover some cheat in them, which would justify their unbelief. So. Dr. Whitby.

[4.] Perhaps they were weary of his company in Galilee (for *are not all these that speak Galileans?*) and this was, in effect, a desire that he would *depart out of their coasts*.

[5.] They causelessly insinuate that he neglected his disciples, and denied them such a *sight of his works* as was necessary to the support of their faith.

[6.] They tacitly reproach him as *mean-spirited*, that he durst not enter the lists with the great men, nor trust himself upon the stage of public action, which, if he had any courage and *greatness of soul*, he would do, and not sneak thus and skulk in a corner; thus Christ's humility, and his humiliation, and the small figure which his religion has usually made in the world, have been often turned to the reproach of both *him* and *it*.

[7.] They seem to question the truth of the miracles he wrought, in saying, "*If thou do these things*, if they will bear the test of a public scrutiny in the courts above, produce them there."

[8.] They think Christ altogether such a one as themselves, as subject as they to worldly policy, and as desirous as they to *make a fair show in the flesh*; whereas he sought not honour from men.

[9.] Self was at the bottom of all; they hoped, if he would make himself as great as he might, they, being his kinsmen, should share in his honour, and have respect paid them for his sake. Note, *First*, Many carnal people go to public ordinances, to worship at the feast, only to *show themselves*, and all their care is to make a *good appearance*, to present themselves handsomely to the world. *Secondly*, Many that seem to seek Christ's honour do really therein seek their own, and make it serve a turn for themselves.

2. The prudence and humility of our Lord Jesus, which appeared in his answer to the advice his brethren gave him, v. 6-8. Though there were so many base insinuations in it, he answered them mildly. Note, Even that which is said without *reason* should be answered without *passion*; we should learn of our Master to reply with meekness even to that which is most *impertinent* and *imperious*, and, where it is easy to find much amiss, to seem not to see it, and wink at the affront. They expected Christ's company with them to the feast, perhaps hoping he would bear their charges: but here,

(1.) He shows the difference between himself and them, in two things: —

[1.] His *time* was *set*, so was not *theirs*: *My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready*. Understand it of the time of his going up to the feast. It was an indifferent thing to them when they went, for they had nothing of moment to do either where they were, to *detain* them *there*, or where they were going, to *hasten* them *thither*; but every minute of Christ's time was precious, and had its own particular business allotted to it. He had some work yet to do in Galilee before he left the country: in the harmony of the gospels betwixt this *motion* made by his kindred and his *going up* to this feast comes in the story of his sending forth the seventy disciples (Luke 10:1, etc.), which was an affair of very great consequence; his time is *not yet*, for that must be done first. Those who live useless lives have *their time always ready*; they can go and come when they please. But those whose *time* is filled up with *duty* will often find themselves *straitened*, and they have *not yet time* for that which others can do *at any time*. Those who are made the servants of God, as all men are, and who have made themselves the servants of all, as all useful men have, must not expect not covet to be *masters of their own time*. The confinement of business is a thousand times better than the liberty of idleness. or, it may be meant of the *time* of his appearing publicly at Jerusalem; Christ, who knows all men

and all things, knew that the best and most proper time for it would be about the *middle of the feast*. We, who are ignorant and short-sighted, are apt to prescribe to him, and to think he should deliver his people, and so show himself now. The present time is *our* time, but he is fittest to judge, and, it may be, *his time is not yet come*; his people are not yet ready for deliverance, nor his enemies ripe for ruin; let us therefore wait with patience for *his time*, for all he does will be most glorious in its season.

[2.] His *life* was *sought*, so was not *theirs*, v. 7. They, in *showing themselves* to the world, did not expose themselves: “*The world cannot hate you, for you are of the world, its children, its servants, and in with its interests; and no doubt the world will love its own;*” see ~~John~~ John 15:19. Unholy souls, whom the holy God *cannot love*, the world that lies in wickedness *cannot hate*; but Christ, in showing himself to the world, laid himself open to the greatest danger; for *me it hateth*. Christ was not only *slighted*, as inconsiderable in the world (*the world knew him not*), but *hated*, as if he had been hurtful to the world; thus ill was he requited for his love to the world: reigning sin is a rooted antipathy and enmity to Christ. But why did the world hate Christ? What evil had he done to it? Had he, like Alexander, under colour of conquering it, laid it waste? “No, but because” (saith he) “*I testify of it, that the works of it are evil.*” Note, *First*, The works of an evil world are *evil works*; as the tree is, so are the fruits: it is a dark world, and an apostate world, and its works are works of darkness and rebellion. *Secondly*, Our Lord Jesus, both by himself and by his ministers, did and will both discover and testify against the evil works of this wicked world. *Thirdly*, It is a great uneasiness and provocation to the world to be convicted of the evil of its works. It is for the honour of virtue and piety that those who are impious and vicious do not care for hearing of it, for their own consciences make them *ashamed* of the turpitude there is *in* sin and *afraid* of the punishment that follows *after* sin. *Fourthly*, Whatever is *pretended*, the *real* cause of the world's enmity to the gospel is the testimony it bears against sin and sinners. Christ's witnesses by their doctrine and conversation *torment* those that dwell on the earth, and therefore are treated so barbarously, ~~Revelation~~ Revelation 11:10. But it is better to incur the world's hatred, by testifying against its wickedness, than gain its good-will by going down the stream with it.

(2.) He dismisses them, with a design to stay behind for some time in Galilee (v. 8): *Go you up to this feast, I go not up yet.*

[1.] He allows their going to the feast, though they were carnal and hypocritical in it. Note, Even those who go not to holy ordinances with right affections and sincere intentions must not be hindered nor discouraged from going; who knows but they may be wrought upon there?

[2.] He denies them his company when they went to the feast, because they were carnal and hypocritical. Those who go to ordinances for ostentation, or to serve some secular purpose, go without Christ, and will speed accordingly. How sad is the condition of that man, though he reckon himself akin to Christ, to whom he saith, “*Go up to such an ordinance, Go pray, Go hear the word, Go receive the sacrament, but I go not up with thee? Go thou and appear before God, but I will not appear for thee,*” as ~~Exo~~ Exodus 33:1-3. But, if the presence of Christ go not with us, to what purpose should we go up? *Go you up, I go not up.* When we are going to, or coming from, solemn ordinances, it becomes us to be careful what company we *have* and *choose*, and to avoid that which is vain and carnal, lest the coal of good affections be quenched by corrupt communication. *I go not up yet to this feast;* he does not say, I will not go up at all, but not yet. There may be reasons for deferring a particular duty, which yet must not be wholly omitted or laid aside; see ~~Num~~ Numbers 9:6-11. The reason he gives is, *My time is not yet fully come.* Note, Our Lord Jesus is very exact and punctual in knowing and keeping his time, and, as it was the time *fixed*, so it was the *best* time.

3. Christ's continuance in Galilee till his *full time* was come, v. 9. He, saying these things to them (*tauta de eipon*) *abode still in Galilee;* because of this discourse he continued there; for,

(1.) He would not be influenced by those who advised him to seek honour from men, nor go along with those who put him upon making a figure; he would not seem to countenance the temptation.

(2.) He would not depart from his own purpose. He had said, upon a clear foresight and mature deliberation, that he would not go up yet to this feast, and therefore he abode still in Galilee. It becomes the followers of Christ thus to be *steady*, and not to *use lightness*.

4. His going up to the feast when his time was come. Observe,

(1.) *When he went: When his brethren were gone up.* He would not go up *with them*, lest they should make a noise and disturbance, under pretence

of *showing him to the world*; whereas it agreed both with the prediction and with his spirit not to *strive nor cry*, nor let his *voice be heard in the streets*, ^{<340>}Isaiah 42:2. But he went up *after them*. We may lawfully join in the same religious worship with those with whom we should yet decline an intimate acquaintance and converse; for the blessing of ordinances depends upon the grace of God, and not upon the grace of our fellow-worshippers. His carnal brethren went up *first*, and then he went. Note, In the external performances of religion it is possible that formal hypocrites may *get the start* of those that are sincere. Many come *first to the temple* who are brought thither by vain-glory, and go thence unjustified, as he, ^{<401>}Luke 18:11. It is not, Who comes *first*? that will be the question, but, Who comes *fittest*? If we bring our hearts *with us*, it is no matter who gets *before us*.

(2.) How he went, *os en krypto* — *as if he were hiding himself: not openly, but as it were in secret*, rather for fear of *giving offence* than of *receiving injury*. He went up to the feast, because it was an opportunity of honouring God and doing good; but he went up as it were in secret, because he would not provoke the government. Note, Provided the work of God be done effectually, it is best done when done with *least noise*. The kingdom of God need not come *with observation*, ^{<471>}Luke 17:20. We may do the work of God *privately*, and yet not do it *deceitfully*.

5. The great expectation that there was of him among the Jews at Jerusalem, v. 11-14. Having formerly come up to the feasts, and signaled himself by the miracles he wrought, he had made himself the subject of much discourse and observation.

(1.) They could not but think of him (v. 11): *The Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he?*

[1.] The common people longed to see him there, that they might have their curiosity gratified with the sight of his person and miracles. They did not think it worth while to go to him into Galilee, though if they had they would not have lost their labour, but they hoped the feast would bring him to Jerusalem, and then they should see him. If an opportunity of acquaintance with Christ come to their door, they can like it well enough. They *sought him at the feast*. When we attend upon God in his holy ordinances, we should seek Christ in them, seek him at the gospel feasts. Those who would *see* Christ at a feast must *seek* him there. Or,

[2.] Perhaps it was his enemies that were thus waiting an opportunity to seize him, and, if possible, to put an effectual stop to his progress. They said, *Where is he? pou esin ekeinos* — *where is that fellow?* Thus scornfully and contemptibly do they speak of him. When they should have welcomed the feast as an opportunity of serving God, they were glad of it as an opportunity of persecuting Christ. Thus Saul hoped to slay David at the new moon, ^{<107>}1 Samuel 20:27. Those who seek *opportunity to sin* in solemn assemblies for religious worship profane God's ordinances to the last degree, and defy him upon his own ground; it is like striking *within the verge of the court*.

