

John 7:1-5 "Jesus Christ, Super Star?"

JOH 7:1-5 After this, Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to take his life. 2 But when the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near, 3 Jesus' brothers said to him, "You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do. 4 No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world." 5 For even his own brothers did not believe in him.

As we come to chapter seven of John's gospel we enter into a new phase of the ministry of Jesus Christ. Our Lord has been with His 12 disciples for over two years and has celebrated two Passovers with them. He has taught the crowds, He has executed His ministry in power with miracles and up to this point many people have followed Him.

But as we saw in chapter six many of His followers have decided to leave Him because of our Lord's "hard sayings" as it related to His deity, His mission as Messiah and His challenge for all men everywhere to believe on Him alone for eternal life.

Jesus has received threats from the leaders and zealots in Israel in the past, but the threats are going to turn much more serious in the days ahead. In fact, in verse one of our text we get a glimpse of what Jesus knew about the attitude of the Jewish zealots.

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.

Galilee, you'll remember, is the northern part of Israel where Jesus spent a good part of His life growing up and now ministering to the people there. Cana is in Galilee and it is where He performed His first public miracle as He turned the water into wine at a celebration of someone's marriage.

Judea, on the other hand, is where the elite Jewish leaders live because it is in Judea where the city of Jerusalem is located. These leaders felt threatened by Jesus in a variety of ways, not the least of which was regarding their status with the Roman government.

With Jesus being portrayed as the Messiah, and possible new heir to the throne of David, as many Jews perceived Him, the Jewish

leaders knew of the potential political problems which could come from a man who might stir up the Jews all throughout Israel.

The Roman government looked to these Jewish leaders to keep peace among their people and Jesus didn't fit into that equation. Also, these Jewish leaders were jealous of Jesus because He was a rebel in one sense; not towing the political or religious line in Israel as He confronted these leaders with dereliction of duty as it related to teaching the people God's word.

And of course they would accuse Jesus of speaking heresy because He spoke as the Son of God and these Jews could not comprehend how a carpenter from Nazareth could make such statements and wield such power and authority and accuse them of being spiritually impotent.

MAT 23:27-28 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. 28 In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness."

And so, by the time we come to chapter seven of our text the leaders of Israel are at the end of their ropes concerning their patience with this Jesus and it is at this point that they begin to seriously consider how they might kill Him which is what the end of verse one indicates; the Jews there were waiting to take his life.

Now, John gives us some chronology here in this section as he indicates a particular Jewish feast which was at hand.

JOH 7:2 But when the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near...

The Feast of Tabernacles is also called, in some of your bibles, the Feast of Booths. As to how this feast was to be celebrated according to the law, Leviticus gives us the frame work.

LEV 23:34-36 Say to the Israelites: 'On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the LORD'S Feast of Tabernacles begins, and it lasts for seven days. 35 The first day is a sacred assembly; do no regular work. 36 For seven days present offerings made to the LORD by fire, and on the eighth day hold a sacred assembly and present an offering made to the LORD by fire. It is the closing assembly; do no regular work.

The fifteenth day of the seventh month would place this feast in and around the end of September and on into October. And essentially this feast was a celebration of the time in which God provided for the Israelites in the desert as they wandered for some forty years, camping in the desert.

This is why it's called the feast of booths because it represented the nation of Israel on the move, building temporary shelters in the desert. And the Jews of Jesus' day would actually build and live in these little make shift shelters outside of their homes during the commemoration of this event.

But it was also a celebration of the harvest, as it would come to be known, once they got into the Promised Land and were able to plant and harvest crops. The Lord addresses this in the book of Exodus.

EXO 23:16 Celebrate the Feast of Harvest with the firstfruits of the crops you sow in your field. "Celebrate the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in your crops from the field.

And so, essentially what you've got here is the equivalent of our Thanksgiving celebration with the addition of celebrating how God was with Israel throughout the desert wanderings before coming into the Promised Land.

It was a great time of family coming together for eight days in celebration and worshipping their God who delivers His people. And yet, it was a celebration where obviously many Jews of Jesus' day were only going through the motions of honoring God, since they could spend their time plotting to kill a fellow Jew instead of celebrating the true meaning of this time which actually spoke of the great Provider and Deliverer who was in their midst.

But the other important thing to keep in mind here is that John records this chronology for us to put into perspective that this will be the last Feast of Booths that Jesus will celebrate, for in six months the Passover will be upon Israel, and in six months Jesus will be upon the tree. Chapter seven is the opening of the last six months of Jesus' life.

But as we come to verse three of our text we find a very interesting statement by some very interesting people.

JOH 7:3-5 Jesus' brothers said to him, "You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you

do. 4 No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world." 5 For even his own brothers did not believe in him.

What is fascinating here is that the brothers of Jesus obviously were following His ministry. They were certainly aware of the miracles and His claims to be the Messiah. They knew of the claims of John the Baptist who said, "this is the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world," because John was their cousin. They all grew up together.

Remember it was Mary who was told by an angel that her relative Elizabeth, now six months pregnant with John, was the one who would later become the Baptizer in Israel.

