



John 7:1-9
Even His Brothers Did Not Believe...

John 7:1 After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for He did not want to walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill Him.

2 Now the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles was at hand.

3 His brothers therefore said to Him, "Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing.

4 "For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world."

5 For even His brothers did not believe in Him.

6 Then Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready.

7 "The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil.

8 "You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come."

9 When He had said these things to them, He remained in Galilee.

It's interesting isn't it how many people want to give Jesus advice about how to grow His church? It's bad enough when its marketers in the modern day, who tell us all the gimmicks and methods we need to adopt in order to get the world into the church, but even worse in these verses the marketing gurus are His own younger half-brothers.

The events of the last Chapter, Chapter 6 occurred in April around the Passover, and now John has taken us forward 7 months to the Feast of Tabernacles in October. Jesus has spent the intervening time teaching and preaching in Galilee. Opposition to Him and His ministry is now growing fiercer, especially amongst the Jewish leadership, and while they can't figure out how to get at Him while He is far away from the center of their power in Jerusalem, it wouldn't be that difficult where he to go up to the city. And they know He must go up, because God had commanded that certain feasts, like Passover, had to be celebrated in Jerusalem. As a perfect keeper of God's law, Jesus had to attend them.

Tabernacles, or *Sukkot* in the Hebrew, was the great feast held at the end of the harvest. It commemorated the goodness of God for providing for His people, first in their wilderness wanderings and then after they settled in the promised land. To remember their forty year sojourn in the wilderness they would erect little tents or booths in the courts and on the roofs of their houses. Four Seven Days they were to dwell in these booths, and then on the eighth there was a great feast. Jews incidentally will still do this, but apparently not for the entire day.

According to the ancient Jewish historian Josephus, Tabernacles was the most popular of the three great feasts that faithful Jews were required to go to Jerusalem to celebrate. Jesus brothers apparently knew that, and they figure now is the time to revitalize the ministry and get it back on track.

These incidentally were his younger half brothers – the sons of Mary and Joseph. Matthew 13:55 identifies them as **James, Joses, Simon, and Judas**. Now as many of you know the Roman Catholics has created a superstitious tradition that Mary never had any other children. But the text of scripture nowhere bears this out.

Matthew 1:24 *Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife,
25 and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS.*

Brothers and Sisters, it should be a no-brainer to you that there is nothing wrong with Mary bearing children for Joseph after giving birth to the Son of God. And certainly remaining a perpetual virgin would have been an ill service to the man she married. There is no sin, in bearing children.

These brothers did not become believers in Christ until after the resurrection and John is quite open in telling us, that like the crowds that had tried to make Him king by force, these brothers did not believe in Him. They are thinking along two lines, **first** from their perspective Jesus' ministry is slumping, many of the disciples have gone away, now he can go down there and get them back, Ok so you drove them away with all your hard teaching. But now do something before it's too late! Time to change your ministry, say the marketers, give 'em what they want. **Second**, if Jesus is going to be a great man and a great leader, what is He doing in the backwater of Galilee? Go to Jerusalem and do miracles so everyone will see you and everyone will follow you!

This is essentially a repetition of the Devil's temptation to throw Himself off the highest point on the temple. And throughout His ministry Jesus is going to constantly be tempted to sinfully compromise.

Its worth considering in this that many a Christian suffering for his faith has had the solace of a believing wife, or believing family members who have strengthened them in their times of trial and helped them to overcome temptations to give up. Martin Luther had Katie, Wesley had Charles his brother who wrote so many of our hymns, Jesus however, had none of these comforts. Rather it seems that at times his family were a further trial. And that in his moment of greatest trial – all left him.

Jesus answers them ***My time has not yet come***, Right then was not the specific time for Him to go up, later He will, and not merely as a pilgrim. Rather when the crowds are assembled and expectant He will suddenly make Himself known.

God had a specific timetable for his life, every moment, every word, every action. And throughout his Gospel John makes it clear that Jesus knew that there was a specific hour that was coming. And that hour was the time when He would go up to Jerusalem to lay down His life as the atonement for our sins. That was the hour of his crucifixion.

He says however to his brothers who do not believe, I have to go up at a certain hour, because I am working according to the father's timetable and following His agenda. You can go up whenever you want. Why? Because without believing in me what you are doing is meaningless. You go up supposedly to worship God at the feast of tabernacles, and yet here I am, the God you claim to worship tabernacling, that is dwelling amongst you, and you will not believe. Truly as John wrote in John 1:10-11 ***“He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.”***

The world not only did not receive Him and believe in Him, it hated Him. Why? Because He is the light, the exposor of darkness! John 3:19 ***"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."***

The world was upset by the teaching of Christ, the exclusivity of Christ, the truth claims of Christ, but what made them mad dog angry was when he exposed their evil in public. The Pharisees for instance, made a great show of public righteousness, but He showed the world they were nothing but whitewashed tombs, pretty on the outside, but inwardly filled with dead men's bones and corruption.

So he tells them, you go up. I am not yet going up, and He remained behind for a time after they had set off.

Lets draw a few applications from this first for believers and then non-believers:

1) We see here answered one of the great dilemmas of the Christian faith. Namely, ***if Christ's people are being persecuted, is it an act of unbelief to seek to avoid that persecution?*** There were for instance Christians who were actually eager to be martyred. Origen for instance, had to be physically restrained from following his father to the arena to die, and the only way his mother prevented it was by hiding all his clothes. I always wondered about this myself. *Must we submit ourselves to die?* Well the answer is No. Here we see that although the Jews wanted to kill Jesus and he knew it, He did not put Himself into their hands by going to Judea. This example is also backed up by the example of the early Christians.

