

October 26, 2014
Sunday Morning Service
Series: John
Community Baptist Church
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as you prepare to study John 7:1-24.

1. When was the last time before the feast mentioned in this text that Jesus was in Jerusalem?
2. Why didn't Jesus' half-brothers believe in Him?
3. Explain the time comparison stated in verses 6-9.
4. Why was Jesus so concerned about not going to Jerusalem publicly?
5. What is the important lesson we need to learn from this passage?

JUDGE RIGHT John 7:1-24

"Judge not, that you be not judged" (Matthew 7:1). People have said that to me on more than a couple of occasions. It is the response I typically hear after I have quoted a passage of Scripture and then explained how a person has either missed the application of the principle or totally ignored it in his or her chosen lifestyle. It's a lot like the response, "You're a legalist" that you can expect if you have the nerve to quote a rule from the Bible like, *"Love your enemy as yourself."* No wait! That rule is always acceptable. Or maybe a rule like, *"We should not stop gathering together with other believers, as some of you are doing"* (Hebrews 10:25a). If you hold

to something like that, you are definitely a legalist who is judging those who are not committed to fellow Christians in a local church.

Doesn't it seem a bit judgmental to accuse someone of being a legalist because they quote a Bible verse about the importance of Christians meeting together (in church is implied)? Actually, the problem often boils down to our failure to be accurate or complete with the Word of God, the words of Jesus, the Bible. For example, Jesus didn't say, "Never judge someone." His statement was this: *"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you"* (Matthew 7:1-2).

Do you see the principle regarding judgement? Jesus warned that when we judge, we better use a very accurate standard, a measurement by which we ourselves are willing to be measured. Therefore, we do well to measure carefully our judgments against others; and when we do need to confront or advise, we better use righteous judgment. That is what Jesus told the Jews at the Feast of Booths in Jerusalem who falsely accused Him of falsely accusing them. A lot of misunderstanding and offense can be swept away if we will just be honest about what the other person said, if we will look at the larger context in which it was said, and if we will say what aligns with the Bible.

Jesus Stayed out of Jerusalem (vv.1-13).

God the Son said that He would not go to the feast in Jerusalem (vv.1-9). There was a good reason for Him to stay out of Judea. John put it like this: *After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him (v.1).* The words *after this* refers to the events recorded in chapter six. At the opening of chapter six we learned that Passover was at hand (6:4). That would have been the 15th of Nisan – equivalent to about the last days of our March or first days of April. Now we read about the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles which was six months later on Tishri 15-21 (our September/October).

During this time of about six months that lapsed, Jesus ministered in Galilee. When we consider the information the other writers (Matthew, Mark, Luke) gave us, we realize that Jesus was

busy. He taught and healed from Tyre and Sidon, which was Gentile country in the far northwest (Mat. 15:21-28), to the Decapolis, which was largely southeast of Galilee across the Jordan (Mark 7:31-37). He traveled all that distance as well as ministering throughout Galilee. In those places, He healed (Mat. 15:29), cast out demons (Mat 15:21), and fed 4,000 with a bit of food (Mat. 15:32).

Most important during this time He taught, trained, and mentored the disciples. It was during this time that Peter made his great confession that Jesus is the Son of God, or equal to God (Mat. 16:13-19). Also, it was during this time when Jesus gave the first direct teaching that He was going to go up to Jerusalem where the leaders would apprehend Him and kill Him (Mt. 16:21). And during this six-month period, Jesus was transfigured and the disciples saw His glory (Mt. 17:1-8).

For many months Jesus had stayed out of Jerusalem. It is entirely possible that He had not been in Jerusalem since the last Feast of Booths a year earlier (John 5). He stayed out of Judea because the religious leaders had already set about to kill Him. Several months earlier, the Jews decided to kill Him because He broke the Sabbath and claimed equality with God (John 5:18). Was it not to be killed as the sacrifice for sins that God the Son became man? So why avoid it? God determines that all things must take place at particular times so that all can be fulfilled that needs to be fulfilled in the process. Jesus was the obedient, submissive Son who was doing the Father's will daily, yea, moment by moment.

