

Who Is Jesus?

John 7:1-36

January 25th, 2026

1. His brothers said He should be more _____. (7:1-10)

2. The crowd debated whether He was a _____ man or led people _____. (7:11-13)

3. The Jewish leaders were astonished that He taught without being _____. (7:14-19)

4. The crowd accused Him of being _____. (7:20-24)

5. Some wondered if He was the _____. (7:25-31)

6. The Pharisees tried to _____ Him. (7:32-36)

7. Applying the Word

a. The true _____ and _____ of Jesus is of saving importance.

b. He was _____ and _____, so we shouldn't be surprised when we are also.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on John 7:1-36

1. What are some ways in which even a non-Christian ought to recognize the powerful, positive influence of Jesus upon world history?
2. Why do Jesus' brothers want Him to go to Jerusalem? What seems to drive their motives? (vv. 1-10)
3. How would you respond to someone who says that Jesus lies in vv. 8-10?
4. How does v. 17 explain the various responses to Jesus, both then and now?
5. What does it mean for someone to "speak from himself" and "seek his own glory" in v. 18? How does Jesus contrast Himself with that?
6. How does the argument build towards Jesus' question at the end of v. 19?
7. What is the argument that Jesus is making about circumcision in vv. 21-24?
8. Why would His audience have taken offense at His statement at the end of v. 28? How does Romans 2:17-29 address a similar issue of the heart?

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Big idea: Jesus is sent from the Father and speaks truth, but questions swirled around His identity. It is necessary to desire God's will to discern Jesus' identity.

Intro

It's hard to deny that Jesus was one of the most fascinating people in history, even if you aren't persuaded of the Christian theological view that He is God in the flesh come down to save people from their sin. This classic poem called, "One Solitary Life" summarizes it well.

One Solitary Life, "Here is a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village. He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty, and then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He never owned a home. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put his foot inside a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where He was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself.... While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed upon a cross between two thieves. While He was dying His executors gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth — his coat When He was dead, He was taken down and laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Nineteen long centuries have come and gone, and today He is the centerpiece of the human race and the leader of the column of progress. I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever were built; all the parliaments that ever sat and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that one solitary life." As quoted in McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*

His contemporaries were grappling with His identity. We see that on full display throughout John but especially in John chapter 7.

1. His brothers said He should be more **public**. (7:1-10)
 - a. Jesus continued in the north of the country, in the region of Galilee, because the south near Jerusalem had become too dangerous for open ministry.
 - i. It's not that He was avoiding death itself, but rather that His time had not yet come, as He states.
 - ii. **John 1:11** He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.
 1. This verse summarizes what Jesus is experiencing at this point in His ministry.
 2. SHOW LINE CHART FOR GOSPEL OF JOHN
 - iii. He traveled and taught and healed near Galilee, further from the Jewish religious leaders and the temple, which also happened to be where He grew up and His family was there, not that they were necessarily on His side.
 - b. His brothers wanted Him to travel to Judea, the region where Jerusalem is, to do His signs more publicly.

- i. It was the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles, which took place in Sept/Oct.
- ii. It was a weeklong festival outlined in Leviticus 23. The people built temporary shelters out of branches to remember God's faithfulness during their wilderness wanderings when they left Egypt.
- iii. Josephus, the ancient Jewish historian from the 1st century, says this was the most popular of the ancient Jewish feasts.
- iv. Hughes - The walls were extra-thin so that light came through, and the roof had to show enough sky so the stars could be seen, thus reminding the Jews of how they had wandered in the wilderness and of how God had provided for them.
- v. In rural areas, these would be set up next to their homes. In Jerusalem, people would build them in whatever space they could find, including on the top of their flat roofs.
 - 1. I imagine children loved this.
- vi. Crowds would travel to Jerusalem for this.
- vii. Kent Hughes describes another aspect of the festival that had developed by the time of Christ: Each morning the people gathered together, and after the priest was sure everything was in order, he would hold out a golden pitcher. The crowds would then follow the priest to the Pool of Siloam, chanting some of the great Psalms and waving their *[branches]* in rhythm. As they approached the Pool of Siloam, the priest would dip his pitcher into the water, and the people would recite some beautiful words from Isaiah 12:3: "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." Then the crowd would march back to the temple, entering through the Water Gate to the blast of the priests' trumpets. The priest would then circle the altar once, ascend with accompanying priests to the platform, and pour the water out. This was a daily event.
 - 1. That will form the background for v. 37, just past out section, when Jesus will stand up and say, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink." We'll look at that next week.
 - 2. The whole festival forms the background for chapters 7 and 8, which is a single unit.

c. Why did His brothers want Him to go to Judea and show Himself publicly?