LUK 1:35-36 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month.

Mary and Elizabeth were blood relatives which makes their children blood relatives. Thus John the Baptist and Jesus were related by blood as well as the rest of Mary's children.

And we know that Mary had many children after the birth of her firstborn, Jesus. When I was growing up a Roman Catholic I was always taught that Mary was a perpetual virgin and that she never had relations with her husband Joseph.

That simply isn't the case. His only restriction was not to have relations with Mary prior to her giving birth to Jesus as the angel instructed Joseph.

MAT 1:24-25 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25 ***But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.***

The reason for this was two-fold. The child in her womb was of the Holy Spirit and so Joseph was not to defile that which the Holy Spirit produced, and second if he had relations with Mary prior to her birth everyone would assume the child was Joseph's.

But the fact remains that there was no restriction on Joseph after the birth of Christ. He carried on a normal biblical marriage

relationship with his wife Mary. And we're told that Mary did have other children.

MAT 12:47 Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you."

In fact, not only did Jesus have other brothers we even know their names. We also know that He had sisters but we're not told their names.

MAT 13:54-57 Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked. 55 "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't *his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas*?" 56 Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?" 57 And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor.

Jesus had four brothers and at least two sisters, probably more. And so, Mary was busy having children after her oldest son was born. By my count she had at least seven children.

But growing up a Roman Catholic I was always told that when it states that Jesus had brothers it means cousins. But in the context of Matthew it's pretty clear that Mary is the one mentioned before any reference to brothers and sisters which leads us to believe that those children mentioned are the result of Joseph and Mary.

The other thing to consider is that there is a legitimate word used for cousin, if in fact these people mentioned in Matthew were his cousins and not his brothers. But that word is not mentioned in Matthew. The Greek word in Matthew for brothers is *adelphos*, and it means brother. It's the exact same word we have in our text in John.

The word for cousin is a separate word. In fact Paul uses the word when speaking of the cousin of Barnabas.

COL 4:10 My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas.

The Greek word for cousin here in Colossians is *anepsios*. If the apostle John wanted to identify James, Joseph, Simon and Judas as the cousins of Jesus it would have made more sense to use the word *anepsios*, not *adelphos*.

Clearly, these brothers of Jesus were half-brothers being the sons of Joseph and Mary. They all grew up together and yet at this time in their lives as adults they didn't identify themselves as followers or disciples of their brother, Jesus.

JOH 7:3 Jesus' brothers said to him, "You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do."

When they said "your disciples" they were not including themselves in that group. Now this doesn't mean they weren't interested in having Jesus succeed as a new religious leader in Israel. But at this time they were not going to identify themselves with someone who has not been accepted by the Jewish leaders.

What this means is that they were more interested in the political aspect of Judaism and the political ramifications of a potential new leader found in their brother. And by the way, they also knew the political and religious atmosphere in Israel and that the leaders wanted to kill their brother. It wasn't a secret.

But they insist that Jesus go forward in His quest, as they perceived it, of advancing this new movement with miracles and signs and wonders and teaching for the sake of making a big splash in Israel.

"You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do."

In other words, 'get out of the backwater towns of Galilee and go to the big city where more people, and people of importance, can see you do your thing.'

JOH 7:4 "No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world."

Was this the quest of Jesus to become a public figure? Hardly. And yet, His own brothers didn't even have a clue as to what Jesus was accomplishing. In fact, Jesus did much to keep His fame a secret.

How many times did Jesus instruct those He healed not to tell anyone?

MAT 8:3-4 Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cured of his leprosy. 4 Then Jesus said to him, "***See that you don't tell***

anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

MAT 9:29-30 Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith will it be done to you"; 30 and their sight was restored. Jesus warned them sternly, "***See that no one knows about this.***"

MAR 5:41-43 He took her [the dead girl] by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). 42 Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. 43 ***He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this,*** and told them to give her something to eat."

Does this sound like someone who is interested in becoming a public figure? Not at all. Why should He be interested in becoming a public figure, a king among kings, a leader of a nation, when He is Creator and Lord of the universe?

His kingdom was not a small slice of the Middle East. His kingdom is spiritual and eternal, not of this present sin-filled world. He obviously had to do His work among the public out in the open, but His motivation was not to become a celebrity as His brothers obviously were encouraging Him to be.

Of course, they knew that the more popular Jesus became the more popular they would become, being His brothers. And though we're not specifically told in our text, it's not hard to connect the dots and see that they probably thought that they might have some influence in this new movement once their brother established Himself in Israel as the new king.

They want Him out in the spotlight.

"No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world."

Show yourself to the world. And by this they meant the important people who can change the course of their world for their own purposes. Merrill C. Tenney in his commentary on John puts it this way.

[His] "brethren felt that He should make an open bid for the kingdom. If He had any miracles on which He could trade, why not display them? Their level of thought was, "it pays to advertise."

