

**AND WE BEHELD HIS GLORY - Studies in John's Gospel - Part thirty**  
Sunday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, 10 a.m.

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**THE FAITHFUL CHURCH - BEARING WITNESS TO *BOTH* THE GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL AND THE BAD NEWS OF THE WORLD**

**John 7:1-13 - "After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. [2] Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand. [3] So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. [4] For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." [5] For not even his brothers believed in him. [6] Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. [7] The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. [8] You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come." [9] After saying this, he remained in Galilee. [10] But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private. [11] The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, "Where is he?" [12] 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." [13] Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him."**

Today we launch into John chapter seven. There are twenty-one chapters in John's gospel account. So that would mean, doing the math, we're about one third through the story of Jesus as John records it.

But that's a deceptive accounting. In fact, though only concluding six chapters of this gospel, we are now entering the last six months of Jesus' earthly life. We are already, as we just begin chapter seven, approaching the beginning of the end for our Lord. And the details John places in this seventh chapter show this to be the case.

For example, John tells us the "***Feast of Booths was at hand***"(2). This feast was one of three compulsory feasts for Jewish observance. The Feast of Booths was celebrated in the fall (relatively close to our month of October). It was celebrated at the fall harvest and commemorated the provision of God during the wandering of the children of Israel in the wilderness for forty years. Its name - the ***Feast of Booths*** - came from the fact that during this feast the people would construct booths or tents from branches - frequently on the rooftops of their houses - and would dwell in them as a reminder of their impermanent dwellings in those wilderness wanderings.

This feast was followed by the keeping of the ***Passover*** in the spring. So John is cluing us in that six months from this ***Feast of Booths*** in chapter seven Jesus will be executed at the ***Passover*** in the same city. Our Lord hasn't much time left and He knows it. We'll go into this in more detail in a moment.

Another point by way of background and introduction. The next few chapters of John's account are marked by an air of ***tension and conflict***. With the exception of a few brighter breaks, these chapters are a constant ***back and forth*** in confrontation. There's the repetition of ***attack and defense - belief exposing unbelief***. Even if you didn't know how the whole story ended you can still feel some kind of storm brewing around Jesus.

We need to pause right here. The whole gospel record reminds us it won't always be an easy thing to follow Jesus in this world. Look around. These are not the 80's and 90's anymore. It's far less popular to seriously follow Jesus today than it was thirty years ago.

Back to our text:

- 1) **JESUS' BROTHERS WANT TO BOLSTER JESUS' SHRINKING NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS**

**John 7:1-5 - “After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. [2] Now the Jews’ Feast of Booths was at hand. [3] So his brothers said to him, ‘Leave here and go to Judea, *that your disciples also may see the works you are doing.* [4] For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.’ [5] For not even his brothers believed in him.”**

Immediately we wonder why John says Jesus’ brothers ***didn’t*** believe in Him. And he tells us this right ***after*** Jesus’ brothers tell Him to head to Judea and work some miracles. Surely that implies ***some*** kind of belief in Jesus, doesn’t it?

In a way, yes. But this is belief with ***twisted motives***. Jesus’ brothers aren’t blind. They can see what’s been happening to Jesus’ support. For two chapters now Jesus seems to be losing everyone around Him. John carefully records the exodus of followers. First, ***the crowd*** (6:30), then the ***leaders*** (6:41-42), then many of the ***disciples*** (6:64), and now ***members of His own family*** (7:7). Something has to be done. Jesus obviously needs an ***agent***.

But His brothers call to “**show time**” for Jesus is based more on enjoying a moment of celebrity status and acclaim than on Jesus’ lowly submission to His Father’s will for a broken body and shed blood. Jesus’ brothers know people would rather rally around a winner than a loser.

