

## John 7 • No Middle Ground

### Introduction

There are very, very few true atheists in life. Even those who profess being agnostic generally have very strong opinions for why they **DON'T** believe. The fact is that we either fully believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Messiah, or we've replaced Him with something else, something that we're equally passionate about protecting, defending, even growing. As portrayed in this chapter, the discussion of Christ may begin with a mild tit-for-tat as to what kind of man He was, but it always and inevitably leads to the decision, "Is Jesus the Christ the Son of God?" The final resolution to that question determines everything that follows.

<sup>1</sup>After these things Jesus was walking in Galilee, for He was unwilling to walk in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him. <sup>2</sup>Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near. <sup>3</sup>Therefore His brothers said to Him, "Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. <sup>4</sup>For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." <sup>5</sup>For not even His brothers were believing in Him.

<sup>6</sup>So Jesus said to them, "My time is not yet here, but your time is always opportune. <sup>7</sup>The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil. <sup>8</sup>Go up to the feast yourselves; I do not go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come." <sup>9</sup>Having said these things to them, He stayed in Galilee.

<sup>10</sup>But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as if, in secret. <sup>11</sup>So the Jews were seeking Him at the feast and were saying, "Where is He?" <sup>12</sup>There was much grumbling among the crowds concerning Him; some were saying, "He is a good man"; others were saying, "No, on the contrary, He leads the people astray." <sup>13</sup>Yet no one was speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews.

### [Read v.1-9]

**Q: According to what kind of logic is Jesus' brothers' thinking in v.3-5? What are they assuming about Jesus?**

A: It's the logic of the world, of the perceived path to public success. Since they don't believe Jesus is actually the Messiah, they assume He has embarked on a career to be popular, well-known, in the public eye.

**Q: What do you think Jesus means in v.8 when He states, "My time has not yet fully come"?**

A: It's the continuing application of His teaching as stated in John 5:30:

*I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.*

### Application:

- How does this compare to the approach we take to our own ministry?
- How does this compare the approach we take for our local church's activities?
- Have you noticed individuals or organizations that seem to operate mainly according to the **world's** definition of the path to success?
- How do we know we should take a ministry or activity "to the next level"?

### [Read v.10-13]

**Q: What is the key word in v.12 that indicates what's really going on? What does this reveal about these people?**

A: "Grumbling". They seem to be more concerned about what others think, guided more by public opinion than personal faith.

### Application:

- Are you confident of your knowledge and relationship with Christ?
- In what ways or according to what teachings are you just "going along"?
- Is it healthy to accept only the opinions and/or interpretations of church leaders?

<sup>14</sup>But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach. <sup>15</sup>The Jews then were astonished, saying, “How has this man become learned, having never been educated?”

<sup>16</sup>So Jesus answered them and said, “My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. <sup>17</sup>If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself. <sup>18</sup>He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.

<sup>19</sup>“Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?”

<sup>20</sup>The crowd answered, “You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?”

<sup>21</sup>Jesus answered them, “I did one deed, and you all marvel. <sup>22</sup>For this reason Moses has given you circumcision (not because it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and on the Sabbath you circumcise a man. <sup>23</sup>If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath? <sup>24</sup>Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”

### **[Read v.14-18]**

**Q: In v.15, reading between the lines, what is the real question that they're asking? Is this really an issue of teaching credentials or training?**

A: They recognize the **power** of the message, but they just don't recognize the **origin** of the message. It's a very polite way of stating, “How can such a message come from someone's own imagination? Couldn't this be from God?”

**Q: What does Jesus indicate in v.17 as the key to the people obtaining the right answer to their question?**

A: “If anyone is willing to do His will”. It all begins with a desire to seek God rather than self, to want to do God's will at the expense of one's own will. Having properly subjected one's heart to God, the truth of Christ becomes crystal clear.

**Q: How does v.18 reveal the test of a true messenger from God?**

A: The true messenger seeks God's glory, not his own.

#### **Application:**

- What is the application here for testing whether an individual, ministry or activity is of God or man?
- What might be a measurement of how successful an endeavor may or may not be? [Hint: Whose will is given priority?]

### **[Read v.19-24]**

**Q: So before they rejected Christ's word, what had they also previously rejected?**

A: God's Word, as already provided in the Old Testament.

**Q: Why is this an important point? What does it indicate?**

A: In general, they're not inclined to obedience from the heart but, at most, following the rules of the Law. Their heart is not in it.

