

THE GOSPEL OF

JOHN

Jesus: A
Man of
God's Will

INTRODUCTION

John 7:1-24

The apostle John wrote of Jesus (1:10-11), "He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him." So throughout his Gospel John sets forth both the tragedy of unbelief along with the triumphs of belief. He wrote his Gospel to show who Jesus is so that (20:31) "you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." To have saving faith, it's crucial that you understand correctly who Jesus is.

In our text, Jesus is at the Feast of Booths in Jerusalem, six months before He would be arrested and crucified. Before He showed Himself publicly at this feast, the crowds were debating, with some saying (7:12), "He is a good man"; [but] others were saying, "No, on the contrary, He leads people astray."

John wants us to see that neither of those are viable options. Jesus could not have been merely a good man and said the things that He said. If a mere man claimed that he could give living water so that the one who drank it would never thirst again; or if he claimed to be the bread of life, so that whoever ate of him would never hunger and would have eternal life; or if he claimed to be the way, the truth, and the life and said that he was the only way that people could come to God; you would not say, "He's a good man." You would say, "He's a crazy megalomaniac!" And, at the same time, Jesus was obviously too good of a man to be a deliberate deceiver. So John wants us to see that Jesus is the eternal Son of God in human flesh. He wants us to see Jesus' glory so that we might believe in Him as our Lord and God (20:28).

But John knows full well that believing in Jesus isn't the automatic response to Him. There is always division: some believe, some are indifferent, and others reject Him vehemently. So here John shows us the reaction of the Jewish leaders and the crowds to Jesus when He went into the temple in the midst of the feast and began to teach. Although Jesus was sent from God, taught God's truth, sought God's glory, and did God's miraculous works, people rejected Him because they valued the wrong things; they were not willing to obey God; they were legalistic hypocrites; they were under satanic influence; and, they were judging by outward appearances. Or, more briefly,

Although Jesus is the true and righteous one, people reject Him because of their many sins.¹

¹ Sermon excerpt by Steven Cole. Found at <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-41-jesus-true-yet-rejected-john-714-24>

OPEN IT

1. Describe a time you were surprised by someone (or someones) showing up for something?

READ IT

John 7:1-24

EXPLORE IT

2. What Jewish celebration was taking place and where was Jesus as it was starting?
3. What were Jesus' brothers telling Him to do? What was Jesus' response to them?
4. What were some of the different ways people perceived Jesus?
5. On what basis did Jesus validate His teaching?
6. What comparison does Jesus make in His defense to the crowds and the Jews?

APPLY IT

Many people know the feeling of isolation being the only believer in their family or work place. They know the pain of being mocked and misunderstood because of their faith at times. But who else better understands those very feelings of being “rejected” by their own families than Jesus. John 7:6 tells us that even Jesus’ own brothers didn’t believe in Him. “What a powerful portrait of the world’s rejection of Jesus is painted here by John! But as the evangelist makes clear, the world’s darkness only accentuates the fact that Jesus is the light of the world.”²

“The brothers want Jesus to show himself to the world, but in John’s most characteristic sense of that word the ‘world’ is precisely that which cannot receive him without ceasing to be the ‘world’. In one sense, Jesus has no intention of showing himself to the ‘world’. And yet in another sense, the reader who presses on to the rest of this Gospel discovers that it is in Jerusalem where Jesus reveals himself most dramatically—not in the spectacular miracles the brothers want but in the ignominy of the cross, the very cross by which Jesus draws all men to himself (12:32) and becomes the Saviour of the world (4:42).”³

7. Take a minute to examine Jesus’ response to His brothers in verses 6-7. What does Jesus’ response reveal about the contrast between “light and darkness” (John 3:19-20)?

8. Verse 12 shows us that there has always been a varied response to Jesus. Consider the two perspectives below. How does each perspective fall short of who Jesus truly is? How would you respond to a person who believed each of those to help them understand more fully who Jesus really is?

“A good man”

“A fraud”

² Köstenberger, Andreas J.. Encountering John (Encountering Biblical Studies). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

³ Carson, D. A.. The Gospel according to John (The Pillar New Testament Commentary (PNTC)). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.. Kindle Edition.

Looking at John 7:8-10, it might seem as if Jesus has been caught in a lie. As a matter of fact, some skeptics might point to these very verses as evidence that Jesus wasn't perfect and therefore can't be the Messiah.

"Could John have failed to realize that he recorded the Lord's telling of a bald-faced lie in the very same passage He is called a deceiver by His enemies (John 7:12, 47)? Could John have possibly missed the irony that Jesus, a liar, publicly condemns His enemies as liars (John 8:44, 55)? Of course not. The fact is that Jesus told no lie. John makes it perfectly clear that Jesus' response to His brothers meant only that He was not going when His brothers thought He should go. The Lord was working on a different timetable, and He was not going to allow His brothers to dictate His actions.

