

JOHN 7:37-53
TRUTH DIVIDES!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 7 as we continue our in-depth study of the Gospel of John.

Here in John chapter 7 the focus is the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths. And we saw the half-brothers of Jesus mock Him for not going to the feast and really challenging Him to go.

But Jesus responded to their mocking of Him, and keep in mind that they did not believe He was the Messiah, by saying to them, “**. . . ‘My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil. You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come.’**” John 7:6-8.

Jesus did not say He wasn’t going to the Feast, it just wasn’t time for Him to go and thus, He sends His half-brothers on ahead.

When He gets to the Feast in Jerusalem the Jewish religious leaders are looking for Him to confront Him and maybe even kill Him.

And Jesus began teaching around the middle of this Feast and they are blown away at how He taught. He taught with authority. He did not teach like the Rabbis taught, “***Rabbi so and so said . . .***”

He did not go to any of the schools that the Rabbis went to, and it blew them away. He taught with authority because He taught according to the Word of God, “***It is written!***” And that is how we must teach, with authority, according to the Word of God!

And we broke John chapter 7 into three main points.

The first was – ***DISBELIEF!***

In John 7:1-13 we looked at the disbelief of the half-brothers of Jesus as well as the disbelief of the Jews and the Jewish religious leaders.

The next point was – ***DEBATING JESUS!***

In John 7:14-36 we saw different groups of people who were debating Jesus, trying to figure out who He was.

We saw the Jewish religious leaders. We saw the Jewish people who came to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. And we saw the Jews who lived in Jerusalem. And some believed and some didn't, just as we see today in regard to Jesus!

This morning we are going to look at the third and final point in this chapter and that is – ***TRUTH DIVIDES!***

Because of that, because speaking the truths of God found in the Word of God will divide people, many Christians have stopped speaking about those things that divide or they water down the Gospel. They make it less offensive to people and yet they make it ineffective as well!

And the end result is that the Gospel message is not proclaimed like it should be because we are afraid about losing family members or friends when we speak about Christ, that He is the only way to heaven and apart from Him you will end up in Hell!

Not a popular message and yet it is one we are to proclaim. Paul said in Romans 1:16, **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”**

One writer sums it up like this for us as he tells us that we are to speak the truth. He wrote,

Why should we engage in debate since it seems to cause division in the church?

What message does that send to those outside the church?

God forbid that we should ever debate the truth of the gospel, that we should ever follow in the footsteps of the apostle Paul, who debated the matter every day in the marketplace and who wrote all these epistles to correct error and distortions of the truth of God.

Weren't those letters the apostle wrote to the Ephesians, to the Galatians, and the Colossians divisive?

Nothing divides like truth.

Nothing divides like Jesus.

But we have this idea that the only real sin that you can have is dividing a church.

Well, there are churches that need to be divided, and they need to be divided - not over minor matters, not over peccadillos [a very minor or slight sin or offense; a trifling fault] - but over substantive issues of the truth of God.

And our Lord, when He was asked by Pontius Pilate, "what are you about?" He said, "I came to bear witness to the truth. And those who are of the truth, hear My voice."

And then the next thing Jesus said, "but I sure don't want to divide anybody over the truth."

Thank you for laughing, but it's really not funny. But that's what they said. The worst thing you can say is that truth is important. When you do that, what happens then is that truth gets slain in the streets and anything goes.

How sad to see that the fear of man is more important to us than the fear of God!

This morning we are going to look at – ***TRUTH DIVIDES!*** And I have broken these verses down into three main points. They are,

THE TRUTH – JOHN 7:37-39

DIVISION BETWEEN THE JEWS – JOHN 7:40-44

DIVISION BETWEEN THE JEWISH RELIGIOUS LEADERS – JOHN 7:45-53

So with that as our introduction, let's begin reading in John chapter 7 beginning in verse 37 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word and look at this topic - ***TRUTH DIVIDES!***

JOHN 7

VERSES 37-39

The Feast of Tabernacles began on the 15th day of the seventh month, which is Tishri. And this feast lasted until the 21st of the month or it lasted for seven days!