So, yes, they **believed** in Jesus - sort of. This is the same kind of “**belief**” in Jesus John described in **John 2:23-25 - “Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. [24] But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people [25] and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.” - IPAD TEXT**

So do these people in John chapter two “**believe**” or don’t they? Well, **they** think they believe. They’re pretty pumped on Jesus at this point. But **Jesus** isn’t very excited. He doesn’t equate what they’re feeling with genuine **belief** in Himself. These people are **success** worshipers, **power** worshipers, **victory** worshipers. But they’re not really **Jesus** followers.

Jesus' brothers have a family love for Jesus that doesn't want to witness His work as a flop. This is belief that misses what Jesus is actually all about. And the church needs John's reminder about the relationship between **true belief** in Jesus Christ and **embracing His redemptive work on the cross**. Our belief in Jesus is an **informed** belief. We're not naive about the **cost** th Jesus and the cost to us as well.

This text is a great **motive checker** for would-be disciples. Here's the life principle. True belief in Jesus must always be **cross/redemption centered**. Authentic discipleship is always **front-loaded** with awareness and self-denial. Any other basis of attachment to Jesus or fascination with His words will never be a faith recognized by Jesus Himself.

2) **FATHER GOD REVEALS THE FULL MEASURE OF HIS REDEMPTIVE GRACE IN THE TIMING OF JESUS' DEATH**

**John 7:6-8 - "Jesus said to them, 'My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. [7] The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. [8] You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come.'"**

One can't miss the way Jesus contrasts these **two time zones** - **His** - "**My time has not yet come**" - and **theirs** - "**....your time is always here.**" And the obvious meaning is **they** can come and go to any feast or any celebration whenever it suits them. It's always the same good time for them. **Jesus**, on the other hand, had people waiting to kill Him. And this present **Feast of Booths** isn't the **time** for His death.

**Why?** Because in the Father's divine plan the Son is to be slain at the **next** Jewish celebration, **The Passover**. In fact, in the Father's timing, Jesus will be slain at the **precise moment that first Passover lamb was slain so long ago**. And this divine timing is a **graciously planned revelation** so people will have an easier time seeing Jesus as the **Lamb of God, shedding His blood so the Father's wrath passes over those in Christ just as that first Passover lamb caused divine judgment to pass over those who applied the shed blood to their houses**.

The Father's timing has these events coordinated to make the message of atonement more **obvious** to the masses in Jerusalem. Think about it. The Father stages history to keep people from interpreting His love **sentimentally** rather than **redemptively**. The **timing** of Christ's death helps explain the **meaning** of Christ's death.

3) **PRESENTING THE GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL REQUIRES  
PRESENTING THE BAD NEWS OF THE WORLD**

**John 7:6-8 - “Jesus said to them, “*My time* has not yet come, but *your time is always here*. [7] The world *cannot hate you*, but *it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil*. [8] You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for *my time has not yet fully come*.”**

As you can see from the text, these words are closely related to Jesus’ words about the two time zones. His brothers aren’t believers at this point - “**For not even his brothers believed in him**”(7:5). And in the very next verse Jesus reveals the **effect** of their unbelief - “***Your time is always here***”(7:6).

Here’s what Jesus means. Because they **don’t** believe in Jesus they don’t face any **inconvenience** in terms of being **out of sync** with the surrounding culture. They fit in. They are in the same **time zone** as the culture around them.



Then Jesus makes Himself even more clear by taking His logic a step further - **John 7:7** - ***“The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil.”*** It’s not just that the world ***does not*** hate them. Jesus goes further. This world ***“cannot”*** hate them. It’s ***impossible*** for the world to hate them because it would be hating itself. ***Our world embraces its own system. It cannot contradict its own self-love*** The whole world is immersed in its own value system. It never deserts it.

The world’s self-embrace is consistent and all-permeating. It controls every movie and sit com. It’s in its sports and its fashions. It dominates its novels and philosophies and blogs. The world always loves itself and is always true to itself. It will tolerate no rivals.

