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What About Jesus?

John 7:11-18

Intro: In the first few verses of ch7 we saw that Jesus' own brothers challenged Him to go up to Jerusalem for the feast of Tabernacles and show Himself to all the people who were attending the feast. They wanted Him to make a highly visible and very public entrance into the city in order to make Himself and His claims known to all. Of course, Jesus refuses because His ministry, in fact, His entire life was running on a divine timetable and not on the whims of unbelievers who just want to see a big show of supernatural power. It was only after His brothers left for Jerusalem that Jesus received the "signal" from the Father to go to Jerusalem Himself and He did so without drawing attention.

As we consider our Lord's actions in this instance, we can see another beautiful illustration of the perfect balance of divine sovereignty and human responsibility in Jesus' life. The Father had a plan for His Son and nothing could spoil that plan. On the other hand, Jesus didn't tempt the Father by rushing to the feast nor did He lag behind when the proper time arrived for Him to attend the feast. The key to His obedience is being sensitive to the Father's timetable and completely surrendered to its ultimate fulfillment. It requires spiritual discernment to know God's timing and Jesus didn't just have it because He was God. He'll share the secret of this discernment with us later in the chapter.

11-13- The scene now shifts from Galilee to Jerusalem. "The Jews" refers to the religious leaders who lived in Jerusalem and were affiliated with the temple ministry. This group was made up of Pharisees, chief priests (mostly Sadducees) and scribes. These groups greatly differed in their theology but they certainly agreed in 1 area: their opposition to Jesus and their determination to get rid of Him. Jesus hadn't been in the city for some time now but they hadn't forgiven nor forgotten His actions when He was there and they're waiting for an opportunity to get Him!

Where is He?- John doesn't tell us why they were so sure Jesus would be there. He had been in Galilee for the better part of a year and had missed some of the other feasts so they might have figured He would have to show

up for this one. Why didn't they just arrest Him in Galilee? That particular region was ruled by Herod Antipas and was not under their jurisdiction. But in Jerusalem, they held the chief executive power over all Jewish affairs, subject only to the overriding authority of the Roman governor of the day.

It appears that the religious leaders weren't the only ones looking for Jesus. It seems there was a lot of talking going on about Him among the common folk too. Now, whether they were complaining, murmuring or just talking under their breath, what is remarkable is that even after an extended period of absence, Jesus was still the main topic of conversation. We don't know exactly how they were speaking about Jesus; all we do know is that there was a great controversy concerning Him. This controversy run throughout this chapter and it continues up to this present day!

The people are clearly divided over Jesus. But that's what Jesus does – He divides people! It's as true today as it was on this day in [ch7](#). The people who heard Jesus and knew Him could not remain neutral in their assessment of Him. A judgment about His person, His character must be made. That's what this current controversy focuses on: the character of Jesus. In the next few verses, the controversy will expand to include His doctrine but for right now, the people are merely discussing, and even arguing over who Jesus is.

If you took a survey on the streets of any modern city asking, "Who is Jesus Christ?," you would probably get a plethora of various answers. One such survey recorded these answers: "a man who thought He was God; the pure essence of energy; someone who had beautiful ideas; one we look up to as our leader; someone interested in the social betterment of all classes of people." Most people who were survey were confused and had no answer. As varied as these answers are, they all still fall into the 2 categories offered by the crowds in [vs12](#). The only problem with these categories is that, while one of them is false, the other is in fact a complete impossibility!

Who is Jesus Christ? Let's start by dealing with the 1 truly impossible answer; the 1st answer given in [vs12](#), that He was a good man. Many people give this answer today but it's the 1 thing Jesus most certainly cannot be. Why's that?

1) The strange nature of His teachings. The most obvious feature of His

teachings is their egocentric focus. His teaching is all wrapped up in Himself! This is seen in His many references to the Father. Jesus often spoke about the special relationship He had with the Father that no one else possessed. He even had a special name for God: Abba, which reflected His special relationship. It meant “Daddy.” No Jewish person would ever use this word for God, it would have been thought too irreverent or even blasphemous. Yet, Jesus used it and He also taught that because of what He would accomplish on the cross, and only because of that, others could enjoy this same relationship.

This egocentric focus is also seen in the great “I am” statements by Jesus that are recorded in John’s Gospel. Jesus said about Himself, “I am the bread of life” “I am the light of the world” “I am the door.” The last of these: “I am the way, the truth and the life” is unmistakable in its teaching that Jesus is the sole avenue by which a sinner can enter into a right relationship with God and thereby, enter into heaven.