Jesus' half-brothers didn't understand anything about God's purpose or timing so they pressured God the Son to "break His rule" about going (vv.2-9). An important feast was coming up. *Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand (v.2)*. This was one of three feasts which all males in Israel were supposed to attend. Therefore, it created the perfect setting for Messiah to campaign and recruit followers. To that end, Jesus' half-brothers thought they had compelling reasons for why Jesus should attend the feast. *So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world."* For not even his brothers believed in him.

It seems that Jesus' half-brothers at least acknowledged that Jesus did unique works. Did they, like many of the Jews, believe that He was some kind of magician who deceived people with slight of hand? Whatever else they believed, common sense required that a massive gathering of Israelites was the best place to show some magic or do some teaching that would recruit followers. The statement, *If you do these things* indicates that the half-brothers were not even convinced Jesus actually turned water into wine or healed lame people or fed thousands with handful of food.

The root problem is that those men did not believe. How can a person grow up and live in the presence of God the Son for 20-30 years and not believe? Maybe the only way a sinner will ever truly believe Jesus is through the miracle of regeneration. If the heavenly Father did not draw Jesus' half-brothers to Him, it wouldn't matter how many years they lived together, they would never believe. We must always keep this picture in our minds. Tell the gospel clearly, tell it plainly, tell it bluntly with no strings attached. God gives faith as people hear the Word of God (Romans 10:17). To do otherwise is to deceive millions of people into thinking they are born again.

Jesus revealed His half brothers' error. *Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come."* After saying this, he remained in Galilee. Now this sounds like an odd situation. On one hand, Jesus told the brothers that He was not going up to this feast. Right away we wonder how He could come to that conclusion and still be innocent of breaking God's law? The law is clear that, *Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Booths. They shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed (Deuteronomy 16:16)*.

The answer to this very troubling dilemma is a matter of timing. Twice in this brief conversation Jesus told His brothers that His *time had not come yet*. But He also pointed out that the half-brothers' time always is prepared. If we contrast these references to timing it looks like this:

The time of me is not yet present (present tense), v.6

The time of you is always ready (present tense), v.6b

The time of mine not yet has been fulfilled (perfect tense), v.8b

In other words, Jesus said to the brothers, “You go ahead because it is time for you to go” (v.7). But He also said, “I’m not going [with you] because it is not time for Me to go” (vv.6 & 9). Jesus’ *time* here is not to be confused with “My hour has not yet come” which He told Mary in reference to His time to be apprehended and killed (John 2:4). That Jesus was running on a different schedule than the brothers is clear from v.10 where He went to Jerusalem privately not publicly. For Jesus to join the crowd that would be walking up to Jerusalem would cause too much disruption because of the people’s hatred for Him. They hated Him because He told the truth about them.

So when and why did the words of Jesus become palatable to a sinful world who offends God all the time? Do we think that somehow things have changed and now sinners by the thousands are just waiting to hear the good news that God has a wonderful plan for their lives? Jesus didn’t tell people how to have peace and joy and comfort in their lives. That kind of stuff is only experienced after sinners come to grips with the reality that they are rebels against their Creator and they are very sorry for that. Jesus’ half brothers didn’t understand that . . . yet!

Coming to verse ten, we read the statement that at first seems to be contradictory. God the Son went to the feast in Jerusalem (vv.10-13). Yes, but more precisely we learn that Jesus went to the feast privately. *But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private (v.10)*. If you don’t understand the timing issue in verses six through nine, this statement looks like Jesus lied. Even Christians struggle with how to explain this. Answering the question we must first and foremost conclude that Jesus lived perfectly under the law having never sinned. Therefore, if you cannot reconcile this statement with the previous statements, you better withhold judgment against Jesus. The answer is that Jesus’ time to go to the feast was about two or three days after His half-brothers’ time to go to the feast. His time was later because He had to go alone. In fact, it is possible that He went through Samaria which the rest of the crowd of Jews would never have done.

