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John 7:1 - 7:31



Gospel of John - Steve Gregg

In John 7, Jesus walks in Galilee as the Jews in Judea sought to kill him. The Feast of Tabernacles approaches, and the Jews want Jesus to come down to Jerusalem, but he tells them his time has not yet come. Jesus' brothers do not believe in him and mock him. The Pharisees tend to feel that Jesus is leading people away from pure Judaism, and they want to arrest him.

Transcript

Let's turn to John chapter 7. After these things, Jesus walked in Galilee, for he did not want to walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill him. Now, the last story we read in chapter 6 took place in Galilee, but not many of the stories in John do. John is mainly focused upon the things that Jesus did in Judea, and it's rather uncharacteristic for him to give very much information about things Jesus did in Galilee, especially things that are already recorded in the other three Gospels, because there's very little, there's minimal overlap between John's Gospel and the other three.

And yet, he has told us this story of the feeding of the 5,000 in chapter 6, in order, no doubt, to set the stage for the discourse about the bread of life, which really took up much more time in that chapter than the telling of this miracle. And that was in Galilee. And so John tells us that Jesus, at this time, stayed in Galilee for a while.

We don't know how long. Well, I guess we do know how long, because this was around Passover. Chapter 6 was around Passover.

And we will now see in verse 2 that the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles was at hand here. That's exactly six months after Passover. And it's exactly six months before Passover, of course.

It's right in the middle between one Passover and the next. The Passover was on the 15th day of the first month of the Jewish calendar, and the Feast of Tabernacles on the 15th day of the 7th month of the calendar. So they're exactly six months between these feasts, either direction.

And since Jesus was going to die on the Passover after this, we now come to a point just six months before his death, and six months after the feeding of the 5,000. So that six months basically says he stayed out of Judea, because it says the Jews sought to kill him. Now, the Jews here would mean the Judeans.

He himself was a Jew, of course, and so were his disciples. Not all Jewish people sought to kill him, but the Jews in this context is in contrast to Galileans. Jesus and his disciples were Galilean Jews, but the Judeans were much more under the control of the Sanhedrin and of the chief priests and the Pharisees, who were Jesus' enemies and who were just murderous enough to want to kill him.

Now, the fact that they wanted to kill him was stated back in chapter 5, apparently the last time he had been in Jerusalem before this coming time that we're about to read of. And we see in verse 18 of chapter 5, therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was his father, making himself equal with God. So the breach of the Sabbath and also what appeared to them to be blasphemy had made them determine that he should die.

He's done things worthy of death. In fact, in the Old Testament, a person would be put to death for breaking the Sabbath and for blasphemy. They had the law on their side, in a sense, if the charges could be made to stick.

Of course, the only way Jesus could really be charged with breaking the Sabbath is if he was not, in fact, the Lord of the Sabbath, as he said he was. If he was the Lord of the Sabbath, then his observance of the Sabbath was basically up to him. And if God really was his father, then the charge of blasphemy would not stick, because what they were charging him with was saying God was his father.

Well, that's not blasphemy if it's true. But if these charges were true and could stick, then they would be punishable by death. And therefore, the Judeans who were finding him particularly difficult, because he did not ever say flattering things about them, but usually very harsh things about them, they saw him as undermining their power base, and so they wanted to kill him.

So verse 2 of chapter 7 says, Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. His brothers therefore said to him, Depart from here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works that you are doing. For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly.

If you do these things, show yourself to the world. For even his brothers did not believe in him. Now, it's not entirely clear what their thinking was.

Either they thought that Jesus did want to start a popular revolution against Rome, as most of the Jews hoped the Messiah would do. And therefore, they're saying, well, you're

not going that way very fast. You haven't raised an army.

You haven't done much. This is a good opportunity. Go down to Jerusalem for the feast.

There will be a lot of pilgrims there from all over the world, Jewish people. You can go and do your works there and gather a lot of popular support. And then you can do your militia thing.

You can do your war against Rome thing. And if so, they were apparently mocking him. Now, it's also possible that they were even questioning whether he did miracles.

It says, if you do these things, why don't you show it openly? Now, remember, these brothers of his were in Galilee, in Nazareth in particular. Jesus did miracles throughout Galilee, but not in Nazareth. At least nothing very impressive.

He had gone to Nazareth twice. The first time he preached in the synagogue there, and he told them that they would no doubt wish for him to do miracles among them, as he had done in Capernaum and other places. But he said, you know, a prophet is without honor in his own country, and their lack of faith prevented him from doing very much among them.

So, although Jesus was doing miracles, his brothers quite possibly had never seen one. Since they were in Nazareth, and that's one place he didn't do them. And he had gone there a second time apparently in his ministry, and also the same problem.

He didn't do many mighty works there because he marveled at their lack of faith. His brothers even lacked faith. His hometown and his family seemed to lack faith in him.

Well, what about Mary? She certainly shouldn't lack any faith. And yet we read in Mark chapter 3 that even she seems to have had her moments, maybe not lacking faith, but at least questioning whether Jesus was really on the right track. In Mark chapter 3, verses 20 and 21, it says, And the multitude came together again so that they could not so much as eat.

That is, Jesus and the disciples were so busy with ministry that they could not stop to take meals. But when his own people heard about this, that's his own family and his own relatives, they went out to lay hold on him for they said he is out of his mind. He's obsessed with this mission that he's on.

He won't even eat. And so it would appear that his relatives said he was out of his mind. Who? Which relatives? Well, a few verses later, Jesus is teaching in a house, a crowded house.

