

## The Forensic Speech of John 7-8

These two chapters appear garbled – as if they have no coherent line of thinking. However, when we understand how forensic speech of the first century worked, particularly in the context of the shame/honor system, we find a lucid and historically plausible account of Jesus’ confrontation with the Jewish leaders during the feast of Tabernacles. There are several things to look for:

Thesis	Antithesis
<p><b>A. Challenges to Jesus’ Honor:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 7:3-5, Jesus’ brothers challenge him to go to Jerusalem.</li> <li>2. 7:15, He is uneducated, unorthodox</li> <li>3. 7:20, Demon-Possessed (crazy) (<b>crowd</b>); and a Samaritan (<b>leaders</b>) (cf. 8:48, 52)</li> <li>4. 7:21, (implied, cf. 5:17-18) He breaks the Sabbath</li> <li>5. 7:25, The leaders are trying to kill him (<b>crowd</b>); no leader has believed in him (7:48)</li> <li>6. 7:27, He is from Galilee (<b>crowd</b>) (cf. 7:41-43, 52)</li> <li>7. 7:35-36, Jesus will run away to the Greeks</li> <li>8. 8:19, Where is your father?</li> <li>9. 8:25, Who are you?</li> <li>10. 8:53, 57 Do you really think you are greater than Abraham? You’re not yet fifty</li> </ol>	<p><b>A’. Jesus’ response to honor challenges:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 7:6-9, He refuses to play their game because he is of God, not the world. But he does arrive late and secretly (7:10, 14).</li> <li>2. 7:16, My teacher was God! (8:26)</li> <li>3. No response! Implies utter ignorance (cf. 7:25); In 8:49-50 Jesus claims he is from God and honors him alone.</li> <li>4. 7:21-24, If Moses circumcised on the Sabbath I am justified in healing.</li> <li>5. None stated</li> <li>6. 7:28, “You know me...” but not God! I am really from him! (cf. 7:33-34; 8:14-18)</li> <li>7. None stated</li> <li>8. 8:19, You don’t know</li> <li>9. 8:25, I’ve already told you</li> <li>10. 8:54-58, Yes, I’m greater than Abraham and more ancient</li> </ol>
<p><b>B. Attempts to arrest or kill Jesus:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 7:1, Jew’s of Judea sought to kill Jesus</li> <li>2. 7:11, “Watching” = zētoun</li> <li>3. 7:30, Tried to seize him</li> <li>4. 7:32, Sent temple guards to arrest him (cf. 7:44)</li> <li>5. 8:59, Attempted to stone him</li> </ol>	<p><b>B’. Consequence:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. None</li> <li>2. A huge argument when he arrives</li> <li>3. 7:30, None, for Jesus’ time had not yet come</li> <li>4. 7:44-45, no one laid a hand on him; guard’s returned empty-handed (cf. 8:20)</li> <li>5. 8:59, he alluded their grasp and hid</li> </ol>
<p><b>C. Legal charges against Jesus: (cf. 5:18)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 7:12, He deceives the people (cf. 7:47)</li> <li>2. 7:21, (implied) He breaks the Sabbath</li> <li>3. 8:52-59, (implied) blasphemy</li> </ol>	<p><b>C’. Testimony for Jesus:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 7:12-13, the <b>crowds</b> whispering, for fear of their leaders, they confessed Jesus was a good man. But these are dismissed by the leaders as a cursed, ignorant mob (7:49)</li> <li>2. 7:15, the <b>leaders</b> were amazed at his wisdom.</li> <li>3. 7:31-32, Many in the <b>crowd</b> put their faith in him for the Christ won’t do more miracles (cf. 8:30)</li> <li>4. 7:40, Some acclaimed him a prophet, others declared he was the Christ (D1)</li> <li>5. 7:46, the <b>guards</b> said he spoke well</li> <li>6. 7:51, Nicodemus defends Jesus’ right to trial, and is excoriated for it (7:52)</li> </ol>

<p><b>D. Response to Jesus' Claims:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 7:40, Some acclaimed him a prophet, others declared he was the Christ (C'4)</li> <li>2. 8:13, "You are your own witness" (E'1)</li> <li>3. None stated</li> </ol>	<p><b>D'. Jesus' Claims:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 7:37-39, I am the real water of Tabernacles</li> <li>2. 8:12, I am the light of the world</li> <li>3. 7:28, I am from God! (cf. 8:14-18, 23, 28-29, 38)</li> </ol>
<p><b>E. Evaluation of the leader's testimony:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 7:17, You disobey God</li> <li>2. 7:19, You are murderers and liars, thus you can't be children of Abraham – you are illegitimate. God is not your father but the devil is! (cf. 8:37-47, 55)</li> <li>3. 7:26, the <b>crowds</b> wonder if the leaders had concluded he was, in fact, the Christ.</li> <li>4. 7:51-52, The leaders are ignorant (Nicodemus was legally correct and Prophets can come out of Galilee) (cf. 8:27).</li> <li>5. 8:15, You judge by human standards, because you are from below (8:23)</li> </ol>	<p><b>E'. Evaluation of Jesus' testimony:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 8:13, "You are your own witness" (D2); Jesus retorts that his witness is valid because he comes from God (8:14-18)</li> </ol>
<p><b>F. Verdict/Sentence on Jesus:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 8:59, Jesus deserves to die (cf. 5:18)</li> </ol>	<p><b>F'. Verdict/Sentence on the Jewish leaders:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 8:21, 24, You will die in your sins.</li> <li>2. 8:31, 36, To those who put faith in him he promised they would be free and never see death (8:51)</li> </ol>