(2.) The people differed much in their sentiments concerning him (v. 12): *There was much murmuring, or muttering rather, among the people concerning him*. The enmity of the rulers against Christ, and their enquiries after him, caused him to be so much the more talked of and observed among the people. This ground the gospel of Christ has got by the opposition made to it, that it has been the more enquired into, and, by being *every where spoken against*, it has come to be every where *spoken of*, and by this means has been spread the further, and the merits of his cause have been the more *searched into*. This murmuring was not *against* Christ, but *concerning* him; some murmured at the rulers, because they did not countenance and encourage him: others murmured at them, because they did not silence and restrain him. Some murmured that he had so great an interest in Galilee; others, that he had so little interest in Jerusalem. Note, Christ and his religion have been, and will be, the subject of much controversy and debate, ^{<125>}Luke 12:51. 52. If all would agree to entertain Christ as they ought, there would be perfect peace; but, when some receive the light and others resolve against it, there will be murmuring. The *bones in the valley*, while they were *dead and dry*, lay quiet; but when it was said unto them, *Live*, there was *a noise and a shaking*, ^{<300>}Ezekiel 37:7. But the noise and rencounter of liberty and business are preferable, surely, to the silence and agreement of a prison. Now what were the sentiments of the people concerning him?

[1.] Some said, *he is a good man*. This was a truth, but it was far short of being the *whole truth*. He was not only a *good man*, but more than a man, he was the *Son of God*. Many who have no *ill* thoughts of Christ have yet *low* thoughts of him, and scarcely honour him, even when they speak well of him, because they do not *say enough*; yet indeed it was his honour, and

the reproach of those who persecuted him, that even those who would not believe him to be the Messiah could not but own he was a *good man*.

[2.] Others said, *Nay, but he deceiveth the people*; if this had been true, he had been a very bad man. The doctrine he preached was sound, and could not be contested; his miracles were real, and could not be disproved; his conversation was manifestly holy and good; and yet it must be taken for granted, notwithstanding, that there was some undiscovered cheat at the bottom, because it was the interest of the chief priests to oppose him and run him down. Such murmuring as there was among the Jews concerning Christ there is still among us: the Socinians say, *He is a good man*, and further they say not; the *deists* will not allow this, but say, *He deceived the people*. Thus some depreciate him, others abuse him, but *great is the truth*.

[3.] They were frightened by their superiors from speaking much of him (v. 13): *No man spoke openly of him, for fear of the Jews*. Either, *First*, They durst not openly speak *well* of him. While any one was at liberty to censure and reproach him, none durst vindicate him. Or, *Secondly*, They durst not speak *at all* of him openly. Because nothing could justly be said *against* him, they would not suffer any thing to be said *of* him. It was a crime to name him. Thus many have aimed to suppress truth, under colour of silencing disputes about it, and would have all talk of religion hushed, in hopes thereby to bury in oblivion religion itself.

JOHN 7:14-36

CHRIST AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

Here is,

I. Christ's public preaching in the temple (v. 14): He *went up into the temple, and taught*, according to his custom when he was at Jerusalem. His business was to preach the gospel of the kingdom, and he did it in every place of concourse. His sermon is not recorded, because, probably, it was to the same purport with the sermons he had preached in Galilee, which were recorded by the other evangelists. For the gospel is the same to the *plain* and to the *polite*. But that which is observable here is that it was *about the midst of the feast*; the fourth or fifth day of the eight. Whether he did not come up to Jerusalem till the middle of the feast, or whether he

came up at the beginning, but kept private till now, is not certain. But, *Query*, Why did he not go to the temple *sooner*, to preach? *Answer*,

1. Because the people would have more leisure to hear him, and, it might be hoped, would be better disposed to hear him, when they had spent some days in their booths, as they did at the feast of tabernacles.

2. Because he would choose to appear when both his friends and his enemies had done looking for him; and so give a specimen of the method he would observe in his appearances, which is to come at midnight, ^{<487>}Matthew 25:6. But why did he appear thus publicly now? Surely it was to *shame* his persecutors, the chief priests and elders.

(1.) By showing that, though they were very bitter against him, yet he did not fear them, nor their power. See ^{<2807>}Isaiah 50:7, 8.

(2.) By taking their work out of their hands. Their office was to teach the people in the temple, and particularly at the *feast of tabernacles*, ^{<487>}Nehemiah 8:17, 18. But they either did not teach them at all or taught for doctrines the commandments of men, and therefore he goes up to the temple and teaches the people. When the shepherds of Israel made a prey of the flock it was time for the chief Shepherd to appear, as was promised. ^{<542>}Ezekiel 34:22, 23; ^{<381>}Malachi 3:1.

II. His discourse with the Jews hereupon; and the conference is reducible to four heads:

1. Concerning *his doctrine*. See here,

(1.) How the Jews *admired* it (v. 15): *They marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?* Observe here,

[1.] That our Lord Jesus was not educated in the schools of the prophets, or at the feet of the rabbin; not only did not travel for learning, as the philosophers did, but did not make any use of the schools and academies in his own country. Moses was taught the learning of the Egyptians, but Christ was not taught so much as the learning of the Jews; having received the Spirit *without measure*, he needed not receive any knowledge *from man, or by man*. At the time of Christ's appearing, learning flourished both in the Roman empire and in the Jewish church more than in any age before or since, and in such a time of enquiry Christ chose to establish his

religion, not in an illiterate age, lest it should look like a design to impose upon the world; yet he himself studied not the learning then in vogue.

[2.] That Christ *had letters*, though he had never *learned* them; was mighty in the scriptures, though he never had any doctor of the law for his tutor. It is necessary that Christ's ministers should have *learning*, as he had; and since they cannot expect to have it as he had it, by inspiration, they must take pains to get it in an ordinary way.

[3.] That Christ's having learning, though he had not been taught it, made him truly great and wonderful; the Jews speak of it here with wonder. *First*, Some, it is likely, took notice of it to his honour: He that had no human learning, and yet so far excelled all that had, certainly must be endued with a divine knowledge. *Secondly*, Others, probably, mentioned it in disparagement and contempt of him: Whatever he *seems* to have, he cannot really have any true learning, for he was never at the university, nor took his degree. *Thirdly*, Some perhaps suggested that he had got his learning by magic arts, or some unlawful means or other. Since they know not how he could be a scholar, they will think him a conjurer.

(2.) What he *asserted* concerning it; three things: —

[1.] That his *doctrine is divine* (v. 16): *My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me*. They were offended because he undertook to *teach* though he had never learned, in answer to which he tells them that his doctrine was such as was not to be *learned*, for it was not the product of *human thought* and natural powers enlarged and elevated by reading and conversation, but it was a *divine revelation*. As God, equal with the Father, he might truly have said, *My doctrine is mine, and his that sent me*; but being now in his estate of humiliation, and being, as Mediator, God's servant, it was more congruous to say, "*My doctrine is not mine, not mine only, nor mine originally, as man and mediator, but his that sent me; it does not centre in myself, nor lead ultimately to myself, but to him that sent me.*" God had promised concerning the great prophet that he would *put his words into his mouth* (~~4588~~ Deuteronomy 18:18), to which Christ seems here to refer. Note, It is the comfort of those who embrace Christ's doctrine, and the condemnation of those who reject it, that it is a divine doctrine: it is *of God and not of man*.

[2.] That the most competent judges of the truth and divine authority of Christ's doctrine are those that with a sincere and upright heart desire and

endeavour to do the will of God (v. 17): *If any man be willing to do the will of God, have his will melted into the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself.* Observe here, *First*, What the question is, concerning the doctrine of Christ, *whether it be of God* or no; whether the gospel be a divine revelation or an imposture. Christ himself was willing to have his doctrine enquired into, whether it were of God or no, much more should his ministers; and we are concerned to examine what grounds we go upon, for, if we be deceived, we are miserably deceived. *Secondly*, Who are likely to succeed in this search: those that *do the will of God*, at least are desirous to do it. Now see,

1. Who they are that *will do the will of God*. They are such as are *impartial* in their enquiries concerning the will of God, and are not biassed by any lust or interest, and such as are resolved by the grace of God, when they find out what the will of God is, to conform to it. They are such as have an honest principle of regard to God, and are truly desirous to glorify and please him.

2. Whence it is that such a one shall know of the truth of Christ's doctrine.

(1.) Christ has promised to *give knowledge* to such; he hath said, *He shall know*, and he can give an understanding. Those who improve the light they have, and carefully live up to it, shall be secured by divine grace from destructive mistakes.

(2.) They are disposed and prepared to *receive* that knowledge. He that is inclined to submit to the rules of the divine law is disposed to admit the rays of divine light. *To him that has* shall be given; those have a *good understanding that do his commandments*, ~~EB10~~ Psalm 111:10. Those who *resemble* God are most likely to *understand* him.

[3.] That hereby it appeared that Christ, as a teacher, did not speak *of himself*, because he did not seek himself, v. 18. *First*, See here the character of a deceiver: he *seeketh his own glory*, which is a sign that he *speaks of himself*, as the false Christs and false prophets did. Here is the description of the *cheat*: they *speak of themselves*, and have no commission nor instructions from God; no warrant but their own will, no inspiration but their own imagination, their own policy and artifice. Ambassadors *speak not of themselves*; those ministers disclaim that

character who glory in this that they *speaking of themselves*. But see the discovery of the cheat; by this their pretensions are disproved, they consult purely *their own glory*; self-seekers are self-speakers. Those who speak *from God* will speak *for God*, and for his glory; those who aim at their own preferment and interest make it to appear that they had no commission from God. *Secondly*, See the contrary character Christ gives of himself and his doctrine: *He that seeks his glory that sent him*, as I do, makes it to appear that *he is true*.