And verse 31 says, Then his brothers and his mother came and standing outside, they sent him calling him. Now, this is apparently the relatives who in verse 21 had decided

they'd better go collect him up because he's out of his mind. And so his mother and brothers show up and they call for him.

They can't get to him because the crowd is around him. So they send a message up to him. And a multitude was sitting around him and they said to him, look, your mother and your brothers are outside seeking you.

But he answered them saying, who is my mother or my brothers? And he looked around in a circle at those who said about him and said, here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of God is my brother and my sister and mother. Now, at this point, he seems almost to be disowning his family and saying this is my new family.

These, my disciples, whoever does the will of my father, they are my family now. And by implication, my mother, my brothers who are outside are not doing the will of my father. And therefore, I do not recognize them as my family any more than these around me.

Now, of course, those who think that Mary was beyond sinning would possibly say that she was not one that was, you know, thinking he was out of his mind. That she was concerned about him and wanted to get him some R&R and so forth and she wasn't really sinning. But his statement seems to imply that the people outside asking for him who were his biological family were not doing the will of his father.

And he said, these around me who do the will of my father, they are my mother and my brother and sister. In other words, at least he's saying that anyone who believes is as much a relative of his as his mother is. He certainly did not put his mother above all the saints or very close to his own level.

But he put all saints on her level when she's doing well, when she's doing the will of the father. When she's not, then she's below that level because only those who do the will of his father does he recognize as his family. So here we see his brothers again.

It's directly stated they don't believe in him. Now, just so you'll know the sequel to this, they later did believe in him. On the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 1, we find the listing of the 12 apostles and others who were among the 120 in the upper room.

And it says, and Jesus' mother and his brothers were there. They had become believers after the resurrection. How? Well, in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul tells us what actually no place else tells us in the whole Bible.

And that is that when Jesus rose from the dead and was appearing to Peter and others, he made a special appearance to his brother James, his oldest brother. James apparently as the oldest brother, seeing him resurrected, came to be a believer and was able to persuade the younger brothers that it was true. And so we find the brothers of Jesus not only becoming believers, but in some respects taking leadership in the church.

Not top leadership. The apostles held that role. But James, the brother of Jesus, kind of filled into the position as the leader of the church in Jerusalem after the 12 were dispersed.

And he also wrote the book of James. And Jude, another brother of Jesus, wrote the book of Jude. So these brothers here who were mocking him and didn't believe in him later wrote scripture.

So it's kind of nice to see that kind of a turnaround here. Now, they were telling him you ought to go down and promote your movement. I remember it says in chapter 2 there were a lot of people who believed in him, but he wouldn't commit himself to them because he knew what was in man.

He certainly wasn't going to commit his mission to the oversight of these brothers who didn't believe in him. And he said to them, my time has not yet come, but your time is always ready. What he means by that is I don't actually move on my own will.

I have to move when my father tells me to go. You can do anything you want because you don't follow your father. Your time is always at your own disposal.

You can go anytime you want, but it's not time for me to go down there right now. And so I can't go because you suggest it, but you can go. He said the world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that its works are evil.

Now they were telling him to go and show himself to the world. That's what they said in verse 4. If you do these things, go show yourself to the world. You want to get the world to follow you.

You want to get a big following, go show yourself to the world. He says the world hates me. You can go anytime you want because it doesn't hate you.

You're not telling them what they don't want to hear. You just fit right in. In fact, you're part of the world.

But I'm not part of the world. I'm testifying against the world, and they hate me. So I'm not going to go show myself to the world and get myself strung up prematurely here.

He says you go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come. Now, the King James and the New King James have the word yet, not yet.

However, in many manuscripts it says I am not going. And that bothers some people because most modern translations have it that way, following the other Greek manuscripts that just have him saying I'm not going to this feast. And yet we read, of course, in verse 10, when his brothers had gone up, he also went up to the feast, not openly but as it were in secret.

So if you read a translation that says I'm not going to this feast, and then he went up when they were gone secretly, it sounds like he lied to them. Like he said go on up, I'm going to stay home. And then as soon as they're gone, around the first corner, he sneaks off and secretly goes anyway.

So he deceived them. But that's not necessarily the case. There's kind of almost equal manuscript evidence for the inclusion or not the inclusion of the yet.

I'm not yet going up, not at the moment. You go on ahead whenever you want. It's not my time yet.

My time has not fully come. When it comes, I'll go. But it's not yet.

And in fact, that could be implied even if the word yet is not there, because it's in the present tense. I am not going means that's not happening right now. It's present tense.

I am not going. It's not future tense. He didn't say I'm not going to go.

He says I'm not going at the moment. That's not what's happening. So he didn't really lie.

He just said you go on ahead. I go when it's my time and not before. That's all he's saying.

And we don't know how much time elapsed after they went. It skips to the time when he then went. But he went quietly and did not show himself to the world as they suggested, but he went there essentially to where he was going to show himself publicly in about the middle of the feast.

The feast was eight days long, Feast of Tabernacles. And it was a feast in which the Israelites were supposed to make pilgrimages to Jerusalem from wherever they lived and camp out there for a week. And they camped out in the streets on this particular feast.

That's why it was called Tabernacles or Booths, Sukkoth. Sukkoth in Hebrew means booths or tabernacles. And a tabernacle, of course, is a temporary structure like the tabernacle that the Jews moved through the wilderness about as a portable structure.

But a tabernacle is a tent, essentially, though in many cases they didn't bring tents to Jerusalem. They made booths out of branches and such. It was a camp out.

It was actually a fun time for the kids. The Jewish children liked Sukkoth because they could go and have a camp out with their family in Jerusalem. And this is what they did to commemorate the years of wandering that their ancestors had spent between Egypt and the Promised Land.

