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## It's About Time

### John 7:1-10

**Intro:** As we noticed last time, John achieves a kind of literary climax at the end of **ch6** with Peter's confession of Jesus. Sure, most of the Lord's followers have left Him by this time but the Twelve were still with Him and Peter had spoken his great confession of faith on behalf of them all – or so he thought. Now, if we had been writing this Gospel, we'd have ended the chapter at this point and moved on to some new and glorious theme in **ch7**. But, John doesn't do this. He goes on to kill the mood by exposing the fact that, not only will one of the Twelve betray Jesus, but that Jesus knows which one it is and that Jesus has always know this. Why? John includes this depressing info because this is what happened. John's not a novelist writing a story to make people feel good about themselves; he's a realist and he is portraying the reality of that day. Not only was there real growth of faith in Jesus among His true disciples but, at the same time there was also emerging a real hatred for Jesus and it was intensifying as the days progressed. This reality sets the stage for the events that will occur in **ch7**.

Right away we become aware of what appears to be a few disturbing inconsistencies in what we know of the character of Jesus Christ. Was He scared to walk in Judea? Was this a question of courage or self-preservation? What about His comment to His brothers? He told them He wasn't going to the feast then He turns around and goes to the feast after they leave. Was He being disingenuous? Did He purposely mislead His brothers? These dilemmas are not imagined because critics of the Bible have made quite a bit of hay over them in the past. But, how do we answer them. How do we rectify what we read here with what we already know about the character of Jesus Christ?

The answer is: it's about time – or more accurately: it's all about timing. As we read through John, in fact, all of the Gospels, we can't help but notice that Jesus always operated under a certain, pre-assigned timetable. Every aspect of His birth, life, ministry, and death was set to a divine timetable and every action He took precisely coincided with this timetable. When understood in this light, the gist of this passage not only becomes more evident; but also more logical. As we go through our text, we'll look at what's

happening in each verse, we'll look at the details of the divine timetable of Jesus' life and then discover what meaning this may have on our own spiritual lives.

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**1-2-** After- this phrase gives no indication of how much time has elapsed from **ch6** but we know that the events of **ch6** took place around the time of the Passover feast (**6:4**), which is in the Spring, and the events of **ch7** take place during the Feast of Tabernacles, which is in the Fall. Thus, we can deduce that a full 6 months has passed since Jesus lost most of His followers and Peter made his great confession. What was Jesus doing during this time? John offers us scant details. He's not writing a complete history of the life of Jesus, he merely selects certain excerpts from the life of Christ for a twofold purpose: to reveal the messiahship of Jesus and bring people to faith in Him.

But, what was Jesus doing during this time? What was there to do after the majority of His followers decided it was too difficult to continue following Him? Well, we know He wasn't setting at home playing video games or surfing the web for new ministry ideas. No, actually, John tells us that He still walked in Galilee – or “went around.” This means that despite the setback to His ministry in **ch6**, Jesus continued His itinerant ministry in Galilee, doing exactly what He had done before the mass exodus of followers. Jesus did not allow the fickleness of the crowd to determine His actions, His ministry or His calling. Yet, so many believers will do exactly that. They'll receive a call from God to engage in some sort of ministry (be it large or small), but when things don't pan out the way they think they ought to, they bail out and start looking for “another calling.” This happens at every level of ministry. Now, sometimes the Lord does move His servants to new ministries, but usually not after they've made a royal mess of their current ministry.

Was Jesus afraid to walk in Judea? Of course not! Since Jesus was following the Father's timetable and since it was not yet time for Him to give His life for the sin of the world, Jesus was indestructible and He knew it! Though the religious leaders actively sought His death, they couldn't touch Him until it was His time. Jesus knew that but He also knew that if He walked (ministered) in Judea, He'd be spending all His time arguing with these religious leaders. He was aware of the Father's perfect timing and it wasn't yet time for Him to be arrested and delivered to the Gentiles.

Basically, Jesus was avoiding the controversy. He could've walked in Judea but it would have been a daily grind of casting pearls before swine. Some Christians seem to only be happy when they are in the thick of the theological argument. The problem with that is, you never really get any real work done for the kingdom of God. You don't bring people to a saving knowledge of Christ by arguing them to a place of faith. There's a time and place for apologetics and contending for the faith but that's not every day with every person. Jesus didn't come to earth to argue doctrine with self-righteous, stiff-necked men but to call sinners to repentance. There were still plenty of people to be reached in Galilee with His message and He was determined to reach them while He had the time and opportunity to do so.

