

John 7:1-36 Bad Reasons to Reject Jesus

Introduction: The Great Exchange college campus evangelism ministry randomly asks students, “Who, in your opinion, is Jesus Christ?” Most really don’t know. The answers they hear vary widely: a good person, Savior, prophet, moral teacher, historical figure, social revolutionary, son of God. If you don’t know who Jesus is, you can’t trust Him for who He really is. This is important, because Jesus said:

NIV **John 8:24** . . . if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.

******Why did Jesus’ brothers urge Him to go to the festival (7:1-9)?** Countless thousands of people swarmed into Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. The brothers offered Jesus conventional wisdom about how to become famous: Go and do miracles where the most people are (7:3-4).¹

Why did Jesus not go to Judea when his brothers wanted Him to (7:1)? He tarried in Galilee because the Jews in Judea were trying to kill him.

Who did John refer to by “the Jews” (7:1)? It is important to note that John was not in any way anti-Semitic. He did not here refer to Jewish people in general, but rather to the Jewish religious leadership (the Sanhedrin).

Why were “the Jews” seeking to kill him (7:1)? See 5:18. It was because He healed a man on the Sabbath and in so doing broke their interpretation of the Sabbath. Worst yet (in their eyes), He justified it by declaring himself equal with God (and thus qualified to judge what did, and did not, constitute a violation of the law of Moses). Jesus was a threat to their power and they were willing to kill Him to maintain it.

ESV **John 5:18** This was why the Jews were seeking . . . to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

- **“After this” (7:1)**—“This” refers to the events of chapter 6, where Jesus fed the five thousand but then subsequently went from five thousand followers down to twelve.
- **“Galilee . . . Judea” (7:1)**—Galilee and Judea were geographical regions. Galilee consisted of part of what had been the ancient northern Hebrew kingdom of Israel. It was a land area west of the Sea of Galilee. Judea was made up of what had been the ancient southern Hebrew kingdom of Judah. It was a land area west of the Dead Sea. Jesus had spent about a year in Galilee before heading back to Judea.² This was Jesus’ last time to leave Galilee and travel to Judea.³

¹ The three great feasts every Jewish man was expected to attend were Passover, Pentecost, and this one (Booths).

² Carson, *John*, 305.

³ Brown, *John*, 309.

- **“Feast of Booths” (7:2):** The Feast of Booths was a time when people lived in leafy huts to commemorate God’s provision for the ancient Israelites during their wilderness wanderings.⁴ Many Jewish people still build such huts today for this feast. The Feast was known for a special water-drawing rite.⁵ John 7 & 8 deal with what Jesus said during this feast.
- **“his brothers” (7:3):** the normal, natural reading of the text is that this refers to Jesus’ biological brothers. Contrary to this, Roman Catholicism holds that Jesus mother, Mary, remained a virgin the rest of her life, and that even Mary was the product of a miraculous virgin birth (thus, often times when you see a Catholic church with “immaculate conception” in its name, this refers to Mary, not Jesus). They say these brothers must have been Joseph’s sons from a previous marriage.

Why did John add the information that not even Jesus’ own brothers believed in Him (7:5)?

It shows they although they may have seen some of Jesus’ signs, there were totally ignorant of what those signs truly signified. Thus, they were still of the world. They were blissfully unaware that Jesus was following the Father’s agenda.

Incarnation Insight: False depictions of Jesus have been presented where He had a halo, or always wore a spotless white robe, or never blinked, had perfect hair, or walked with His feet never quite touching the ground. So perfectly was Jesus’ deity veiled that even his own brothers, who lived with him day in and day out, did not realize He was God in human form.