Keep in mind that on the first day of this Feast and the day after the Feast or the eighth day, which was known as Shemini Atzeret, were considered sacred assemblies or Sabbaths. No work was permitted on either of these days.

And the Lord said in Leviticus 23 that they were to make booths and place palm branches over the tops, and they were to move out of the comfort of their homes and spend those seven days in these booths. And in the evening you could see the stars and it was then that the fathers would share with their children about the things of God.

This feast started with the morning sacrifice and the High Priest taking the golden pitcher as he led a procession of priests down to the Pool of Siloam to fill the golden pitcher.

After the golden pitcher was filled, they would make a procession back to the Temple Mount. Then, as they entered through the Watergate there would be three trumpet blasts and the people would recite Isaiah 12:3, “**Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.**”

As they came to the Temple, the priests would then march around the altar of sacrifice with the pitcher one time and the Temple choir sang the Hallel Psalms, which were Psalms 113-118. After that the water was poured out on the altar as an offering to God!

This went on for six days and the idea with this feast was showing how God had provided water for them during their forty years of wilderness wanderings, He satisfied their thirst!

But the seventh day was different. On the seventh day it was a day of celebration as the feast climaxed. This day was known as “*The Great Hosanna.*”

And it was on this day that the High Priest marched around the altar not just once but seven times before he poured out the water on the altar.

So all this showed how God provided for them during their wilderness wanderings, as I have said, and it looked forward to the coming Messiah and His Kingdom.

Some believe that what is taking place here in John chapter 7 occurred on the seventh day of the feast as the priest would pour out the water on the altar. They believe that it was when the priest was pouring out this water that Jesus said to them, “. . . **‘If anyone thirst, let him come to Me and drink.’**” John 7:37.

I believe that when John tells us that it was “**the last day**” that he is speaking of the eighth day, a holy convocation.

And on this day no water was poured out.

Think about this for a minute. No more water is being poured out and yet the people are still thirsty, and Jesus is telling them that if they want to satisfy that thirst in their souls, they need to take Him into their lives!

Even today people have thirsty souls, and they try to find temporary respites to quench this thirst with all kinds of emotional and material things, but they never satisfy, they never fill a thirsty soul like Jesus does.

And it is at this point, as the people are all around, Jesus stands up and says **“If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”** John 7:37-38.

It is as Isaiah 44:3 says, **“For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, And floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, And My blessing on your offspring.”**

Or in Isaiah 55:1-3 we read, **“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you - The sure mercies of David.”**

Today we turn on the television and we hear all kinds of commercials telling us what we need.

I wish they would come out with a commercial that says, ***“GOT JESUS?”*** or ***“JESUS, IT DOESN'T GET ANY BETTER THAN THIS!”***

You see, in the heart of every person is a god-shaped void that man tries to fill with all kinds of things and Jesus is the only thing that fits, He alone can satisfy!

Now John, writing this Gospel some 50 years or so after this event, tells us Jesus was speaking of the Holy Spirit that was to be given on the day of Pentecost. Could it be speaking of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit or the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

Well, before you can be empowered by the Spirit of God you have to be saved, the Spirit of God must indwell you. It is then that we see this empowerment to bring the Gospel message forward, this empowering! Both probably apply here.

Now I do realize that some deny this empowering with the Spirit of God but let's just look at what the Scriptures say.

We have dealt with this before but just to re-cap, after the resurrection of Jesus we see Jesus appear to His men and in John 20:22 we are told, "**He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'**" At this point they are New Testament saints as the Holy Spirit has come inside them.

Then in Luke Jesus tells us "**Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.**" Luke 24:49.

