

Asking Questions About Jesus?
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John 7:1-31

Opening question: Before you married your spouse, even before you agreed to be engaged, you had to become convinced this was the person you wanted to spend the rest of your life with. You had to DECIDE they were the really what they appeared to be. **How did you figure that out in your courtship? What were some ways you came to that decision?**

During his earthly ministry, Jesus made claims that raised many questions then AND NOW. If anyone seriously looks at the claims Jesus made about Himself, they HAVE TO DECIDE, He either IS or IS NOT who He claims to be.

Studying John chapter 7, we'll learn how Jesus verified His identity as the Son of God back then, and confirms it in our hearts today. We'll also see some good "rules of thumb" on how to test if a teacher or preacher is truly from God.

As we begin this chapter, about six months have passed since Jesus fed the 5,000. His miracles; His message; and His claim to be the Son of God caused the religious establishment to hate him. Verse 1 of chapter 7 sets the stage:

John 7:1 (ESV)

7 After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him.

- To avoid a premature confrontation with the Jewish religious leaders, Jesus had stayed away from Judea. Now, It was time for another feast when all Jewish males were expected to be in Jerusalem.
- As the Feast of Tabernacles approached, Jesus' earthly half-brothers urged Him to go to Jerusalem and make Himself known.
- His brothers didn't even believe him yet. They themselves just wanted to see if He was really the Messiah. Jesus told them to go ahead; his "hour" had not come.
- God has a DIVINE TIMETABLE for everything and Jesus always observed it. Because the Jewish leaders sought to kill Him, He quietly slipped into town, and to the temple.

John 7:14–18 (ESV)

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.

- Verse 14: Despite the threats on His life, Jesus BOLDLY began to teach in the temple.
- **Verse 15: What effect did His teaching have on the people?**

After the sermon on the mount, Matthew 7:28 and 29 tells us:

28 And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching,
29 for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

- He spoke with such authority, they couldn't attack His impact, **so what did they attack?**
- **16: How did Jesus respond to their questions about his EDUCATIONAL status?**
- Ray Stedman said a man wrote him a letter about preachers, saying, "I want to hear a man who knows God and has seen him recently." Isn't that a great way to put it!
- **How can we know if a teacher or preacher's teaching is from God? Thoughts?**
- In Verse 17 Jesus gives us a way to know:
- *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.*
- Verse 17 just JUMPED off the page to me this week! It has a lot to say to us.
- If you only take ONE THING home with you today. Take home verse 17.
- **What kind of person does it say would RECOGNIZE His teaching was from God?**
- **Considering this verse, why do Atheists and skeptics not believe in Christ?**

A.T. Robertson wrote:

Atheists of all types have no point of contact for approach to the knowledge of Christ. This fact does not prove the non-existence of God, but simply their own isolation. They are out of tune with the Infinite. For those who love God it is also true that obedience to God's will brings richer knowledge of God. Agnostic and atheistic critics are disqualified by Jesus as witnesses to his claims.

Here's what Jesus himself said to the skeptics:

John 8:43–44 (ESV)

43 Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. 44 You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Warren Wiersbe writes:

"How, then, can we know that Jesus is teaching us the truth? By obeying what He tells us to do. God's Word proves itself true to those who will sincerely do it. John 7:17 literally reads, 'If any man is willing to do His [God's] will, he shall know.'" This explains why the Jewish leaders did not understand Jesus' teachings: they had stubborn wills and would not submit to Him (John 5:40)."

- Verse 17 is POWERFUL for both BELIEVERS and those yet to believe in Christ.
- We're back to the BASIC DECISION: Jesus either IS, OR ISN'T who He says.

- I wrote it this way: *The doorway to SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE is OBEDIENCE.*
- If you don't yet believe, if you're not sure about Jesus, just SINCERELY take Him up on His offer of ETERNAL LIFE with an intention to OBEY what He says in His word.
- The Holy Spirit of God will come inside you and confirm Jesus IS WHO HE SAYS.
- For the believer who says, *"I'm not sure I'm smart enough to understand God's word."* Just start DOING WHAT IT TELLS YOU TO DO. The Holy Spirit inside will do the rest.

I love how Albert Barnes put it:

"An honest desire to obey God will lead a man to embrace the great doctrines of the Bible. He will find that his heart is depraved and inclined to evil, and he will see and feel the truth of the doctrine of depravity; he will find that he is a sinner and needs to be born again; he will learn his own weakness, and see his need of a Saviour, of an atonement, and of pardoning mercy; he will feel that he is polluted, and needs the purifying influence of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, we may learn: That an honest effort to obey God is the easiest way to become acquainted with the doctrines of the Bible."

- In Mark 9:24 a father brings his demon possessed son to Jesus.
 - Jesus asks, "Do you believe?"
 - This dad speaks for all of us when he said: *"I believe; help my unbelief!"*
 - Jesus I WANT to believe everything you say...HELP ME!
 - The doorway to Spiritual Knowledge is childlike faith and OBEDIENCE.
 - Want to understand Jesus and His word? Come sincerely willing to OBEY it.
- **Verse 18 - What's else did Jesus say proved His teaching was from God?**
 - In verse 18 Jesus asserts His own uniqueness for fallen mankind: (1) He does not seek His own glory; (2) He seeks the Father's glory; (3) He is true; and (4) He is sinless. (Bob Utley - The Beloved Disciple's Memoirs and Letters.)

Based on these verses, The Life Application Commentary gives some guidelines to "test" if a teacher or preacher is REALLY from God:

- Their words should agree with, not contradict, the Bible in its entirety.
- Their words should glorify God and his will, not themselves.
- If their words are true, we will realize more deeply all that Jesus has done for us.
- Their message should not only challenge our present way of living but also show us, in the light of the Bible, what corrections need to be made.

Life Application Commentary on John p.156

- Still, the people had questions about Jesus.

John 7:25–31 (ESV)

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."

- Tradition, based on Malachi 3:1, mistakenly taught the Messiah would appear out of nowhere.
- **Where did Old Testament prophecy say the Messiah would come from?**
- They thought he was just a carpenter from Nazareth. “Nothing good” ever came out of Nazareth! Jesus said, “That’s not where I come 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.”

- Verse 29: Jesus boldly says He is SENT FROM GOD THE FATHER. The Jewish leaders considered this BLASPHEMY! They want to kill Him. Yet, His hour hasn’t come.
- **Some insulted and rejected Him. What does verse 31 say happened?**

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?”

- In that day just like this day, Jesus always causes DIVISION.
- Why? Because when it comes to Jesus, YOU HAVE TO DECIDE.
- Any other thoughts or questions before we wrap up?

So, What’s the Takeaway?

Some people still say Jesus was just a “great moral teacher.”

C.S. Lewis, wrote in “Mere Christianity:”

“A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic...or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

As we learned in verse 17, we’ll only see Jesus for WHO HE REALLY IS if we come in childlike faith, ready to OBEY, asking His Holy Spirit to HELP our unbelief.