In summary, Jesus did not lie to His half-brothers. He was making it clear to them that if or when He went to the festival was a matter of God's exact timing and perfect plan, not their ignorant opinions. He knew His brothers would see Him at the festival and would have to think about what He told them more deeply when His exact hour had come, but not before."⁴

9. Why was it important that the Father's appointments prevented Jesus from going to the feast right when it started? What might have happened differently?

10. We often feel like "the Lord's timing" is such a mystery in life and treat it as if it were a game of chance. Do you think we are able to discern God's timing aside from simply "waiting for doors to close"? Explain why you think that.

⁴ Got Questions. "Did Jesus lie to His brothers in John 7:8-10?" <https://www.gotquestions.org/did-Jesus-lie-to-His-brothers.html>

“[The Jews] were astonished that someone who had not studied in one of the great rabbinical centres of learning, or with one of the famous rabbis, could have such a command of Scripture, such telling mastery in his exposition. About a year later, Peter and John similarly confounded the religious authorities, who were compelled to observe that although they were ‘unschooled (agrammatoi), ordinary men’ (Acts 4:13), they had been with Jesus and apparently drew their knowledge and authority from that exposure.”⁵

11. Why does an authentic relationship with God supersede formal training when it comes to authority and conviction?

12. Do you feel that someone could say of you that you speak of your faith as with authority and conviction? Explain.

13. One might make the excuse in Jesus’ case that since He was God, He has the advantage to teach with authority, yet Acts tells us the same thing about Peter and John who were ordinary guys like us who had been with Jesus. How does that testimony encourage you or spur you on to boldly seek opportunities to proclaim the gospel?

⁵ Carson, D. A.. The Gospel according to John (The Pillar New Testament Commentary (PNTC)). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.. Kindle Edition.

“Two statements by Jesus in John 7 and 8 highlight the importance of a person’s commitment to do (not merely know) the truth. The first appears in John 7: 17: “Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.” Augustine commented on this statement, “Understanding is the reward of faith. . . . What is ‘If any man be willing to do his will’? It is the same thing as to believe” (quoted in the NIV Study Bible at 7: 17, p. 1609). And, in the same passage, Augustine counseled, “Do not seek to understand in order to believe, but believe in order to understand.” Both statements underscore the truth embodied in Jesus’s teaching: we must be willing to take the “risk” of stepping out in faith, or we will never experience the presence, assistance, and blessing of Christ. Augustine had it right: faith must come first, and understanding will follow.”⁶

14. How would you define spiritual maturity?

15. Do you agree with the conclusion above: “faith must come first, and understanding will follow”? Explain.

16. Why do you sometimes struggle to act on faith when you don’t understand the process or purposes of God?

⁶ Köstenberger, Andreas J.. Encountering John (Encountering Biblical Studies). Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

“Few things are as dangerous as self-righteousness. ... Do you excuse in yourself what you accuse in others? The Jewish leaders could do something on the Sabbath—circumcise—and it was OK. But Jesus couldn’t do something on the Sabbath—heal—because it was wrong. If they did it, it must be OK. If someone else did it, it was worthy of scorn and ridicule and judgment. When you find yourself accusing someone else, ask if you would excuse or rationalize the same behavior in yourself. If so, you’ve found where self-righteousness is hiding.”⁷

17. In what ways do we at times get caught up in the “letter of the law” (like the Pharisees) rather than understanding the “spirit of the law” (like Jesus)?

18. What things do you tend to excuse either in yourself or your loved ones that you accuse in others?

⁷ Carter, Matt; Wredberg, Josh. Exalting Jesus in John (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

“Jesus’ appeal is more personal, eschatological and redemptive. They have misconstrued his character by a fundamentally flawed set of deductions from Old Testament law, an approach that turns out to be superficial, far too committed to ‘mere appearances’. If their approach to God’s will were one of faith (cf. notes on v. 17), they would soon discern that Jesus is not a Sabbath-breaker, but the one who fulfills both Sabbath and circumcision.”⁸

19. What does that mean that Jesus is “the one who fulfills both Sabbath and circumcision”?

Take a moment to pause before the Lord and thank Him for His fulfillment on your behalf of the Law and the Prophets.

⁸ Carson, D. A.. The Gospel according to John (The Pillar New Testament Commentary (PNTC)). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.. Kindle Edition. This study was compiled and questions were written by Jeremy Anderson (Indian Creek Campus)—www.villagebible.church/smallgroup