And in Acts 1:8 we read "**But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.**"

And then in Acts chapter 2, on the day of Pentecost we see the fulfillment of this promise as the believers are empowered to be witnesses of Jesus after they have come to saving faith.

It is the Holy Spirit coming upon a believer in power and thus, we are not just to be vessels to contain God, but channels from which God can flow through and touch the lives of others, living water not stagnant ponds!

Temple put it this way, ***“No one can be indwelt by the Spirit of God and keep that Spirit to himself. Where the Spirit is, He flows forth; if there is no flowing forth, He is not there.”***

And I believe the Scriptures clearly show us that this empowering spoken of in Acts is for us as it was for the early church. We need the power of God in our lives!

Ray Stedman summed it up like this for us. He wrote,

Physical thirst is the most powerful drive known to man.

The sex drive can be contained, you can even deny satisfying hunger for weeks at a time, but one thing you cannot leave unsatisfied is thirst. It becomes a driving demon that takes over the whole of your life and makes you think of nothing else but satisfying it.

That is what Jesus means. If you feel yourself driven, wanting something, restless and thirsty and longing for satisfaction, then his invitation is, “Come unto me and drink, and by means of the Spirit, which I will give to those who believe in me, I will satisfy that thirst.”

- bit.ly/33TXrtU

Again, you must receive Jesus into your lives as Lord and Savior and it is out of that relationship with Jesus that we see what God has poured into our lives will flow outwardly and touch the lives of others.

Jesus has just spoken the truth, that He is the Living Water that people need, and now it is up to those who heard to listen and obey.

THE TRUTH was spoken and what we are going to see is – ***DIVISION BETWEEN THE JEWS!***

VERSES 40-44

Now when people think about Jesus, they believe that He brings peace, serenity, calm to situations. The reality is, the exact opposite is true, He brings division.

I know that this sounds strange. What about all those verses that speak about the peace that Jesus brings?

That is very true, He does bring peace to our lives, but we need to pay attention to what Jesus is speaking of.

Let me show you what I mean. In John 16:33 Jesus said, **“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”**

The Amplified Bible puts it like this, **“I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have [perfect] peace and confidence. In the world you have tribulation and trials and distress and frustration; but be of good cheer [take courage; be confident, certain, undaunted]! For I have overcome the world. [I have deprived it of power to harm you and have conquered it for you.]”**

And The Living Bible sums it up like this, **“I have told you all this so that you will have peace of heart and mind. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows; but cheer up, for I have overcome the world.”**

In other words, Jesus is telling us that in this world we are going to have some difficult times, we are going to face many trials, there will be many sorrows, lots of conflict!

I know, you are thinking, *“I don’t know what Pastor Joe is talking about! How is that peace? How is that comfort? It looks like we are going to face many battles in this life! So again, how is that peace?”*

That is a good question. And the answer is right there before us. “**... in Me you may have peace. . .**” John 16:33.

Our peace is not found in the absence of storms, but it is a peace that surpasses all understanding as we go through these storms in life, as we go through these storms of conflict, trials and so on.

Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

Long ago a man sought the perfect picture of peace. Not finding one that satisfied, he announced a contest to produce this masterpiece.

The challenge stirred the imagination of artists everywhere, and paintings arrived from far and wide.

Finally, the great day of revelation arrived. The judges uncovered one peaceful scene after another, while the viewers clapped and cheered.

The tensions grew. Only two pictures remained veiled.

As a judge pulled the cover from one, a hush fell over the crowd.

A mirror-smooth lake reflected lacy, green birches under the soft blush of the evening sky. Along the grassy shore, a flock of sheep grazed undisturbed. Surely this was the winner.

The man with the vision uncovered the second painting himself, and the crowd gasped in surprise.

Could this be peace?

A tumultuous waterfall cascaded down a rocky precipice; the crowd could almost feel its cold, penetrating spray. Stormy-gray clouds threatened to explode with lightning, wind and rain.