Everyone expected the Teacher to be at the feast (vv.11-13). The Jews were looking for Him. *The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, “Where is He?” (v.11)*. There is an important difference in wording between verses eleven and twelve. The term *Jews* in verses eleven and thirteen refers to the rulers who wanted to kill Jesus. That is how the term is used in 1:19 where the leaders sent representatives to find out who John was, and in 2:18 where the leaders confronted Jesus about wrecking their flea market. In contrast is the term *people* in verse twelve that speaks of those who were often curiosity seekers and such. The religious leaders were bent on killing Jesus and hoped that the feast would draw Him out of the protection of Herod Antipas in Galilee into their jurisdiction in Jerusalem. Oh! So Jesus was exactly right to stay out of Judea as much as possible and to go up to Jerusalem alone so that the authorities would not apprehend Him and kill Him. Don’t judge Him by saying, “Where is He? He ought to be here!” It is quite foolish for us to try to be our Creator’s judge by insisting that He do what we think He should do.

The Jews wanted to flush Jesus into a trap so they could kill Him. The people on the other hand muttered much. *And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, “He is a good man,” others said, “No, he is leading the people astray.” Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of Him*. There was much arguing and debating about Jesus. The conflict was whether Jesus was a good man or a deceiver. How ironic that the debate today seems to conclude that Jesus was both a good man and a deceiver. Almost all religions conclude that Jesus was a good man. However, all man-made religions conclude that Jesus was not God, which is exactly what Jesus taught that He was. That is the reason the authorities had Him crucified. So how can Jesus be a good man and a deceiver about His origin at the same time?

And still even professing Christians debate whether Jesus is just a good man or the Lord of their lives – which is only fitting since He is our Creator. Debate was carefully guarded in Jerusalem that day so that the *Jews* (again speaking of the rulers) would not hear and do something nasty to the people. Here an important difference is on the surface. On one hand, people who truly believe Jesus cannot help but speak boldly of His divinity and sovereign control over timing and schedules. On the other hand, people who assent to certain truths

about Jesus doubt Him and His work and fear what others might believe about Him. Which describes you best?

Jesus Confronted a Crowd in Jerusalem (vv.14-24).

As He began teaching in the temple area, God the Son confronted the crowd about their law breaking (vv.14-19). Also as was expected, Jesus taught with authority (vv.14-15). He began teaching at about the time the feast was half over. John wrote, *About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching (v.14)*. Jesus arrived about three or four days late according to man's schedule, and at the perfect time for God's schedule. Immediately He went up into the temple and began teaching. As usual, He was teaching about Himself – who He is and what He came to do for sinners.

And as usual, the Jews were taken aback by His authority. *The Jews therefore marveled, saying, "How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?" (v.15)*. First, let's be very clear: this principle does not apply to pastors and seminary students. The query was regarding the fact that Jesus never studied at the approved schools for Rabbis (teachers). He, unlike us, never has to study because He is the author of truth. No wonder He struck the people as having unusual authority. Wise teachers and pastors study HIM!

Jesus taught with authority, according to the people's conclusion, but at the same time Jesus' authority was quite pointed (vv.16-19). It had to be because His authority was not His own. *So Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me" (v.16)*. The people were right to be astonished. But the simple explanation was that Jesus taught exactly what God – who authored the Scriptures – taught. Of course He ought to have a firm grasp of Scripture and be able to explain it – He invented it! But then there are still the doubters who rely very heavily on human wisdom and human conclusions rather than the boring, old-fashioned Bible. Why teach the words of Jesus when the experiences of fellow humans generate a whole lot more interest? Actually, that issue often reveals the difference between regeneration and lack of regeneration.

It is one thing to admit that Christ taught with authority and another to accept it. When following Jesus becomes costly, that is when we discover that His authority is affirmed by faith. A hunger for righteousness confirms the authority behind Jesus' teaching. Jesus told the muttering crowd, *If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority (v.17)*. What kind of people will desire to do God's will? People who God is drawing to Christ. People who God has already drawn to Christ and who have been born again through the work of the Holy Spirit. Truly born again people accept what Jesus taught, even when we struggle to understand it. At some point in life, every single person must decide if Jesus taught God's truth. Those who agree will desire to do God's will, and those who desire to do God's will, will agree.