- i. We're told specifically that they were not believing in Him at this point (although after His death and resurrection they do believe and one of His brothers, James, becomes a leader in the early church and wrote one of the books of the NT).
- ii. Two options:
 - 1. One, they saw the signs and had a superficial belief in Him as a miracle working prophet, much like many in the crowd, and wanted him to be more public, but they didn't have the faith of Simon Peter at the end of John 6 where he confessed that Jesus is the Holy One of God with the words of eternal life.

2. Two, they are mocking him (which, if you have brothers, sounds just like something brothers would do), “If you’re really who you say you are, why don’t you go where all the people are and make this public.”
 - iii. Their counsel makes sense in either scenario, because even if there was superficial belief it was the type based on signs and they overestimated what signs could accomplish, however I think the more likely option is the mocking.
 - iv. We already know what happens when Jesus puts on just such a display – people try to make him king by force (6:14) and want more stuff, more miracles, more signs.
- d. Why did Jesus say He wasn’t going and then He went?
 - i. He is not going on the timeline and for the reason provided by his brothers
 - ii. Leon Morris “John is clear that others do not lay down the pattern for Jesus. He is supremely the master of every situation. So in this case he went up when he was ready and in the way he chose.” (*The Gospel according to John*, page 355)
 - iii. Jesus meant that he was not going up to the festival at the same time as they were going, for his time had not “yet” fully come.
 - iv. It was not yet time for the triumphal entry and the culminating final week of His life leading to the cross. That would come in about six months.

2. The crowd debated whether He was a **good** man or led people **astray**. (7:11-13)
 - a. Even though He hadn’t made a public appearance, the crowd was murmuring about him.
 - i. “grumbling” has the idea of muttering and whispering
 - b. Notice the competing dynamics – is He a good man or leading people astray?
 - i. Leading people astray from the true God was a capital offense in Deut. 13 for the people of Israel, so this was no small charge.
 - ii. Even the statement of Him as a good man was accurate but insufficient, since He was far more than a good man.
3. The Jewish leaders were astonished that He taught without being **educated**. (7:14-19)
 - a. In the midst of the feast, He began to teach in the temple.
 - i. This isn’t a violation of His stated intentions, because it was several days into the feast, and wasn’t a big public entrance like it would be at the Triumphal entry with palm branches and loud statements of praise.
 - b. They were astonished at His teaching.
 - i. There were Jewish centers of learning where the famous rabbis would train. He wasn’t a part of that system.
 - ii. Similar to the response if someone set up a class outside at ISU and began teaching on philosophy and history and economics, and wove it together someone might ask (or object) – what are his credentials? Does he have a Ph.D. or at least a masters? They might be shocked if they found he didn’t graduate HS and somewhat offended that he claims to have the authority to teach.
 - c. Jesus responds in a way that we have already seen before.

- i. His teaching is not His own but the Father's as He is here to do the Father's will.
 - 1. The rabbinical schools taught their rabbis to base their instruction on precedent and history, but He taught as one with authority (Matthew 5-7)
 - 2. Other prophets would have said "thus sayeth the Lord" but Jesus can say "I tell you the truth"
- d. But He also points to an issue of the heart – Do you actually want to do God's will? If so, you'll see that my teaching is from the Father.
 - i. He connects the head and the heart. If the disposition is one of pride and self-glory, they will reject.
 - ii. Carter - He connects the head and the heart. ... The gateway to the mind is the heart. When we rebel against God's will, our ability to understand and comprehend spiritual truth is compromised. Or to put it simply: *Unbelief causes misunderstanding*.
- e. As evidence of His assessment, He points to a specific way that at least some of them are violating God's will – they are trying to kill Him unjustly.
 - i. What a stark and bold pivot!
 - ii. Not that everyone in the crowd was seeking to kill him but among the crowd would have been those who were seeking to kill him.
 - iii. Their self-righteousness allowed them to justify breaking God's law against murder because Jesus had broken a different law – the Sabbath – although Jesus did not actually violate the sabbath, only their man-made additions to it. Isn't that just like self-righteous people, like us? We justify sinful anger, pride, harshness, irritability, unforgiveness because someone violates one of our rules/preferences.