The 40 years they wandered in the wilderness were commemorated each year by the

Feast of Booths. It was also timed in the year to coincide with the harvest of the fruit crops. The harvest of the grain crops was earlier in the late spring and early summer.

But Sukkoth was at the end of the summer, in the early fall, and that was the fruit, the grapes especially, and the figs, the main products of Israel, they would ripen in the late summer and be harvested so that the Sukkoth became also a celebration of the harvest. Harvest celebrations in most societies are very great festive things because almost all societies until modern times were agrarian. And they worked all year to get their food supply for the next year.

And they watched it grow. And, of course, until it was ripe, they weren't sure what would happen. They weren't sure if locusts would get it, if there would be a drought.

But at the end of the season when everything's ripe and they harvest it in, they can breathe a sigh of relief. You know, all our labor for the year is not in vain. We've got our food supplies for the next year stored up.

And they just say, okay, now we've essentially finished the year's work. Let's take some time off and celebrate. So they'd have these festivals.

So that's what Passover was. It was a harvest also. Actually, not so much harvest there.

The first fruits were waived at Passover, first fruits of the barley. But it wasn't until Pentecost that the grain harvests were brought in. And then tabernacles was when the fruit harvests were brought in.

It was sometimes called a feast of ingathering for that reason. But it was eight days long. And there were certain ceremonies associated with tabernacles that we'll allude to later on because Jesus seems to make reference to them in a certain vague way.

But he did go down, it says, after his brothers were gone. He also went up to the feast. And this was apparently the last time he saw Galilee, where he grew up.

It was six months before his death, but we have no record of him going back to Galilee after this. He came down, and instead of going back to Galilee after this, he went over to Transjordan, an area that Josephus referred to as Perea. And so scholars sometimes refer to it as Perea.

He did some Transjordanian ministry on the other side of the Jordan River, outside the country, to avoid arrest, really, prematurely. This was six months before his death. And so he goes down there, and he hides, for the most part, until the middle of the feast.

Now, we get some information about the talk on the street about Jesus at this time. Jesus had become very controversial in Jerusalem, and even the people on the street, for the most part, knew who he was and knew that he was controversial. In fact, they knew that

the leaders of Israel had told people not to talk about him.

And so people talked about him quietly, under their breath. They didn't talk openly, it says they were afraid to. But we find that there were mixed opinions about him.

In fact, one thing this chapter illustrates, more than almost anything else, is how many different opinions there were and how confused people were about him. We are told that there was a division among the people because of him, in verse 43. And we can see, as we read through it, a number of ways that they divided over different opinions they had of him.

So, even though people weren't really allowed to talk openly about him, all the buzz on the street was about him. Now, we have to remember that this is a festival when people from out of the area are also coming to Jerusalem. Not just the locals, but people from other countries.

Jews from all over the world would come to pilgrimage at the Feast of Tabernacles. So, not everybody in town was equally familiar with who this guy was that was being discussed. And you'll find that there's different degrees of knowledge and ignorance that these people have, no doubt corresponding with the degree to which they were locals or not.

The local people seemed to know that the chief priests and Pharisees had put out a word that people should not believe in him, that they should turn him in if they see him, that there was a contract out for him. But there were people who came from out of the area who wouldn't even know who he was because they live in other countries and were hearing about him for the first time, at this time. So, the Jews saw him at the feast and said, where is he? And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him.

Some said, he is good. Others said, no, on the contrary, he deceives the people. So, this is the main division between the people over him.

Some liked him and some didn't. Some thought he was good, certainly seemed like a good man, went around healing people and feeding people and raising up dead people and so forth. Seems good.

But others said, no, he is a deceiver. And of course, it is always possible that good deeds can be done by someone for a deceptive purpose. We know that in other religions besides Christianity, there are good deeds done by people, even some that seem miraculous at times.

There might even be miracles done in other religions from time to time. They certainly claim them. But this does not mean that the people are not deceiving you.

The devil himself can deceive. People sometimes say, well, you know, if you go over to

Manila and you go visit one of these Filipino psychic healers, who, you know, they reach into your body and remove cancerous tissue and pull out their hand, there is no mark, but they are holding a cancerous tumor out of your side. This kind of thing happens over there.

And it is either trickery, as most skeptics assume, or else it is demonic. Now, some might say, well, how do you know it is not God? Well, because they are practicing occult arts. And while God, of course, can use those, he does not support them.

And therefore, some might say, well, why would the devil cure people? Isn't the devil mean? Why would the devil cure people of their cancer and stuff like that? That sounds like the work of God. Well, it is the rightful work of God to do that kind of thing. But the devil is a deceiver.

And he is not likely to get many followers if he only does things that people do not like. You know, to bring people in, doing deeds that look good, may prove to be the necessary means of deceiving people into following his movement. And so, they thought maybe Jesus was like that.

After all, Moses had said in Deuteronomy 13, verses 1-3, Moses had said, if there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, whereby he says, let us go after other gods that you have not known, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass. He says, you should not believe that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, because the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. So, Moses said that there might be false prophets that would come and give true signs that really occur.

But if their message is, let us go worship other gods, then they are deceivers and you should not follow them. Now, certainly the Pharisees and other religious leaders tended to feel that Jesus was leading people away from the pure religion of Judaism, because he seemed to them to be breaking the Sabbath, he seemed to them to be blaspheming, he seemed to them to be undermining the authority of, they thought, undermining the authority of Moses. And therefore, his signs and his wonders, they might interpret to be those of a false prophet who is giving a sign or a wonder to lead you away from God.

