

John Ch 7 Vs 1-24 (31)

“Where Do You Stand?”

Let me just begin this morning by saying that there is no neutral ground with Jesus. You're either in Christ, or you're out of Christ, you either love Him, or you don't, you're either hot or cold, for Him or against Him. Jesus said, *“He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.”* Matt 12:30 and There is no middle ground, there is not a person on the face of this earth who has had an encounter with Jesus Christ of some form or another, be it in a bible study much like we are today, or perhaps hearing something on the radio or television, maybe someone has approached them on the mission field, given them a book, witnessed to them at work or at school, or whatever, but that they're not forced to make a decision about Jesus Christ and who He is. and That decision holds with in it the very power to make or to break the difference between eternal life, and eternal death, everlasting life, and eternal separation from God.

I don't know that I'll ever forget one particular time we were (as a church group) doing some caroling at a local nursing home and as I ventured off into one particular room there was this elderly woman in there who seemed just so frail and vulnerable. Just lying there, eyes open, listening as the carolers passed down the hall. and Though she was coherent, and I could tell she could understand what was going on, it was difficult for her to communicate much beyond a nod of the head one way or another. and As I began to speak to her, I asked her if she knew the Lord. She wagged her head so as to inform me that she didn't, and as I began to share with her, I could sense that she was getting nervous, and you could just tell that she was afraid as I began to speak to her of the frailty of life and God's love for her. But when I asked her if she wanted to invite the Lord into her heart, she fearfully shook her head no, and rejected God's offer to her of everlasting life. Now did she later reconsider? Perhaps, but I don't know but that I wasn't that one last instrument of God's grace reaching out to her on her death bed only to see her turn away from God's invitation of eternal life to her. and Let me just say that that's a radically sobering feeling. We all have a decision to make about Jesus Christ and who He is.

As we come to Ch 7 of the gospel of John, we see these various groups of people being brought into that place whereby they're making their stand regarding Jesus Christ Where do you stand? Who is Jesus to you, because that will determine where you make your stand, which will determine your eternal destiny.

By the time we come to John Ch 7, 2 and ½ yrs of the ministry of Jesus have passed, there's approx. 6 months left prior to the crucifixion, and 6 months have passed since the events of Ch 6. The feeding of the 5,000, the discourse on the bread of life, and many of Jesus' disciples resolving to walk with Him no more, people have been and are beginning to make their stand as to who He is. and I wish that I could tell you that it's limelight and glory from here on out, but unfortunately as John testified earlier, *“He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.”* John 1:11 and Consequently this ch breaks up into 3 fairly disheartening or unsettling sections that center around 3 time periods with in this ch.

This Ch encompasses approx. 8 days in the life of Jesus, which take place during the time of the Feast of Tabernacles. and We see a time just before the feast, in the midst of the feast, and then just after the feast. and The sections which outline our ch for us accordingly are # 1Vs 1-10 “Disbelief,” #2 Vs 11-36 “Debate,” and #3 Vs 37-53 “Division.”

Vs1

Couple of things to observe here, #1 Jesus wasn't on a fast track to martyrdom.

He wasn't out looking for trouble, or seeking to somehow place Himself in harms way that He might be persecuted for righteousness sake. But rather He walked very wisely, very prudently, or carefully, and cautiously. The bible never teaches anyone to go looking for trouble, to the contrary we're not to be troublemakers, but rather we're to be peacemakers. Jesus didn't say, “Blessed are the trouble makers.” He said, “*Blessed are the peacemakers.*” Matt 5:9

So when you read through the book of Acts, every time Paul became aware that people were seeking his life, he left that area, or avoided that region. Now there may come a time that God will be glorified in your death, you may be called upon to lay down your life for His name's sake. But meanwhile let Him be all the more glorified through your life, and don't go looking to stir things up and get yourself in trouble and then thing you're being persecuted for righteousness. You're being persecuted because you wouldn't leave things well enough alone, you brought it on yourself, stepped willfully into harms way. Jesus said, “*Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.*” Matt 10:16

So we see Jesus here exercising wisdom, He doesn't force Himself into an arena of which He's not welcome. Loves people (no doubt), prayed for them, was available to them, but didn't force Himself upon them. But secondly it wasn't as though Jesus was afraid of man, but He was sensitive to the Father's timing in His life, we've already pointed it out in past studies, but we'll begin to see more and more about how Jesus led His life on a divine schedule that was laid out for Him by the Father, and Jesus was always walking in stride with God's Spirit. Wasn't out in front of Him, or lagging way behind, but simply staying in stride with God's will for His life being as it were Spirit led. and That's important for us to, we don't want to be out there just shooting from the hip, we want God's Spirit to lead us, and to guide us, to convict us when to step out, and when to stay back, and Jesus serves (obviously) as the perfect example of what it means to have a life led of the Spirit.

