



John 7:10-24

“Jesus Teaches with God’s Authority”

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?"

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.

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 wants 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?"

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

If I may, I'd like to begin by quickly reminding us of the context of these verses. You remember that Jesus' brothers had been concerned about what they saw as the drop in the popularity in Christ's ministry, and their pragmatic answer to the problem was for Him to leave Galilee and travel down to Jerusalem at the time of the Feast of the Tabernacles. There he could do signs and wonders in front of huge crowds of Jews from all over Palestine and the Roman world, become popular again and recover the disciples He had lost through His hard teachings.

But as we will see in these verses, Jesus did not come to earth to gain personal glory, He came glorify the Father and to do His will on earth as it is in heaven, and He is also doing that work according to the Father's timetable. Had he gone openly to the feast with the other Galilean pilgrims then they probably would have forced some sort of premature "triumphal entry" upon him, and the time had not yet come for His triumphal entry into the city in fulfillment of *Zec. 9:9* "**Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.**"

But after the pilgrims have left, Jesus secretly goes up as well. And that is where we take up these verses. He is leaving Galilee for the last time before the crucifixion.

There is much more going on though than just a drop in popularity. While many Jews simply do not understand who Christ is and have stopped following him, John has already told us in chapter 5 that the leaders of the Jews, in particular the Pharisees and the Saducees hated Him and had been looking for a way to put him to death since he healed the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda. That is why they kept seeking Him at the feast. They were certain the feast would bring him out of Galilee and deliver Him into their hands.

Even before He showed up at the feast Jesus was the main topic for argument and debate amongst those already gathered in the capital. Who was this preacher and miracle worker Jesus of Nazareth? Was He the Messiah? The Great Prophet Moses said would come in Deut. 18:15 the one they were commanded to hear? Or was he a deceiver or false prophet as the leaders said and someone deserving of death? That incidentally was the story the Rabbis spread about after the resurrection, the Babylonian Talmud in Sanhedrin 43a states *“On the eve of the Passover Yeshu was hanged. ... because he ... practised sorcery and enticed Israel to apostacy.”* Was he not a deceiver but Mad? Or was he simply a “good man” as some thought then and now.

The kind of division of opinion about Jesus that existed in Jerusalem during the feast has gone on to the present day, and it always will until He returns. Some will believe and call Him *“My Lord and my God!”*, but others will call Him a deceiver or a madman as the leaders and their followers did. Of course the most popular form of unbelief is simply to call Him a “good man.” But **that** as C.S. Lewis pointed out, **is the one thing Jesus cannot have been.** Kids, you’ll know C.S. Lewis as the author of the Narnia stories like *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and *Prince Caspian*, but during the Second World War, the BBC asked him to give a number of talks on the truth of the Christian Faith, they were eventually brought together and published as the book *Mere Christianity*.

In Mere Christianity Lewis wrote “I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic--on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg--or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” – C.S. Lewis

What Lewis said there is very true, for instance, when the rich young ruler came running to Christ he addressed Him as *“Good Teacher”* Jesus responded to that greeting with, *“Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.”* In other words, Only God is truly Good, I’m either God or I’m not Good. Again and again, Jesus leaves us with only that decision, either He is God or he is a deceiver. Liar, Lunatic, or Lord as C.S. Lewis framed it. Those really are the only options.

There’s another similarity, incidentally, between then and now. The authorities certainly didn’t want an open, fair, and frank discussion of who Jesus is. They wanted all mention of Him driven out of the public square. *“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 color of silencing disputes about it, and would have all talk of religion hushed, in hopes thereby to bury in oblivion religion itself.”* – *Matthew Henry* So high school Valedictorian Brittany McComb could have delivered a speech about her devotion to Transcendental Meditation or the teachings of Karl Marx or the Dalai Llama, but the moment she started talking about her faith in Jesus, her mike was switched off.

But though they might try to silence Him, the authorities cannot and in the middle of the feast Jesus appears and begins teaching at the center of the gathering in the Temple itself.

The crowds, many of who were hearing him for the first time, were amazed because he taught with authority. Jesus doesn't begin his teachings with *"This is just my opinion but..."* He didn't speak as the Rabbi's citing the traditions established by other Rabbi's *"As Rabbi Akiba said..."* Jesus did not even teach as the Prophets who would say *"Thus says the Lord..."* rather he said "I say to you..." and *"Truly, Truly, I tell you..."* Also, the people were amazed because they knew that Jesus had never been in a Rabbinic school and yet he had such knowledge and understanding of the scriptures and was able to explain them so well that even his enemies would declare *"No man ever spoke like this Man!"* A year later after the crucifixion resurrection the same phenomenon would be witnessed as untutored fishermen boldly and accurately explained the scriptures to the Sanhedrin.