1. He was *sent of God*. Those teachers, and those only, who are sent of God, are to be received and entertained by us. Those who bring a divine message must prove a divine mission, either by special revelation or by regular institution.

2. He *sought the glory of God*. It was both the tendency of his doctrine and the tenour of his whole conversation to *glorify God*.

3. This was a proof that he was *true*, and there was *no unrighteousness in him*. False teachers are most *unrighteous*; they are unjust to God whose name they abuse, and unjust to the souls of men whom they impose upon. There cannot be a greater piece of unrighteousness than this. But Christ made it appear that he was *true*, that he was really what he said he was, that there was *no unrighteousness* in him, no falsehood in his doctrine, no fallacy nor fraud in his dealings with us.

2. They discourse concerning the *crime* that was laid to his charge for curing the impotent man, and bidding him carry his bed on the sabbath day, for which they had formerly prosecuted him, and which was still the pretence of their enmity to him.

(1.) He argues against them by way of *recrimination*, convicting them of far worse practices, v. 19. How could they for shame censure him for a breach of the law of Moses, when they themselves were such notorious breakers of it? *Did not Moses give you the law?* And it was their privilege that they had the law, no nation had such a law; but it was their wickedness that *none of them kept the law*, that they rebelled against it, and lived contrary to it. Many that have the law given them, when they have it do not keep it. Their neglect of the law was universal: *None of you keepeth it*: neither those of them that were in *posts of honour*, who should have been most *knowing*, nor those who were in *posts of subjection*, who should have been most *obedient*. They boasted of the law, and pretended a

zeal for it, and were enraged at Christ for seeming to transgress it, and yet none of them kept it; like those who say that they are for the church, and yet never go to church. It was an aggravation of their wickedness, in persecuting Christ for breaking the law, that they themselves did not keep it: “*None of you keepeth the law, why then go ye about to kill me for not keeping it?*” Note, Those are commonly most censorious of others who are most faulty themselves. Thus hypocrites, who are forward to pull a mote out of their brother's eye, are not aware of a beam in their own. *Why go ye about to kill me?* Some take this as the evidence of their not keeping the law: “*You keep not the law; if you did, you would understand yourselves better than to go about to kill me for doing a good work.*” Those that support themselves and their interest by persecution and violence, whatever they pretend (though they may call themselves *custodes utriusque tabulae* — *the guardians of both tables*), are not keepers of the law of God. Chemnitius understands this as a reason why it was time to supersede the law of Moses by the gospel, because the law was found insufficient to *restrain sin*: “*Moses gave you the law, but you do not keep it, nor are kept by it from the greatest wickedness; there is therefore need of a clearer light and better law to be brought in; why then do you aim to kill me for introducing it?*”

Here the *people* rudely interrupted him in his discourse, and contradicted what he said (v. 20): *Thou has a devil; who goes about to kill thee?* This intimates,

[1.] The *good opinion* they had of their rulers, who, they think, would never attempt so atrocious a thing as to kill him; no, such a veneration they had for their elders and chief priests that they would swear for them they would do no harm to an innocent man. Probably the rulers had their little emissaries among the people who suggested this to them; many deny that wickedness which at the same time they are contriving.

[2.] The *ill opinion* they had of our Lord Jesus: “*Thou hast a devil, thou art possessed with a lying spirit, and art a bad man for saying so;*” so some: or rather, “*Thou art melancholy, and art a weak man; thou frightenest thyself with causeless fears, as hypochondriacal people are apt to do.*” Not only open frenzies, but silent melancholies, were then commonly imputed to the power of Satan. “*Thou art crazed, has a distempered brain.*” Let us not think it strange if the best of men are put under the worst of characters. To this vile calumny our Saviour returns no

direct answer, but seems as if he took no notice of it. Note, Those who would be like Christ must put up with affronts, and pass by the indignities and injuries done them; must not *regard* them, much less *resent* them, and least of all *revenge* them. *I, as a deaf man, heard not.* When Christ was *reviled*, he *reviled not again*,

(2.) He argues by way of appeal and vindication.

[1.] He appeals to *their own sentiments* of this miracle: “*I have done one work, and you all marvel*, v. 21. You cannot choose but marvel at it as truly great, and altogether supernatural; you must all own it to be marvellous.” Or, “Though I have done but *one work* that you have any colour to find fault with, yet you marvel, you are offended and displeased as if I had been guilty of some heinous or enormous crime.”

[2.] He appeals to their own practice in other instances: “*I have done one work on the sabbath, and it was done easily, with a word's speaking, and you all marvel, you make a mighty strange thing of it, that a religious man should dare do such a thing, whereas you yourselves many a time do that which is a much more servile work on the sabbath day, in the case of circumcision; if it be lawful for you, nay, and your duty, to circumcise a child on the sabbath day, when it happens to be the eighth day, as no doubt it is, much more was it lawful and good for me to heal a diseased man on that day.*” Observe,

First, The rise and origin of circumcision: *Moses gave you circumcision*, gave you the law concerning it. Here,

1. Circumcision is said to *be given*, and (v. 23) they are said to *receive* it; it was not imposed upon them as a yoke, but conferred upon them as a favour. Note, The ordinances of God, and particularly those which are seals of the covenant, are *gifts given to men*, and are to be received as such.

2. Moses is said to give it, because it was a part of that law which was *given by Moses*; yet, as Christ said of the manna (^{416} John 6:32), Moses did not give it them, but God; nay, and it was not of Moses first, but *of the fathers*, v. 22. Though it was incorporated into the Mosaic institution, yet it was ordained long before, for it was a seal of the righteousness of faith, and therefore commenced with the promise four hundred and thirty years before, ^{417} Galatians 3:17. The church

membership of believers and their seed was not of Moses or his law, and therefore did not fall with it; but was *of the fathers*, belonged to the patriarchal church, and was part of that blessing of Abraham which was to come upon the Gentiles, ~~<RB4>~~Galatians 3:14.

Secondly, The respect paid to the law of circumcision above that of the sabbath, in the constant practice of the Jewish church. The Jewish casuists frequently take notice of it, *Circumcisio et ejus sanatio pellit sabbatum* — *Circumcision and its cure drive away the sabbath*; so that if a child was born one sabbath day it was without fail circumcised the next. If then, when the *sabbath rest* was more strictly insisted on, yet those works were allowed which were *in ordine ad spiritualia* — *for the keeping up of religion*, much more are they allowed now under the gospel, when the stress is laid more upon the *sabbath work*.

Thirdly, The inference Christ draws hence in justification of himself, and of what he had done (v. 23): *A man-child on the sabbath day receives circumcision, that the law of circumcision might not be broken*; or, as the margin reads it, *without breaking the law*, namely, of the sabbath. Divine commands must be construed so as to agree with each other. “Now, if this be allowed by yourselves, how unreasonable are you, who are *angry with me because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day!*” *emoi cholate*. The word is used only here, from *choge* — *fel, gall*. They were angry at him with the greatest indignation; it was a spiteful anger, anger with gall in it. Note, It is very absurd and unreasonable for us to condemn others for that in which we justify ourselves. Observe the comparison Christ here makes between their *circumcising a child* and his *healing a man* on the sabbath day.

- 1.** Circumcision was but a ceremonial institution; it was *of the fathers* indeed, but not from the beginning; but what Christ did was a good work by the law of nature, a more excellent law than that which made circumcision a good work.
- 2.** Circumcision was a *bloody ordinance*, and *made sore*; but what Christ did was healing, and made whole. The law works pain, and, if that work may be done on the sabbath day, much more a gospel work, which produces peace.
- 3.** Especially considering that whereas, when they had circumcised a child, their care was only to heal up that part which was circumcised,

which might be done and yet the child remain under other illnesses, Christ had made this man *every whit whole*, *holon anthropon hygie* — *I have made the whole man healthful* and sound. The *whole body* was *healed*, for the disease affected the whole body; and it was a perfect cure, such as left no relics of the disease behind; nay, Christ not only healed his body, but his soul too, by that admonition, *Go, and sin no more*, and so indeed made the *whole man* sound, for the soul is the man. Circumcision indeed was intended for the good of the soul, and to make the *whole man* as it should be; but they had perverted it, and turned it into a mere carnal ordinance; but Christ accompanied his outward cures with inward grace, and so made them sacramental, and healed the *whole man*.

He concludes this argument with that rule (v. 24): *Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment*. This may be applied, either, *First*, In particular, to this work which they quarrelled with as a violation of the law. Be not partial in your judgment; judge not, *kat' opsin* — *with respect of persons*; knowing faces, as the Hebrew phrase is, ⁽⁴⁸¹⁷⁾Deuteronomy 1:17. It is contrary to the law of justice, as well as charity, to censure those who differ in opinion from us as transgressors, in taking that liberty which yet in those of our own party, and way, and opinion, we allow of; as it is also to commend that in some as necessary strictness and severity which in others we condemn as imposition and persecution. Or, *Secondly*, In general, to Christ's person and preaching, which they were offended at and prejudiced against. Those things that are false, and designed to impose upon men, commonly appear best when they are judged of *according to the outward appearance*, they appear most plausible *prima facie* — *at the first glance*. It was this that gained the Pharisees such an interest and reputation, that they *appeared right* unto men (⁽⁴⁸²⁷⁾Matthew 23:27, 28), and men judged of them by that appearance, and so were sadly mistaken in them. “But,” saith Christ, “be not too confident that all are real saints who are seeming ones.” With reference to himself, his *outward appearance* was far short of his real dignity and excellency, for he took upon him the *form of a servant* (⁽³¹⁰⁷⁾Philippians 2:7), was in the *likeness of sinful flesh* (⁽⁴⁸³⁸⁾Romans 8:3), had *no form nor comeliness*, ⁽²⁵¹²⁾Isaiah 53:2. So that those who undertook to judge whether he was the Son of God or no by his *outward appearance* were not likely to *judge righteous judgment*. The Jews expected the outward appearance of the Messiah to be pompous and magnificent, and attended with all the

ceremonies of secular grandeur; and, judging of Christ by that rule, their judgment was from first to last a *continual* mistake, for the kingdom of Christ was not to be *of this world*, nor to *come with observation*. If a divine power accompanied him, and God bore him witness, and the scriptures were fulfilled in him, though his appearance was ever so mean, they ought to receive him, and to judge by faith, and not by the sight of the eye. See ~~31B~~ Isaiah 11:3, and ~~04E~~ 1 Samuel 16:7. Christ and his doctrine and doings desire nothing but *righteous judgment*; if truth and justice may but pass the sentence, Christ and his cause will carry the day. We must not judge concerning any by their *outward appearance*, not by their titles, the figure they make in the world, and their fluttering show, but by their intrinsic worth, and the gifts and graces of God's Spirit in them.