Vs2

The Feast of Tabernacles was one of the 3 national events of which all the male Israelites had to make their way to Jerusalem to commemorate. The other 2 were of course Passover and Pentecost. and The Feast of Tabernacles was the last major shindig of the year taking place 6 months after Passover in October. Passover took place in April, the Feast of Tabernacles took place in October.

The Feast of Tabernacles was a time set aside to commemorate God's faithfulness to the children of Israel during their wilderness wanderings. and So during this week long period or so they were to set up tents, or booths, and they were to campout all week in their homemade type tents, and that was to remind them of how their fathers dwelt in tents in the wilderness.

During this time they were to speak to their sons, and remind one another of their history. How the Lord provided for, and protected them for 40yrs, gave them manna everyday, quail, water from the rock, their clothes never became tattered and their sandals never wore out, how the pillar of fire led them by night, and a pillar of cloud by day. and It was just a real festive time whereby the people would stir one another up and remind each other of God's faithfulness to them as a nation.

Vs 3-5

#1 Disbelief, His own brothers didn't believe in Him. Which, by the way, this kinda shoots that whole perpetual virginity of Mary thing right out of the water doesn't it? Jesus had ½ brothers, obviously they weren't whole brothers because Jesus was God's Son, not Joseph's, but Mary had other sons by Joseph. Matt's gospel names no less than 4, James, Joses, Simon and Judas (not Iscariot), but we find here that *even they* don't believe in Him.

Now you would think that if anyone would believe on Jesus it would be His own brothers. I mean who else has had such an up close and personal experience with Jesus like that of His own brothers? They've seen His life day in and day out, never making a mistake, always saying and doing the right thing, I mean, can you imagine growing up living in the shadow of Jesus? Talk about frustration, how many times they probably heard, "Why can't you be more like your brother!?" He never said or did anything wrong, He was the perfect big brother, was always nice *to* them, looked out *for* them, took care *of* them. But the scriptures had prophesied this would happen, the bible says, "*I have become a stranger to my brothers, And an alien to my mother's children.*" Ps 69:8 and Of course we're seeing the fulfillment of that.

Now later on they would believe upon Him, at least a couple of them, of some the record doesn't say, but they would later believe upon Him but it would take the cross, and the resurrection. Once they seen the cross, and knew of the resurrection, it would make believers out of them. Which makes for a real practical application for you and me, because we can sometimes take the mentality that if we're just nice to people, look out for people, and take care of people that eventually they'll be won to Christ. But that's not necessarily true, you can be nice to people your whole life and watch people slip off into hell, because the power of salvation isn't found in being nice (as much as we need to be nice).

The power of salvation is found in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and So as important as it is to be nice to people, and look out for people, at some point we need to

share the message of Jesus Christ with people. Because the power of salvation is in the message of the gospel, the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified for the sin of the world, and resurrected for our justification if we'll just but believe upon Him. Jesus was nice to His brothers I'm sure, but that didn't make believers out of them did it? But the cross, and the resurrection did, Paul said, "*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.*" Rom 1:16 God help us not to be ashamed of the gospel and camouflage our shame with this notion of just being nice to people in order to somehow draw them to Jesus. Jesus said that it was going to be by His being lifted up, upon the cross that men would be drawn to Him, not by our being nice, so when you're talking with people about an issue, or about your life, look for those opportunities to force the issue back to the cross, take them to the cross whenever you can.

Really these brothers of His stand in place of the popular pulse of the people of the nation, they weren't questioning Jesus works, or the reality of what He did, but who He said He was, they didn't believe in Him. and Yet they're going up to the Feast which speaks entirely of Him, how easy it is to get caught up in tradition, and yet completely miss the truth; going up to this Feast to honor God, yet completely missing their Messiah.

I'm certain that they were aware of what had just recently happened and how all those people who were following after Him just recently forsook Him. and So they begin to reason with Him, and they're saying, "Hey, this is your big chance, there's going to be millions of people up there teeming the streets, go up there and do something big! Wow the crowds with some big miracle and recoup your losses, make up for some lost ground."