In the midst of the thundering noises and bitter chill, a spindly tree clung to the rocks at the edge of the falls. One of its branches reached out in front of the torrential waters as if foolishly seeking to experience its full power.

A little bird had built a nest in the elbow of that branch. Content and undisturbed in her stormy surroundings, she rested on her eggs. With her eyes closed and her wings ready to cover her little ones, she manifested peace that transcends all earthly turmoil.

- Berit Kjos, *A Wardrobe from the King*, pp. 45-46

That is the way it is for us, and we can sit there and be worried, anxious, angry, bitter, fight back at this storm, and get nowhere.

Or we can be at peace in Jesus as these storms crash in around us. Is it easy? Absolutely not, but it is what the Lord warned us about. In this world we are going to have tremendous tribulation, the world is going to come after us, but we can be in that perfect peace as we rest in Jesus and are directed by Him how we should handle these things!

And think about it. When you came to Christ did your family, unsaved family rejoice? Did you hear ***“Praise the Lord, that is wonderful”*** from any of them, the unsaved family members?

I am safe to say you did not but your faith in Christ brought about division, not only with family but friends as well.

And that is what we see here in John chapter 7 – ***DIVISION BETWEEN THE JEWS!***

Jesus does bring division!

What is interesting to me is what Alford points out regarding this word, “*division*.” He wrote, “The word rendered *division* implies a *violent dissension* – some taking up His cause, some wishing to lay hands on Him.”

Again, Jesus did warn us about this. Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 10:34-37, **“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.’ He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.”**

Jesus is saying that by coming to Him it may cause divisions between family members and friends.

Even today, in the Orthodox Jewish homes, if one of their children comes to Jesus, Jesus is his Lord and Savior, they will have a funeral for him for in their minds, he is dead to them!

We see this in the Muslim faith. If someone comes to Christ, comes out of Islam, many times they are put to death!

And I do realize that these verses can be very troubling to many Christians. Why?

Because Jesus is saying that He did not come to bring peace and it seems that He has brought division to family and friends.

What does that mean?

Please understand, and we did talk about this, but Jesus did come to bring peace, but it is not a peace that many think of.

What do I mean by that?

Jesus did come to bring peace, a peace between man and God that is only received by His shed blood applied to our lives.

And like I have said, the problem with family and friends is many times they are in opposition to this and thus, there is great conflict.

It is amazing to me, but I have seen families so upset because their family member has come to Christ and in this salvation that person has been delivered from drugs and alcohol.

You would think they would rejoice but many times they don't because the light of Christ shining in this person is exposing their darkness and they don't like it.

So there is a division and I think many if not all of us can attest to that fact with family and friends when we came to Christ!

Also, Jesus speaks of loving family more than Him and if we do then we are not worthy of Him!

That is a tough one! What does that mean? Are we to hate our family?

No, that is not what Jesus is saying.

Let me put it like this. If Jesus is not first in your life, if you don't love Him more than family and friends, then you are in trouble.

Why is that?

Because if you love them more than Jesus than it is their influence that is going to come flowing from your life! They will cause you to do things that you should not be doing. You have to love Jesus more than everyone else!

And if you still don't get it, if this is still troubling you, then Jesus makes it very clear the road we are to travel as He goes on to say, "**And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.**" Matthew 10:38-39.

The cross spoke of death and the idea here is the death of the old life that was in opposition with God. To follow Christ will cost you something and are you willing to give up those things and follow Him?

That is a question only you can answer but keep in mind that He alone has the words of eternal life!

Back here in John we see the division that Jesus brought.

Some said this and some said that about Jesus and who He was. Everyone had their own opinion about Jesus. What is interesting is that when they were confronted with Jesus, with the truth that He spoke, no one could remain neutral.

Now could there have been people in the crowd that just blended in, that when you looked at them it appeared they were neutral.

