

THE DECEIVER OF THE PEOPLE

John 7:1-13

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. ¹⁰ But when His brothers had gone up, then He also went up to the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret. ¹¹ Then the Jews sought Him at the feast, and said, "Where is He?" ¹² And there was much complaining among the people concerning Him. Some said, "He is good"; others said, "No, on the contrary, He deceives the people." ¹³ However, no one spoke openly of Him for fear of the Jews.

One of the things that is very often heard when Christians of differing persuasion gather together is the statement that "We need to set aside our differences and just preach the Gospel." This usually comes up when one person or another find themselves challenged in a position that they hold and rather than stretch themselves out of their comfort zone they fall back on this familiar refrain. One of the impressions I often get from people who say this is that they have an idea of Jesus that is very different from the way the Bible presents Him.

Their view of Jesus is that He is some sort of cosmic good guy that's teachings that can basically be boiled down to "Be nice to everyone, and make sure you don't make anyone uncomfortable." Yes that is a little bit simplistic, but not nearly as simplistic as their view of what it means to preach the Gospel. In the above passage we see exactly what kind of things happened when Jesus, "just preached the Gospel."

John Chapter 7 begins a section in John's Gospel that I like to call the *period of conflict*. John begins with its 18 verse prologue introducing Jesus as the Word of God, and moves through 7 distinct periods. We must always remember when reading or studying John's Gospel his reason for writing which is written in the 20th Chapter in verse 30, and 31:

³⁰ *And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;* ³¹ *but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.*

John is writing with the express purpose that people would know who Jesus is and that He is the Christ. Everything in this account is meant to point to Jesus so that those who read would believe and have life/

The first of these periods is the Period of Consideration where Jesus presents Himself before the public for their consideration and acceptance. Some of the events in this period are the Wedding at Cana, His meeting of the Samaritan woman at the well, and His dialogue with Nicodemus.

The second period is the Period of Controversy. In the first period Jesus presented Himself as nothing less than God, and He put forth His claim as Messiah, and demanded nothing less than obedient faith from those who would follow Him. During this period Jesus healed the man at the pool, and in response to the reaction of the leaders of the Jews and of the crowds He has long discussions with both groups and actually contends with the false beliefs and practices of many of the leaders of the Jews. This is one of my favorite sections of John's Gospel because I love reading and studying the way Jesus confounds his opponents. Also in this section there is the feeding of the five thousand, and Jesus walks on the water. Jesus continues to present Himself as the Divine Son of God, and it is here that we see the first signs of a divide amongst his hearers.

The third period is the period of Conflict, which is where our text is, and we will get back to that in just a moment, but Section 4 is the period of Crisis, Section 5, the period of Conference, and 6 is the period of Consummation and the close of the book. Each section build on the previous and the whole book is moving toward the conclusion where we have already saw that John wants us to learn who and what Jesus is.

So let's go back to the Period of Conflict. It is not a coincidence that Conflict comes immediately after Controversy. I also think it is not a coincidence that this section the Period of Conflict is the largest single section in John's Gospel. I mark this period as going from John 7 through John 11. One of the things that is most apparent from this section is that when controversy arises, it makes it a little easier to identify who sides with who.

In the preceding section the "Controversy" was introduced and arguments sprang forth, but by the time we get to this Period of Conflict the opposition to Jesus had pretty much fixed their attitude of disagreement and animosity and made it their own and now they were in open conflict with the Word of God, The Logos.

Our text today begins with the statement that "After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for He did not want to walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill Him." Obviously the controversy was no mere disagreement. Jesus had presented Himself as the Messiah, and the people who did not like this were not content to just let Him continue His claims in peace, they wanted Him dead. You will notice from this time on in John's Gospel the attempt by the leaders to trick Jesus only intensify.

The occasion of today's verse is The Jews' feast of tabernacles Or the feast of tents, or booths. This feast was celebrated on the 15th day of the month Tisri, which in our calendar would be around late September or early October. It was called this to cause Israel to remember that they had to dwell in tents in the wilderness. During this feast according to Leviticus 23, they would dwell in booths or tents, as their fathers did in the wilderness. The feast was to last eight days, and the last day was the most distinguished, and it was on this day that there was to be a great feast. The Feast of Tabernacles was one of the three feasts which every male among the Jews was required to attend.

Those who are with Jesus, naturally, are encouraging Jesus to attend this mandatory feast. In verse 3 and 4 we see them offering Jesus their council to go into Judea for the feast, What is truly fascinating about these verses though is that we get a glimpse not only of what they say but what it is they were feeling as well. The text tells us that, much like the Pharisees and the Leaders of the Jews, that even His brothers did not believe Him

Like most of Israel who had been awaiting the Messiah, the disciples had their own idea of what He would be like, and their "encouragement" was more of a prodding for Jesus to make an open bid on His Messianic claims by promoting Himself as a worker of Miracles. You can almost hear their thinking. "You know, I have been looking for this Messiah character for quite some time now, and Jesus seems to fit the criteria, but what is He waiting for?" You see they took for granted that Christ was influenced by the same spirit which they were influenced by, thus they thought He should use every opportunity to publicly promote Himself. "Why Jesus, are you wasting your time out here in Galilee when the real big show is in Jerusalem? No one is ever going to hear about you if you stay out here."

Jesus then respond to the Disciples claim by drawing further line of controversy. He tells them He is not going up to the feast yet, because His time is not yet come, but that they should go up to the feast and then He says some words which are actually kind of haunting.

"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."