Feast- Following the Feasts of Trumpets and the solemn Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles was a festive time for the people of Israel. It was primarily a feast of thanksgiving for the blessings of God in the harvest but there was also a special reference to the past blessings Israel received during the 40 year wilderness wanderings. During this week long feast, which occurred in September or October, families would camp out in temporary shelters or makeshift "booths" made from branches and leaves, reminding them of God's faithfulness to Israel in the wilderness.

During this feast, the temple area was illuminated with large candlesticks which reminded the people of the guiding pillar of fire and each day of the feast, the priests would carry water from the pool of Siloam and pour it out of a golden vessel onto the steps of the temple to remind the people of the miraculous provision of water from the rock. This particular activity will become more important to us the further we get into this chapter.

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**3-5-** brothers- These were actual half-brothers, not step-brothers or cousins but literal "uterine" siblings, born of Mary and fathered by Joseph. Scripture tells us that Jesus had 4 younger brothers and "sisters" (plural) meaning more than 1. So Jesus had at least 6 other younger siblings. This Biblical truth debunks the false doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary. Jesus was her first born, born when she was a virgin, but no man can prove that He was her last.

Now, can you imagine having Jesus as your older brother? That can be good and bad. Having an older brother is nice if he's a fairly cool guy and

what cooler older brother could there ever be than Jesus. On the other hand, I'm sure they all heard it said more than once in their lives, "Why can't you be more like your older brother?" That would be a hard act to follow: at home, at school, in the community – you would always be a disappointment! Who could do that? Who could achieve that? Nobody! But yet, that's exactly why Jesus came to this earth and died for our sins: so that, having accepted His gift of salvation, He now can transform us by His Spirit into His image! So, when presented with that same question, we can now respond, "Just you wait! He is currently making me into His own image."

Jesus' brothers were trying to help Him out. They knew His ministry had taken a big hit when most of His followers jumped ship and they were advising Him that Jerusalem would be the best place to remedy that situation. Besides, if you're going to claim to be Messiah shouldn't your messianic works be performed in the holy city and not just in the remote reaches of Galilee? No one who claims to be a public figure can ever establish himself as such by working in secret. "You can't be famous hiding like this! If you're so great, prove it to the world." Their problem here was in thinking that His glory was limited to public demonstrations of His miraculous power when in fact; His glory would only be supremely displayed at His crucifixion. They thought His success depended on the world's attitude towards Him; in other words, they believed in the world and not in Him.

Remarkably, Jesus' brothers never did believe in Him as Messiah before His death and resurrection. It was only after these things occurred that they were numbered among the disciples and eventually became prominent in the church.

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**6-10-** Because Jesus was completely submitted to the Father's will, the divine timetable was important. His brothers were not submitted to God's will in the same way, so any time was fine for them. It was not for them to tell Him where and when to go, His steps were ordered by another. "My time," means an opportunity, the best time to do something, that moment when circumstances are most suitable. His brothers wanted Him to go to Jerusalem and make a grand, public appearance. Of course, this is something Jesus would do, but not at this feast. His grand appearance would take place 6 months later, a week before Passover, and it would coincide precisely with the Father's timetable.

The world was not interested in Jesus' time or His doctrine for that matter. In this regard, His brothers were aligned with the world. Their concept of His ministry was worldly. What they failed to realize was that all those followers that left Jesus had done so because their faith was imperfectly placed on the outward signs Jesus had performed and not on the spiritual truth these signs were meant to convey. Their worldly advice would only produce more of the same.

The attitude of the world and His brothers boiled down to one undeniable truth – the world isn't interested in what God thinks about it, they don't even want to know. The world is only interested in having its own selfish desires met and wants nothing to do with the will or purpose of God. That's why the religious leaders wanted to kill Him, that's why His followers left, that's why His brothers didn't believe. Not because they didn't understand the extent of His teaching but because they did understand it and refused to submit to it.