And so, some were interpreting his miracles and his teachings as good things, showing he is a good man. Others thought, no, this is just a deception, it's an elaborate deception. But verse 13 says, However, no one spoke openly of him for fear of the Jews.

Now, about the middle of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and taught. So, he finally breaks cover and comes out and teaches in the temple. Now, rabbis did this.

There was the outer court of the temple had various areas, booths. They were called pitches, where a rabbi could sit down and have disciples gather around him or anyone

who's curious and teach there. This is probably the kind of thing that Jesus entered when he was 12 years old.

And, you know, his parents found him discussing the law with the teachers of the law, probably one of these kinds of discussions going on. And Jesus, now as an adult, sits in the temple. And, in fact, he did that, as we find, every time he was in Jerusalem.

He availed himself of the temple as a place to do public teaching. And probably miracles, too. And so he sat in the temple and taught.

And the Jews marveled, saying, How does this man know letters, having never studied? Now, they're not asking how is it that he's literate. Literacy was not unusual among Jews. Actually, almost all Jewish boys had at least the equivalent of what we'd call a sixth or maybe eighth grade education.

All Jewish boys, unless there was some reason that they couldn't, would go to the synagogue and be taught how to read and write and memorize scripture. So knowledge of scripture and the ability to read and write is not the thing they marveled at. That was not so unusual.

What they're talking about is the word letters, having never learned these letters, is a reference to the writings of Moses and, of course, the interpretations of them given by the rabbis. Usually, if somebody was a teacher in Israel, they had sat under another teacher. They had disciples or been a protege of some mentor.

As, for example, Saul of Tarsus was before he was a Christian. He was a protege of Gamaliel, a rabbi. But Jesus had never sat under a rabbi.

He just appeared and had what everyone recognized as rather profound things to say. And they marveled and said, where did he learn this? How does he know these things? And Jesus answered them and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his who sent me. So he's saying, now the word doctrine, by the way, just means teaching.

The King James and the New King James used the word doctrine. A modern translation might just use the word teaching. My teaching is not my own teaching.

It's the teaching that the Father is giving through me. So that's answering the question that they were murmuring. How does he know how to do this? Well, frankly, I don't.

My father does. I'm teaching what my father tells me, what my father reveals to me. It's not what a rabbi taught me.

It's what God taught me. He's God-trained. And he, of course, indicates here that his teaching is reliable as God's own words.

And, of course, if someone was skeptical about that, he says in verse 17, if anyone wants

to do his will, he shall know concerning the teaching, whether it is from God or whether I speak of my own authority. He claimed that his teaching was not from man but from God. He says, now, you may doubt that, but you can know.

And you will know. If you are one of those few who want to do the will of God, then he will let you know. You will discern that my teaching is from God.

So that discernment of the words of God is not something that comes so much from theological training or the learning of letters. It comes from having a heart that's obedient to God, of which there were not that many in Israel at that time. There was a remnant.

And that remnant heard and understood him and knew that he was speaking from God. And later on in chapter 10, he makes the same point, only in different terms, saying that his sheep hear his voice and know him and recognize him. He says the sheep don't follow a hireling.

They follow the true shepherd. And so he actually develops that in the early part of John chapter 10 about how he's the shepherd. And the people who follow him are like his sheep because they recognize his voice.

They're really God's sheep. And God has given them to Christ. So he's saying there are people who are obedient in their heart to God and they recognize that what I'm speaking is from God.

The rest of you, I'm not even hoping that you'll know that my teaching is of God because you don't really, of course, know. You don't want to do his will. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is true and no unrighteousness is in him.

Now this is a generic statement that, of course, he's speaking about himself, but it's true generically. The person who speaks from his own authority, and not many rabbis did, by the way, that person would be seeking his own glory. He's trying to elevate himself.

You see, the rabbis generally did not speak on their own authority. They did not even claim to. Originality of teaching was not a value that the rabbis esteemed very much.

You might think when you hear Bible teachers who always want to have some new wrinkle, some new insight that no one's ever heard, that a teacher would like to have something original to say that everyone could say, oh, did you come up with that yourself? Yeah. You know, I mean, you think, wow, you're a good thinker. Wow, you're really original.

Well, originality was not esteemed among the rabbis. They always wanted to be able to quote other earlier rabbis to back up everything they said. In fact, some famous rabbis

were quoted as saying, I've never said one word that was not previously said by other rabbis.

That was their boast, that they were not deviating from the tradition of those before them. They would never speak on their own authority and just say, this is the way it is. They would say, Rabbi so and so has said that this is the way this law should be understood.

Although Rabbi so and so B, you know, he has another opinion about this. Is this what he says? And they would give the opinions of rabbis, but they would never give their own opinion. And that is why when Jesus taught, we have often read, especially in the synoptic gospels, that when Jesus taught, the people marveled because he spoke as one who has authority and not like the scribes.

The scribes didn't speak as if they had any authority. A man who did would be unusually brazen. He'd be seeking his own glory.

He'd be elevating himself above the rabbis before him. And Jesus said, anyone who speaks on his own authority is seeking his own exaltation. He's seeking his own glory, which is something that is not considered to be a good or humble thing to do.

And Jesus is therefore saying, I also am not speaking from my own authority either. You might think I am because I'm not quoting any rabbis. I'll tell you who I'm quoting.

I'm quoting God. The teaching I'm giving is not my own. It's not on my own authority.

I'm not making this up. I'm not really being original at all. I'm just giving you the teaching my father has given me.

I'm not seeking my own glory or speaking from myself. He says, he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is true, and no unrighteousness is in him. No one can really find fault with somebody who's just repeating what he was told to say by someone that he's subject to.

