

THE PEOPLE WHO KNOW GOD AND THE PEOPLE WHO DON'T

John 7:25-36 - "Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, "Is not this the man whom they seek to kill? [26] And here he is, speaking openly, and they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ? [27] But we know where this man comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from." [28] So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, "You know me, and you know where I come from. But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know. [29] I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me." [30] So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come. [31] Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, "When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?" [32] The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him. [33] Jesus then said, "I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. [34] You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come." [35] The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? [36] What does he mean by saying, 'You will seek me and you will not find me,' and, 'Where I am you cannot come?'"

It helps to know the different players in this text to make sense of the mixed responses to Jesus' presence in Jerusalem at the Feast of Booths as John records it. There are *three different groups* of people and they each play a role in our text.

First, there are *Jews who resided in Jerusalem or the immediate area*. John calls them the "*people of Jerusalem*"(25). They aren't the ones trying to *kill* Jesus but they are "*in the loop*" in terms of knowing the tension between Jesus and the leaders - "*Is not this the man whom they* (the religious leaders) *seek to kill?*"(25b). So they are watching all of this unfold with the *understanding of insiders*.

Second, there were the *religious leaders* who were concerned about the uprising Jesus might cause which would end the peaceful religious system Jerusalem's Roman rulers allowed. They are *introduced* in **verse 30** - "*So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come.*" And they are more *clearly identified* in **verse 32** - "*The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him.*"

But there's more. A *third group* is described in **verse 31** - "*Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, 'When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?'*" Remember, this was one of the three major Jewish religious feasts. There were Jews from many of the outlying areas who traveled a great distance into Jerusalem. Because these Jews weren't from Jerusalem they were largely *unaware* of the brewing tension regarding Jesus. They were curious and impressed and came to "*believe*" in Jesus because they couldn't imagine any *other* Messiah coming and doing greater works than Jesus had already done (31).

So these are the key players in our text today. And remembering some of this background helps frame an understanding of the varied responses to Jesus' words and works.

Consider these lessons from our text:

1) **MISTAKEN PRE-CONCEIVED NOTIONS ABOUT JESUS CHRIST BLOCK THE MIND TO HIS ETERNAL REDEMPTIVE WORK**

John 7:25-27 - "Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, "Is not this the man whom they seek to kill? [26] And here he is, speaking openly, and they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ? [27] But we know where this man comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from."

There's a lot of subterfuge in these words. The local Jerusalem Jews almost taunt the hesitation of the authorities in arresting Jesus. Jesus was speaking as openly as it gets and the leaders weren't lifting a finger to shut Him up. And so the taunt - "*Could it be they actually believe Jesus is the Messiah?*"(26).

Of course this was not the case. The authorities were merely biding their time. They couldn't nab Jesus while many of the pilgrim Jews were fascinated and thrilled with the signs and words of Jesus.

And even the Jews who made this taunt rejected Jesus as the Christ - **verse 27** - "*But we know where this man comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from.*"

And now we come to the main first point. These local Jews embraced the idea that Messiah *would* come. But he wouldn't come the way *Jesus* came. The true Messiah would come in great earthly power and political might. His earthly identity would be mysterious, shrouded in the sheer brightness of his reign over the Jewish people.

This was their problem with Jesus. Jesus they knew. They knew His earthly birth place - rather humble at that. They knew His humble work in basic carpentry. They knew His family. Some of them may have even remembered the rumors that floated around when young Mary was pregnant out of wedlock.

In other words, their ideas of Jesus - the way they saw Him as a nice man and perhaps even a great moral teacher - these ideas made it impossible for them to see Jesus as anything **more** than a religious leader or prophet or moral teacher. This earthly Jesus **couldn't** be God's promised Messiah.

Thus it has ever been. Consider this. Today Jesus is almost universally granted historic identity. He certainly walked this earth. Almost everyone admires what we have preserved of the **sayings** of Jesus - the Golden Rule, the Sermon on the Mount. Then there is Jesus and the poor and needy and His call to give rather than merely receive.

Naturally there is nothing **offensive** about this Jesus. No talk of His broken body and shed blood being the only ransom for sin. No talk about Him being the future, returning judge of all mankind. No talk of Jesus delivering us from the wrath of God. No talk of every knee bowing and tongue confessing Him as Lord of all. Never mind that He said, "**Except you believe that I am He you will die in your sins.**" None of that.

But, then as now, when all people see is the humble birth and brutal lonely, rejected dying, and the selfless moral teaching of Jesus it makes it almost impossible to get the whole picture of His divine nature and work. When you see only **part** of the story it makes it almost impossible to get the **whole** story. Like those Jerusalem Jews, "**We know where this man comes from.**" They cling to their commonly held religious opinion. That's why they're totally removed from divine light and life.

2) THERE IS ONE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS THE CHRIST THAT IS MOST RESISTED BY THE SPIRIT OF THIS PRESENT AGE

John 7:28-29 - "So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, "**You know me, and you know where I come from. But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know.** [29] I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me."

There is a powerful sentence that needs to be seen from two angles in these verses - "**You know me, and you know where I come from....**"(28). There are two thoughts here. **They have just stated they knew Jesus' earthly origins** - "**....we know where this man comes from**"(27).