Application: You can grow up in a Christian home and go to church every week and know a lot about Jesus, but not personally believe in Him as your Savior and Lord.⁶

What did Jesus mean when He answered that His “time” had not yet come (7:6a), and in what sense was it always the brothers’ time (7:7)? *What time is it?* The Greek word for “time” (7:6) is *kairos*. There are three options as to what Jesus meant:

- 1) **Time to be killed.** Since He also spoke about both being killed and being hated, Jesus may have meant that His time to be killed had not yet come. However, since He added, “your time is always here” that is probably not what He meant.
- 2) **Time to go public.** His brothers wanted Jesus to go public. He may have meant it was not yet quite time for Him to go public. However, it would make no sense for him to then say to the brothers that “your time is always here”, since they had no desire to become public figures.
- 3) **Time to go to the feast.** He may have simply meant it was not yet time for Him to go to the Feast, since a premature appearance would have meant certain death. However, since no one was seeking to kill His brothers, He said, “your time is always here”. It was always a good time for the brothers to go to Judea since no one was trying to kill them.

According to 7:7, why did the world hate Jesus? The world hated Jesus because He testified that its works were evil. For example, this is why John the Baptist was beheaded:

⁴ Dennis & Grudem, *ESV Study*, 2036.

⁵ Carson, *John*, 305.

⁶ Steven Cole, “Lesson 39: What do You Think About Jesus? (John 7:1-13)”, Bible.org. Accessed 10/06/19.

ESV **Matthew 14:3-4, 10** . . . Herod had seized John and bound him and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because John had been saying to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her" . . . He sent and had John beheaded in the prison . . .

Parallel: If you want to see total depravity on full display, stand outside an abortion clinic and suggest to those going inside that it is wrong to kill babies. You are generally shining light both sexual immorality and the murder of an innocent child.

ESV **John 3:19-20** . . . this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

Application: It has been said that the hard part about getting people saved is first getting them to realize they are lost. Another Great Exchange question is, "On a scale of 1 to 10, how good are you?" (1 is evil—10 is perfect)." Most people answer with a 7 and will later answer that God will let them into heaven because they are basically good. People often deny both the extent of their sinfulness and the seriousness of their sinfulness. They are in denial.

ESV **John 15:18-19** If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Application: *If you don't get hate from the world, why do you suppose that is?*

- **"I am not going" (7:8)**—What Jesus meant by this is that He was going to the feast neither *how* they wanted him to go nor *when* they wanted Him to go. Jesus' itinerary was regulated by the Father.⁷

******During the festival, why would no one speak openly about Jesus (7:10-13)?** Everyone feared "the Jews". It sounds like "the Jews" were religious thought police, the Taliban of their day. There was no separation of church and state. Those who went against "the Jews" were persecuted (or prosecuted) by a temple police force. Similarly, imagine going to Iran and speaking openly of Jesus; you would soon find yourself in prison.

Based on 7:11, why did Jesus go in private (7:10)? Consistent with what we were told in 7:1, "the Jews" were looking for Him. It was a hostile search. Based on 7:12, Jesus really was the talk of the town.

If you had given the Great Exchange survey to this crowd, based on 7:12, who would they have said Jesus was? There was confusion. Some would say a good man, and others a deceiver. Both of these answers were wrong. Good men who are merely human don't claim to be God in the flesh! Jesus was either a deceiver, a nut case, or God; there is no other option.

⁷ Carson, *John*, 308.

******How did Jesus justify healing on the Sabbath (7:14-24)?** The Law of Moses prohibited work in the Sabbath. However, the Law of Moses also required baby boys to be circumcised on the eighth day. Sometimes the eighth day fell on a Sabbath; *Now what? To circumcise or not? Which law was higher?*

- **“patriarchs” (7:22)**—Jewish thinking rightly associated circumcision with Moses and the law. However, circumcision was more properly associated with Abraham and the patriarchs, who lived 500 years before Moses. Thus, the parenthetical remark of 7:22 was not merely made for the sake of historical accuracy. The command for circumcision predated the Law of Moses and was considered a higher command than Sabbath observance. Thus, there was a hierarchy of precedence.⁸ All were agreed it was permissible to circumcise on the Sabbath.

Circumcision was a medical procedure done to perfect a small part of the body. Jesus argued that since it was lawful to perform the medical procedure of circumcision on the Sabbath (thus in a sense perfecting part of the baby), then it was also lawful to heal someone on the Sabbath, another medical procedure, perfecting the whole person and not just a part of him. Jesus did not break the Sabbath; He broke their erroneous interpretation of the Sabbath.