You bet, but they heard the truth from Jesus and thus, their silence on the matter or their pretending to be neutral showed that they were really against Him. You can't hear the truth and ignore it; you have an opinion as did this crowd of people in Jesus' day!

Some said, "**... 'Truly this is the Prophet.'**" John 7:40.

And what they were saying is that Jesus was the Prophet that was spoken of in Deuteronomy 18:18, "**I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.**"

Others said, “... ‘This is the Christ.’ ...” John 7:41. In other words, this is the Messiah, the One who has come to deliver us from Roman bondage, at least that is what they were thinking!

And others said, “... ‘Will the Christ come out of Galilee? Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?’” John 7:41-42.

Here we see some have the opinion that this could not be the Messiah because He came out of Galilee and that is not what the Scriptures have to say about the Messiah. He was to come from Bethlehem, and he was to be of the seed of David!

What is the problem with their line of reasoning?

It was wrong like many today who don't have all the information and come to the faulty conclusion based on faulty information.

You see, Jesus was from the seed of David, and He did come from Bethlehem, it was where He was born! So their conclusion or their opinion is wrong!

I like the way that Boice sums this up and applies it to people's lives today and why they reject Jesus.

He wrote, “*Are you the one who has been rejecting Jesus Christ on a quibble? Do you refuse to come because you cannot understand where Cain got his wife? Or how God can punish sinners? Or why we are to believe in a virgin birth or a resurrection?*” (Boice)

You see, many reject Jesus because they have the wrong information or not all the information that they need to make a decision. Thus, they come to a conclusion based upon faulty information and they reject Jesus. That is very sad.

We see this played out for us all the time. My brother said that there was not one Christian scientist who believed in creation that went to an accredited school and developed anything worthy for the scientific community.

I gave him a list of about fifty Bible believing seven-day creationists that were scientists and developed many of the categories in science we have today.

This false information circulates around so much within those who reject creation, and they believe it to be true.

I have been called a flat-earther because I am a Christian. Wrong! The Bible tells us that the earth is not flat, but a sphere and I trust what God has said and not what man has said. But they are trying to discredit us and many times they have been told these lies and they believe them to be true!

For instance, listen to what Ken Ham had to say about the inventor of the MRI machine, a very important piece of equipment that have saved millions of lives. This is what he wrote,

Many of you may recall that during my debate with Bill Nye last February, [This was about six years ago] I countered Mr. Nye's frequent claim to the media that if the U.S. population believes in creation and not evolution, it will be a hindrance to scientific development and technological breakthroughs.

Nye had been saying that for some time, so I thought that during my debate with him, I would play a clip of Dr. Damadian - an eminent scientist, whose work has saved countless lives - to share his beliefs on origins.

Dr. Damadian is a renowned scientist - and is unashamedly a biblical creationist.

- bit.ly/3evPLQG

So people, knowingly or unknowingly, here it is Bill Nye who knows that what he is saying is false, spreading this false information and people then develop an opinion based on false information. They trust what he is saying but it is not true!

That is what we see here going on with the Jews.

And we can see what transpired as all these different people had their own opinion, “**So there was a division among the people because of Him.**” John 7:43.

And this was not like, “*You have your opinion and I have mine. That is fine, let’s grab something to eat!*”

No, this was a violent dissension, they were probably yelling at each other, in the face of the person who did not have the same opinion as they did. It was bad.

You see, Jesus made it very clear who He was and what He came to do. He is the Messiah, and the truth was there for them to see, and because of that, we see – ***DIVISION BETWEEN THE JEWS!***

Here is where we as Christians need to be careful. It is not my opinion or your opinion, it is what the Word of God has to say.

Now, let me also say this. Regarding the essential truths of the Bible, there is no opinion, it is the Word of God and nothing more and nothing less. There is no room for people’s opinion here because if you get the foundational truths wrong, then everything else will fall apart.

But there are non-essential doctrines that we have to be careful we don’t divide over. I am sure that there are non-essential doctrines that we don’t agree on. That is okay, you will see that I am right! Sorry, you could be right too!