They were more or less ridiculing Him, and tempting Him in a manner that wasn't unlike the way that Satan tempted Him some 2 ½ yrs earlier. "Use your powers to serve your own self centered purposes, do some magnanimous miracle and take advantage of who you are." But it is written you shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve, we're not to serve our own agenda, we're not to seek to manipulate the circumstance to exalt ourselves, we're to worship the Lord our God, seek to serve Him and His agenda, and to exalt Him with our lives. and So Jesus says to them.

Vs 6-9

Now He wasn't saying that He was going to skip out on the feast, but that He wasn't going up on their terms, to seek to reveal Himself to the world, it wasn't time for that yet. But what an indictment against His brothers, we read earlier in John how the law came through Moses, but grace and truth comes through Jesus Christ and I'm so thankful for the grace of God, but sometimes that truth stings a bit.

Jesus is saying to His brothers, "Look, I can't go up to that feast in any type of open way because they hate Me up there. Because though I'm in the world I'm not of the world, I testify against the world its works are evil, therefore the world hates Me." Earlier on Jesus said, "*And*

this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.” John 3:19-21

Now Jesus is the Light of the world, therefore when He sees something He calls is like it is, exposes sin for the sin that it is, makes those who *dwell* in darkness, and *practice* darkness, uncomfortable, a little nervous, and even at times hostile.

Jesus is saying here, “I can’t go up there in the public eye because those people want to kill Me because I expose them for who they are. But you can go up there anytime you want, you fit right in.” and I pray that it could never be said of us regarding any aspect of the worlds dark doings, that we fit right in and can join in openly anytime and no one will think anything different about it. God help us to never be accepted in the places that are dark, but that we would make people nervous around us in such places, or uneasy in our presence because of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. May we be a turn off to the darkness of the world, because if we fit right in we’ve got big problems. Because Jesus told His brothers here that He just didn’t fit in, in the darkness of the world, He was an outcast of the darkness (if you will) and if you’re a believer Jesus is in you, consequently you’re not to be fitting in, in those places either. Jesus told His brothers they could fit right in and no one would think anything different about it.

Vs10

Remember Jesus didn’t say that He wasn’t going up to the feast, He said He wasn’t going in the way His brother suggested, or in their desired time, but rather He’d wait for the Father’s timing, He didn’t show Himself publicly yet, but privately at 1st just being obedient to the word of God in going to the feast.

Vs11-13

That is the religious leaders, if wind was caught that you were talking about Jesus, you just might be killed. and So the debate begins. Who is Jesus? Is He good, or is He a deceiver? It may’ve been C.S. Lewis that coined the phrase that Jesus had to be either a liar, a lunatic, or Lord, but the idea definitely didn’t originate with Him. They were trying to decide that right there when He was physically in their very midst! Who is Jesus? Is He good? Because to say that He’s good, that is, good in His very essence, (intrinsically) is to say He’s God, because there’s only one that’s intrinsically, inherently good and that’s God. and That’s who Jesus claimed to be, one with the Father, sent from Heaven, equal to God in everyway deity emphatically included. So either He’s good, and He’s Lord, or He’s a liar and a deceiver. Deceiving the masses and leading them astray, and this is the position that the Lord by His very nature and claims forces us into, where do you take your stand? Is Jesus Lord, or is He a liar, deity, or deceiver, there is no in between or neutral ground.

Vs14

So around day 4 He just seems to pop up on the scene suddenly, blows His covering and reveals His presence. Mal 3:1 says, “*Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming, Says the LORD of hosts.*” and Though that’s a reference to His 2nd coming we’re seeing sort of a foreshadowing of the fulfillment of that here where Jesus just sort of suddenly appears in His temple and begins to teach as the messenger of the covenant.

The last time Jesus was at this temple was in John Ch 2 when He made that whip of cords and drove out the money changers and people who were making merchandise of the people of God, and now He’s there teaching in that same temple. What’s the point? The point is that before Jesus can impart His word effectively *to* me, there needs to be a cleansing *within* me. How can I effectively hear from the Lord if I’m regarding iniquity in my heart when sin separates me from God? You see Jesus taught in the temple after He cleansed the temple, allow God to search your heart and see if there be any wicked way in you, or in me, that He might lead you in the way everlasting.

