

Unbelief

There is growing division and unbelief among the people: the Jews, the officials, the Pharisees, the disciples, even Christ's own family. Everyone is trying to figure out who Jesus is: Teacher? Prophet? Lunatic? Legend? Jesus carries on His mission amid this confusion and speaks like no other. Some will hear His radical words and draw near, and others will plug their ears in unbelief. But one key to understanding the radical words of Christ is understanding why He spoke them: "The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood." (John 7:18)

Prepare Your Heart

As you prepare to study today, begin by bowing your heart to the Lord through worship and prayer. We will read today the words of the officers: "No one ever spoke like this man!" (John 7:46). Listen and sing "Build My Life" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z32HiCoFzIU>) as we seek God, submit our unbelief, and acknowledge His beautiful, glorious, redeeming uniqueness: "Holy, there is no one like you!"

John 7:1-9 ¹After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. ²Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand. ³So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. ⁴For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." ⁵For not even his brothers believed in him. ⁶Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. ⁷The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. ⁸You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come." ⁹After saying this, he remained in Galilee.

- 1) From verse 1, what do we know about the environment and what people thought about Jesus?
- 2) In verse 4, Jesus' brothers tell Him to go and demonstrate His works and miracles to others, and verse 5 reveals that this means they did not believe He was the Messiah. Why does their suggestion reveal that they don't believe in Him? What tone of voice do you think they were using when they spoke to Him?
- 3) How do you think it felt to Jesus knowing His family didn't believe in Him? How does Jesus respond to His brothers? Does He give in? Does He lash out? What is His main focus?

- 4) Read verse 7. Why does the world hate Jesus? Why does it not hate His brothers?

John 7:10-24 ¹⁰But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private. ¹¹The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, "Where is he?" ¹²And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, "He is a good man," others said, "No, he is leading the people astray." ¹³Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him. ¹⁴About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. ¹⁵The Jews therefore marveled, saying, "How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?" ¹⁶So Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. ¹⁷If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. ¹⁸The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood. ¹⁹Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?" ²⁰The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?" ²¹Jesus answered them, "I did one work, and you all marvel at it. ²²Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. ²³If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well? ²⁴Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."

- 5) Unbelief is rampant, and it is also causing division. What are some of the things people are saying about Jesus in this passage? Look especially to verses 11-13.
- 6) Today, what are some of the things that people say about Jesus? Who do your friends think He is? A prophet? Teacher? Nice Guy? Lunatic? Liar?
- 7) Examine this quote by C.S. Lewis. Why is it impossible to brush off Jesus as just a "nice guy" or "teacher"?

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: "I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God." That is the one thing we must not say. A man who said the sort of things Jesus said would

not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” (Mere Christianity, 55–56)

- 8) The people are so doubtful and skeptical, they even question Jesus’ education and knowledge of the Scriptures, wondering where it all comes from. They know Jesus never had formal rabbinic training. Jesus says not only that his knowledge is from the Lord, but from the One who sent Him. Then, He seems to challenge them in verse 17, about whether or not they really understand God’s will, or believe He (Jesus) is the Way. Andy Stanley writes, “Jesus came to do the will of the Father. In order to do the will of the Father, He had to know the will of the Father. Jesus made it a priority to know the One who sent Him.” What about you? How do you do the will of the Father? How can you know what His will is?

- 9) Jesus did not follow the advice of His brothers and seek greater crowds. Jesus came to the feast privately. Jesus does not take credit for His teaching in verse 16. In this passage, who does Jesus give credit to? Where does the “authority” come from? (v. 16-18)

John 7:25-31 ²⁵Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, “Is not this the man whom they seek to kill? ²⁶And here he is, speaking openly, and they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ? ²⁷But we know where this man comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from.” ²⁸So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, “You know me, and you know where I come from. But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know. ²⁹I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me.” ³⁰So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come. ³¹Yet many of the people believed him. They said, “When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?”

10) Again, we see so much division among the people. Why do some doubt Him? What reasons do they give? What reasons does Jesus give for their doubt?

11) What causes some to believe?

John 7:32-39 ³²The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him. ³³Jesus then said, "I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. ³⁴You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come." ³⁵The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? ³⁶What does he mean by saying, 'You will seek me and you will not find me,' and, 'Where I am you cannot come'?" ³⁷On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" ³⁹Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

12) Here, we continue to see unbelief about who Christ is, and great confusion about what He says. What is Christ proclaiming in this passage? Where will He go? What will He give?

John 7:40-52 ⁴⁰When they heard these words, some of the people said, "This really is the Prophet." ⁴¹Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Is the Christ to come from Galilee? ⁴²Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" ⁴³So there was a division among the people over him. ⁴⁴Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him. ⁴⁵The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, "Why did you not bring him?" ⁴⁶The officers answered, "No one ever spoke like this man!" ⁴⁷The Pharisees answered them, "Have you also been deceived? ⁴⁸Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him? ⁴⁹But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed." ⁵⁰Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, ⁵¹"Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?" ⁵²They replied, "Are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee."

- 13) This passage begins with more division, unbelief, and confusion. Then, enter the officers who were sent to arrest Christ, but could not. They recognized something in Christ: “No one ever spoke like this man!” (verse 46). They’re right! Let’s examine some of the radical speech of Jesus Christ, just what we’ve seen so far in this study in John:
 I am the _____; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. (John 6:35)
 Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will _____. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. (John 4:14)
 On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him _____. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” (John 7:37-38)
 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will _____ on the last day. (John 6:40)
 Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is _____ he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3)

- 14) The Pharisees respond in unbelief again. They are set on unbelief fully, and make excuses for those that have believed:
 They say that the officers have been d_____ (see verse 47)
 They accuse Nicodemus of being b_____ (see verse 52)
 They know the people are d_____ (see verse 43)

Jesus’ ministry is like no other we’ve witnessed, His life is like no other we’ve seen, and His words are unlike any other we’ve heard. Who else would have told people to be “born again” or claimed to be “living water.” Jesus’ words are like no other because He is not like any other, and He is committed fully to one thing. Jon Bloom writes, “Jesus spoke like no one else because He pursued his Father’s glory like no one else.” (See John 7:18 again). Though many, from Pharisees to family, rejected Him or did not believe, Christ lived and died like no other so that we might live with Him.

Reflect

- 15) Where are you struggling with unbelief? Where do you struggle to believe in God, what He has done, or what He is doing now?
 16) What truths about God do you need to study in order to trust in Him?
 17) Jesus does the will of the Father because He knows Him. How will you know the will of God? How will you spend time with God more this week and get to know Him more?
 18) Fill in the statement: Knowing that Christ is _____ shows me that I am _____.
 Explain.

As you end your time, I encourage you to read and pray through Job 42:1-6. This virus outbreak is a season where we have to rely on God and not fall into unbelief through the hard things. This is a prayer that we can come to God with and repent of any doubt we’ve had, and look to Him who can “do all things” in a time such as this.