The thing I see today is division over non-essential issues and we let the foundational truths go by the wayside. That should not be.

Spurgeon summed it up like this for us. He wrote, *“We can sometimes even fight with one another for what we believe to be the truth, and rebuke each other to the face if we think there is an error; but when it comes to Christ and his dear cross, give me thy hand, brother. You are washed in the blood, and so am I. You are resting in Christ, and so am I. You have put all your hope in Jesus; and that is where all my hope is, and therefore we are one. Yes, there is no real division among the true people of God because of Christ.”* (Spurgeon)

Amen to that!

And listen to what these various opinions did to the people. It stirred them up and we are told, **“Now some of them wanted to take Him, but no one laid hands on Him.”** John 7:44.

So we see now that they are so stirred up that they were coming to get Jesus but they held back.

And that is interesting to me.

Why did they hold back?

Because it was not time for Jesus to be taken in and crucified or put to death by stoning according to the Law. But again, the stoning was not going to happen because we are told He would be crucified on a tree!

But that is not going to stop the division that was going on. And, as we will see with our next point, there was – ***DIVISION BETWEEN THE JEWISH RELIGIOUS LEADERS!***

VERSES 45-53

Now this is interesting to me. The chief priests and Pharisees send some officers to come and arrest Jesus and their efforts were unsuccessful.

Keep in mind that these officers were not like the Three Stooges, if you know what I mean.

And yet they were not able to arrest Jesus, not because they were incompetent, but it was not the right time for Jesus to be arrested.

And as they return and come before these chief priests and Pharisees they are asked, **“Why have you not brought Him?”** John 7:45.

That was their whole job and yet they failed.

Now there is another reason why they failed. Yes, it was not time yet on God’s prophetic timeclock. But the other reason is that **“No man every spoke like this Man!”** John 7:46.

The words that Jesus spoke blew their minds and thus, they did not arrest Him.

Tenney put it like this. He wrote, *“Never did any man talk in this fashion.’ In the Greek the word ‘man’ (anthropos) occurs in the emphatic position at the end of the sentence and implies by contrast that he must be more than an ordinary human being.”*

And the response by the Pharisees is interesting. You can hear the resentment, the anger in their voices, even though with written words it is hard to get that. But listen to what they said, ***“Are you also being deceived?”*** John 7:47.

Obviously, the Jewish religious leaders did not believe what Jesus was saying and they wanted Him arrested.

But these officers who went to Jesus, they were blown away by what He said but they never allowed what He said to become part of their life.

It is easy for people to be enamored by Jesus, fascinated by Him, but unless you repent of your sins and ask Jesus to be Lord and Savior of your life, you will not see the Kingdom of God.

And that word *“repent”* speaks of turning around. You were moving away from God and now you have turned towards God, you have asked Jesus to be Lord and Savior of your life.

We clearly see here this – ***DIVISION BETWEEN THE JEWISH RELIGIOUS LEADERS!***

And I think what these Pharisees said to these officers, challenging what they were beginning to believe, caused them to turn away. They let the pressures of others keep them from Jesus and people still do that today.

They want to fit in, they don’t want to be seen as some kind of Jesus freak, so they go along with the crowd because there is just too much to lose if they come to Jesus!

The reality is that it is just too much to lose not to come to Jesus!

Of this Ray Stedman wrote,

This is one of the humorous incidents of the gospels. Can you imagine how these chief priests felt when the very officers whom they sent out to arrest Jesus returned, having been arrested by him?

“Where is he?” the priests demanded.

“You knew where he was. Why didn’t you bring him?”

We can almost hear the response of the men, “Well, it is hard to tell exactly what happened, but as we were listening to him he somehow got through to us. We became so wrapped up in what he was saying we forgot what we set out to do. We have to say that we have never heard anybody speak like this man.”

