

JOH 7:14-24 Not until halfway through the Feast did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach. 15 The Jews were amazed and asked, "How did this man get such learning without having studied?" 16 Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. 17 If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. 18 He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him. 19 Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?" 20 "You are demon-possessed," the crowd answered. "Who is trying to kill you?" 21 Jesus said to them, "I did one miracle, and you are all astonished. 22 Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a child on the Sabbath. 23 Now if a child can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing the whole man on the Sabbath? 24 Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment."

The last time we were together Jesus was going up to Jerusalem for the feast of Tabernacles. His brothers had gone before Him and now He entered the city without any fanfare.

The Jewish leaders were looking for Him so as to put Him to death and the people of that city knew their intentions. They also knew Jesus was no ordinary teacher.

JOH 7:14-15 Not until halfway through the Feast did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach. 15 The Jews were amazed and asked, "How did this man get such learning without having studied?"

And of course what this statement means is not that Christ never studied the Old Testament Scriptures, but that He had not studied under the great teachers of His day, nor sat in the classes of their seats of higher learning, which is why the NASB says, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?"

And so, Jesus begins to answer them when He says in verse 16, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me,"

which is to say that He is not a lone ranger making up His own doctrines, but rather is only teaching those things the Lord has revealed through His prophets as contained in the Old Testament Scriptures.

In fact, as we come to our text this morning Jesus makes it quite clear that if these people were only willing to check the word of God out for themselves they would discover this truth.

JOH 7:17 "If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own."

This is imperative to discover. If anyone who claims to be a teacher of God's word is not open to scrutiny from the very word he or she teaches then they should be suspect. No one is above God's word, not even the one who claims to be an expert in it.

If there was anyone who knew God's word, in light of the Holy Spirit illumining his mind, it would have been the apostle Paul. And yet, not even Paul was above being scrutinized by the word of God. You might remember a group of people who were checking out whether his teachings were true or not.

ACT 17:11 Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

Now again, keep in mind that the only Scriptures these Bereans had were the Old Testament writings. The message Paul was giving them was a message from the Old Testament Scriptures from which he taught; namely that the Messiah was promised to come into this world to redeem men through His death and resurrection, and that these promises were fulfilled in Christ Jesus.

And so, naturally Paul would have been teaching from a variety of places from the Old Testament Scriptures which would likely have included the prophet Micah.

MIC 5:2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times [eternity]."

He certainly would have taught them how the Messiah had to suffer and die for their sins and so Isaiah would also have been a prominent book to go to.

ISA 53:3-5 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. 4 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

But of course, though He was smitten by God and afflicted, He was not abandoned to the grave.

ISA 53:9-11 He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. 10 Yet it was the LORD'S will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. 11 After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

As Paul undoubtedly pointed out these passages, as he pointed them to Christ who fulfilled them, these Bereans must have been excited to know that this former Pharisee was on to something. What he was on to was the truth that they could be forgiven of their sin and that they too could have eternal life in this Messiah as they placed their faith in Him alone.

They knew that eternal life was the goal as they would one day receive their resurrected bodies, but they also knew that eternity was something the unbeliever would have to deal with which separated him from his God if he rejected the Messiah.

DAN 12:2 Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.

But this everlasting life could only come as the result of God forgiving their sin.

JER 31:34 No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me,

from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

Paul certainly made it clear that the Messiah, who forgave their sin and assured them of this eternal life, was none other than Messiah, Jesus. And this is exactly what our Lord Jesus is telling these Jews in Jerusalem.

JOH 7:17 "If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own."

The word chooses in verse 17, where Jesus says, "If anyone chooses to do God's will...", could be better translated, desires. "If anyone desires to do God's will..." The word in Greek infers to be resolved or determined, to purpose.

In other words, 'if you're serious about searching the Scriptures and seeking to know God's will contained in them then you will know that what I say is not something I'm making up, but is the actual truth that was given to the prophets by God and handed down to you to see for yourself.'

And what Jesus means by this is that these people were not studying the Scriptures; they were not looking, for themselves, into what the word of God had to say on any particular subject, especially as it applied to who the Messiah would be.

They were relying only on what their teachers taught. And unfortunately, their teachers had long since twisted the Scriptures to their own devices. In fact, the Jews of Christ's day were being discouraged from reading the Scriptures on their own because the leaders of Israel didn't trust that the common man would be able to understand them.

And so basically the Jews had to rely solely on these leaders to bring them the truth of God's word. In fact, this is not unlike what many today experience, who claim to be Christian.

