

HE SENT ME

John 7:14-29

Two thousand years ago when Jesus was in the midst of His earthly ministry, people were confronted with the question of “who is this Man?” There were many different opinions and disagreements regarding the answer to this question then just as they are now. The way we answer the question affects decisions we make, and decision we make can be related to what we really believe about Jesus.

Jesus’ popularity among the people of Galilee had been good around the time of the Sermon on the Mount and following that time when many people were healed. The events of our present study were a little more than two years after He was baptized by John. Jesus had recently sent the twelve disciples out in pairs to spread the good news and it was about this time that He returned to Nazareth and spoke in the synagogue about the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah which really upset the Jewish leaders who regarded His remarks as blasphemous when he told them that the prophecy of Isaiah was being fulfilled and they were seeing it happen. This was about the time that John the Baptist was executed by Herod. When the disciples returned from their mission trip, Jesus and they tried to take a break but the crowds followed them and that was the occasion of a great multitude being fed and was probably the peak of His popularity. However, that popularity plummeted shortly after Jesus told them that He was the Living Bread and that they should “consume” Him if they wanted real life. In these statements, He was declaring Himself to be the “Passover Meal.”

Shortly after this was Passover time and some scholars question whether Jesus went to Jerusalem then or if He skipped it because the Jews were planning to harm Him and it was not the right time for that to happen. Six months later (in the Fall), Jesus did go to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles, but He choose to go alone rather than make the journey with His physical family brothers who had been taunting Him that He should go and do some miracles so that He could regain a larger following. Obviously, they were skeptical or unbelieving in their ridicule of Jesus.

From the Father – 7:14-19

¹⁴ About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. ¹⁵ The Jews therefore marveled, saying, “How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?” ¹⁶ So Jesus answered them, “My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. ¹⁷ If anyone’s will is to do God’s will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. ¹⁸ The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood. ¹⁹ Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?” John 7:14–19 (ESV)

This trip to Jerusalem was approximately six months before the time of the crucifixion.

Is it safe to say that everyone has an agenda? Those who would deny having an agenda would be like someone saying he has no purpose in life. Everyone has a purpose or something that motivates them whether they recognize it or not. In these verses we see something of Jesus’ agenda or purpose. Even though He was attempting to keep a low profile during this time because of the danger posed by the Jewish leaders, He found a reasonably safe environment in the crowd at the temple and He began to teach. This teaching activity was directly related to His purpose that He later stated to Pilate in John 18:37 “for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.”

There are several significant things which we can see in these few verses. One thing that is clear is that the “seasons” of our lives have “multiple levels” for lack of a better term. While it

was a season of relative discretion and caution for Jesus, the local situation provided Him an opportunity to be “instant in season and out of season.” This was because the large crowd in the temple area provided some degree of protection against being arrested since the High Priest was concerned about how the common people might react if Jesus were arrested in such a public setting. Jesus made good use of the opportunity and taught the people.

Another thing we see is that a formal higher education is not a requirement for a person to understand and share the truth of the word of God. Many people today put a great deal of confidence in the opinions of those in seminaries and universities and tend to dismiss those who are “self-taught” in the word of God. The major influence in a person’s ability to know God’s word is how close that person is walking with God in his or her life. Just as God (by the Holy Spirit) revealed His word to those who authored the Scriptures, He reveals the message of the written word to those who are willing to obey those truths and incorporate them into their very lives. Those who seek to learn for the sake of knowledge may be operating on a self or ego agenda and likely will not be able to fully comprehend the truth that is the word of God.

The experience of the Jews with regard to “truth” up this point in their history was associated with what Moses had delivered to them. We just read what Jesus said that Moses gave them the law (the truth). How did Moses obtain the truth? It was given to him by the One who sent him. There is a parallel to what had happened fourteen hundred years ago to what the Jews were experiencing from the ministry of Jesus. The parallel between the word of God (the “law of Moses”) and the Living Word with whom they were interacting at that point in time was extended to consider what the Jews had done with the law of Moses. What had they done with law? For all practical purposes, they were ignoring it. They had “canceled” the law except for ritualistic observances and to them it was dead and they had killed it. That did not change the fact that “the law” was still the truth. Essentially, Jesus was telling them that He was (the fulfillment of) the law of Moses. Then He (in so many words) added, “Just as you have tried to negate, cancel and kill the law of Moses, you are, now, trying to kill Me.” Of course, many in the crowd completely missed the point that Jesus was making which would explain their response.