- bit.ly/33TXrtU

I also want you to listen to what John 7:49 says once again. We are told that the Pharisees said, **“But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed.”**

First, they were putting down these officers who were sent to arrest Jesus. And now we see them degrading those who would follow Jesus, the common people.

Listen to how The Living Bible puts it, **“These stupid crowds do, yes; but what do they know about it? A curse upon them anyway!”**

That is how they felt! They looked down upon the people; saw them as cursed because they did not keep the Law like they did!

The reality was that they did not even keep the Law!

Barclay gives us this insight as he wrote, *“The Pharisees had a phrase by which they described the ordinary, simple people who did not observe the thousands of regulations of the ceremonial law. They called them the People of the Land; to them they were beneath contempt.”*

And Bruce put it like this, *“Even the liberal Rabbi Hillel, of the generation before Christ, summed up this attitude when he said, ‘No member of the common people is pious.’”*

Look at the contempt, the disrespect they had for the common people and yet, they were the ones who were to be leading the people to God and this pious attitude kept them from doing that!

And can you see what was keeping them from coming to Jesus?

It is what gets in the way so often with people and that is – ***PRIDE!***

Pride caused them to feel too educated to be taken in by Jesus. They knew better and yet, in their pride they did not know better and apart from Christ, they were going to die in their sins!

Again, what they were doing with these officers who didn't arrest Jesus was to shame them for even thinking about listening to what Jesus was saying and intimidate them from following Jesus!

Think of it like this. They were basically saying, ***“Please understand that only the smart, only the spiritual people don't follow Jesus and thus, neither should you!”***

The same goes on today as people try to shame us and intimidate us for believing in Jesus and the Bible!

Think about it like this,

How in the world can you believe in creation when science has proven that we have evolved over millions and millions of years!

And yet, the evidence for evolution is non-existent and the evidence for creation is all around us! And yet, they still use that to discourage us and others into believing the Bible is the Word of God from Genesis through Revelation and we can trust it!

Jesus was not a real person. He is someone that people made up and they put together this religion!

The reality is, there is much evidence for Jesus, His life, His death and His resurrection. And the reality is, the evidence is also our own lives as God has given us eternal life through Jesus and apart from Him there is no hope!

What in the world are you talking about? Are you living in the dark ages? There is nothing wrong with sex outside of marriage! There is nothing wrong with homosexuality, transgenderism, lesbianism. Do whatever you want. Loosen up and get with the times!

If we look at what God says in His Word, the Bible, we see that these are wrong and that is why we are against it. We are not against because we said it is wrong, we are against it because God has said it is wrong. And I will trust that God knows what He is talking about instead of listening to man who is constantly changing his views on things!

And I can go on, but you get the idea of how easy it is for people to come down against us and that is why we need to know what we believe, and we need to know how to defend our faith.

That is what Peter said in I Peter 3:15-16, **“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.”**

The Amplified Bible puts these verses like this, **“But in your hearts set Christ apart as holy [and acknowledge Him] as Lord. Always be ready to give a logical defense to anyone who asks you to account for the hope that is in you, but do it courteously and respectfully. [Isa 8:12,13.] [And see to it that] your conscience is entirely clear (unimpaired), so that, when you are falsely accused as evildoers, those who threaten you abusively and revile your right behavior in Christ may come to be ashamed [of slandering your good lives].”**

Peter tells us to be ready to defend our faith.

That word **“defense”** in the Greek is APOLOGIA, (ap-ol-og-ee’-ah) and it is where we get our English word *“apologetics”* from.

Thus, it is a word that speaks of a formal defense in a judicial court. In other words, can you defend your faith before the court of this world, what you believe?

You see, if we are living what we say we believe, then we need to be able to share that with others, give them the reason for the hope that is in us.

How is that done?

By “**sanctifying**” or setting your life apart for the Lord, by consecrating yourself to His control and be ready to share your faith. Be men and women of the Word!