A few days after His brothers left for the feast, Jesus Himself went up to Jerusalem; not to observe the feast as they had proposed, but to minister to the people – to deliver the message of the kingdom of God yet again. He did not go up the way His brothers had suggested (publicly) but in secret (undercover). Others did not establish the pattern for Jesus to walk in. In His submission to the Father's timetable, He was the master of every situation. He went up to Jerusalem when He was ready and in the manner He deemed appropriate. He didn't go up because His brothers counseled Him to do so but because the timing was right and there was still ministry to be accomplished. We should also understand that Jesus is leaving Galilee for the last time. He would eventually give up His life in Jerusalem

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To fully understand what Jesus meant when He said His time was not the same as His brother's time, we must first recognize that God's time is different from ours. In fact, it's questionable for us to use the word "time" in regards to God's plan at all. Time is a word for creation. God is not in time, He's outside it. He stands in eternity. Thus, we must not make the mistake of trying to apply the concept of time to Him.

It's difficult to explain how God relates to what we call time. You can use the example of a parade or canoeing down a river. Or, you can think of it in terms of a motion picture: we watch a movie in sequence from beginning to

end. This is both a construct and limitation of time. But God views it as a million different frames, all seen at once. From His eternal perspective, God sees Adam and Eve, Abraham and Isaac, Christ on the cross, you and me, simultaneously!

This isn't just an exercise in imagination; it has real bearing on our lives, primarily in regards to making decisions. For us, a life in time is filled with decisions. We make decisions constantly, mainly in an effort to deal with variableness, ignorance, previous indecision and other things. Our decisions are attempts to deal with problems not previously considered. God's decisions aren't like this at all because of His relationship to time. There is no variableness or indecision with God. Thus, His decisions are more like eternal decrees: they are unchanging and unchangeable.

God doesn't make decisions because He's suddenly confronted with a problem He hasn't foreseen. He determines both the problems and their solutions in advance. He's never surprised, never caught off balance. So, there's never a problem that baffles Him or a work that He doesn't intend to finish. Because of this we can rest in Him and trust Him to order our steps. To know this about God and trust Him in it is a huge step forward in the believer's life.

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This truth has particular bearing on the life of Jesus for here was God, the inhabitant of eternity, now living in time. The one thing we know about the "time" of Jesus was that the events of His life were set by God's eternal decrees. The NT reveals in many places that the birth, life and death of Jesus all occurred according to the fixed plan of God (**Gal 4:4-5**). His death is seen this way in **Rev 13:8** where Jesus is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Peter linked His death to both prophecy and the Father's timetable in **Acts 2:22-23**.

These and many other verses teach us that the death of Jesus was eternally planned and determined by God. Not just His death but the very details of His death, birth and life were similarly determined. One important conclusion can be drawn from this. If the events of Christ's life were ordered by God then the most important thing that can be said about the death of Jesus Christ is that God the Father caused it. God the Father put Jesus to death. It wasn't the Romans, the religious leaders or even sinners that killed Jesus. Jesus died for sinners but sinners didn't take His life. His death was

predetermined by the Father, set to a specific timetable and a particular set of circumstances.

Not only were the events of Christ's life determined by the Father but the exact time they occurred was determined. Jesus wasn't about to make a grand entrance into Jerusalem during this feast because He would later make that entrance on what is commonly called Palm Sunday now. What you might not be aware of is that His Palm Sunday entrance fulfilled to the exact day a prophecy that was given about this event in Daniel 9. This isn't the only instance of this in Jesus' life. From His birth in Bethlehem, His escape into Egypt, even His life and ministry in Galilee – not only were the details of His life determined but the precise days of certain events in His life were even determined.

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How does all this apply to our lives? Few things in this life are as important as time, but time often is wasted and as such, becomes unimportant. Also, time is often spent on things which later prove to have no meaning. This describes the world's time to a "T!" The world spins on its axis as its inhabitants scurry around in much effort and anxiety but in the end, it all counts for nothing. As believers, we have a choice: our time can be like the world's time (meaningless) or it can be like the time of Jesus – filled with meaning and purpose. Your time can become part of that great and eternal drama of salvation that is God's plan for the ages.

Maybe you can't see how your time can be made meaningful for God's kingdom. That's ok because God sees it and He both knows and has already planned what's going to happen in your life. You don't have to be Billy Graham to make a difference in the world. You just have to be submitted to God's plan and purposes for your life just like Billy Graham was. Our problem is that we often miss the beauty of what God is doing in our lives because His work is either too slow for our comprehension or too fast. All we can do is trust Him to do what is best for His kingdom thru us and rejoice in the fact that our perspective will one day be just like His! 😊