A messenger who just brings a message from his master or whatever, or a son who brings a message from his father on an errand from someone in authority over him, that person, if you don't like his message, it's really not him that you blame. There's nothing wrong with him. There's no unrighteousness in him.

If you don't like his message, blame the one who sent him. And so he's saying, don't criticize me for what I'm saying. What I'm saying is what my father says.

Now, of course, lots of people could say that they're speaking from God when they're not, and that's why he said you need to be one of those who is willing to do what God wants, and then God will let you know if this is true, what I'm saying, that this is what

God is saying, rather than just me. Did not Moses give you the law? And yet none of you keeps the law. Now, why does he say this here? He could be picking up on where he left off in his rebukes of them at the end of chapter 5, the last time he was in Jerusalem.

You might remember in chapter 5 how his conversation with them ended. He says in verse 44, How can you believe who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes only from God? Or from the only God that's rendered here. Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father.

There is one who accuses you, Moses, in whom you trust. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words? Okay, so, he's saying Moses is going to judge you.

Moses is going to accuse you on the day of judgment, because he spoke to you and you're not listening to him. And so he picks up that theme again in chapter 7. In verse 19, Did not Moses give you the law? And yet none of you keeps the law. You're not doing what Moses said.

You call yourself Moses' disciples, but you're not following what he said. And this is in contrast to Jesus. Because Jesus is simply bringing the message from God, and he's being obedient to the one who sent him.

These people were given orders by Moses, and they're not being obedient. These people are supposedly teaching the doctrine of Moses, but they're not listening to Moses. They're not hearing what Moses said.

They're not obeying Moses. And he says, Why do you seek to kill me? Now this is apparently given not just as an exasperated and frustrated cry, but he's pointing out, You don't obey Moses. Exhibit A, You're trying to kill me.

Didn't Moses say, Thou shalt not kill? Why are you trying to kill me? Have I committed a crime? Moses said, Don't kill. You don't keep what Moses' law says you should do. He gave you the law, but you don't obey him.

You're trying to kill me. That's a breach of law. Now, it says in verse 20, The people answered and said, You have a demon.

Who's seeking to kill you? Now, we've already been told earlier that the Jews were in fact seeking to kill him. Now the people who raised this objection, either were people from other countries recently visiting for the feast, and they didn't know any of the history, and they hadn't heard, and they thought, What? I don't see anyone trying to kill you. Here you are standing out in public.

I don't see any people out here trying to kill you. What are you talking about? Are you demon possessed or something? Notice that the Jews were familiar with demon

possession. They'd seen demon possession.

We know that because wherever Jesus went, they brought demon possessed people to him and asked him to cast them out. I think they knew more about demon possession than we do because we don't recognize it when we see it. But notice they mistook him for being demon possessed.

But by what symptom? They thought he was paranoid. You think everyone's out to kill you? I don't see anyone out to kill you. What do you mean? You're paranoid, man.

There's no danger here. The wicked flee when no one pursues. And you must be a nut.

You must be demon possessed. Having a demon is almost the same thing as saying you're crazy. Because in those days, crazy was recognized as demonic.

When you're crazy, it's because you were demonized. And being paranoid was a form of crazy. So they're saying you're paranoid.

No one's seeking to kill you. Now, again, the people who said this might well be the people who really didn't know there was a plot on his life. But some people knew.

For example, you'll see this in verse 25. Some of them from Jerusalem said, is this not he whom they seek to kill? But these were the people from Jerusalem. They were insiders.

They knew the buzz on the street. Probably the ones who were saying, who's seeking to kill you were people who were not Jerusalemites. They didn't know what was going on locally.

They were just there for the feast and they see this guy talking. He's talking publicly in the temple. No one's trying to kill him.

And they're saying, why does he say people are trying to kill him? It's also possible, of course, that the people who say you have a demon who's seeking to kill you were actually people who knew very well and might have even been involved. Might have been the people who were seeking to kill him, as he said, but they were trying to cover it up. They didn't like being accused just right there in public.

So they act like it's not true. But I suspect, since verse 25 mentions the people who were from Jerusalem saying this is the one they seek to kill, and we're not told where the people are from in verse 20 that he's talking to, that it may be people who were not from Jerusalem and therefore really were ignorant. But this is one of the many things we find in this chapter where the people are divided.

Some say they're trying to kill this man. Others say no one's trying to kill this man. We'll see other examples as we read through the chapter.

People having different opinions. We already saw it in verse 12. Some said he's good.

Others said no, he's deceiving the people. These are the divisions that were being caused about him. Verse 21, Jesus answered and said to them, I did one work and you all marveled.

He's referring in this case back to chapter 5 where he healed the man who was at the pool of Bethesda. Moses therefore gave you circumcision, not that it is from Moses but from the fathers, and you circumcised a man on the Sabbath. If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath? Do not judge according to appearance but judge with righteous judgment.

Now the point he's making here is this, that even among the rabbis it was agreed that some things are more important than keeping the Sabbath. One of those things was circumcision. This was an agreed hierarchy of responsibilities that the rabbis had acknowledged.

For example, in the Mishnah, in the tractate Shabbat, it says they may perform on the Sabbath all things needful for circumcision. Now that's in the tractate about what things can be and cannot be done on the Sabbath in the Mishnah, which is of course the rabbinic laws. The reason for this was that the law stated that a baby must be circumcised, a male baby, on the eighth day after his birth.

Now since babies are born every day of the week, there's going to be a certain number of babies born on days where the eighth day will be a Sabbath day, will be on Saturday. So the question then is, well, the rabbi would normally do the circumcision but it's the Sabbath. He's not supposed to do his regular work.

