

John 7:1-13

Teaching Points

John 7 is about opposition to Jesus. The beginning of the chapter highlights opposition from his family. The context is the Feast of Tabernacles which is a weeklong celebration in September or October when families camped out in temporary shelters to remember God's faithfulness to Israel in the wilderness on the way from Egypt to Canaan under Moses. The people lived in makeshift booths of branches and leaves and so the Hebrews called it the festival of booths (you can read about it in Leviticus 23:33-43).

Discussion: Why didn't Jesus want to go to the Feast? (*Note: The Feast was in Judea, which was south of where Jesus was in Galilee*). Was He afraid of those who wanted to kill Him? Was He afraid of dying?

Thoughts: *Jesus was not afraid. He was aware of His Father's perfect timing and it was not yet time for Him to be arrested and delivered to the Gentiles.*

It comes as a surprise to some that Jesus had brothers, but John has said it already (2:12) and we read it Matthew 12:46-47. Matthew 13:55-56 says Jesus had sisters. He was the first-born and Mary was empowered by the Holy Spirit to conceive Him. But she had children after Jesus. It's interesting to think that Jesus had half-brothers and half-sisters, isn't it? And isn't it remarkable that His brothers did not believe in Him? They chide Him about going to Jerusalem to "show" Himself to the world. Jerusalem is the center of Judaism. And it is a bigger platform for Him to go prove Himself the Messiah. "Do your works there and quit hiding yourself up here in little 'ole Galilee," is gist of what they were saying. They thought He needed the world's approval, but His success didn't depend on the world's attitude toward Him.

Discussion: Remarkably, they never seemed to be supportive of His ministry. When did they become supportive? What was the catalyst?

Thoughts: *Look at Acts 1:14 and note who is in the room. Why are they there? What convinced them to join with the disciples of Jesus, their half-brother? It was the resurrection.*

Jesus tells His brothers that they are of different worlds. Jesus' time has not yet come, but their time is always ready. Jesus is hated by the world, but the world cannot hate them. What a contrast! Jesus was completely submitted to the will of the Father, so the timing of the Father was important to Him. The brothers are fine with any time because they are not submitted in the same way. And the brothers are fine with the world's approval because their actions and wishes are in line with the world's. Jesus, however, boldly confronts the sins of the world and is therefore hated by the world. Jesus said He would not go to the Feast publicly, as they urged Him to do. But He did go privately (v.10).

Notice the range of interest and opinions about Jesus as they looked for Him at the Feast. Some complained about Him, some said He was good, while others were convinced He was a deceiver. Much like He is today, Jesus was a “controversial” figure in His days of public ministry. People were not neutral about Jesus.

Discussion: Why were the people afraid to discuss Jesus openly? Who are “the Jews” referenced in verse 13? Aren’t all these people Jews?

Thoughts: *Yes, they are all Jews, but the phrase, “the Jews”, often refers to the Jewish leaders. These leaders of the Jews didn’t want people talking about Jesus for at least a few reasons: They did not recognize Him to be the Messiah, they didn’t want to cause a stir and get in trouble with the Romans (a rival King to the Emperor would get them quickly squashed), and because they were jealous of the attention He was getting.*

We can understand why Jesus went to the Feast “in secret.” His enemies were watching for Him, no doubt because they wanted to arrest Him. But it wasn’t His time (because it wasn’t the Father’s time) for Him to be arrested and crucified. That would come later. The people needed more time to get a fuller sense of the identity of Jesus of Nazareth. Many complained about Him at this point in His ministry because they wanted Him to fulfill *their* wishes for the Messiah, and for Him to fulfill them *now*.

Discussion: When did Jesus become more than merely a “neutral” figure in your life? Is Jesus dividing people today? How so? How do you handle the conversation when people claim Jesus is false or a deceiver?

Prayer Focus

Praise God for the perfect timing of Jesus in His ministry. Praise the Lord Jesus for not caving into the fickle demands of His brothers or the crowd or the Jewish leaders. Praise Him for executing the Father’s perfect plan of redemption even in this “minor” moment during His public ministry.

Praise God for making known to you the true identity of Jesus through His Spirit and His Word. Why are you no longer part of the crowd bickering over the identity of Jesus? Why do you trust Him now as your All in All? Because of His love and grace and mercy. Thank Him!

Ask the Lord to help you to stand strong in the face of opposition and to give an answer to those who are Christ-deniers. Ask Him to open the eyes of those who are blind to truth.