Jesus waited until the middle of the feast to go public by teaching in the temple (7:14).

What about His teaching caused “the Jews” to marvel (7:15)? They marveled because Jesus had never been to any of their seminaries, yet there He was, teaching with all the competence and authority of someone who had an earned doctorate.

Warning: John did not record this as an indictment against learning and education, but rather to show Jesus’ supernatural nature. “Edumacation” is a good thing!

What is the answer to the Jews’ question (7:15)? The answer is found in 7:16. Both Jesus’ learning and teaching were supernatural in origin. He perfectly represented the Father.

To whom was Jesus speaking in 7:16. To whom does “them” refer (7:16)? Jesus was speaking to “the Jews” (the leadership).

According to 7:17, what type of people will be able to discern the legitimacy of Jesus’ teaching? Those whose will is to do God’s will are the only ones in a position to discern the origin of Jesus’ teaching. There is a moral dimension involved.⁹ The real emphasis here is not on who is qualified, but on who truly is not qualified (“the Jews”).

What litmus test did Jesus suggest to help determine if His teaching was from God or not (7:18)? He said to look at who got the glory as a result of the teaching.

⁸ Carson, *John*, 315-316.

⁹ Carson, *John*, 312.

What indictment did Jesus bring against the Jews in 7:19? Jesus flat-out declared that they did not keep the Law of Moses, as evidenced in the fact that they were unlawfully trying to kill Him.

ESV **Exodus 20:13** You shall not murder.

ESV **John 7:50-51** Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, “Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?”

How does 7:19 relate back to 7:17? The Jews were far from being among those whose will was to do God’s will. This was evidenced by the fact that the Jews themselves did not keep the law of Moses. They were not worthy to judge the validity of Jesus’ teachings. Earlier, Jesus said of these leaders:

ESV **John 5:42** I know that you do not have the love of God within you.

ESV **John 5:44** How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?

ESV **John 5:46-47** If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?

How did “the crowd” react when they heard Jesus say that someone wanted to kill Him (7:19-20)? Clearly unaware of the conspiracy by the Jews to kill Jesus, they essentially accused Him of being crazy. Perhaps they think Jesus is paranoid.

Three Groups: There are three groups of people in this chapter: “The Jews” (leaders who sought to kill Jesus), “the crowd” (naïve pilgrims who came from out of town for the feast), and “the people of Jerusalem” (sophisticated insiders who were aware of the plot to kill Jesus).

Parallel: People are the same way today (“Our government would never do that!”). Most Chinese citizens deny there ever was a Tiananmen Square massacre, many Russians deny that Stalin killed millions, some Germans even deny the holocaust, etc. This is especially true of people’s hesitancy to suspect anything might be amiss with religious leaders they suspect. Once they’ve drunk the cool-aid, they often become emotionally unreasonable. There is simply no talking to them.

Reality: They accused Jesus of have a demon, but in reality they were the ones who were under demonic influence:

ESV **1 John 5:19** . . . the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

ESV **2 Corinthians 4:4** . . . the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ . . .

How did Jesus answer their charge that He had a demon (7:20)? See 7:21. Jesus responded by reviewing the Sabbath-healing incident for them (5:1-15), and the subsequent marvel it created.

Review: How did Jesus justify healing a man on the Sabbath (7:22-23)? Since it was lawful to circumcise on the Sabbath, then it was also lawful to heal on the Sabbath. Jesus did not break the Sabbath; He broke their erroneous interpretation of the Sabbath.

What application did Jesus suggest in 7:24?

******What caused some people of Jerusalem to suspect that Jesus really might be the Christ (7:25-31)?** Some couldn't understand why the authorities didn't arrest Jesus unless they thought He really was the Christ (7:25-26), and the signs Jesus convinced others (7:31).

Observation: Whereas the "crowd" was unaware of the plot to kill Jesus (7:20), the "people of Jerusalem" knew the leaders sought to kill him (7:25).

