

“Doctrine from Above”  
John 7:14-18  
(Preached at Trinity, October 30, 2019)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **John 7** opens with the beginning of the Feast of Booths. This tells us there has been about a six-month time-lapse since the events of **Chapter 6**. Jesus' brothers try to convince Him that He needs to go up immediately to the Feast. With all of the people present it would be an excellent time for Jesus to promote Himself. Jesus rebuffed their carnal reasoning and sent them on their way.
2. About midway through the feast, however, Jesus arrived at the Temple and began to teach. It was a bold move since there were many seeking His life. Once again, the people were amazed at the words of Jesus.
  - A. On one hand, Jesus had not been formally trained.

**John 7:15 NAU** - "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?"

    1. Jesus was a common man. He grew up in the home of those of little prestige. His earthly father was a carpenter. This was common knowledge, and many rejected Him because of His background.

**Matthew 13:54-57 NAU** - "He came to His hometown and *began* teaching them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where *did* this man *get* this wisdom and *these* miraculous powers? <sup>55</sup> "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary, and His brothers, James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? <sup>56</sup> "And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then *did* this man *get* all these things? And they took offense of Him . . ."
    2. The question was actually a condemnation, a bitter exclamation of their hatred of Jesus. What right did Jesus have to teach them, and by what authority did He make His claims.

**John 7:12 NAU** - "There was much grumbling among the crowds concerning Him; some were saying, "He is a good man"; others were saying, "No, on the contrary, He leads the people astray."
  - B. In spite of His lack of training Jesus spoke like no one they had ever heard. They were amazed at His teaching. This had been the case from the beginning.
    1. We don't have record of His early life, but He amazed the teachers at the Temple at the age of twelve.

**Luke 2:46-47 NAU** - "Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. <sup>47</sup> And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers."

2. Jesus spoke with authority and taught with authority  
The greatest of prophets said, "Thus saith the Lord."  
Jesus said, "But I say unto you."  
He spoke with the authority of God.  
**John 7:16 NAU** - "So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me."
3. No one could oppose His teaching – He spoke with authority from on high. Jesus continually silenced His opponents.  
**Matthew 22:42-46 NAU** - "What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?" They said to Him, "*The son of David.*" <sup>43</sup> He said to them, "Then how does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying, <sup>44</sup> 'The LORD said to my LORD, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies beneath your feet "'? <sup>45</sup> "If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his son?" <sup>46</sup> No one was able to answer Him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask Him another question."
3. Jesus answers their question plainly, but beyond their comprehension. Where did Jesus get such knowledge? What was the source of His teaching?  
**John 7:16 NAU** - "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me."  
A. Once again, Jesus declares His unity of purpose with God.  
**John 5:19 NAU** - "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless *it is* something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner."  
B. The words of Christ were the words of the Father. And the Father validated the words of the Son. God spoke at the Transfiguration:  
**Mark 9:7 NAU** - "Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!"  
C. The problem with fallen humanity is they cannot hear, and they will not hear.  
**John 8:43-44 NAU** - "Why do you not understand what I am saying? *It is* because you cannot hear My word. <sup>44</sup> "You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies."  
**John 10:27** – "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:"
4. Jesus is declaring that it is a matter of the heart.