Acts 8:1 Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Additionally, in the first section of Matthew 10:23 Jesus commanded ***"But whenever they persecute you in one city, flee to the next"***

Matthew Henry comments: ***"In times of imminent peril it is not only allowable, but advisable, to withdraw and abscond for our own safety and preservation, and to choose the service of those places which are least perilous"*** So for instance, Calvin fled to Geneva, the Puritans fled to Holland, the Covenanters met in secret. *However, there is a limit to this, we must not be so eager to avoid martyrdom that we are willing to sin to save them.* For instance, if you were ordered to repudiate your faith. As Calvin pointed out ***"for to what purpose would life be maintained and defended, but that we may serve the Lord? We ought always to take care, therefore, that we do not, for the sake of life, lose the reasons for living."*** – John Calvin

2) For those of you who have unbelieving friends and relatives, I hope you gain great comfort from these verses. I've met many a parent who beats themselves up constantly because a child does not believe, a spouse who feels that they are to blame for their mates unbelief. As JC Ryle points out: ***"The true servants of Christ in every age will do well to remember this. They are often surprised and troubled to find that in religion they stand alone. They are apt to fancy that it must be their own fault that all around them are not converted like themselves. They are ready to blame themselves because their families remain worldly and unbelieving. But let them look at the verse before us. In***

our Lord Jesus Christ there was no fault either in temper, word, or deed. Yet even Christ's own "brethren did not believe in Him." Also, know that although because none of your family believe you may have to go through the trial of standing alone for Christ, that as in all your trials and tribulations your savior has passed through them before you, and that in Him you will never be alone, he is always with you. And amongst the saints he has given you brothers and sisters who are tied to you by bonds stronger than blood, and who will stand with you forever.

3) Brothers and Sisters, take heart from that because as Paul told us in 2 Tim. 3:12 *"all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution"* If you are in the Light, the Darkness will hate you because you cannot help but expose the evil of its deeds. John the Baptist was put to death precisely because he condemned the sins of Herod and his elopement with His Brother's wife Herodias. Paul Schneider was a German Reformed Pastor who was sent to Buchenwald, "In the name of Jesus Christ, I witness against the murder of these prisoners." He got another beating. "A guard said to him, 'If we released you, what would you do?' . . . Paul replied, 'I would go to Weimer and the first kerbstone would become a pulpit from which I would denounce the brutal crimes committed here.'"

Well, that would never happen here... No? Brothers and Sisters, evangelical pastors in Europe, Canada, and Australia have already been tried, convicted, and even imprisoned merely for testifying against the world, and its evil acts.

A Canadian human rights tribunal ordered a Christian pastor to renounce his faith and never again express moral opposition to homosexuality, according to a new report.

In a decision dated May 30 in the penalty phase of the quasi-judicial proceedings run by the Alberta Human Rights Tribunal, evangelical pastor Stephen Boisson was banned from expressing his biblical perspective of homosexuality and ordered to pay \$5,000 for "damages for pain and suffering" as well as apologize to the activist who complained of being hurt... " That Mr. Boissoin and The Concerned Christian Coalition Inc. shall cease publishing in newspapers, by email, on the radio, in public speeches, or on the internet, in future, disparaging remarks about gays and homosexuals. Further, they shall not and are prohibited from making disparaging remarks in the future about Dr. Lund or Dr. Lund's witnesses relating to their involvement in this complaint. Further, all disparaging remarks versus homosexuals are directed to be removed from current web sites and publications of Mr. Boissoin and The Concerned Christian Coalition Inc. That The Concerned Christian Coalition Inc. and Mr. Boissoin shall, in future, be **restrained** from committing the same or similar contraventions of the Act.. That Mr. Boissoin and The Concerned Christian Coalition Inc. provide Dr. Lund with a written apology for the article in the Red Deer Advocate which was the subject of this complaint.. That Mr. Boissoin and The Concerned Christian Coalition Inc. shall request the Red Deer Advocate publish a copy this Order in the Red Deer Advocate and that they request their written apology for the contravention of the Act be published in the Red Deer Advocate."

4) Finally a warning, regarding Christ's words to his brothers. What a huge contrast, Jesus lived a Godward life where every moment was precious, every second ordered by God's providence and accomplishing some aspect of the Will of His Father. His brothers, although they clearly had great plans and a huge agenda, were ultimately wasting the time that God had given them. What of You? Are you ticking away the moments that make up the dull day, fritter and waste your time in an offhand way? That's the way I used to live my life. I had time to waste, time to kill.

"Those who live useless lives have their time always ready; they can go and come when they please. But those whose time is filled up with duty will often find themselves straitened, and they have not

yet time for that which others can do at any time. Those who are made the servants of God... must not expect not covet to be masters of their own time. The confinement of business is a thousand times better than the liberty of idleness."

Many of course plan to get on board with God when their own agendas are exhausted. We were speaking with a waitress. Later, Later. Tomorrow. There will come a time when there is no more time for you though. A time when time has run out. 2 Corinthians 6:1 We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

2 For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

One life to live, its soon past, only what is done in Christ will last.