3. Christ discourses with them here concerning *himself*, whence he came, and whither he was going, v. 25-36.

(1.) *Whence he came*, v. 25-31. In the account of this observe,

[1.] The objection concerning this stated by some of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who seem to have been of all others most prejudiced against him, v. 25. One would think that those who lived at the fountain-head of knowledge and religion should have been most ready to receive the Messiah: but it proved quite contrary. Those that have plenty of the means of knowledge and grace, if they are not *made better* by them, are commonly *made worse*; and our Lord Jesus has often met with the least welcome from those that one would expect the best from. But it was not without some just cause that it came into a proverb, *The nearer the church the further from God*. These people of Jerusalem showed their ill-will to Christ,

First, By their reflecting on the rulers, because they let him alone: *Is not this he whom they seek to kill?* The multitude of the people that came up out of the country to the feast did not suspect there was any design on foot against him, and therefore they said, *Who goes about to kill thee?* v. 20. But those of Jerusalem knew the plot, and irritated their rulers to put it into execution: *“Is not this he whom they seek to kill? Why do they not do it then? Who hinders them? They say that they have a mind to get him out of the way, and yet, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing to him; do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?”* v. 26. Here they slyly and maliciously insinuate two things, to exasperate the rulers against Christ, when indeed they needed to spur.

1. That by conniving at his preaching they *brought their authority into contempt*. “Must a man that is condemned by the *sanhedrim* as a deceiver be permitted to *speak boldly*, without any check or contradiction? This makes their sentence to be but *brutem fulmen* — a *vain menace*; if our rulers will suffer themselves to be thus trampled upon, they may thank themselves if none stand in awe of them and their laws.” Note, The worst of persecutions have often been carried on under colour of the necessary support of authority and government.

2. That hereby they brought *their judgment into suspicion*. *Do they know that this is the Christ?* It is spoken ironically, “How came they to change their mind? What new discovery have they lighted on? They give people occasion to think that they believe him to be the Christ, and it behoves them to act vigorously against him to clear themselves from the suspicion.” Thus the rulers, who had made the people enemies to Christ, made them *seven times more the children of hell than themselves*, ⁴²⁶⁵Matthew 23:15. When religion and the profession of Christ's name are *out of fashion*, and consequently *out of repute*, many are strongly tempted to persecute and oppose them, only that they may not be thought to favour them and incline to them. And for this reason apostates, and the degenerate offspring of good parents, have been sometimes worse than others, as it were to wipe off the stain of their profession. It was strange that the rulers, thus irritated, did not seize Christ; but his hour was not yet come; and God can tie men's hands to admiration, though he should not turn their hearts.

Secondly, By their exception against his being the Christ, in which appeared more malice than matter, v. 27. “If the rulers think him to be the Christ, we neither can nor will believe him to be so, for we have this argument against it, that *we know this man, whence he is; but when Christ comes no man knows whence he is.*” Here is a fallacy in the argument, for the propositions are not *body ad idem* — *adapted to the same view of the subject*.

1. If they speak of his *divine nature*, it is true that when Christ comes *no man knows whence he is*, for he is a priest after the order of Melchizedek, who was *without descent*, and *his goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting*, ⁴²⁶⁶Micah 5:2. But then it is not true that as for this man they knew whence he was, for they knew not his divine nature, nor how *the Word was made flesh*.

2. If they speak of his *human nature*, it is true that they knew whence he was, who was his mother, and where he was bred up; but then it is false that ever it was said of the Messiah that none should know whence he was, for it was known before *where he should be born*, ~~408~~ Matthew 2:4, 5. Observe,

(1.) How they *despised him*, because they knew *whence he was*. Familiarity breeds contempt, and we are apt to disdain the *use* of those whom we know the *rise of*. Christ's own received him not, because he was *their own*, for which very reason they should the rather have loved him, and been thankful that their nation and their age were honoured with his appearance.

(2.) How they endeavoured unjustly to fasten the ground of their prejudice upon the scriptures, as if they countenanced them, when there was no such thing. *Therefore* people err concerning Christ, because they *know not the scripture*.

[2.] Christ's answer to this objection, v. 28, 29.

First, He spoke freely and boldly, he *cried in the temple, as he taught*, he spoke this louder than the rest of his discourse,

1. To express his earnestness, being *grieved for the hardness of their hearts*. There may be a vehemency in contending for the truth where yet there is no intemperate heat nor passion. We may instruct gainsayers with warmth, and yet with *meekness*.

2. The priests and those that were prejudiced against him, did not come near enough to hear his preaching, and therefore he must speak louder than ordinary what he will have them to hear. Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear this.

Secondly, His answer to their cavil is,

1. By way of *concession*, granting that they did or might know his origin as to the flesh: “*You both know me, and you know whence I am*. You know I am of your own nation, and one of yourselves.” It is no disparagement to the doctrine of Christ that there is that in it which is level to the capacities of the meanest, plain truths, discovered even by nature's light, of which we may say, We know whence they are. “*You*

know me, you think you know me; but you are mistaken; you take me to be the carpenter's son, and born at Nazareth, but it is not so."

2. By way of *negation*, denying that that which they did see in him, and know of him, was all that was to be known; and therefore, if they looked no further, they judged by the outward appearance only. They knew *whence* he came perhaps, and *where* he had his birth, but he will tell them what they knew not, *from whom* he came.

(1.) That he did not *come of himself*; that he did not run without sending, nor come as a private person, but with a public character.

(2.) That he was sent of his Father; this is twice mentioned: *He hath sent me*. And again, "*He hath sent me*, to say what I say, and do what I do." This he was himself well assured of, and therefore knew that his Father would bear him out; and it is well for us that we are assured of it too, that we may with holy confidence go to God by him.

(3.) That he was *from his Father*, *par' autou eimi* — *I am from him*; not only sent from him as a servant from his master, but from him by eternal generation, as a son from his father, by essential emanation, as the beams from the sun.

(4.) *That the Father who sent him is true*; he had promised to give the Messiah, and, though the Jews had forfeited the promise, yet he that made the promise is *true*, and has performed it. He had promised that the Messiah should see his seed, and be successful in his undertaking; and, though the generality of the Jews reject him and his gospel, yet he *is true*, and will fulfil the promise in the calling of the Gentiles.

(5.) That these unbelieving Jews did *not know the Father*: *He that sent me, whom you know not*. There is much ignorance of God even with many that have a *form of knowledge*; and the true reason why people reject Christ is because they do not *know God*; for there is such a harmony of the divine attributes in the work of redemption, and such an admirable agreement between natural and revealed religion, that the right knowledge of the former would not only admit, but introduce, the latter.

(6.) Our Lord Jesus was intimately acquainted with the Father that *sent him*: *but I know him*. He knew him so well that he was not at all *in doubt* concerning his mission from him, but perfectly *assured* of it; nor

at all *in the dark* concerning the work he had to do, but perfectly apprized of it, ^{<4117>}Matthew 11:27.

[3.] The provocation which this gave to his enemies, who hated him because he *told them the truth*, v. 30. *They sought therefore to take him*, to lay violent hands on him, not only to do him a mischief, but some way or other to be the death of him; but by the restraint of an invisible power it was prevented; nobody touched him, *because his hour was not yet come*; this was not their reason why they did it not, but God's reason why he hindered them from doing it. Note, *First*, The faithful preachers of the truths of God, though they behave themselves with ever so much prudence and meekness, must expect to be hated and persecuted by those who think themselves tormented by their testimony, ^{<6111>}Revelation 11:10. *Secondly*, God has wicked men in a chain, and, whatever mischief they *would do*, they *can do* no more than God will suffer them to do. The malice of persecutors is *impotent* even when it is most *impetuous*, and, when Satan *fills their hearts*, yet God *ties their hands*. *Thirdly*, God's servants are sometimes wonderfully protected by indiscernible unaccountable means. Their enemies do not do the mischief they designed, and yet neither they themselves nor any one else can tell why they do not. *Fourthly*, Christ had *his hour* set, which was to put a period to his day and work on earth; so have all his people and all his ministers, and, till that hour comes, the attempts of their enemies against them are ineffectual, and their day shall be lengthened as long as their Master has any work for them to do; nor can all the powers of hell and earth prevail against them, until they have *finished their testimony*.