They're trying to market their brother, Jesus. They're trying to conform Him as the King of the Jews, into their own image. And

this is where much of the church is today. People associate themselves with Christ's church and they acknowledge that this is His church and yet they do everything they can to conform the Kingdom of Christ into some sort of worldly enterprise.

This does not mean to suggest there aren't practical things the church must do to take care of business; paying the bills, meeting physical needs, and so forth. But that is not the primary business of the church.

The primary business of the church is advancing the Kingdom of God with the gospel of Jesus Christ and discipling people to live lives that bring honor and glory to God.

I look at these empires that people in the church have established for themselves and all of the trappings that go along with that. I mean, I praise God that the Lord has provided for legitimate ministries who reach the world for Christ, who may need office buildings and large churches to house the people.

But do we need to build a church out of crystal? Do we need a cathedral made out of glass? Do we need to market ourselves in such a way where only if you build such an edifice they will come?

Do we need to spend millions of dollars so as to keep up with the image of the world? I don't mean that millions may not have to be spent to establish large ministries. You look at some of the ministries around the world who send missionaries out and are teaching the word of God faithfully; they need that kind of money to pay salaries and buy bibles and books to give away.

But that's different from spending millions to put up hanging gardens and elaborate fountains and ornate buildings simply for the sake of appearance. But that's just me, what do I know?

But what is more distressing to me regarding our text, and how it often translates over into the world, is how someone so apparently close to Christ, who can even try and counsel the Son of God, doesn't even believe in Him.

There are lots of people today who have all sorts of ideas as to how Christ ought to be advancing the kingdom of God, and in the process they are affecting the lives of real Christians, and yet they themselves, often the ones in authority, may not even be believers.

Their agenda is to make sure they have the largest building with the most people and the most ministries simply for the sake of

being the biggest and the baddest church in town. Never mind that our Lord may not be involved in any of their agenda's, but they've made it happen. So, much for the Holy Spirit and God's will.

And this is what we see with the very brothers who grew up with Jesus. They didn't seem to care that His life might be in danger, only that He become a public figure and that He show Himself to the world.

'And oh, by the way, you and your disciples make this happen. Once you've established your kingdom on earth we'll join up with you.'

And they could take this attitude because they didn't really believe Jesus was who He said He was; the Son of the living God who came to redeem mankind from their sin.

JOH 7:5 For even his own brothers did not believe in him.

How sad. How this shows the hardness of man's heart that even His own brothers deny Him as the Savior. And how this demonstrates once again the words Jesus spoke in chapter six, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him..." (JOH 6:44)

His brothers had every advantage and opportunity and yet they would not believe. And yet, we know that that is not the end of the story because at least two of His brothers would come to not only believe on Him but would play a vital role in being used by Christ as they were inspired by the Spirit of God to record part of the very Scriptures we have in our possession.

I refer to James and Jude, both of whom have letters to the churches in their own names. Paul identifies James when writing to the Galatian church.

GAL 1:18-19 Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. 19 I saw none of the other apostles -only **James, the Lord's brother**.

This James was a pillar in the church and I love the way he opens his letter.

JAM 1:1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ...

Jude, or Judas, was also one who came to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. In his letter he actually identifies himself as the half-brother of Jesus by identifying himself as the brother of James.

JUD 1:1 *Jude*, a servant of Jesus Christ and *a brother of James*...

Both James and Jude call themselves servants of Jesus Christ. The word servant in the Greek is *doulos* and it means slave or bond servant.

These two men at one time were willing to send their brother into the lion's den by suggesting that He go to Jerusalem to make Himself a public celebrity for the sake of setting up a new Kingdom in Israel.

And yet, they would later serve this King of kings and Lord of lords as humble servants who acknowledged that their brother was none other than God in the flesh, born of Mary into the same family they grew up in, as they sought an eternal Kingdom with Christ as its head.

They now know Him as Master, Lord and Savior. They became His disciples and served Him all of their days. We're not told anything about the rest of our Lord's half brothers or sisters. We would hope they all came to Christ by faith. But it's encouraging to note that our Lord sought after those who didn't want anything to do with Him.

That's where you and I were at some point in our lives and yet He sought us out and gave us life. May we work in His kingdom, not with the idea of becoming celebrities or even a celebrity church, but as humble servants who love the Lord above all and desire to see His will be done to the honor and glory of God.

It is the Kingdom of God that Christ came to establish for His people and it is this same Kingdom for whom all of the prophets of old longed. And it is this Kingdom that Mary herself was promised through the Son that would be born to her, called Jesus.

Luke 1:31-33 ³¹ "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. ³² "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; ³³ and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."

There is an end to the story of redemption, and it involves you and me and every believer in every age as we long for that kingdom to come that it might be the same on earth as it is in heaven, which is to say, that one day heaven will come down to earth as Christ returns in glory and we will join with the host of heaven

worshipping and serving our King forever on the new earth amidst the new heavens.

This is the promise given to us by Christ through His servant John.

Revelation 5:8-13 ⁸ When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood *men* from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. ¹⁰ "You have made them *to be* a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth." ¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." ¹³ And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, *be* blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever."