John 7-8 — Controversies about Jesus

The Trial Motif

- Christ never got a real trial - St John is giving Him the Trial He deserved throughout His Gospel
- Prologue
  - "This man came for a **witness**, to **bear witness** of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to **bear witness** of that Light." (John 1:7-8)
  - "John **bore witness** of Him" (John 1:15)
  - "And John **bore witness**, saying,..." (John 1:32)
  - "He **confessed**, and **did not deny**, but **confessed**, 'I am not the Christ.'" (John 1:20)
- Nicodemus
  - "Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and **testify what We have seen**, and you do not receive **Our witness**." (John 3:11)
- The Fourfold witness
  - “If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true. [32] There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true. [33] You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. [34] Yet I do not receive testimony from man, but I say these things that you may be saved. [35] He was the burning and shining lamp, and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light. [36] But I have a greater witness than John’s; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish—the very works that I do—bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me. [37] And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. [38] But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. [39] You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. [40] But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life." (John 5:31-40)
    - John the Baptist
    - The works which the Father has given Me to finish
    - The Father Himself
    - The Scriptures

Jesus' Brothers Disbelieve

[1] After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for He did not want to walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill Him. [2] Now the Jews’ Feast of Tabernacles was at hand. [3] His brothers therefore said

to Him, “Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing. [4] For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world.” [5] For even His brothers did not believe in Him.

[6] Then Jesus said to them, “My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready. [7] The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil. [8] You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come.” [9] When He had said these things to them, He remained in Galilee.

[10] But when His brothers had gone up, then He also went up to the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret. [11] Then the Jews sought Him at the feast, and said, “Where is He?”

- Jews want to kill Him
  - This section starts (John 7:1) with them wanting to kill Him because He said He is the Bread of Life and to eat His Flesh and drink His Blood (John 6) and ends with them picking up stones to kill Him (John 8:59)
- Feast of Tabernacles
  - Harvest festival - late summer, early fall
  - Festival that remembers their wandering in the desert
    - Manna
    - Water from the Rock
    - Light (Pillar of Fire)
  - Today, Jews will try to spend as much time outdoors as possible
    - Maybe just in the backyard
  - In Biblical Times, there were elaborate celebrations at Jerusalem
    - The Lord gave them water from a Rock
      - Drawing water from the Pool of Siloam
      - Jesus will say "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink." (John 7:37)
    - The Lord gave them light as a pillar of fire
      - At night, they would have celebrations with light - a huge candelabra that burned all night long (e.g. Olympic Flame)
      - Jesus will say "I am the Light of the World." (John 8:12)
- His brothers did not believe in Him
  - They are telling Him to go to Judea because everyone was there for the feast
  - They know that He lost many disciples in John 6
  - Who are the brothers? Relatives - cousins
    - Not His brothers... or He would not have given St Mary to St John
    - Also, the way they speak to Him is like a "younger brother" - speaking with authority over Him. Very Jewish-ism
      - They send for Him (Mark 3:31-32)
    - Some say they are older sons of Joseph from His departed wife
  - Did they not believe Him entirely?
    - They believe in His signs, but they don't believe in Him like the disciples
    - Disciples believe He is the Christ...
    - Disciples believed He is the Son of God...

    - Disciples believed Hs is the King of Israel...
    - The brothers see Him more familiarly ("we saw Him grow up!")
- My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready... My time has not yet fully come
    - Time/Hour are themes in this gospel - show that there is a plan of salvation
    - Compare with John 2 - Wedding of Cana "My time has not yet come" - but for His mother, it's okay
- Jesus goes up privately
    - He is going according to the will of the Father
    - He is not lying or tricking the brothers
    - Privately...
        - Most people still did not recognize Him (this Gospel is more early ministry)
        - If He had gone with the brothers, it would have been a large group
        - Rather, He goes by Himself, and He is able to hear what the Jews are saying about Him
- The Jews
    - Different groups - but John just says Jews

Criticism #1: He Deceives the People

12 And there was much complaining among the people concerning Him. Some said, “He is good”; others said, “No, on the contrary, He deceives the people.” 13 However, no one spoke openly of Him for fear of the Jews.

- Crowd is divided about Him
    - "He is good"
    - "He deceives the people" (He leads the people astray) - Deuteronomy 13 - Punishment of death

Criticism #2: He Has Not Studied

14 Now about the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught. 15 And the Jews marveled, saying, “How does this Man know letters, having never studied?”

16 Jesus answered them and said, “My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. 17 If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or *whether* I speak on My own *authority.* 18 He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him. 19 Did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law? Why do you seek to kill Me?”

- Scribes would teach by Rabbinic Authority - they would give a teaching and quote a Rabbi (e.g. Rabbi Hillel)
- Christ would teach with His own authority
    - He is uneducated
    - He has no authority
    - He has no education
    - He doesn't know what He's talking about
    - These criticisms would have come from the elite, those who are educated

- Especially that they see the signs and the signs/miracles witness to His legitimacy - it shows that He has a kind of authority from God, but not the authority that they have

Criticism #3: He Has a Demon

20 The people answered and said, “You have a demon. Who is seeking to kill You?”

Criticism #4: He Breaks the Law of Moses

21 Jesus answered and said to them, “I did one work, and you all marvel. 22 Moses therefore gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. 23 If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath? 24 Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”

- I did one work - the healing of the paralytic in John 5
  - It's not that He did this work only, but that this one was on the Sabbath
  - But they also made exceptions for the Sabbath... circumcision! Routinely!!! And it's not even life or death

Criticism #5: We Know Where He is From

25 Now some of them from Jerusalem said, “Is this not He whom they seek to kill? 26 But look! He speaks boldly, and they say nothing to Him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is truly the Christ? 27 However, we know where this Man is from; but when the Christ comes, no one knows where He is from.”