But Jesus sees they know more than just that. They know more than they're willing to admit. The plot against Jesus (of which John says these Jews were aware - 25) had been brewing for some time. It went back to the healing of the lame man in John 5. These people saw the power of God in Jesus' works. They **knew** more about Jesus than they were willing to **embrace**.

That's what Jesus means when He says "**You know me and you know where I come from**"(28). And that's why many translations **don't** put the question mark after those words as does the **ESV**. Look, for instance, at the very emphatic statement in the **NASB** - "**You both know me and know where I come from....**" Those are the facts these people are aware of. That's Jesus' point. Their blindness is willful. His being the **sent Messiah** from Father God has been made obvious.

What Jesus means is, **against the best evidence** they wouldn't embrace the light as they had seen it. They wouldn't admit what they had seen because their present rebellion couldn't **afford** to admit it. To see Jesus coming as God the Son and dying - precisely at the Feast of Passover - as the Lamb of God for their sin required more than mere **knowledge**. It demanded **repentance**. And repentance was hard for these proud religious people. The need to bow and repent is still the real reason people reject Jesus.

My point here is there's an **edge** to Jesus' words when He says, "**You both know me and know where I come from....**"(28). Those words are designed to pin them in their own guilt. Jesus, in these pointed but compassionate words, is desperate in His desire to warn of the peril of their growing blindness and resistance.

And the truth to take home from church today is **it's a dangerous thing to pretend not to know revealed and redemptive truth**. Don't play dumb when the Spirit speaks to your conscience. Don't ignore issues of Christ's ongoing sanctifying work. Don't brush past the call to repent by pretending God isn't speaking to you right now.

3) TO REJECT THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS IS TO REJECT THE ONLY WAY TO KNOW GOD

Now we begin to see Jesus unfold what's at stake here:

John 7:28-30 - "So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, "**You know me, and you know where I come from. But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know.** [29] I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me." [30] **So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come.**"

How does Jesus **know** these people don't know God - "**....him you do not know**"(28)? They don't know God because they're rejecting Jesus. **That's** what Jesus knows emphatically. What they do with Jesus is what they do with God. There are no pious words or religious practices that **compensate** for rejecting the truth about Jesus Christ. There is no other worship or sacrifice or moral adaptation that is acceptable to God if His Son is ignored or rejected. These Jewish worshipers were attending a **religious festival** when Jesus spoke these words to them -

Look at two texts back to back:

John 7:28b-29 - "...I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know. [29] I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me."

Now look at these words from the apostle John in **John 17:3** - "**And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.**"

The very same theme is repeated - almost word for word. Eternal life hangs in the balance. Nothing could be clearer. Eternal life comes from trusting in the linking of Father God and the sent Son. There is no life apart from this living redemptive connection. If the Son isn't sent by the Father His words carry nothing unique. If the Father didn't send the Son we remain under divine wrath and guilt. That's why John says, "**And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent**"(John 17:3).

4) **THE IMPORTANCE OF RECOGNIZING YOUR TIME OF OPPORTUNITY**

John 7:32-36 - "The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him. [33] Jesus then said, "I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. [34] You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come." [35] The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? [36] What does he mean by saying, 'You will seek me and you will not find me,' and, 'Where I am you cannot come'?"

This idea of Jesus going away and people not being able to come with Him or find Him is repeated three times in John's account. In other words, Jesus **used** this terminology over and over, indicating its importance in His mind.

The words have an even sterner feel in **John 8:19-24** - "They said to him therefore, "Where is your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also." [20] These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come. [21] So he said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come." [22] So the Jews said, "Will he kill himself, since he says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?" [23] He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. [24] I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins."

So Jesus addressed the same attitude of unbelief. The people have had opportunities piled up on each other to see Jesus as the Messiah, God the Son. But they won't see Him that way. And Jesus says because they are looking only for **their kind** of Messianic deliverer from Rome they will never find Him as the Lamb who would take away their sins. That's why He tells them they will look for Him but not find Him. The result is they will "**die in their sins**" (21,23).

Then Jesus uses these same words again a third time, but in a different sense when speaking with **His disciples**:

John 13:33-36 - "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.'" [34] A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. [35] By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." [36] Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward."

Jesus will die and ascend to the Father. For now **everyone** - believer and unbeliever - will be left behind. But the **leaving** isn't the same. The separation isn't **final** for everyone. Jesus will leave. He will go to the cross and the grave. He will rise and ascend to His Father. But this will not bring a permanent separation from believers any more than **our own death** will separate us from Father God's triumphant love.

But in our John 7 text there is no comfort in Jesus' words. You can ignore Jesus too long. Foolish hearts harden. People who reject the kind of Redeemer the Father sends - people who look to Jesus for ideas and moral principles and religious words - **those** false believers will never find the forgiveness of sins they so desperately need. They will die in their sins.

The church needs to discover - **rediscover** - the urgency of bringing the authentic Jesus to this sinful world. Jesus Himself - the One who said He knew the Father in a way no one else did (29) - **that** Jesus said He was our only hope.