[4.] The good effect which Christ's discourse had, notwithstanding this, upon some of his hearers (v. 31): *Many of the people believed on him*. As he was set for the fall of some, so for the rising again of others. Even where the gospel meets with opposition there may yet be a great deal of good done, ^{<5111>}1 Thessalonians 2:2. Observe here, *First*, *Who* they were that believed; not a few, but many, more than one would have expected when the stream ran so strongly the other way. But these *many* were *of the people*, *ek tou ochlou* — *of the multitude*, the crowd, the inferior sort, the mob, the rabble, some would have called them. We must not measure the prosperity of the gospel by its success among the great ones; nor much ministers say that they labour in vain, though none but the *poor*, and those of no *figure*, receive the gospel, ^{<4115>}1 Corinthians 1:26. *Secondly*, *What* induced them to believe: the *miracles which he did*, which were not only

the accomplishment of the Old-Testament prophecies (²³⁸⁶Isaiah 35:5, 6), but an argument of a divine power. He that had an ability to do that which none but God *can do*, to control and overrule the powers of nature, no doubt had authority to enact that which none but God can *enact*, a law that shall *bind conscience*, and a covenant that shall *give life*. *Thirdly*, How *weak* their faith was: they do not positively assert, as the Samaritans did, *This is indeed the Christ*, but they only argue, *When Christ comes will he do more miracles than these?* They take it for granted that Christ will come, and, when he comes, will do many miracles. “Is not this he then? In him we see, though not all the worldly pomp we have fancied, yet all the divine power we have *believed* the Messiah should appear in; and therefore why may not this be he?” They *believe* it, but have not courage to own it. Note, Even weak faith may be true faith, and so *accounted*, so *accepted*, by the Lord Jesus, who *despises not the day of small things*.

(2.) *Whither he was going*, v. 32-36. Here observe,

[1.] The design of the Pharisees and chief priests against him, v. 32. *First*, The provocation given them was that they had information brought them by their spies, who insinuated themselves into the conversation of the people, and gathered stories to carry to their jealous masters, that *the people murmured such things concerning him*, that there were many who had a respect and value for him, notwithstanding all they had done to render him odious. Though the people did but whisper these things, and had not courage to speak out, yet the Pharisees were enraged at it. The equity of that government is justly *suspected* by others which is so *suspicious* of itself as to take notice of, or be influenced by, the secret, various, uncertain *mutterings* of the common people. The Pharisees valued themselves very much upon the respect of the people, and were sensible that if Christ did thus *increase* they must *decrease*. *Secondly*, The project they laid hereupon was to seize Jesus, and take him into custody: *They sent officers to take him*, not to take up those who murmured concerning him and frighten them; no, the most effectual way to disperse the flock is to *smite the shepherd*. The Pharisees seem to have been the ringleaders in this prosecution, but they, *as such*, had no power, and therefore they got the *chief priests*, the judges of the ecclesiastical court, to join with them, who were ready enough to do so. The Pharisees were the great pretenders to *learning*, and the *chief priests* to *sanctify*. *As the world by wisdom knew not God*, but the greatest philosophers were guilty of the greatest blunders in natural religion, so the Jewish church by their wisdom knew not Christ,

but their greatest rabbin were the greatest fools concerning him, nay, they were the most inveterate enemies to him. Those wicked rulers had their officers, officers of their court, church-officers, whom they employed to take Christ, and who were ready to go on their errand, though it was an ill errand. If Saul's footmen will not *turn and fall upon the priests of the Lord*, he has a herdsman that will, ^{<027>}1 Samuel 22:17, 18.

[2.] The discourse of our Lord Jesus hereupon (v. 33, 34): *Yet a little while I am with you, and then I go to him that sent me; you shall seek me, and shall not find me; and where I am, thither you cannot come.* These words, like the pillar of cloud and fire, have a *bright* side and a *dark* side.

First, They have a *bright side* towards our Lord Jesus himself, and speak abundance of comfort to him and all his faithful followers that are exposed to difficulties and dangers for his sake. Three things Christ here comforted himself with: —

1. That he had but a *little time* to continue here in this troublesome world. He sees that he is never likely to have a quiet day among them; but the best of it is his warfare will shortly be accomplished, and then he shall be *no more in this world*, ^{<071>}John 17:11. Whomsoever we are *with* in this world, friends or foes, it is but a *little while* that we shall be with them; and it is a matter of comfort to those who are *in* the world, but not *of* it, and therefore are hated by it and sick of it, that they shall not be *in it always*, they shall not be *in it long*. We must be *awhile* with those that are pricking briars and grieving thorns; but thanks be to God, it is but a little while, and we shall be out of their reach. Our days being *evil*, it is well they are *few*.

2. That, when he should quit this troublesome world, he should *go to him that sent him; I go*. Not, “I am driven away by force,” but, “I voluntarily *go*; having finished my embassy, I return to him on whose errand I came. When I have done my work with you, then, and not till then, I go to him *that sent me*, and will *receive me*, will prefer me, as ambassadors are preferred when they return.” Their rage against him would not only not hinder him from, but would hasten him to the glory and joy that were set before him. Let those who suffer for Christ comfort themselves with this, that they have a God to go to, and are going to him, going apace, to be for ever with him.

3. That, though they persecuted him here, wherever he went, yet none of their persecutions could follow him to heaven: *You shall seek me, and shall not find me.* It appears, by their enmity to his followers when he was gone, that if they could have reached him they would have persecuted him: “But you cannot enter into that temple as you do into this.” *Where I am*, that is, where I then *shall be*; but he expressed it thus because, even when he was on earth, by his divine nature and divine affections he was in heaven, ^{<403>}John 3:13. Or it denotes that he should be *so soon* there that he was as good as there already. Note, It adds to the happiness of glorified saints that they are out of the reach of the devil and all his wicked instruments.

Secondly, These words have a *black and dark side* towards those wicked Jews that hated and persecuted Christ. They now longed to be rid of him, *Away with him from the earth*; but let them know,

1. That according to their choice so shall their doom be. They were industrious to *drive him* from them, and their sin shall be their punishment; he will not trouble them long, yet a little while and he will *depart* from them. It is just with God to forsake those that think his presence a burden. They that are weary of Christ need no more to make them miserable than to have *their wish*.

2. That they would certainly repent their choice when it was too late.

(1.) They should in vain seek the presence of the Messiah: “*You shall seek me, and shall not find me.* You shall expect the *Christ to come*, but your eyes shall fail with looking for him, and you shall never find him.” Those who rejected the true Messiah when he did come were justly abandoned to a miserable and endless expectation of one that should never come. Or, it may refer to the final rejection of sinners from the favours and grace of Christ at the great day: those who now seek Christ shall find him, but the day is coming when those who now refuse him *shall seek him, and shall not find him.* See ^{<403>}Proverbs 1:28. They will in vain cry, *Lord, Lord, open to us.* Or, perhaps, these words might be fulfilled in the despair of some of the Jews, who possibly might be convinced and not converted, who would wish in vain to see Christ, and to hear him preach again; but the day of grace is over (^{<407>}Luke 17:22); yet this is not all.

(2.) They should in vain expect a place in heaven: *Where I am*, and where all believers shall be with me, *thither ye cannot come*. Not only because they are *excluded* by the just and irreversible sentence of the judge, and the sword of the angel at every gate of the new Jerusalem, to keep *the way of the tree of life* against those who have *no right to enter*, but because they are disabled by their own iniquity and infidelity: *You cannot come*, because you *will not*. Those who hate to be where Christ is, in his word and ordinances on earth, are very unfit to be where he is in his glory in heaven; for indeed heaven would be no heaven to them, such are the antipathies of an unsanctified soul to the felicities of that state.

[3.] Their descant upon this discourse (v. 35, 36): *They said among themselves, Whither will he go?* See here, *First*, Their wilful ignorance and blindness. He had expressly said whither he would go — to him that sent him, to his Father in heaven, and yet they ask, *Whither will he go?* and *What manner of saying is this?* None so blind as those that will not see, that will not heed. Christ's sayings are *plain to him that understandeth*, and difficult only to those that are disposed to quarrel. *Secondly*, Their daring contempt of Christ's threatenings. Instead of trembling at that terrible word, *You shall seek me, and not find me*, which denotes the utmost degree of misery, they banter it and make a jest of it, as those sinners that *mock at fear, and are not affrighted* (^{<3159>}Isaiah 5:19); ^{<3158>}Amos 5:18. *Let him make speed. But be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong.* *Thirdly*, Their inveterate malice and rage against Christ. All they dreaded in his *departure* was that he would be out of the reach of their power: "*Whither will he go, that we shall not find him?* If he be above ground, we will have him; we will leave no place unsearched," as Ahab in quest of Elijah, ^{<1180>}1 Kings 18:10. *Fourthly*, Their proud disdain of the Gentiles, whom they here call the *dispersed of the Gentiles*; meaning either the Jews that were *scattered* abroad among the Greeks (^{<300>}James 1:1; ^{<600>}1 Peter 1:1.); will he go and make an interest among those silly people? or, the Gentiles *dispersed* over the world, in distinction from the Jews, who were *incorporated* into one church and nation; will he make his court to them? *Fifthly*, Their jealousy of the least intimation of favour to the Gentiles: "Will he go and *teach the Gentiles?* Will he carry his doctrine to them?" Perhaps they had heard of some items of respect shown by him to the Gentiles, as in his sermon at Nazareth, and in the case of the centurion and the woman of Canaan, and there was nothing they

dreaded more than the *comprehension* of the Gentiles. So common is it for those who have lost the power of religion to be very jealous for the monopoly of the name. They now made a *jest* of his going to *teach the Gentiles*; but not long after he did it *in good earnest* by his apostles and ministers, and gathered those *dispersed* people, sorely to the grief of the Jews, ^{<519>}Romans 10:19. So true is that of Solomon, *The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him.*

<405> JOHN 7:37-44

THE GOSPEL INVITATION

In these verses we have,

I. Christ's discourse, with the explication of it, v. 37-39. It is probable that these are only short hints of what he enlarged upon, but they have in them the substance of the whole gospel; here is a *gospel invitation to come to Christ*, and a *gospel promise* of comfort and happiness in him. Now observe,

1. When he gave this invitation: *On the last day* of the feast of tabernacles, *that great day*. The *eighth day*, which concluded that solemnity, was to be a *holy convocation*, ^{<4236>}Leviticus 23:36. Now on this day Christ published this gospel-call, because

(1.) Much people were gathered together, and, if the invitation were given to *many*, it might be hoped that *some* would accept of it, ^{<4020>}Proverbs 1:20. Numerous assemblies give opportunity of doing the more good.