With Righteousness – 7:20-24

²⁰ The crowd answered, “You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?” ²¹ Jesus answered them, “I did one work, and you all marvel at it. ²² Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. ²³ If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man’s whole body well? ²⁴ Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.” John 7:20–24 (ESV)

Those who raised the question of “who is trying to kill You” had either not heard about the plan of the Jewish leadership that was initiated about one year before this time or they were in denial. Instead of naming names, Jesus told the people “why” there was a plot to kill Him. At the time of the last Feast of Booths, Jesus had healed a lame man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath day. This overt act by Jesus was seen as defiance of the added restrictions that the Jewish leaders (primarily, the Pharisees) had included in what was the “proper way” (or politically correct way) to observe the Sabbath. Such defiance was a threat to their control of the people in their sphere of influence.

It is a natural and understandable tendency for people to exercise control over whatever area or realm they consider their dominion. Sometimes that is good and it can also be bad – it depends on the motives of the ones in control. In that time, masters controlled their slaves, employers controlled their workers, and parents exercised control of their children and their

animals. The Sanhedrin exercised control in the religious areas allotted to them by the Roman occupiers. The Romans exercised general overall control of that area of the world which extended far beyond the borders of Israel.

Usually, the “rulers” of these subsets of the world wanted or even demanded control of these subsets and those who defied them were dealt with severely which sometimes resulted in death. Most rulers realized that they were answerable to the next level of authority or the rulers of the higher level of authority. If a parent abused his children or animals, then he may have to answer to the Levites or the priests or perhaps even to the Romans. Those Jews who participated in the worship rituals were answerable to the Sanhedrin and the Sanhedrin members were answerable to the high Priest and he was accountable to the Romans if he went too far. The Roman believed they were eventually answerable to Caesar and Caesar likely thought he was answerable to no one. However, it is evident that just about every “rulership” level had failed to realize that their ultimate accountability was to the Sovereign God of Creation.

Further comments by Jesus regarding circumcision and the Sabbath were to point out to them how their added rules and regulations to the “spirit of the law” were inconsistent with other requirements of the law of Moses. For example, if a male child was eight days old on a Sabbath day, then it was not a violation of the Sabbath to conduct the ritual but healing someone who had been lame for thirty-eight years was a violation. Such distinctions missed the spirit of the Sabbath observance and defied common sense or “right judgment.”

As mentioned earlier, there were many different opinions regarding Jesus and His ministry. Some in the crowd had heard something about the plot to eliminate Jesus that raised additional questions as we see in the next verses.

They Know Each Other – 7:25-29

²⁵ 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.” John 7:25–29 (ESV)

While most people in “the crowd” had not heard anything about the plot to eliminate Jesus, some had heard about it. Because they had heard the rumors, they were surprised that Jesus had showed up in the temple area and that He was not arrested. What they did not know was that some temple guards had been sent to arrest Jesus but they did not carry out their mission because they were so impressed with what Jesus taught. This behind-the-scenes plot was mentioned by John later on in this chapter.

People will try to make sense of what they see happening. If they do not know the facts, they will make up a story (speculation) that would seem consistent with what they have seen. In this case, some speculated that the leaders had not arrested Jesus because they thought He was the Messiah. We know that was not true. This is why we cannot always trust what we see.

At the same time, some of those who were observing the events concluded that Jesus was not the Messiah because the common belief was that no one would know where the Messiah was from and they knew that Jesus was from Nazareth. Such conclusions result from thinking in physical terms rather than spiritual terms. Jesus came from God and they did not know God since they had chosen to ignore Him and had abandoned His ways in favor of rites and rituals for the sake of “religion.”

Jesus knew that these arguments and discussions were going on among the people and He

addressed the issue in verse 28. The statement “you know Me, etc.” was actually a challenge to point out that they just thought they knew Him and where He was from. Then Jesus told them in somewhat cryptic terms that He came from the One who had sent Him, and they did not know the One to whom He referred. My guess is that no one in the crowd had any idea of the truth that Jesus had just revealed to them. No one even asked Him to explain the meaning of what He had just said. They were too caught up in their own speculations and ideas they had invented to try to convince each other of their own personal opinions of what was going on. Some were close to connecting the works (miracles and teaching) of Jesus with the obvious conclusion that these were indications (not necessarily proof) that He was the Messiah.

Regarding whether people can understand the teachings of Jesus, the answer is “yes we can” if we will listen with spiritual ears and get beyond the physical and temporal and refocus our view to the eternal. We are living in the reality of being those who have been given much and of whom much is expected since we have the benefit of seeing and hearing the teaching of Jesus from a “post-cross” historical view. Because we have been given as much understanding as we have, then we should have the same kind of drive to share this truth as Jesus did.

To claim that Jesus is the Messiah and that He is Lord will cause controversy with the world. The question of “Who is Jesus?” is the most important question we will ever answer because all of our eternity depends on our answer.