How we need to hear Jesus’ words at this point. He points to His own unbelieving brothers and says flat out there is nothing about their lives or their words that is ***sufficiently out of sync*** with this world to even remotely provoke its displeasure. And the punch-line of this observation is ***unlike many in the contemporary church, Jesus didn’t see this harmony with the world as a good thing. There is disappointment in Jesus’ words.***

Here it is in a nutshell. The world was **free to be itself** in their presence in a way that it **wasn't** free to be itself in Jesus' presence. Their words and actions left the world **undisturbed**. Jesus' words left the world **angered and agitated being itself. There was no room for the contrary value system of Jesus in the world's system. There still isn't.**

And now it all starts to fit together. Of course, they can go up to the festival anytime they want. Not Jesus. They're waiting to **kill** Jesus. And **why?** Jesus tells us - **John 7:7b - "...it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil."** - IPAD TEXT

All of this goes right back to the first point in today's teaching where we examined the twisted belief of Jesus' brothers. How easy it is for them to say **"Go up to Jerusalem, Jesus! Make some miracle bread! Find a couple lame people to heal! Raise the dust a bit! The crowds will love it"**

And that's all so easy for them to say because they don't have a clue about why the crowds hate Jesus and want to kill Him. They don't really know why He's here in the first place. Their belief is in a Jesus of their own making. O, how the church needs to think about that.

4) **WHY IS OUR WORLD SO STRUCTURED AGAINST THE NEW TESTAMENT REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST?**

**John 7:7-13 - “The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. [8] You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come.” [9] After saying this, he remained in Galilee. [10] But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private. [11] The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, “Where is he?” [12] 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.” [13] Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him.”**

You can see the *mixed* opinions. **Verse 13** says people were guarded in being outspoken in their views of Jesus because of their **“fear of the Jews.”** **“Jews”** in this verse means the **Jewish religious leadership**. We know that because the people who were afraid were Jews too, but not in the same authoritative group. These leaders wanted to kill Jesus. The best review Jesus gets is from a group that is willing to concede He’s a good person. That’s it.

The people in power **hate** Jesus. The Jewish religious representatives want to kill Him. And now we wrap up with the question, **“Why?”** And the answer to the **“Why does the world hate Jesus?”** question comes on two levels. One level is on the surface and the other is deep and foundational.

On the surface we **know** some of the reasons because the New Testament **tells** us. These people say they hate Jesus because He healed on the Sabbath (**John 5:16** - “**....this is why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath**”). They say they hate Jesus because He was guilty of blasphemy (**John 5:18** - “**Who can forgive sins but God?**”).

But those aren't the deep reasons. They were ready and useful **excuses** for hating Jesus. But the striking issue to me is, **when Jesus has a chance to tell us why the world - including those Jews waiting to kill Him in Jerusalem - when Jesus tells us why they hated Him those aren't the reasons He gives.**

There's a deeper reason for the world's rejection of Jesus under the surface and Jesus tells us what it is. And the reasons this matters is we will **misinterpret our mission** if we take our cue from the world about how we have to package Jesus to make Him acceptable in their view. This has **everything** to do with what the true, Christ-like message and mission of the church must always be.

Our text tells us people who reject Jesus **mask** their reasons for doing so. This is how our true sinfulness effects the way we deal with Jesus Christ. Their reasons aren't necessarily **lies**. But they fall short of **fully accounting** for their rejection of Jesus Christ.

According to our all-knowing Lord the real reason **anyone** rejects Him is He exposes the sin in the heart - the things kept secret from everyone else. And that's very intimidating - **John 7:7 - "The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil." - IPAD TEXT**

Jesus, God the Son, who never lies, says He gives "**testimony.**" That's a very official word - like a witness on the witness stand - He declares the sins this world doesn't want exposed. And **that's** why people reject Him. That's our Lord's testimony.

So remember, if you reject Jesus today it isn't because genuine faith in Him as God the Son lacks evidence. And it really isn't because the church is full of hypocrites. And it isn't because of all the innocent people killed by the Romans Catholic church in the Spanish Inquisition. It's because He shows the sinfulness of your own heart.

Finally, find freedom by coming clean. Find the inward lightness of soul with honesty. Admit your sin and come to the light today.