When I was growing up a Roman Catholic we never opened a bible to study the word of God. I went 12 years to Catholic schools and was never introduced to the bible as a book which I could pick up on my own and glean God's will for my life.

We certainly heard passages being read at Mass, and once in a while we had a priest or nun bring up the bible in class; but as a

book I could understand on my own, we were always told to rely on the priests or the church because if we read the bible on our own we might come up with the wrong message. And that was a fearful thing.

But in all fairness, the Roman Catholics are not the only one's guilty of this. There are some Protestant churches who have taken the same attitude. The leadership of some churches would rather have you rely on them alone for what God says, fearing that if the common man in the pew read the word they might actually disagree with what the leaders believe.

We've seen this in such cases where some church leaders are introducing extra-biblical revelations they claim are from God, but which actually contradict the word of God. And when someone in their congregation comes to them with this contradiction they are told not to question them. And if they do question them they are told that they are being used as a tool of the devil.

The day we use man's word, or even a word they claim from God, that does not match up with God's word, is the day we have shut up our ability to hear from God. We are encouraged, all of us, to study the Scriptures on our own as we rely on the Holy Spirit to speak to us from God's word.

2TI 3:16-17 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

1PE 2:2 Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation. (NASB)

This doesn't mean we don't listen to those in the church who teach God's word, but even they must be scrutinized by that very word to see if what they teach is true and biblical.

Jesus was telling these Jews in our text that they had failed their responsibility to search the will of God in the Scriptures. If they had searched them they would have discovered that Jesus' teachings were not His own, but those of the Father who sent Him to teach the truth which are revealed in the Scriptures.

JOH 7:18 "He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him."

This is very true. "He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself..." Now, anyone who desires to gain honor for himself is going to teach in such a way so as not to make waves. He is essentially going to teach what people want to hear. In fact, this is exactly what Paul told Timothy.

2TI 4:3-4 For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

This is what was happening even in our Lord's day. The point Jesus was making was that if He were simply trying to bring honor to Himself, why in the world was He teaching in such a way as to potentially make so many enemies? Why was He not tickling the ears of these people if He were interested in pleasing everyone?

The answer is that He was not bringing His own teaching to honor Himself, but was rather teaching the truth of the One who sent Him to bring honor to Him.

On the other hand the Jewish teachers of the law were changing the Scriptures to suit their own needs and had bound the Jews in such a way where they were following doctrines which were antithetical to God's word and His salvation which is through the Messiah.

MAT 23:13,15 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. 15 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are."

The very law that Moses gave to the people is the very law which speaks of the Messiah who is to be received by faith for the forgiveness of sin. In fact, you might remember that the risen Christ spoke similar words to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus who were broken hearted over the killing of their Master, who they thought was still in the grave.

LUK 24:25-27 [Jesus] said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he

explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself."

This is why Jesus brings up Moses in the next verse of our text.

JOH 7:19 "Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?"

In other words, for all of their insistence of being children of God who follow the Law of Moses, they can't keep it if they try. And this is what Jesus has been teaching them. He has been saying that Moses and the law was not the end- all when it came to a relationship with the living God.

JOH 3:14-16 "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15 that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. 16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Jesus was constantly teaching the Jews that He was the fulfillment to what Moses taught. He could not have made it any clearer.

JOH 5:45-47 "But do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. 46 If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. 47 But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"

In our text Jesus is saying to the Jews that 'you say you follow Moses and that in the law he delivered to Israel is your hope. Well, guess what gang, you don't even follow what Moses taught. Where then is your hope?'

'And yet, I come to you as One sent from the Father with a message from the Father; a message of hope and eternal life which match up with the Scriptures you have in your possession, and yet you want to kill Me. What's up with that?'

Well, it's pretty hard to respond to that and so the next best thing is to start making false accusations. If you can't respond to the truth you call people names.

JOH 7:20 "You are demon-possessed," the crowd answered. "Who is trying to kill you?"

In today's vernacular they were saying, "you're out of your mind. Who is trying to kill you?"

Well, the fact of the matter is that these people knew the Jewish leaders wanted to kill Jesus. It was common knowledge. In fact, John records this for us in the beginning of this chapter.

JOH 7:1 After this, Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to take his life.

And so, what have these Jews proved once again? That they can't keep the Law of Moses they claim to adhere to.

LEV 19:11 Do not steal. "Do not lie. Do not deceive one another.

Can you imagine how the Jewish leaders must have felt when Jesus publicly exposes their hearts whose only desire was to kill Him? Again, keep in mind that it would only be six months from this time that Jesus would be killed by the Jews who handed Him over to the Roman government to be put to death.