He's been doing circumcisions all week long. Should he stop doing that on the Sabbath? What takes precedence, observing the Sabbath or doing the circumcision on the eighth day? Couldn't they wait to the next day to do the circumcision? Well, the rabbis had agreed, no, the circumcision is not as important. I mean, Sabbath is not as important as circumcision.

Circumcision is essential on the eighth day. So they had said they may perform on the Sabbath all things needful for circumcision. Rabbi Jose, who is also quoted in the Mishnah, said, great is circumcision, which overrides even the rigor of the Sabbath.

So Jesus is simply stating what the rabbis agreed upon. He says, you will circumcise people on the Sabbath. Now he said, Moses therefore gave you circumcision, then in parentheses, not that it was from Moses but the father.

So what he means by that is, Moses included circumcision as a requirement in the law, but it had been with Israel before the law. It was originally given to Israel through

Abraham, to Abraham. God commanded Abraham to circumcise himself and all the men of his family and household and that all his descendants should be circumcised also.

That was in Genesis 17. So Jesus said, it wasn't really Moses who gave you circumcision, the father's long before him did it, but it was nonetheless the case that Moses did give it as a law. When he gave the law, it was in there.

And he says, therefore, you will circumcise a man to obey Moses, even if you have to break the Sabbath. But he says, you see, you yourselves recognize some things take precedence over Sabbath keeping. In another place, in Matthew 12, he pointed out to them that the priests offering sacrifices on the Sabbath also are doing the same thing.

Their work is not ended on the Sabbath day. They don't stop on the Sabbath. They offer their sacrifices on the Sabbath as on other days.

So there were things that were more important than Sabbath keeping. And he's saying, now you will allow a priest to circumcise a baby on the Sabbath, but you won't allow me to make a man completely well on the Sabbath. And he's talking about the man that he healed at the pool there, for which he had received great criticism and even they had wanted to kill him for it.

And he says, don't judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment. Now that statement, don't judge according to appearance, is a good rule in any case, but I've often wondered what is he referring to here in this context? They were clearly judging him or judging at least right and wrong behavior, unfavorably toward him, and they were doing it by appearances. How so? Well, there's at least three ways in this chapter, two of them we've already encountered, one will come up later in the chapter, that they were guilty of judging according to appearances, that is misjudging because of taking appearances rather than deeper issues of righteousness into consideration.

One of those was that they had judged him to be an uneducated man and therefore had thought less of him. That was back, of course, in verse 15. How does this man know letters, having never studied? He was an unlettered peasant and they judged that he couldn't really be qualified to be teaching like a rabbi.

In fact, the chief priests and so forth, the leaders, the Pharisees and the chief priests, later in this chapter, said in verse, well, let's see here, they said that the crowds there, in verse 49, excuse me, they say, but this crowd that does not know the law is accursed. The scholars of the law thought that everyone who didn't have special training like them were accursed because they didn't know all the rabbinic law and therefore they were continually inadvertently violating it and therefore lived continually under the curse. In fact, even Hillel, the great rabbi of the generation before Jesus, had said, there are no pious ordinary people because an ordinary person was someone who had not studied as the Pharisees had to know all the rules and therefore ordinary people were continually

breaking rules that the Pharisees would keep.

And so they believed that everybody who was not specially trained was living in sin and was unqualified to speak for God and yet Jesus was recognized as an untrained man. Later on, in the book of Acts, the Sanhedrin had John and Peter standing before them and it says they noted that they were unschooled men. And so Jesus and his disciples all had neglected to get rabbinic training, although the disciples, of course, had been trained by Jesus, the best teacher of all.

But one way they were judging according to appearance was judging by the outward circumstance of a man being educated or not educated. And they were missing the point that he could be speaking from God even if he was not an educated man. God can speak through the uneducated too.

They also judged that Jesus was a bad man because they figured he was a breaker of the Sabbath. That's the main issue that even Jesus is discussing in the immediate context. But he's saying that they're judging by shallow considerations, just shallow rules that are not based in anything logical.

And they're not looking at it from the standpoint of what righteousness would require. They're not judging a righteous judgment. They're just judging by surface rules and commands that the rabbis have given, don't do this or do this on the Sabbath.

They're not looking at the issue. They're not looking at case-by-case instances where this man, they say, has broken the Sabbath, but he's healed a man. Isn't that more something that we should rejoice in? Isn't that a righteous thing to do? So they were not judging according to righteousness or righteous judgment, but according to appearance.

They also judged him to be a Galilean and rejected his claims on that basis. We see that, for example, in verse 41. Others said, this is the Christ.

But some said, will the Christ come out of Galilee? And even the Pharisees said in verse 52, no prophet has arisen out of Galilee. And they misjudged him. For one thing, he wasn't from Galilee.

They thought he was. He was Jesus of Nazareth as far as they were concerned because he grew up in Nazareth of Galilee. Even another Galilean had said, can any good thing come out of Nazareth? But the Messiah should come out of Bethlehem, they said.

And they didn't realize he had. So they misjudged on that. They thought he was a Galilean.

They're judging by external things that aren't the things they should be judging by. Now, notice that he says, do not judge. These words at the beginning of verse 24 are the same as the beginning words of Matthew 7.1. Judge not.

Do not judge. But in Matthew 7.1, he says, judge not that you be not judged. And many people just take that as an absolute statement.

Oh, Christians really shouldn't judge. But they don't look at this verse where he says, judge not according to appearance, but judge. Judge with righteous judgment.

There is not a blanket forbidding of making all judgments. You would have to be an amoral being. You'd have to become a plant or an animal to not make judgments because moral beings always have to make judgments about things.