In this brief statement Jesus is actually saying that the reason His disciples are not yet in agreement with Jesus is because His testimony is actually different from theirs. He tells them that the world cannot hate them because they actually have no voice that opposes the world. They are in agreement with the world. They are obviously not going to incite the world's envy, or cause the world's leaders to come against them, if they are speaking the same things that the World speaks. When one has the same spirit and same principles with the men of the world, how can you expect the world to hate you.

Jesus then tells them that He is bearing witness against it. This was the reason He was so opposed. He proclaimed that men were fallen, and the result was that they hated Him, and because they hated Him, they also hated God. Truthfully, all who preach faithfully against the wickedness of the world will face opposition.

A slight clarification becomes necessary here, Some have taken this to mean that we should strive to be offensive. And then when people take offense at the message that they proclaim, they say, well apparently I am doing God's will, if brother so and so can't hack it then they obviously need to repent. True there are times when the Gospel does offend people, but make sure that the offense is coming from the Gospel and not from your own arrogance and pride.

After this conversation Jesus tells His disciples that His time is not yet, but that they should go to the feast. They go and Jesus stays behind, and sure enough when they get there the Jews are looking for him and wondering where He is. The controversy is again evident here because the crowds are complaining about Him. The word used here in the Greek is the word γογγυσμός. (*gong-goos-mos*) which can be translated as grudging or murmuring.

Their complaints as we will see are not open complaining but more of a secret grumbling, and the the reason for the murmuring is made obvious in the next verse, because it tells us that they were afraid to speak openly of Him because of the Jews. It is funny how frequently we see this very thing today. We have Jesus words at our access, and we have the ability to know what He said and taught and continues to teach, but very often we remain silent due to the fact that we, like the people then, are afraid of what people will say.

How many times are we gathered with friends and family or co-workers , when we hear someone say something about the Bible or about Jesus, that is in accurate or untrue? And rather than speak up we murmur and complain about it in such a way that we allow our fear to win the day. You see I do think much of modern Christianity tries to be more respectable than faithful to the Word of God. I mean if our leaders and those in know consider Christianity to be foolish, who am I to dissuade them? Part of the design of God's Word is to divide people. Luke 12:51-55 tells us the following:

“Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division.⁵² For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three.⁵³ Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.”

You see there are two ways that Jesus can be viewed. This is not news to any one of us, but it definitely requires some reconsideration. Either Jesus is who He claimed to be, The Messiah, The King of Kings, the 2nd person of the Trinity, either He is this, or He is a great deceiver of the people. As Christians I think it is obvious where we side on this issue, but a question that I think must be asked is this? Are we regarding Christ and His word as people who are afraid of those who oppose Him?

I have so often seen it where when someone is confronted about their faith or about their belief in the Bible and their belief is put to the test they wilt. Examples that are common today:

1. You know Mike, how can you oppose a loving relationship between two consenting adults? Who are you to judge? Please note this argument is no different today than it was when it was used in the 60's about so called "shacking up." Just like the 60's and just like today people are often very firm on their convictions until it comes to facing someone they know. Then they are afraid to say anything, and I honestly cannot think of a reason they would be afraid other than fear.

2. This is a fun one. You are not one of those people who believe in a 6 day creation are you? Do you believe the earth is flat as well? Why are some, and by some I mean many, afraid to stand and say. "Well the Bible is the Word of God, and the Bible says this..." Are you afraid you are going to lose respectability with a fool? Psalms 14:1 says that the fool says in His heart there is no God.

I can remember when I attended Bible College there were many who modified their view of Creation. I can only guess they did this to become more acceptable among certain folks, but seriously, if you do not take the Bible for what it says, all you are really doing is showing people the level of your unbelief.

3. There are numerous examples I could list, but I will go with one more. The abortion issue. I remember a few years ago standing out side an abortion clinic with my daughters trying to convince a few moms not to kill their children. You know it actually sounds like an argument you couldn't lose, but over and over again we were losing it. We had been there about 2 hours and I was getting ready to go home when a car pulled up and I was being confronted about my "unfaithful witness" to Jesus Christ. And then I heard those familiar words, "You know I am a Christian as well, but Christ called us to preach the Gospel, not do this."

Did I become fearful, I have to admit a little bit I did. But I had to ask myself a few questions. Does Jesus tell us to "only preach the Gospel, or does he tell us to care for orphan and the widow and the poor as well?" It would of seemed pretty lame to share with my new brother the 4 Spiritual Laws, after all, He too was a Christian. So I asked Him a question.

What Jesus is it that you serve? Do you serve the Jesus who in Psalms 110 leaves a path of the dead in the wake of His judgment as He strikes through Kingsd or do you serve the Jesus who stands by while a murderer rips the arms and legs off of a baby girl. But then you hand Him a Gospel tract.

You see I know this is extreme to many of us, but I want to take us back to what Jesus said in verse 7. *The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil.*

I believe very strongly that much of the modern church has so assimilated itself to the World around it, that they have actually bought into the idea that our goal is to be nice to everyone. It is true, that we are to love our enemies, but it is not loving to allow them to wallow in their muck without actually sharing the Hope that Jesus Christ brings. And that hope is not to say a prayer and your life will be forever changed. The hope is that the transforming power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ will change the way you work, play serve, obey, worship and live. It will change your interactions with everyone that you meet.

When we testify to the World the way that Jesus testified to the World, the World is not going to give you a silver star. They are going to reward you the same way they rewarded Him, with a wooden cross. Jesus said to pick up our cross daily, and that means daily we are to do what He did.

If everything you ever testify about Jesus leaves all your hearers thinking, wow, Jesus is a good man, then there is a good chance you are leaving something out. Because if you testify accurately about Him, there are always some who will accuse him of being a deceiver of the people.