(2.) The people were now returning to their homes, and he would give them this to carry away with them as his parting word. When a great congregation is to be dismissed, and is about to scatter, as here, it is affecting to think that in all probability they will never come all together again in this world, and therefore, if we can say or do any thing to help them to heaven, that must be the time. It is good to be lively at the close of an ordinance. Christ made this offer *on the last day of the feast*.

[1.] To those who had turned a deaf ear to his preaching on the foregoing days of this sacred week; he will try them once more, and, if they will yet hear his voice, they shall live.

[2.] To those who perhaps might never have such another offer made them, and therefore were concerned to accept of this; it would be half a year before there would be another feast, and in that time they would many of them be in their graves. *Behold now is the accepted time.*

2. How he gave this invitation: *Jesus stood and cried*, which denotes,

(1.) His great earnestness and importunity. His heart was upon it, to bring poor souls in to himself. The erection of his body and the elevation of his voice were indications of the intenseness of his mind. Love to souls will make preachers lively.

(2.) His desire that all might take notice, and take hold of this invitation. He *stood, and cried*, that he might the better be heard; for this is what every one that hath ears is concerned to hear. Gospel truth seeks no corners, because it fears no trials. The heathen oracles were delivered privately by them that *peeped and muttered*; but the oracles of the gospel were proclaimed by one that *stood, and cried*. How sad is the case of man, that he must be *importuned* to be happy, and how wonderful the grace of Christ, that he will *importune* him! *Ho, every one,* ²⁵⁰ Isaiah 55:1.

3. The invitation itself is very general: *If any man thirst*, whoever he be, he is invited to Christ, be he high or low, rich or poor, young or old, bond or free, Jew or Gentile. It is also very *gracious*: “*If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. If any man desires to be truly and eternally happy, let him apply himself to me, and be ruled by me, and I will undertake to make him so.*”

(1.) The persons invited are such as *thirst*, which may be understood, either,

[1.] Of the *indigence* of their cases; either as to their *outward* condition (if any man be destitute of the comforts of this life, or fatigued with the crosses of it, let his poverty and afflictions draw him to Christ for that peace which the world can neither give nor take away), or as to their *inward* state: “If any man want spiritual blessings, he may be supplied by me.” Or,

[2.] Of the *inclination* of their souls and their desires towards a spiritual happiness. If any man hunger and thirst after righteousness, that is, truly desire the good will of God towards him, and the good work of God in him.

(2.) The invitation itself: *Let him come to me*. Let him not go to the ceremonial law, which would neither *pacify* the conscience nor *purify it*, and therefore could not make the *comers thereunto perfect*, ^{<380>}Hebrews 10:1. Nor let him go to the heathen philosophy, which does but beguile men, lead them into a wood, and leave them there; but let him *go to Christ*, admit his doctrine, submit to his discipline, believe in him; come to him as the fountain of living waters, the giver of all comfort.

(3.) The satisfaction promised: “Let him come *and drink*, he shall have what he comes for, and abundantly more, shall have that which will not only *refresh*, but *replenish*, a soul that desires to be happy.”

4. A gracious promise annexed to this gracious call (v. 38): *He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow* —

(1.) See here what it is to come to Christ: It is *to believe on him, as the scripture hath said*; it is to receive and entertain him as he is offered to us in the gospel. We must not frame a Christ according to our fancy, but believe in a Christ according to the scripture.

(2.) See how thirsty souls, that come to Christ, shall be made *to drink*. Israel, that believed Moses, drank of the *rock that followed them*, the streams followed; but believers drink of a rock *in them, Christ in them*; he is in them a *well of living water*, ^{<404>}John 4:14. Provision is made not only for their *present* satisfaction, but for their *continual perpetual* comfort. Here is,

[1.] *Living water, running water*, which the Hebrew language calls *living*, because still in motion. The graces and comforts of the Spirit are compared to *living* (meaning *running*) *water*, because they are the active quickening principles of spiritual life, and the earnest and beginnings of eternal life. See ^{<403>}Jeremiah 2:13.

[2.] *Rivers of living water*, denoting both plenty and constancy. The comfort flows in both *plentifully* and *constantly* as a river; strong as a stream to bear down the oppositions of doubts and fears. There is a fulness in Christ of grace for grace.

[3.] These flow out *of his belly*, that is, out of his heart or soul, which is the subject of the Spirit's working and the seat of his government. There *gracious principles* are planted; and out of the heart, in which the Spirit dwells, flow the *issues of life*, ^{<403>}Proverbs 4:23. There divine comforts are

lodged, and the joy that a *stranger doth not intermeddle with*. He that believes has the witness in himself, ^{<618>}1 John 5:10. *Sat lucis intus* — *Light abounds within*. Observe, further, where there are *springs* of grace and comfort in the soul that will *send forth streams*: *Out of his belly shall flow rivers*. *First*, Grace and comfort will produce good actions, and a holy heart will be seen in a holy life; the tree is known by its fruits, and the fountain by its streams. *Secondly*, They will *communicate themselves* for the benefit of others; a good man is a common good. His *mouth* is a *well of life*, ^{<201>}Proverbs 10:11. It is not enough that we *drink waters out of our own cistern*, that we ourselves take the comfort of the grace given us, but we must let our *fountains* be *dispersed abroad*, ^{<205>}Proverbs 5:15, 16.

Those words, *as the scripture hath said*, seem to refer to some promise in the Old Testament to this purport, and there are many; as that God would *pour out* his Spirit, which is a metaphor borrowed from waters (^{<202>}Proverbs 1:23; ^{<202>}Joel 2:28; ^{<244>}Isaiah 44:3; ^{<320>}Zechariah 12:10); that the *dry land* should become *springs of water* (^{<248>}Isaiah 41:18); that there should be *rivers in the desert* (^{<239>}Isaiah 43:19); that gracious souls should be like a *spring of water* (^{<281>}Isaiah 58:11); and the church a *well of living water*, ^{<205>}Song of Solomon 4:15. And here may be an allusion to the waters issuing out of Ezekiel's temple, ^{<301>}Ezekiel 47:1. Compare ^{<621>}Revelation 22:1, and see ^{<348>}Zechariah 14:8. Dr. Lightfoot and others tell us it was a custom of the Jews, which they received by tradition, *the last day of the feast* of tabernacles to have a solemnity, which they called *Libatio aquae* — *The pouring out of water*. They fetched a golden vessel of water from the pool of Siloam, brought it into the temple with sound of trumpet and other ceremonies, and, upon the ascent to the altar, poured it out before the Lord with all possible expressions of joy. Some of their writers make the water to signify *the law*, and refer to ^{<302>}Isaiah 12:3; 55:1. Others, *the Holy Spirit*. And it is thought that our Saviour might here allude to this custom. Believers shall have the comfort, not of a vessel of water fetched from a pool, but of a river flowing from themselves. The joy of the law, and the pouring out of the water, which signified this, are not to be compared with the joy of the gospel in the wells of salvation.

5. Here is the evangelist's exposition of this promise (v. 39): *This spoke he of the Spirit*: not of any outward advantages accruing to believers (as perhaps some misunderstood him), but of the gifts, graces, and comforts of the Spirit. See how scripture is the best interpreter of scripture. Observe,

(1.) It is promised to *all that believe* on Christ that they shall *receive the Holy Ghost*. Some received his miraculous gifts (^{<417>}Mark 16:17, 18); all receive his sanctifying graces. The gift of the Holy Ghost is one of the great blessings promised in the new covenant (^{<409>}Acts 2:39), and, if *promised*, no doubt *performed* to all that have an interest in that covenant.

(2.) The Spirit dwelling and working in believers is as a *fountain of living running water*, out of which plentiful streams flow, cooling and cleansing as water, mollifying and moistening as water, making them fruitful, and others joyful; see ^{<415>}John 3:5. When the apostles spoke so *fluently* of the things of God, as the Spirit gave them utterance (^{<411>}Acts 2:4), and afterwards preached and wrote the gospel of Christ with such a *flood* of divine eloquence, then this was fulfilled, *Out of his belly shall flow rivers*.

(3.) This plentiful effusion of the Spirit was yet the matter of a promise; for *the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified*. See here

[1.] That *Jesus was not yet glorified*. It was certain that he should be glorified, and he was ever worthy of all honour; but he was as yet in a state of humiliation and contempt. He had never forfeited the glory he had before all worlds, nay, he had *merited* a further glory, and, besides his *hereditary* honours, might claim the *achievement* of a *mediatorial* crown; and yet all this is in *reversion*. Jesus is now *upheld* (^{<241>}Isaiah 42:1), is now *satisfied* (^{<251>}Isaiah 53:11), is now *justified* (^{<516>}1 Timothy 3:16), but he is *not yet glorified*. And, if Christ must wait for his glory, let not us think it much to wait for ours.

[2.] That *the Holy Ghost was not yet given*. *oupo gar hen pneuma* — for *the Holy Ghost was not yet*. The Spirit of God was from eternity, for in the beginning he *moved upon the face of the waters*. He was in the Old-Testament prophets and saints, and Zacharias and Elisabeth were both *filled with the Holy Ghost*. This therefore must be understood of the eminent, plentiful, and general effusion of the Spirit which was promised, ^{<218>}Joel 2:28, and accomplished, ^{<411>}Acts 2:1, etc. *The Holy Ghost was not yet given* in that visible manner that was intended. if we compare the clear knowledge and strong grace of the disciples of Christ themselves, after the day of Pentecost, with their darkness and weakness before, we shall understand in what sense *the Holy Ghost was not yet given*; the earnest and first-fruits of the Spirit were given, but the full harvest was not yet come. That which is most properly called the *dispensation of the Spirit* did

not yet commence. The *Holy Ghost* was *not yet given* in such rivers of living water as should issue forth to water the whole earth, even the Gentile world, not in the *gifts of tongues*, to which perhaps this promise principally refers.