But when the Jews respond that Jesus is out of His mind because no one wants to kill Him, He doesn't debate that issue as He argues the point. He doesn't need to. He simply continues to give the truth.

JOH 7:21 Jesus said to them, "I did one miracle, and you are all astonished."

By the way, we can learn something from this. Often times unbelievers will do everything they can to draw us into an argument when we're trying to give them the truth of God's word and His gospel.

And by argument I mean they want to sidetrack us from the message so as to draw attention away from themselves as they try and discredit our Savior. This doesn't mean we can't answer some of their questions, but we must never become embroiled in an argument where we might win the battle of words, but lose the war of that person's soul.

I've shared the gospel with people where the issue of their sin and God's salvation comes up. And invariably someone will make the comment that if this gospel is so essential to one's salvation, then what about the people in the rain forest of South America who will never hear this message?

Well, they could care less about these people in the rain forest. Their only concern is to get the heat off of themselves and place it



upon you or me and make us look like we serve an insensitive and cold hearted God who isn't concerned with those people.

The truth is that He is and has sent many missionaries into those areas to give them the gospel. But, don't ever forget that people are not condemned because they haven't heard about Christ, they are condemned because they are sinners. We all deserve death. We are all guilty because of our sin.

And so, Jesus doesn't bite at the argument that He's out of His mind and that no one wants to kill Him. He simply points out the truth once again.

JOH 7:21 Jesus said to them, "I did one miracle, and you are all astonished."

The miracle in question here is the last miracle which created all of the commotion among the Jews. It's the miracle we see way back in chapter five of this gospel.

JOH 5:5-11 One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?" 7 "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me." 8 Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." 9 At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, 10 and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat." 11 But he replied, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'"

The Jews certainly were amazed and marveled at such a thing, but the point Jesus is making is that if they had marveled at such a good deed why in the world are they still condemning Him?

Well, we know the reason. The Jews were not condemning Him for a good deed, but for a deed which took place on the Sabbath. But here Jesus points out their hypocrisy because even Moses allowed such deeds on the Sabbath.

JOH 7:22-24 Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a child on the Sabbath. 23 Now if a child can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing the whole man on

the Sabbath? 24 Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment."

Jesus brings Moses back into the picture. And He does this to accentuate the law which these people claim to follow. And the law He has in mind is circumcision. Now, circumcision was not put into effect by Moses, but rather by Abraham as God commanded Him to use this as a sign and seal of the covenant He made with Abraham.

But Moses certainly taught the necessity of this sign and seal. But in bringing this up Jesus shows them that though circumcision is a good deed, the law forbids any kind of work on the Sabbath. And yet, the law also requires that a male child must be circumcised on the eighth day. What happens if the eighth day falls on the Sabbath?

Does the law contradict itself and therefore we must not circumcise that child on the Sabbath? Of course not, and even the Jews recognize this, is Jesus' point.

JOH 7:23-24 "Now if a child can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing the whole man on the Sabbath? 24 Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment."

So, why are they so angry that Jesus would heal an entire man on the Sabbath? Why are they not making a right judgment about the Son of Man? Because they hate the messenger sent from God. He is bringing a message which they don't like and don't want to hear. Why else would they reject the One who claims to come from the Father and proves it with signs and wonders?

This shows us once again the hardness of man's heart and shows once again the grace of God who continues to pursue sinful men despite how they hate Him. His love is amazing and proves itself ultimately at the cross as He took our sin.

And by the way, that greatest good deed from Jesus was also done on a Sabbath. You might remember that there were two Sabbaths in the week Jesus died for our sins. There was the Passover Sabbath and there was the seventh day Sabbath. Praise God for His good work for us during these Sabbaths.

Of course it would not be on the Sabbath, but on the first day of the week Jesus would rise bodily from the grave. This is why we celebrate on the first day of the week after the examples of the

apostles. Jesus Christ is now our Sabbath, not any particular day of the week.

The Jews wanted to keep the Sabbath according to their perception of the law, but they rejected the true Sabbath, the true rest which is found only in Christ.

HEB 4:9-10 There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; 10 for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.

If we have entered that rest, that peace found only in Christ, may we then live in that rest and share it with the world that they might be delivered from darkness to light in Christ.

Are we resting in Christ or are we scurrying about in this world worrying how God will work things out? Are we resting in His grace and giving it away or are we demonstrating to the world with our actions that grace is a stranger in our lives?

Don't let God be a stranger. Seek Him, love Him, obey Him and honor Him as you rely on His grace and strength, knowing that He loves us with an everlasting love.