Vs15

You see at 1st the questioned His *character*, whether He be a good man or a deceiver, and now they’re questioning His *credentials*. “Well, He hasn’t sat under Gamaliel, or been to any of the Theological Universities of Jerusalem, so how is it that He can teach so insightfully, with such authority?” They said the same thing about His followers there in the book of Acts regarding the boldness of Peter and John. Peter grabbed hold of this lame man and set him upright on his feet and he was completely healed. One thing led to another and they found themselves on trial for causing such a stir and as they gave their defense we read, “*Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.*” Acts 4:13 and Therein lies the key, it’s not in which seminary you attend, it’s about the Savior in whom we abide, it’s about being with Jesus. and If you spend time with Jesus in the morning, or meditating upon His word in the evening, the people will marvel when you speak to them, not because you’ve got this degree, or that PhD or whatever, but because you’ve been with Jesus. They were freaking out that Jesus would be able to teach like He did, but He’s going to unlock the mystery for them as well, it’s not necessarily about being in bible college, but it’s specifically about abiding in and being with the Father.

Vs16-18

In Vs 16 Jesus is saying, “My authority isn’t of man, it’s of My Father.” He didn’t claim to be self taught, but taught directly of the Father. and Jesus was constantly bringing to their attention the fact that He did what the Father did, He simply reflected His will to the people. and Here He’s saying, “Not only do I do what the Father does, and do nothing of Myself, but I only say what the Father says.” In John 8:28 He said, *“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.”* The Pulpit Commentary states it like this, “I have not learned in your schools, but am uttering the thoughts that come from an infinitely deeper source. "He who sent me" gave them to me. I have been in intimate communion with HIM. All that I say is Divine thought. I have drawn it all from the Lord of all. I came from him, and represent to you the will of God.” This is a lofty prophetic claim, more urgent, more complete, than that made by Moses or Isaiah. Special messages, oracles, and burdens were delivered by the prophets with a "Thus saith the Lord." But Jesus says his thoughts are God's thoughts, his ways God's ways, his teachings not his own, but altogether those of him who sent him.”

He says here that if it’s your true desire to be busy about God’s will then it’s going to bear witness on your heart that what He’s saying is true. In other words before God’s going to entrust you with insight and understanding into His word, you’ve got to be willing to do it. If God shows you something, and you won’t do it, then why would He show you something more?

It’s sort of that principle of, *“Take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him.”* Luke 8:18 If you don’t want really want to do God’s will, then He won’t reveal it to you via His word. and That’s where these guys were at, they weren’t willing to come to Him, they were about serving their own agenda rather than the Lord’s, so they didn’t get it. But if in your heart you’re about the will of God for your life, then He’s going to open His word up to you. I’m not saying it doesn’t take diligent study and prayer, but God will reveal Himself to the seeker, draw near to Him and He’ll draw near to you.

Now we’re going to move on into the close but did you notice Jesus’ claim of sinlessness in vs 18? He says of Himself, there is no unrighteousness in the One who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him, who’s He in reference to? Himself.

Vs19

Now this begins to tie us back into the 1st vs of why Jesus wasn’t spending time in this region in the 1st place, and He’s blowing the lid off the religious leaders cover. and He’s saying there’s no unrighteousness in Me, yet you don’t keep the law, and you’re wanting to kill Me! Pointing to the hypocrisy.

Vs20

These people who are in for the feast from wherever don't know yet that the religious leaders are after Him, but we'll see next time that the citizens of Jerusalem/Judea were well aware of that fact.

Vs21-24

So Jesus takes them back to the healing of the man at the of Bethesda the last time He was there. and They were all uptight because the healing of this man who had a certain infirmity for 38yrs took place on the Sabbath. and They were ready to kill Jesus for that, but He's saying here that if they were ready to circumvent the Law in order to keep the covenant of circumcision which was in order before the Law. Then why is He being criticized for showing goodness and mercy on the Sabbath which was in the heart well before the Law was established as well. If they're willing to do something which takes away, and causes pain on the Sabbath, then how much more should He be willing to do that which adds to, and makes one whole, and brings healing on the Sabbath? I mean it's a no brainer of an argument. and So He says, don't just look at something and cast judgment before you consider it well, think it through. Be more godly than that, man looks to the outward appearance, but God searches the heart. and Jesus is inviting you and Me to consider His works, consider His words, weigh them in the balance, make a righteous judgment and determine, where do you stand? For Him, or against Him.

I just pray that if you're here today and you don't know Jesus Christ and you've never invited Him into your heart and into your life that today you might consider well the facts, that Jesus claimed to be God come in the flesh and that with a perfect love He laid down His life for you upon the cross and died for your transgression and was raised for your justification. Was He a liar? Or is He Lord? If He's Lord then allow Him to be the Lord of your life, because He's either Lord of all, or He's not Lord at all. Jesus wants to forgive you of your sin and give you a brand new life in Him today, if you'll just give Him your heart. and He'll wash you and cleanse you, and make you white like snow, pure in His sight, but it's up to you. He won't come where He's not invited.