[3.] That the reason why *the Holy Ghost* was *not given* was because *Jesus* was *not yet glorified*. *First*, The death of Christ is sometimes called his glorification (^{<433>}John 13:31); for in his cross he conquered and triumphed. Now the gift of the Holy Ghost was purchased by the blood of Christ: this was the *valuable consideration* upon which the *grant* was grounded, and therefore till this *price was paid* (though many other gifts were bestowed upon its being *secured* to be paid) the Holy Ghost was not given. *Secondly*, There was not so much need of the Spirit, while Christ himself was here upon earth, as there was when he was gone, to supply the want of him. *Thirdly*, The giving of the Holy Ghost was to be both an *answer* to Christ's *intercession* (^{<434>}John 14:16), and an *act* of his *dominion*; and therefore till he is glorified, and enters upon both these, the Holy Ghost is not given. *Fourthly*, The conversion of the Gentiles was the glorifying of Jesus. When certain Greeks began to enquire after Christ, he said, *Now is the Son of man glorified*, ^{<423>}John 12:23. Now the time when the gospel should be propagated in the nations was not yet come, and therefore there was as yet no occasion for the *gift of tongues*, that *river of living water*. But observe, though the Holy Ghost was not yet given, yet he was *promised*; it was now the great *promise of the Father*, ^{<404>}Acts 1:4. Though the gifts of Christ's grace are *long deferred*, yet they are *well secured*: and, while we are waiting for the good promise, we have the promise to live upon, which *shall speak and shall not lie*.

II. The consequents of this discourse, what entertainment it met with; in general, it occasioned differences: *There was a division among the people because of him*, v. 43. There was a *schism*, so the word is; there were diversities of opinions, and those managed with heat and contention; various sentiments, and those such as set them at *variance*. Think we that Christ came to send peace, that all would unanimously embrace his gospel? No, the effect of the preaching of his gospel would be *division*, for, while some are *gathered to it*, others will be *gathered against it*; and this will put things into a *ferment*, as here; but this is no more the fault of the gospel than it is the fault of a wholesome medicine that it stirs up the *peccant humours* in the body, in order to the discharge of them. Observe what the debate was: —

1. Some were *taken with him*, and well affected to him: *Many of the people, when they heard this saying*, heard him with such compassion and kindness invite poor sinners to him, and with such authority engage to make them happy, that they could not but think highly of him.

(1.) Some of them said, *O, a truth this is the prophet*, that prophet whom Moses spoke of to the fathers, who should be *like unto him*; or, This is *the prophet* who, according to the received notions of the Jewish church, is to be the harbinger and forerunner of the Messiah; or, *This is truly a prophet*, one divinely inspired and sent of God.

(2.) Others went further, and said, *This is the Christ* (v. 41), not the *prophet* of the Messiah, but the Messiah himself. The Jews had at this time a more than ordinary expectation of the Messiah, which made them ready to say upon every occasion, *Lo, here is Christ*, or *Lo, he is there*; and this seems to be only the effect of some such confused and floating notions which caught at the first appearance, for we do not find that these people became his disciples and followers; a good opinion of Christ is far short of a lively faith in Christ; many give Christ a good word that give him no more. These here said, *This is the prophet*, and *this is the Christ*, but could not persuade themselves to leave all and follow him; and so this their testimony to Christ was but a testimony *against themselves*.

2. Others were *prejudiced against him*. No sooner was this great truth started, that *Jesus is the Christ*, than immediately it was contradicted and argued against: and this one thing, that his rise and origin were (as they took it for granted) out of Galilee, was thought enough to answer all the arguments for his being the Christ. For, *shall Christ come out of Galilee?* Has not *the scripture said that Christ comes of the seed of David?* See here,

(1.) A laudable knowledge of the scripture. They were so far in the right, that the Messiah was to be a *rod out of the stem of Jesse* (²¹⁰⁰Isaiah 11:1), that out of Bethlehem should *arise the Governor*, ³¹⁰⁰Micah 5:2. This even the common people knew by the traditional expositions which their scribes gave them. Perhaps the people who had these scriptures so ready to object against Christ were not alike knowing in other parts of holy writ, but had had these put into their mouths by their leaders, to fortify their prejudices against Christ. Many that espouse some corrupt notions, and spend their zeal in defence of them, seem to be very ready in the

scriptures, when indeed they know little more than those scriptures which they have been taught to *pervert*.

(2.) A culpable ignorance of our Lord Jesus. They speak of it as certain and past dispute that *Jesus was of Galilee*, whereas by enquiring of himself, or his mother, or his disciples, or by consulting the genealogies of the family of David, or the register at Bethlehem, they might have known that he was the Son of David, and a native of Bethlehem; but *this they willingly are ignorant of*. Thus gross falsehoods in matters of fact, concerning persons and things, are often taken up by prejudiced and partial men, and great resolves founded upon them, even in the same place and the same age wherein the persons live and the things are done, while the truth might easily be found out.

3. Others were *enraged against him*, and they *would have taken him*, v. 44. Though what he said was most sweet and gracious, yet they were exasperated against him for it. Thus did our Master suffer ill for saying and doing well. *They would have taken him*; they hoped somebody or other would seize him, and, if they had thought no one else would, they would have done it themselves. *They would have taken him*; but no man *laid hands on him*, being restrained by an invisible power, because his hour was not come. As the malice of Christ's enemies is always *unreasonable*, so sometimes the suspension of it is *unaccountable*.

JOHN 7:45-53

THE OFFICERS' TESTIMONY OF CHRIST

The chief priests and Pharisees are here in a close cabal, contriving how to suppress Christ; though this was the *great day of the feast*, they attended not the religious services of the day, but left them to the vulgar, to whom it was common for those great ecclesiastics to consign and turn over the business of devotion, while they thought themselves better employed in the affairs of church-policy. They sat in the council-chamber, expecting Christ to be brought a prisoner to them, as they had issued out warrants for apprehending him, v. 32. Now here we are told,

I. What passed between them and their own officers, who returned without him, *re infecta* — *having done nothing*. Observe,

1. The reproof they gave the officers for not executing the warrant they gave them: *Why have you not brought him?* He appeared publicly; the people were many of them disgusted, and would have assisted them in taking him; this was *the last day of the feast*, and they would not have such another opportunity; “why then did you neglect your duty?” It vexed them that those who were their own creatures, who depended on them, and on whom they depended, into whose minds they had instilled prejudices against Christ, should thus disappoint them. Note, Mischievous men fret that they cannot do the mischief they would, ~~430~~ Psalm 112:10; ~~436~~ Nehemiah 6:16.

2. The reason which the officers gave for the non-execution of their warrant: *Never man spoke like this man*, v. 46. Now,

(1.) This was a very great truth, that *never any man spoke with* that wisdom, and power, and grace, that convincing clearness, and that charming sweetness, wherewith Christ spoke; none of the prophets, no, not Moses himself.

(2.) The very officers that were sent to take him were taken with him, and acknowledged this. Though they were probably men who had no quick sense of reason or eloquence, and certainly had no inclination to think well of Jesus, yet so much *self-evidence* was there in what Christ said that they could not but prefer him before all those that sat in Moses's seat. Thus Christ was preserved by the power God has upon the consciences even of bad men.

(3.) They said this to their lords and masters, who could not endure to hear any thing that tended to the honour of Christ and yet could not avoid hearing this. Providence ordered it so that this should be said to them, that it might be a vexation in their sin and an aggravation of their sin. Their own officers, who could not be suspected to be biassed in favour of Christ, are witnesses against them. This testimony of theirs should have made them reflect upon themselves, with this thought, “Do we know what we are doing, when we are hating and persecuting one that speaks so admirably well?”

3. The Pharisees endeavour to secure their officers to their interest, and to beget in them prejudices against Christ, to whom they saw them begin to be well affected. They suggest two things: —

(1.) That if they embrace the gospel of Christ they will *deceive themselves* (v. 47): *Are you also deceived?* Christianity has, from its first rise, been represented to the world as a great cheat upon it, and they that embraced it as men *deceived*, then when they began to be *undeceived*. Those that looked for a Messiah in external pomp thought those deceived who believed in a Messiah that appeared in poverty and disgrace; but the event declares that none were ever more shamefully deceived, nor put a greater cheat upon themselves, than those who promised themselves worldly wealth and secular dominion with the Messiah. Observe what a *compliment* the Pharisees paid to these officers: “*Are you also deceived?* What! men of your sense, and thought, and figure; men that know better than to be imposed upon by every pretender and upstart teacher?” They endeavour to prejudice them against Christ by persuading them to think well of themselves.

(2.) That they will *disparage themselves*. Most men, even in their religion, are willing to be governed by the example of those of the *first rank*; these officers therefore, whose preferments, such as they were, gave them a *sense of honour*, are desired to consider,

[1.] That, if they become disciples of Christ, they go contrary to those who were persons of quality and reputation: “*Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed on him?* You know they have not, and you ought to be bound up by their judgment, and to *believe* and *do* in religion according to the will of your superiors; will you be wiser than they?” Some of the rulers did embrace Christ (~~408~~ Matthew 9:18; ch. 4:53), and more believed in him, but wanted courage to confess him (ch. 12:42); but, when the interest of Christ runs low in the world, it is common for its adversaries to represent it as lower than really it is. But it was too true that few, very few, of them did. Note, *First*, The cause of Christ has seldom had rulers and Pharisees on its side. It needs not secular supports, nor proposes secular advantages, and therefore neither courts nor is courted by the great men of this world. *Self-denial* and the *cross* are hard lessons to *rulers* and *Pharisees*. *Secondly*, This has confirmed many in their prejudices against Christ and his gospel, that the rulers and Pharisees have been no friends to them. Shall *secular* men pretend to be more concerned about *spiritual* things than spiritual men themselves, or to see further into religion than those who make its study their profession? If *rulers* and *Pharisees* do not believe in Christ, they that do believe in him will be the most singular, unfashionable, ungentle people in the world, and quite out of the way of

preferment; thus are people foolishly swayed by *external motives* in matters of *eternal moment*, are willing to be damned for fashion-sake, and to go to hell in compliment to the *rulers* and *Pharisees*.