28 Then Jesus cried out, as He taught in the temple, saying, “You both know Me, and you know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. 29 But I know Him, for I am from Him, and He sent Me.”

30 Therefore they sought to take Him; but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come. 31 And many of the people believed in Him, and said, “When the Christ comes, will He do more signs than these which this *Man* has done?”

32 The Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring these things concerning Him, and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take Him. 33 Then Jesus said to them, “I shall be with you a little while longer, and *then* I go to Him who sent Me. 34 You will seek Me and not find *Me,* and where I am you cannot come.”

35 Then the Jews said among themselves, “Where does He intend to go that we shall not find Him? Does He intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? 36 What is this thing that He said, ‘You will seek Me and not find Me, and where I am you cannot come’?”

37 On the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. 38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” 39 But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in

Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given,* because Jesus was not yet glorified.

- Folk belief had developed among the Jews that the Messiah would spring up all of a sudden and no one would know where he came from, and he would only be revealed if Elijah came and revealed him
  - John the Baptist - He is Elijah who came and the testified of Him
- Of course it's true that they don't know where He is from because He is from heaven

Criticism #6: He is not from Bethlehem

40 Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, “Truly this is the Prophet.”
41 Others said, “This is the Christ.”

But some said, “Will the Christ come out of Galilee? 42 Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?” 43 So there was a division among the people because of Him. 44 Now some of them wanted to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

- Generally speaking, people were not born in one place and moved elsewhere... they lived where they were born
- We know that He was born in Bethlehem

He Bears Witness of Himself

12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”

13 The Pharisees therefore said to Him, “You bear witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true.”

14 Jesus answered and said to them, “Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from and where I am going. 15 You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. 16 And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I *am* with the Father who sent Me. 17 It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. 18 I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me.”

19 Then they said to Him, “Where is Your Father?”

Jesus answered, “You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also.”

20 These words Jesus spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one laid hands on Him, for His hour had not yet come.

- I judge no one
  - Yet!
  - But if I did, My judgment would be true!

- Two Witnesses
  - Your Law states we need two witnesses…
  - I am One and the Father who set Me is the Other
  - So they say… okay well where/Who is Your Father?

21 Then Jesus said to them again, “I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin.
Where I go you cannot come.”

22 So the Jews said, “Will He kill Himself, because He says, ‘Where I go you cannot come’?”

23 And He said to them, “You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of
this world. 24 Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I
am *He,* you will die in your sins.”

25 Then they said to Him, “Who are You?”

And Jesus said to them, “Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning. 26 I have many
things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world
those things which I heard from Him.”

27 They did not understand that He spoke to them of the Father.

28 Then Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am *He,* and
that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. 29 And He who sent
Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.” 30 As
He spoke these words, many believed in Him.

- You will seek Me and will die in your sin
  - Sin is unbelief
  - They will seek Him because they will recognize Who He is but it will be too late

31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples
indeed. 32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

33 They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants, and have never been in bondage to
anyone. How *can* You say, ‘You will be made free’?”

34 Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. 35
And a slave does not abide in the house forever, *but* a son abides forever. 36 Therefore if the Son
makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

37 “I know that you are Abraham’s descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no
place in you. 38 I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your
father.”

39 They answered and said to Him, “Abraham is our father.”

Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham. [40] But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. [41] You do the deeds of your father.”

Then they said to Him, “We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God.”

[42] Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. [43] Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. [44] You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources,* for he is a liar and the father of it. [45] But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. [46] Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? [47] He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.”

Criticism #7: You are a Samaritan

[48] Then the Jews answered and said to Him, “Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?”

[49] Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. [50] And I do not seek My *own* glory; there is One who seeks and judges. [51] Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.”

[52] Then the Jews said to Him, “Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, ‘If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.’ [53] Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Who do You make Yourself out to be?”

[54] Jesus answered, “If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God. [55] Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, ‘I do not know Him,’ I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word. [56] Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad.”

[57] Then the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?”

- Samaritan
  - They believed that heresy comes from the Samaritans (e.g. Simon Magus)
- Theme in Gospel of John is that the Lord is speaking about something spiritual (eternal life) and they interpret it literally
  - If anyone keeps My word, he shall never see death..."
  - "Abraham and the prophets all died!!!"
- Theme in Gospel of John - Christ distinguishes Himself from the Father, and at the same time reveals His unity with the Father
- Theme in Gospel of John - Christ knows the Father uniquely
- Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad

- The Jews understood that Abraham saw the future in some way (e.g. Genesis 15) but for Christ to imply that HE is the one Abraham saw, is shocking.

Criticism #8: He Makes Himself to be God

58 Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”

59 Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

- Very clear, that He is making Himself to be God - so they want to stone Him.
- "Before Abraham was, I AM" - I AM is the name of God
- Jesus escapes from them because His time had not yet come

Revision #3
Created 2026-04-23 20:51:18 UTC by Fr.Maximus Wahba
Updated 2026-05-06 20:07:07 UTC by Fr.Maximus Wahba