Always have to decide some things are right and some are wrong. If only to govern their own behavior. But once one has made such judgments that some things are right and wrong, they recognize right and wrong when other people do it too.

There's nothing wrong with that. But you have to make sure that what you're calling right and wrong are really what is right and wrong rather than misjudgments. We're not really forbidden to judge.

We're just forbidden to judge certain ways. And we're forbidden to judge surface judgments because we make a miscalculation in those cases. Remember when Jesus said in Matthew chapter 12 to the Pharisees, if you had gone and learned what this means, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless.

You made a judgment and you misjudged. You condemned these people, but they were guiltless. And you know why? Because you were thinking only about surface ritual things and these people were in fact violating your rituals, but you weren't thinking of righteousness.

You weren't thinking of what God cares about. He will have mercy rather than sacrifice. And if you had known that, he said, you would not have made this miscalculation, this false judgment you've made.

That's of course Matthew 12, 7. Matthew 12, 7. So we must make judgments, but we're not to make judgments based on shallow considerations. Surface considerations, we have to really look deeper before we make a judgment. Actually a lot of people that we would judge, just walking down the street and seeing someone, you know, a derelict on the street, we might be inclined to make a critical judgment of that person.

And no doubt, that person has made some bad choices or he wouldn't be there. But we don't know what led to those bad choices. We don't know what that person's background is.

We might find that if we could see as much as God could see, that he's less guilty of making the bad choices he's made than we are of making the bad choices we've made. Because he's had more pressures than we've had in his life. He's had less input from

godly influences than we have.

We've had all kinds of benefits he may not have had. That's why we really can't judge. Remember Jesus said it'll be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the Day of Judgment than for Capernaum.

Well, why? Capernaum wasn't, you know, raping every male guest that came to town. Why wouldn't they get a better judgment than Sodom and Gomorrah that were totally given over to immorality? He said it's going to be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for Capernaum. That means Sodom and Gomorrah are going to get a lighter sentence.

But they were worse people. The society was more corrupt. Why would they be judged lighter? Well, Jesus said, I'll tell you why.

Because if the works that were done in you, Capernaum, had been done in Sodom and Gomorrah, they would have repented. That is, you've had a lot more light. You've had a lot more benefit.

God has done miracles among you, and I've preached among you, and you've rejected it. They never had those benefits. So you would judge them more severely than you'd judge Capernaum.

But God will judge Capernaum more severely than Sodom and Gomorrah. And how might this be true in individual cases too? People that we would look down on as people who've ruined their lives by making evil and stupid choices. And we haven't done that.

We're more righteous than they are. Well, on the surface. But only God knows, or maybe even we could know if we tried, whether the persons have a good heart or a bad heart.

They might have a better heart than we do. They've had less advantages than we've had. We don't know.

You've got to be careful when you make a judgment. You can judge behavior, but it's awfully risky to try to judge culpability. Because culpability is actually, you know, there's a scale there.

Behavior can be said to be objectively right or wrong. And no one doubts that a person who's, let's say, in our day we'd say people who are committing homosexual acts. They're doing something that is objectively wrong.

There's no way to make that a right thing to do. But they may be struggling against drives that they've had since their childhood. And they may be striving harder against those than we're striving against the temptations we have.

They may just be succumbing. We succumb to temptations too, maybe lighter ones than

that. And we judge them by surface things.

And Jesus says, no, you need to judge by righteous judgment. You've got to look deeper. You've got to look as God does.

Man looks on the outward appearance. God looks on the heart. That's what God said to Samuel when he was looking for a new king in Israel.

And he went to the house of Jesse, and Eli, the oldest son, came in. He was handsome and tall and strong. And Samuel's first impression was, wow, this is certainly the right guy to be the king.

And God said, no, don't even look at his height or his good looks. He says, God doesn't look as a man looks. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart.

And he was looking for a man after his own heart. David was also good looking and strong, but his heart was the issue. And even Samuel initially tended to judge according to appearance and not righteous judgment.

But God corrected him. Now, we're just about out of time here. Maybe we should even quit here.

I have a feeling we should, because we've gone about an hour, and we have a lot ahead of us. And I'm not really sure. There's a little bit more here I want to take.

There's another stopping point, just a few verses hence. So we'll read a little bit more. Then some of them from Jerusalem said, this is verse 25, Is this not he whom they seek to kill? But look, he speaks boldly, and they say nothing to him.

Do the rulers know indeed that this is truly the Christ? However, we know where this man is from. But when the Christ comes, no one knows where he is from. Now, notice this is another point of division.

The Jews had different opinions about the Messiah and his origins. Here they're saying, you know, when the Messiah comes, he's just going to pop up out of nowhere. No one will know where he came from.

But over in verse 42, another group are saying, Has not the scripture said that the Christ comes from the seat of David, from his own town of Bethlehem, where David was? So, some of them were a little better educated from scripture. In Micah 5, 2, it says the Messiah will come from Bethlehem, and some people knew that. Others had apparently a rabbinic tradition that the Messiah is just going to appear out of nowhere.

Now, when they said, we know where this man is from, I don't know where they thought he was from, because they're usually wrong. Even the ones who knew the Messiah is supposed to come from Bethlehem didn't know that he was from Bethlehem. They said,

he's a Galilean, he can't be the Messiah.

The Messiah is supposed to come from Bethlehem. Well, duh, he was from Bethlehem. But they didn't know that.

So, the people said, we know where he's from. They probably thought he was from Galilee. But, the main thing that was their objection in verse 27, was that their particular view, which was not universally held among the Jews, apparently, was the Messiah is just going to show up from nowhere.