Acts 4:13 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.

Jesus claimed to be speaking with the Authority of God. He was claiming to have come as God the Son to proclaim the Good News of Salvation through Faith in Him. He said to them and to you, these things I'm teaching you were "made in Nazareth" if they were, you could safely ignore them. But you must hear them because these doctrines, these teachings, are from the throne in Heaven. And your eternal well-being depends on your believing them.

Now, Jesus also says, if your plan is to assess whether this message truly is from God by means of your natural fallen understanding, your inherent biases, traditions, and inclinations you are in trouble. Because you will never come to believe on that basis. Because what you are trying to do is find a neutral ground outside of God's truth upon which a fallen man may sit and hope to judge it accurately. Friends the natural man is by his very nature, opposed to the word of God, hopelessly biased against it.

Therefore if you would have any hope of understanding and believing the gospel, you must **want, desire, will**, to do the will of God. And Jesus has already said that involves believing in the one who He sent, and you can't do that unless He changes your heart, unless you are born again, you won't understand, you won't believe. All the persuasive arguments and miracles in the world won't change that. You can be a stunningly brilliant individual, and yet unless God changes your heart, and grants you the gift of faith, you'll never rightly judge the gospel. As Paul, one of the most brilliant scholars of his day, who had himself been hopelessly opposed to the gospel, wrote in *1 Cor. 2:14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

Later another brilliant philosopher, Augustine, would write *"Understanding is the reward of faith. Therefore seek not to understand that you might believe, but believe that you may understand."* Friends, take it from someone who is not a genius, but who was also desperately opposed to the gospel. It isn't compelling evidence, although it abounds, that will enable you to believe. These people saw the miracles of Christ first-hand, confessed no one had ever taught as he did, couldn't refute any of his arguments, and yet they still didn't believe. Until like me, your stubborn heart is broken and your eyes are opened, by God the Holy Spirit, this will remain foolishness to you:

But despite that, Jesus does offer them one critical observation to confirm what he is saying, he says this is the mark of true teaching whom does it exalt? The speaker or God? The Pharisees claimed to be teaching for God, but somehow they were the ones who always got the glory. Jesus says, do you want to know if a man is a true messenger of God? Determine who is at the center of his ministry!

Jesus clearly was not working for his honor, but for the honor of the one who sent Him. He came to serve not to be served. Had he been working simply to gain earthly honor for himself as the Pharisees did, He never would have preached the “hard sayings” that drove away the fair-weather followers in the last chapter, and he **would** have gone up when his brothers wanted him to and done many miracles. He certainly would never have gone to the cross, but you see he came not to gain honor, but to do the will of the father, so in the garden He humbly prayed: *“Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.”*

19 "Did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law? Why do you seek to kill Me?"
20 The people answered and said, "You have a demon. Who is seeking to kill You?"

We aren't listening to you, the leaders said, we only listen to the Law! and although Jesus has proven they exalted their tradition above the Law of God and would have worshipped Him if they did not. He turns his attention to the Law. Yes you have the law, God gave it to you through Moses and you are so proud to have received the oracles of God and the Law. Oh but the tragedy is that you have utterly failed to realize that you have utterly failed to keep it and are instead condemned by it.

What more obvious example of that than that the leaders were seeking to kill Him, an innocent man in direct contravention of the sixth commandment “You shall not Murder!”

The people though, who were aware of the fact that he was not popular, but not aware of the plot to kill him think he is mad or demon possessed. Who is trying to kill you? And there we have it, some think him a good man, some think him a Deceiver or a Liar, others as these men, a Lunatic. But He is none of these things, **JESUS IS LORD.**

Application: 1) Brothers and sisters, that rule that Jesus gave us that only the messenger who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true still applies and always has:

“The minister truly called of God will be deeply sensible of his Master's majesty and his own infirmity, and will see in himself nothing but unworthiness. He, on the other hand, who knows that he is not "inwardly moved by the Holy Spirit," will try to cover over his defects by magnifying himself and his office. The very desire to exalt ourselves is a bad symptom. It is a sure sign of something wrong within.” – J.C. Ryle

So always be considering what it is that a minister seeks to exalt. Is it the church? Is it the sacraments? Or the Country? Or the Pope? Is it money? Or Man? Is it himself? Brothers and Sisters, only the Pastor who Exalts God and says with John the Baptist *“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”* is worthy.

2) Christ has always and will always generate division amongst men, many use that as excuse not to believe. They say that all the controversy over Christ and His teachings proves it is impossible to figure out what the truth is. And then they simply use that as an excuse for living without religion and doing what almost everyone acknowledges is wrong.

If you want to know the truth you must believe. Well how am I going to do that, pray. {Cowboy who couldn't figure it all out...} Believe that you may understand.