You see, we are not to just endure through the suffering, but we are to be ready to defend our faith as the opportunities come our way!

Why is this such a big deal?

First of all, if you can't share your faith, you are a poor witness of Jesus and what are you going to give people if you are not giving them Jesus?

Secondly, if you don't know what you believe, when difficult times come your way, your faith is going to be shaken, you may even doubt your salvation.

Thus, know what you believe and be ready to share it!

The big question for the days we are living in is, “***Are you going to allow persecution, people coming against you and what you believe to change your behavior? Are you going to water down your faith? Are you going to play secret-agent Christian and live out your faith in secret?***”

Of course not, we are to live out our faith in spite of what people throw at us! You see, we should always answer evil with good even though when we do good, people may answer back with evil. Just don't let it change how you live out your faith!

Isn't it amazing how many educated people reject Jesus today and believe all kinds of foolish things!

Isn't it amazing how many religious leaders deny the Deity of Jesus, His virgin birth, His miracles, His resurrection and yet the simple faith of a child can proclaim, ***“Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so!”***

Pride and hardness of heart kept them from seeing and receiving Jesus!

And yet, there was one Pharisee named Nicodemus who tries to stand up for Jesus, and yes, maybe in a weak way at this time, but he did stand up for Jesus.

And he tells them that the Law says it is not legal to convict a man before he could defend himself. They were violating their own law!

It is as Jesus said in John 7:24, **“Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”**

They were not doing that!

And how did they respond to what Nicodemus said to them? We don't have to guess because we are told in John 7:52, **“They answered and said to him, ‘Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee.’”**

Notice how they are mocking Nicodemus here. And how sad that is. And please understand this. The Jewish leaders looked down upon the Galileans with scorn. They were the butt of their jokes. They could not see anything good coming from Galilee, even saying that no prophet came from there.

Do you know what the problem with that statement is?

They were wrong!

Let me show you what I mean.

In II Kings 14:25 we are told that the prophet Jonah came from Gath Hopher which was three miles north of Nazareth in Lower Galilee.

There was also the prophet Elijah who was from Thisbe. And it is possible that Nahum and Hosea came from Galilee.

So much for these prideful religious leaders who thought they knew the Scriptures so well. And they were not judging with righteous judgment but according to their own standards, their own will, what they thought was true and not what the Scriptures had to say!

All these opinions, all these ideas and the end result of all of this, “**And everyone went to his own house.**” John 7:53.

The feast is over, the lean-tos have been taken down and the people are returning to their homes.

Some have been touched by the Savior, by Jesus, others have not, they just observed a religious practice.

The same happens today in churches across America. As the Word of God is taught some receive what God has for them, they are touched by Jesus, while others leave as they came in, unchanged!

Let me close with these words from Ray Stedman. He wrote,

But the point, of course, is, they were sarcastic, pompous, cynical, and calloused in their attitude. This is often the reaction of those who are disturbed by the words of Jesus.

I want to close this message, however, not on this negative note where John leaves us, but on those gracious words of Jesus, “If any one thirst . . .”

What a wonderful word that is! “If any one thirst . . .”

Remember the popular song of a few years ago, *Is This All There Is?*

Do you feel that way about life? Are you looking for more?

Well, do not look for it in travel, in increased business success, in new gadgets, in cars or houses or things. They will never satisfy your thirst. Although some of you know that, you still keep doing it.

Here is what will satisfy your thirst: “If any one thirst, let him come unto me, and keep on drinking.”

As you listen to Jesus, as you draw upon the fact of his presence, as you lean on his grace, and enjoy his love, and his acceptance you will find that he will change you.

And one of the signs of that change, as certain as tomorrows sunrise, is that you will begin to think of somebody other than yourself. You will reach out to the hurting around you, and when you do that your own heart will be satisfied.

Meaning, significance, power and companionship will come into your life. That is the promise of Jesus.

I hope many will claim it today.

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