This is a very important principle because seeking to glorify God prevents falsehood. Jesus said, *The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood (v.18)*. Human nature is to speak in a way that exalts self. We witness that all the time, even in preaching and preachers. A true servant of the Lord will seek to bring honor and glory to His Lord who sent him. Jesus taught God's truth with authority so that God would be glorified. People who love God and desire for Him to be glorified connected with Jesus' teaching. People who love God and seek His glory will connect with a preacher who preaches God's Word for God's glory. People who are all about fads, trends, personalities, and human heroes will gravitate to fleshly speakers who talk about God and the Bible but who do so in a way that exalts themselves.

At that, Jesus zeroed in on the point of His teaching: "None of you keeps the law." *"Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?" (v.19)*. This statement should have hit like a ton of bricks. Did Moses give them the law? Yes. "But no one keeps the law." You can hear the howls of protest! What about the Pharisees? Surely they kept the law! Nope. So the modern religionists chimes in, "What about devout, faithful Baptists?" Definitely not! No one keeps the law.

It is impossible to keep the law because the purpose of the law is to reveal sin. No one is able to keep it or it would cease to serve as

God intended. Everyone breaks the law so everyone needs the Savior from sin. In particular (Jesus drives to the point) murder is against the law. Those very people who were proud of keeping the law, in their hearts, wanted to kill Jesus. Not far removed from them is ourselves. Since our sin hung Christ on the tree, anyone who loves to hang on to sin is guilty of murdering Jesus.

Finally, God the Son confronted the crowd about their misuse of the law (vv.20-24). He uncovered what His opponents tried to cover (vv.20-23). This happened when the crowd rebuked God, if we can imagine that! *The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?" (v.20)*. The people of the crowd denied Jesus' accusation. They denied the truth that Jesus could plainly see, the truth that would manifest itself about six months later. Time and truth walk hand-in-hand. Instead of admitting the truth, the people shifted the focus to Jesus and claimed He was demon-possessed.

Jesus went on to reveal their anger (vv.21-23). They had marveled at a work Jesus did on the Sabbath. *Jesus answered them, "I did one work, and you all marvel at it" (v.21)*. When was that? The last time Jesus was in Jerusalem He healed the lame man at the pool of Bethesda (5:1-18). Everyone marveled at it. But the leaders cringed at it because Jesus broke their Sabbath law. They were all about keeping their laws and traditions. Jesus addressed that issue by saying, *Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath (v.22)*. Jesus healed on the same day that the people would circumcise baby boys. What's the difference?

The truth is that Jesus did not keep the people's law according to the people's preferences. They were also very inconsistent. So Jesus pointed out, *If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well? (v.23)*. Inconsistency is the bane of religion and too often the black eye of Christianity.

The whole story boils down to this point where Jesus established the principle of righteous judgment. He taught, *Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment (v.24)*. This story has focused on the very kinds of things that critics and judges jump on with a vengeance as inconsistencies. Jesus stayed out of

Judea, then went to Jerusalem. Jesus said He wasn't going to the feast, but then He went. The Jews said they weren't trying to kill Jesus, but they were. Jesus accused the Jews of not keeping the law, but then admitted that they did keep the law of circumcision. The Jews claimed Moses gave them the law of circumcision, when in reality what they practiced was their forefathers' version of the law from Moses. The Jews circumcised on the Sabbath, but railed on Jesus for healing on the Sabbath.

Because Jesus taught only what the Father sent Him to teach, He was perfectly consistent. The authoritative word from God that He taught leveled judgment against sin and inconsistency. The people misjudged Him, but in the end He will prove to be true.

Therefore, we need to learn from this example to stick with what works. Our opinions and preferences will almost always lead to inconsistencies. But the Word of God, though disliked and unpopular, always judges righteously. Let's be sure God's Word is speaking.