Then Jesus cried out as he taught in the temple, saying, you both know me, and you know where I'm from. Now, by the way, some translations put a question mark at the end of that. So, in other words, he's speaking ironically.

Like, you say you know me, you know me, and you know where I'm from, do you? You think so? So, I don't know if a question mark belongs there or not, but in the Greek there's no punctuation. So, it could be a question mark or a statement. But in any case, he said, and I have not come of myself, but he who sent me is true, whom you do not know.

Now, you might know where I'm from, but you don't know who sent me. That's what he is at least saying that. You might know or you might think you know where I'm from, but whether you do or not, that's not as important as who sent me, and you're not receiving him.

You don't know him. But I know him, for I am from him, and he sent me. Then they sought to take him, but no one laid hand on him, because his hour had not yet come.

And many of the people believed in him and said, When the Christ comes, will he do more signs than these, which this man has done? Now, there are actually no Old Testament scriptures that talk specifically about the Messiah working signs and wonders. Although there are some passages about the Messianic Age, like Isaiah 35, that talk about how the blind will see and the lame will leap and the deaf will hear and the dumb will speak and so forth. It doesn't say that those will be wrought by the Messiah, but they are said to be things that take place during the Messianic Kingdom Age, and of course could well imply that the Messiah will be the one doing those miracles.

At least when John the Baptist sent messengers to Jesus from prison and said, Are you the Messiah or not? Essentially, that's what he said. He said, Are you the one who's coming or do we look for another? Jesus said, Go back and tell John what you see. The blind see, the deaf hear, the lame are walking, and blessed is he who's not offended by me.

He was actually alluding to Isaiah 35, that in the Messianic Age these kinds of things will be happening. So maybe some of the rabbis had taken stuff like that and extrapolated

that the Messiah will work signs, or at least there will be signs ushering in the age of the Messiah. And so when the Messiah comes, is he going to do more than this man has done? In other words, they're saying, What more are we looking for here? Which is perhaps a good question we can close on tonight.

The skeptic really ought to ask, or be asked, What exactly more are you looking for? What would it take to believe in Jesus? What would God have to do? What would the Messiah have to do? I often think when people say, Well, I don't believe the Bible is the word of God. And I say, Well, but what about all these fulfilled prophecies? Well, and then they make excuses for it. Well, we don't know that those really happen that way or whatever.

But, you know, well, then is God then unable to do anything to convince you? Because what in the world could more convince you that the word of God is inspired than that he tells the future and says, This is because I'm God, I can tell you this. So he does it and it happens, and you say, Well, no, I want something more. Well, what do you want? What do you want more than that? And Jesus rises from the dead.

He's got 12 witnesses that bear witness of him, sealing their testimony with their blood. I mean, they're sincere. And yet someone says, Well, I don't think we have enough evidence.

Well, what do you want? Well, if they get down to it, what they want is for Jesus just to go away. For Jesus just not to make any claims on their life. They're not looking to be convinced.

They don't want to be convinced. They don't want it to be true. They want something else to be true.

They're not happy that there's plenty of evidence. They're hoping that the evidence will go away. You see, these are not people who are seeking truth.

These are people who are seeking their own agendas. And the truth just kind of interferes with what they want to do with their lives. And so the question is, When the Messiah comes, will he do more signs than this? Good question.

What more could he do? He raised the dead. He walked on the water. He healed every kind of sickness.

Opened the eyes of the blind. What would you want a man to do to convince you? And yet there were many Jews who had seen these things happen, and they still were not convinced. Why? Because they weren't looking for better evidence, for better miracles.

They weren't looking for more proof. They were looking for ways to explain it away, so that it wouldn't be true. This is what Jesus said in John chapter 3. This is the

condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men love the darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.

They weren't looking for light. They weren't looking for truth. They didn't want to know.

They weren't happy about the fact that Jesus came and revealed to them. Jesus said to the Pharisees, if you were blind, you'd be without sin. But you see, and therefore your sin remains.

You don't have too little light. You've got plenty of light. And that's why you're responsible.

That's why you're guilty. Because light is not what you want. Knowing whether Jesus really is the Messiah or not is not what they wanted.

They weren't saying, well we just need a little more evidence. No, they would have loved to have a lot less evidence than what they had. Because the evidence was pointing in a direction that was a conclusion they were not willing to accept.

And frankly, a lot of people who are not Christians are in exactly that same position today. They keep saying, there's not enough evidence. You know, extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.

Well, we have extraordinary evidence. Equal to the extraordinariness of the claims. But, if you ask them, what would you really like to have? I mean, I've asked atheists this in debate.

I've said, okay, of the things that God has done to make himself known to you, none of them are, you know, none of them do anything for you. So what would it take for God to convince you? And they always say the same thing. Well, let him ride across the sky, I'm God.

Or let him just appear here before me. And I say, you're not being honest. You wouldn't believe even then.

You would say it's a holographic image. You would say it's a hallucination. You would give it any kind of natural explanation.

Like when God spoke from heaven in John 12 and some said it thundered. Others said an angel spoke. Some were willing to give it a supernatural explanation.

But not God. Just an angel. Others weren't even willing to give it a supernatural explanation.

They hear the voice of God and say, that was just thunder. Just natural. There is no supernatural.

That can be explained. And you know that people are committed to unbelief. No amount of proof is going to convince them.

If anyone is willing to do his will, then they will know. Jesus said. It's not how convinced the mind has become.

It's how willing the heart is to receive. Because a person who's got a willing heart will see there's more than enough evidence has been given. And so we will not finish this chapter tonight.

We'll finish it next time.