- I. If a man is willing to do the will of God he will be granted discernment  
**John 7:17 NAU** - "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or *whether* I speak from Myself."
- A. Where there is no desire to obey the will of God no knowledge will be found
1. This is consistent with the Psalmist  
**Psalm 111:10 NAU** - "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do *His commandments*"
  2. We also find it in Proverbs  
**Proverbs 1:7 NAU** - "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction."
  3. This means knowledge and obedience are tied together.
    - a. Where there a desire to obey discernment will be given to understand God's will.
    - b. And where there is true knowledge of God, obedience will follow.  
**John 8:31-32 NAU** - "So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word (obedience), *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; <sup>32</sup> and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."
- B. Jesus is saying that their unwillingness to obey God blinded their eyes from comprehending the teaching of Christ.
1. This is why there is so little discernment of the will of God. Where there is little desire to submit to the will of God there will be little knowledge *of* the will of God.
  2. John Owen: "Whatever natural or acquired talents a man may possess, if he is an enemy to God and his government, he will utterly fail of comprehending, in their full and gracious import, the spiritual and sublime truths of revelation. On the other hand, while sanctified learning furnishes great facilities for the investigation of moral truth, yet the humblest and least educated intellect animated by the love of God, will attain to clearer and richer views of redemption by Jesus Christ, than can possibly be reached by the highest order of unregenerate minds."<sup>1</sup>
- II. What was the source of Christ's teaching? We find here the nature of true doctrine.
- A. Jesus was being condemned because of His lack of credentials. He had not sat under the respected rabbis of His day. He was being accused of novel teaching of His own making.
1. Jesus responded by saying His teaching was not His own. But whose was it? If He claimed it to be His own He would have been condemned.
    - a. The Rabbis quoted other rabbis as their authority. But Jesus would simply say, "but I say unto you." But what was the basis for such claims?
    - b. Jesus said He received His teaching directly from God.  
**John 7:16 NAU** - "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me."

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<sup>1</sup> John J. Owen, *A Commentary, Critical, Expository, and Practical, on the Gospel of John*, (New York: Leavitt & Allen, 1861), 158.

2. As God incarnate, Jesus spoke with Divine authority. He received His teaching by Divine inspiration.  
As the eternal Son He was the source of all truth.  
**John 14:6 NAU** - "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

B. All Christian teaching must be of Divine authority

1. There is a great gulf between man's doctrine and God's doctrine
2. Too often men pass off their own doctrine as being true. God tells us:  
**Isaiah 55:8-9 NAU** - "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. <sup>9</sup> "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts."
3. We do not receive our teaching in exactly the same way Jesus received His.
  - a. Jesus received His teaching from above, by direct Divine revelation and perfect illumination by the Spirit.
  - b. We receive our teaching also from above, but God has given us His holy Scriptures, perfect and complete.  
Where Jesus received His Word directly by Divine revelation, we have God's Divine revelation in written form. We must study diligently and pray for guidance from the Holy Spirit. We must labor in the Word. The Holy Spirit takes God's revelation and gives us the discernment of understanding.
  - c. Paul writes:  
**2 Timothy 3:16-17 NAU** - "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."
4. It is the same Word as that received by Christ. It is Doctrine from above.
  - a. But how do we comprehend the truths contained in Scripture?  
It begins with a desire to obey.  
We must desire to honor and obey God. We must desire His glory.
  - b. The true teacher does not seek his own glory but the glory of the One above.  
The false teacher seeks the approval of men. He speaks words that will bring him the greatest favor and the loudest acclaim.
  - c. The true teacher speaks the truth no matter what personal hardship it may bring because he is seeking to bring glory to God.

Conclusion:

1. Divine truth is given to us in the rich storehouse of God's Word. For those who approach it humbly with a desire to be conformed to it, they will find rich treasure of truth. God will teach them and give them great discernment.
2. On the other hand, for those who despise God's commandments, God will remove from them even the understanding they have.  
LBC: 5:6 – "As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God, as the righteous judge, for former sin doth blind and harden; from them He not only withholdeth His grace whereby they might have been enlightened in their understanding, and wrought upon their hearts; but sometimes also withdraweth the gifts which they had. . ."
3. J. C. Ryle provides some insight on this mystery: "One secret of getting the key of knowledge is to practice honestly what we know, and that if we conscientiously use the light that we now have, we shall soon find more light coming down into our minds. We should say, 'I will diligently use such knowledge as I possess, and believe that in the using fresh knowledge will be given to me.' The plain things in religion are undeniably very many. Let a man honestly attend to them, and he shall be taught the deep things of God."<sup>2</sup>  
The bottom line: "Are we really willing to do God's will so far as we know it? If we are, God will take care that our knowledge is increased. If we are not willing to do His will, we show clearly that we do not want to be God's servants."<sup>3</sup>
4. May God grant us the grace to humble ourselves before Him.  
**1 Peter 5:5 KJV** - "for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."

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<sup>2</sup> J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, John Vol.2* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2007), Page 14.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Page 20.