#### **Application:**

- Is it surprising that if we're not generally obedient to God's Word that we struggle greatly when we need to be obedient in a large thing?
- Is it possible to “follow the rules” yet not follow from the heart?
- If we don't apply and follow the simple commandments, how will we understand the deeper wisdom and teachings of God's Word?

<sup>25</sup>So some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, “Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill?” <sup>26</sup>Look, He is speaking publicly, and they are saying nothing to Him. The rulers do not really know that this is the Christ, do they? <sup>27</sup>However, we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from.”

<sup>28</sup>Then Jesus cried out in the temple, teaching and saying, “You both know Me and know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. <sup>29</sup>I know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me.” <sup>30</sup>So they were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.

<sup>31</sup>But many of the crowd believed in Him; and they were saying, “When the Christ comes, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?”

<sup>37</sup>Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. <sup>38</sup>He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’” <sup>39</sup>But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

<sup>40</sup>Some of the people therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, “This certainly is the Prophet.”

<sup>41</sup>Others were saying, “This is the Christ.”

Still others were saying, “Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He? <sup>42</sup>Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?”

<sup>43</sup>So a division occurred in the crowd because of Him. <sup>44</sup>Some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

### **[Read v.25-31]**

**Q: What is the chief difference between those who believe and those who don't?**

A: Believers accept Christ and His Word as divine, unbelievers react violently toward Him and His message.

**Point:** *It's very rare to find someone who has no passionate response—either for or against—on the subject of Jesus. Notice that they are not evaluating Him as a teacher or good man, but whether or not He is the Christ. Everything else proceeds from this central, personal decision as to whether or not Jesus is the Messiah. Every person, upon hearing Christ's words, instinctively know that they cannot be accepted without accepting Him as God; otherwise, in rejecting His words, Jesus must be rejected as God.*

### **[Read v.37-39]**

**Note:** *At this point in the feast there was a great ceremony involving the pouring out of water. Jesus' words would have dramatically mirrored what was going on at the feast and the deeper meaning of the Law in this regard.*

**Q: What is the significance of the conditional statement “if” used by Jesus?**

A: Not everyone is thirsty. Spiritual thirst can be satiated by drinking from sources **OTHER** than Christ.

**Q: What is “drinking” equated to in v.38?**

A: Belief in Jesus alone.

### **[Read v.40-44]**

**Q: When the people were grumbling about Jesus in v.12, what terms were they arguing about in describing Jesus?**

A: “A good man” and “lead the people astray”. It was basically a general assessment as to whether He was a “good” or “bad” man, a “good” or “bad” influence.

**Q: How is this different from v.40 and 41 where He is described as “the Prophet” and “the Christ”?**

A: They now recognize the only way to explain Jesus is from a spiritual perspective. Their personal decision must be to determine whether or not He is divine, to accept or reject Him as from God.

**Application:** *On what basis have you accepted/rejected Jesus? How would others know this?*

<sup>45</sup>The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, “Why did you not bring Him?”

<sup>46</sup>The officers answered, “Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks.”

<sup>47</sup>The Pharisees then answered them, “You have not also been led astray, have you? <sup>48</sup>No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he? <sup>49</sup>But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed.”

<sup>50</sup>Nicodemus (he who came to Him before, being one of them) said to them,

<sup>51</sup>“Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?”

<sup>52</sup>They answered him, “You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee.”

### **[Read v.45-52]**

**Q: The “officers” are not Romans but Jews, something akin to a police force assigned to the temple. Why should their testimony be a double witness to the Pharisees?**

A: They would have spent their careers within earshot of the Pharisees themselves teaching and preaching. Their stunning admission, “*Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks*” is both a testimony of the authority of Christ and the lack of same for the authorities.

**Q: How would you summarize the Pharisees’ basic character flaw?**

A: They believe they have all the answers; unless everything is fulfilled exactly the way they’ve predetermined, no one measures up. It’s the contrast to v.17, “*If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God whether I speak from Myself.*” They have placed their will over God’s will. There’s no room in their heart for another.

### **Overall Application**

- Taking all the different viewpoints and situations covered in this chapter, what is the best indicator of our walk in Christ, of whether or not we’ve accepted Him fully as the Messiah? (If we accept and obey His Word.)
- In what ways do we need to make personal changes so that this is completely, 100% true in our life?