4. The crowd accused Him of being **crazy**. (7:20-24)

- a. "Have a demon" is equated with being insane in John 10, which is probably how they are using it.
 - i. **John 10:20** Many of them were saying, "He has a demon and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?"
- b. But Jesus explains what He means
 - i. He did one deed (healed on the Sabbath in John 5 in Jerusalem) and they are angry with him.
 - 1. John 5:18 is when they began to make plans to kill Him.
 - 2. That probably happened the last time He was in Jerusalem. We're told that happened at the time of a feast, which could have been Passover 6 months earlier or the feast of booths a year ago.
 - ii. His point in bringing up circumcision is that even though the law said not to work on the Sabbath, if the timing of circumcision which was done on the 8th day fell on the Sabbath they would still do it. If they can do that, which was a symbol of the purity that God alone can give, why can He not heal on the Sabbath, making an entire person well?

- iii. Don't judge according to appearance (according to their man-made rules), but with righteous judgment based on who Jesus actually is.
- c. We see an example of self-righteous judgment that we can be guilty of today.
 - i. They have a standard that is manmade and they judge Jesus for violating it, even while they excuse law-breaking in themselves by trying to kill him.
 - ii. Here are two questions to diagnose self-righteousness.
 - iii. How do you treat people who are different from you? (Carter)
 - 1. Self-righteousness is evident in how we handle differences. The whole point of self-righteousness is that self is the standard for what's righteous. So self-righteousness can appear anywhere someone does something different from what I do. Are you the standard for what's right or wrong?
 - iv. Do you excuse in yourself what you accuse in others?
 - 1. 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.
- v. Examples
 - 1. "Their style of clothing is inappropriate for Sunday morning but mine is fine" – never mind that someone else might think you are dressed too informally.
 - 2. "That music is inappropriate to listen to but mine is fine"
 - 3. What adds to the challenge is that we should want to honor God with our approach to Sunday mornings and what we listen to, but the error of self-righteousness is to make self the standard and judge based on it, rather than to honestly assess what God's Word actually says.

5. Some wondered if He was the **Christ**. (7:25-31)

- a. They once again debated whether he could be the Christ since they know where He is from.
 - i. Although there were OT prophecies about the birthplace of the Messiah, a tradition had developed that the Messiah would essentially spring into the public eye and rescue the people from political oppression and would be wholly unknown until that point.
- b. Jesus makes the startling claim that would have been severely offensive, that they don't even know God.
 - i. Just as he said in 5:46, "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me."
 - ii. I want to make sure you track with this, though. It isn't an issue of religious squabbling between different factions. Jesus came to give life, to give eternal life, to take the weight of sin off their shoulders as he takes it on his own, to bring them into relationship with the Father that they want to know and claim to know.

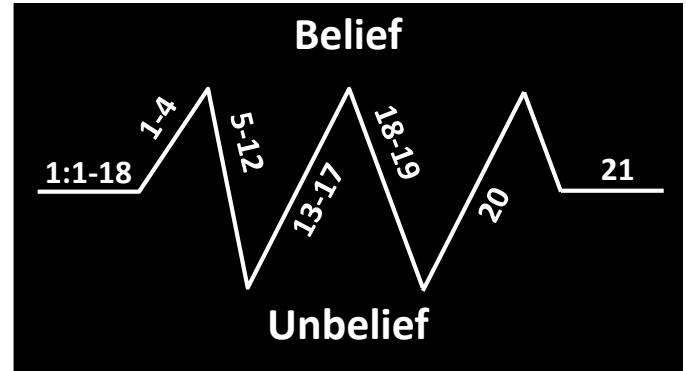
- c. His hour had not yet come.
 - i. This is the 3rd time that this phrase has been used in John.
 - ii. Jesus is the complete master of His fate. When He goes to the cross, He lays His life down.
 - iii. **John 10:18** "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."
- 6. The Pharisees tried to **seize** Him. (7:32-36)
 - a. They didn't like the crowds muttering these things about Him. They wanted to control the narrative and viewed Him as a threat with His blasphemous claims.
 - b. They also tried to send people to seize Him but it was ineffective.
 - c. They once again misunderstood Him – He would return to the Father but they wondered if He was heading out of Israel into the diaspora where the Jews are scattered among the nations around them.
- 7. Applying the Word
 - a. The true **nature** and **identity** of Jesus is of saving importance.
 - i. **John 8:23-25** And He was saying to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world.²⁴ "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins."²⁵ So they were saying to Him, "Who are You?" Jesus said to them, "What have I been saying to you *from the beginning*?"
 - b. He was **misunderstood** and **hated**, so we shouldn't be surprised when we are also.

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