[2.] That they will link themselves with the despicable vulgar sort of people (v. 43): *But this people, who know not the law, are cursed*, meaning especially those that were well-affected to the doctrine of Christ. Observe, *First*, How scornfully and disdainfully they speak of them: *This people*. It is not *laos*, this *lay-people*, distinguished from them that were the clergy, but *ochlos outos*, this *rabble-people*, this pitiful, scandalous, scoundrel people, whom they disdained to *set with the dogs of their flock* though God had set them with the lambs of his. If they meant the *commonalty of the Jewish nation*, they were the seed of Abraham, and in covenant with God, and not to be spoken of with such contempt. The church's common interests are betrayed when any one part of it studies to render the other mean and despicable. If they meant the *followers of Christ*, though they were generally persons of small figure and fortune, yet by owning Christ they discovered such a sagacity, integrity, and interest in the favours of Heaven, as made them truly great and considerable. Note, As the wisdom of God has often chosen base things, and things which are despised, so the folly of men has commonly debased and despised those whom God has chosen. *Secondly*, How unjustly they reproach them as ignorant of the word of God: *They know not the law*; as if none knew the law but those that knew it *from them*, and no scripture-knowledge were current but what came out of their mint; and as if none knew the law but such as were observant of their canons and traditions. Perhaps many of those whom they thus despised *knew the law*, and the prophets too, better than they did. Many a plain, honest, unlearned disciple of Christ, by meditation, experience, prayers, and especially obedience, attains to a more clear, sound, and useful knowledge of the word of God, than some great scholars with all their wit and learning. Thus David came to understand *more than the ancients and all his teachers*, ¹¹⁹Psalm 119:99, 100. If the common people did not *know the law*, yet the chief priests and Pharisees, of all men, should not have upbraided them with this; for whose fault was it but theirs, who should have *taught them better*, but, instead of that, *took away the key of knowledge*? ¹¹⁵Luke 11:52. *Thirdly*, How magisterially they pronounce sentence upon them: they are *cursed*, hateful to God, and all wise men; *epikartaroi* — *an execrable people*. It is well that their saying they were cursed did not make them so, for the *curse*

causeless shall not come. It is a usurpation of God's prerogative, as well as great uncharitableness, to say of any particular persons, much more of any body of people, that they are reprobates. We are unable to *try*, and therefore unfit to *condemn*, and our rule is, *Bless, and curse not.* Some think they meant no more than that the people were *apt to be deceived and made fools of*; but they use this odious word, They are *curse*d, to express their own indignation, and to frighten their officers from having any thing to do with them; thus the language of hell, in our profane age, calls every thing that is displeasing *curse*d, and *damned*, and *confounded*. Now, for aught that appears, these officers had their convictions baffled and stifled by these suggestions, and they never enquire further after Christ; one word from a *ruler* or *Pharisee* will sway more with many than the true reason of things, and the great interests of their souls.

II. What passed between them and Nicodemus, a member of their own body, v. 50, etc. Observe,

1. The just and rational objection which Nicodemus made against their proceedings. Even in their corrupt and wicked sanhedrim God left not himself quite *without* witness against their enmity; nor was the vote against Christ carried *nemine contradicente* — *unanimously*. Observe,

(1.) Who it was that appeared against them; it was Nicodemus, *he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them*, v. 50. Observe, concerning him,

[1.] That, though he had been with Jesus, and taken him for his teacher, yet he retained his place in the council, and his vote among them. Some impute this to his *weakness* and cowardice, and think it was his fault that he did not quit his place, but Christ had never said to him, *Follow me*, else he would have done as others that left all to follow him; therefore it seems rather to have been his *wisdom* not immediately to throw up his place, because there he might have opportunity of serving Christ and his interest, and stemming the tide of the Jewish rage, which perhaps he did more than we are aware of. He might there be as Hushai among Absalom's counsellors, instrumental to *turn their counsels into foolishness*. Though we must in no case deny our Master, yet we may wait for an opportunity of confessing him to the best advantage. God has his remnant among all sorts, and many times finds, or puts, or makes, some good in the worst

places and societies. There was Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar's court, and Nehemiah in Artaxerxes's.

[2.] That though at first he came to Jesus *by night*, for fear of being known, and still continued in his post; yet, when there was occasion, he boldly appeared in defence of Christ, and opposed the whole council that were set against him. Thus many believers who at first were timorous, and ready to *flee at the shaking of a leaf*, have at length, by divine grace, grown courageous, and able to *laugh at the shaking of a spear*. Let none justify the disguising of their faith by the example of Nicodemus, unless, like him, they be ready upon the first occasion openly to appear in the cause of Christ, though they stand alone in it; for so Nicodemus did here, and ~~439~~ John 19:39.

(2.) What he alleged against their proceedings (v. 51): *Doth our law judge any man before it hear him (akouse par' autou — hear from himself) and know what he doeth?* By no means, nor doth the law of any civilized nation allow it. Observe,

[1.] He prudently argues from the principles of their own law, and an incontestable rule of justice, that no man is to be condemned *unheard*. Had he urged the excellency of Christ's doctrine or the evidence of his miracles, or repeated to them his divine discourse with him (John 3), it had been but to *cast pearls before swine*, who would *trample them under their feet*, and would *turn again and rend him*; therefore he waives them.

[2.] Whereas they had reproached the people, especially the followers of Christ, as *ignorant of the law*, he here tacitly retorts the charge upon themselves, and shows how ignorant they were of some of the first principles of the law, so unfit were they to give law to others.

[3.] The law is here said to *judge*, and *hear*, and *know*, when magistrates that govern and are governed by it *judge*, and *hear*, and *know*; for they are the *mouth of the law*, and whatsoever they bind and loose according to the law is justly said to be bound and loosed by the law.

[4.] It is highly fit that none should come under the *sentence* of the law, till they have first by a fair trial undergone the *scrutiny* of it. Judges, when they receive the complaints of the accuser, must always reserve in their minds room for the defence of the accused, for they have two ears, to remind them to hear both sides; this is said to be the manner of the

Romans, ~~4258~~ Acts 25:18. The method of our law is *Oyer* and *Terminer*, first to *hear* and then to *determine*.

[5.] Persons are to be judged, not by what is *said* of them, but by what they *do*. *Our law* will not ask what men's opinions are of them, or out-cries against them, but, What have they done? What *overt-acts* can they be convicted of? Sentence must be given, *secundum allegata et probata* — according to what is alleged and proved. Facts, and not faces, must be known in judgment; and the *scale* of justice must be used before the *sword* of justice.

Now we may suppose that the motion Nicodemus made in the house upon this was, That Jesus should be desired to come and give them an account of himself and his doctrine, and that they should favour him with an impartial and unprejudiced hearing; but, though none of them could gainsay his maxim, none of them would second his motion.

2. What was said to this objection. Here is no direct reply given to it; but, when they could not resist the force of his argument, they fell foul upon him, and what was to seek in *reason* they made up in railing and reproach. Note, It is a sign of a bad cause when men cannot bear to *hear reason*, and take it as an affront to be reminded of its maxims. Whoever are *against reason* give cause to suspect that *reason* is *against them*. See how they taunt him: *Art thou also of Galilee?* v. 52. Some think he was well enough served for continuing among those whom he knew to be enemies to Christ, and for his speaking no more on the behalf of Christ than what he might have said on behalf of the greatest criminal — that he should not be condemned unheard. Had he said, “As for this Jesus, I have heard him myself, and know he is a *teacher come from God*, and you in opposing him fight against God,” as he ought to have said, he could not have been more abused than he was for this feeble effort of his tenderness for Christ. As to what they said to Nicodemus, we may observe,

(1.) How *false* the grounds of their arguing were, for,

[1.] They suppose that Christ was of Galilee, and this was false, and if they would have been at the pains of an impartial enquiry they would have found it so.

[2.] They suppose that because most of his disciples were Galileans they were all such, whereas he had abundance of disciples in Judea.

[3.] They suppose that out of Galilee no prophet had *risen*, and for this appeal to Nicodemus's search; yet this was false too: Jonah was of Gath-hepher, Nahum an Elkoshite, both of Galilee. Thus do they *make lies their refuge*.

(2.) How *absurd* their arguings were upon these grounds, such as were a shame to *rulers* and *Pharisees*.

[1.] Is any man of worth and virtue ever the worse for the poverty and obscurity of his country? The Galileans were the seed of Abraham; barbarians and Scythians are the seed of Adam; and *have we not all one Father?*

[2.] Supposing no prophet had risen out of Galilee, yet it is not impossible that any should arise thence. If Elijah was the first prophet of Gilead (as perhaps he was), and if the Gileadites were called *fugitives*, must it therefore be questioned whether he was a prophet or no?

3. The hasty adjournment of the court hereupon. They broke up the assembly in confusion, and with precipitation, and *every man went to his own house*. They met to take *counsel together against the Lord and his Anointed*, but they *imagined a vain think*; and not only he that sits in heaven laughed at them, but we may sit on earth and laugh at them too, to see all the policy of the close cabal broken to pieces with one plain honest word. They were not willing to hear Nicodemus, because they could not answer him. As soon as they perceived they had one such among them, they saw it was to no purpose to go on with their design, and therefore put off the debate to a more convenient season, when he was absent. Thus the counsel of the Lord is made to stand, in spite of the devices in the hearts of men.