What reason was given in 7:27 for not believing in Jesus? They didn't believe in Jesus because they thought they knew where He was from, but supposedly no one would know where the Christ was from. This same objection was stated in the previous chapter:

ESV **John 6:42b** "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say, 'I have come down from heaven'?"

Is it true that no one would know where Christ came from (7:27)? Scripture clearly predicted that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem, and people were aware of this (7:42). However, they apparently held to the notion that the Christ, though born in Bethlehem, would remain in hiding before suddenly appearing and presenting His credentials as Messiah. Jesus appeared disqualified because they had known about Jesus for years.

False Reasoning: The real Messiah will suddenly and unexpectedly appear, almost as if from out of nowhere. Jesus has been around a while, and it is well known where He is from. Thus, Jesus cannot be the real Messiah.¹⁰

Application: Many Christians today have messed-up beliefs about end-time events. They are certain they are right, but they are as wrong as these people from Jerusalem. Rather than holding their views humbly, they are too willing to divide from those who differ.

In 7:28-29, how did Jesus answer the home-boy objection (7:27)? He said that they only *thought* they knew where he came from (Galilee). The reality was that He was sent by One they indeed did not know (God the Father). Jesus' beginning went way back before His conception in Mary's womb. Jesus is the eternal God. Jesus' answer comes down to:

¹⁰ Hendriksen, *John*, 17.

ESV **John 7:24** Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.

Do you see the word “so” in 7:30? It indicates “for this reason” or “therefore”.¹¹ Offended by Jesus’ teachings, what did the people of Jerusalem attempt to do (7:30)? They evidently attempted vigilante action in sort of a citizens’ arrest.¹²

Why were the authorities unable to arrest Jesus (7:30)? Jesus was providentially protected; His hour had not yet come. They sought a reason to arrest him, but evidently could not come up with a good enough reason to legally do so.

What “hour” for Jesus had not yet come (7:30)? The hour for Him to be arrested, placed on trial, and killed had not yet come. Earlier Jesus spoke of his “time” (*kairos*) to go to the feast; John now wrote of Jesus’ “hour” (*hora*, basis for “hour”) to be arrested and put on trial. The two terms are not synonymous.

Despite the unbelief of those who doubted Jesus ancestry, why did many others believe in Jesus (7:31)? They believed in Him because of the signs He did.

******How did the chief priests and Pharisees respond to the crowd’s growing interest in Jesus (7:32-36)?** Dropping any pretense of just cause, they signed an arrest warrant and sent the police to arrest him.

Hearing of the arrest warrant, what did Jesus say about His future whereabouts (7:33-36)? Knowing that they were coming to arrest Him, Jesus used the occasion to say He would only be with them a little longer. He further said that no one could come where He was going.

What was Jesus talking about in 7:33-34? Jesus knew that He was about to leave earth and go back to the Father. He may have said this to strengthen the faith of those who believed in Him, so that after He was crucified they would realized it was all part of God’s sovereign plan.

Where did the Jews think Jesus might be headed (7:35-36)? They thought He try to escape to another country, a fugitive from justice, and live in Jewish communities dispersed throughout the Roman Empire. The “dispersion”(*diaspora*, 7:25) referred to all Jewish people outside Palestine, scattered throughout the Roman Empire.

From the context, why would they be looking for Jesus? What motive would they have had? For the authorities, it would have been to apprehend Him so as to stop people from believing in Him. For those who believed, it would have been to learn from Him.

¹¹ The word for “so” (7:30) is *oun*, “therefore”.

¹² Carson, *John*, 319.

So What?

How does the information in John 7 help persuade an unbelieving, first-century dispersion Jew to believe in Jesus as the Christ? It shows the bias and unreasonableness of the leadership of Judea. It shows the ignorance of the general populace concerning Jesus. However, some did believe.

According to John 7, who is Jesus? Jesus was someone whose teaching was that of the Father, and who was from the Father. Furthermore, Jesus was the Christ, equal with the Father.

Based on John 7, what does Jesus want from us? He wants us to judge not by appearances, but with right judgment. In so doing we will be able to recognize Him for who He really is.

**** = Ask this question before reading the text. This will engage people's minds and focus their attention.

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Revised 10/06/19