A thorough study of Jesus’ teachings will also show that He believed the OT Scriptures to have mainly been written about Himself. He told the religious leaders in [ch5 \(46\)](#) that Moses “wrote about Me.” He’ll tell them in [ch8 \(56\)](#) that “Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” When He meets up with the 2 disciples on the road to Emmaus, He will use the books of the OT to explain to them all the things that were written concerning Himself. The greatest example of this happened early in His public ministry in the synagogue at Nazareth. Jesus was asked to read from the prophets and He chose to read from [Isaiah 61 \(Luke 4:18-21\)](#). This was a scandalous declaration, for it was nothing less than the claim that Isaiah had written specifically of Him and that He was fulfilling this prophecy!

With such an estimate of Himself it’s not surprising that Jesus called people to follow Him. The truth is, He actually commanded them to follow Him, and then later He sent them out on a world-wide evangelistic ministry, a ministry that at the very least cost most of them their livelihood and for many of them it would cost them their very lives.

2) His claim to be able to forgive sins. Not just sins against Himself but sins committed against others. No mere man can forgive sins, no matter how good he is. C. S. Lewis said, “Unless the speaker is God, this is really so preposterous as to be comic.” We can easily see how a person can forgive

an offense against himself. If someone hits you, you have a right to forgive them. If they steal from you, you can forgive them that too. But what if that person goes around hitting other people and stealing from them? Then you really have no right to forgive him; and you wouldn't think much of anyone who thought he had this right. Yet that's exactly what Jesus claimed.

Once, when a paralyzed man was lowered into His presence from a hole cut in the roof, Jesus said, "Son, your sins are forgiven" ([Mark 2:5](#)). Another time, Jesus forgave a woman who was a known sinner. She came into the house where Jesus was eating, wept so much that her tears fell on His feet, and then wiped His feet with her hair. Jesus told her, "Your sins are forgiven" ([Luke 7:48](#)). On each occasion, onlookers objected, "Who is this that forgives sins? Who can forgive sins but God only?" None of them were ready to admit Christ's claims at this point, but at least they saw the issue clearly. How could He forgive sins? The claim was ridiculous if He was not really God.

3) He clearly claimed to be God. He did this on several occasions. Of course, the nature of the Judaism of His day meant this couldn't be done very often or openly because it was considered blasphemy and was a capital offense! But in light of this, there were still times when Jesus allowed the issue to be made clear. In [ch8](#), we'll find Jesus contending yet again with the religious leaders. They thought they were saved because of their physical descent from Abraham. Jesus said no. They got angry and attacked Him personally. "Are you greater than our father Abraham?" Jesus answers, "Before Abraham was, I am" ([8:58](#)). This offended them so much that they picked up stones to kill Him with. Why? They recognized the claim to divinity that His words implied. The words were at least a claim to preexistence: Jesus claims to have existed in the beginning with God before Abraham was created. Plus, they were also a claim to be God. Jesus' "I am" was the very name for God—Jehovah—which means, "I am who I am" ([Ex 3:14](#)). It was because of this claim that those who heard Jesus took up stones to kill Him.

Another time was when Jesus appeared to Thomas after the resurrection. Thomas missed the first appearance and didn't believe them when they said they had seen Jesus. Thomas refused to believe Jesus was alive unless he could touch the nail prints in His hands and the wound in His side. When Jesus appeared, Thomas didn't insist on proving Him; he fell on his face at

Jesus' feet and declared, "My Lord and my God." Did Jesus rebuke him? Not at all! He accepted this designation of divinity from Thomas without any rebuttal or rebuke to the contrary.

What do we do with these claims? We can't escape them. One scholar put it this way, "The claims are there. They do not in themselves constitute evidence of deity. The claims may have been false. But some explanation of them must be found. We cannot any longer regard Jesus as simply a great teacher, if He was so grievously mistaken in one of the chief subjects of His teaching, namely Himself." C. S. Lewis wrote, "You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

Who is Jesus Christ? We've yet to answer the question. We've establish that it was quite impossible that Jesus was merely a good man. If this option is impossible, what other possibilities do we have? C.S Lewis alludes to them and there are 3. **1)** It's possible He was crazy. He could've been suffering from megalomania. In [vs20](#), they'll accuse Him of being demon possessed. But, before we accept this possibility, we must look at the complete character of Jesus to see if it bears this out. Did Jesus act or speak like He was crazy? When you read the accounts of His life, it's hard to deny the fact that Jesus was the sanest person who ever lived. He spoke with quite authority and was always in control of the situation. He's never surprised or rattled. He just does not seem to fit the "crazy" classification.

There is another reason why Jesus couldn't have been crazy: the reactions others had to Him. People didn't just tolerate Jesus; they were either completely for Him or violently against Him. This isn't the way we react to those who are crazy. We may be irritated by their irrational behavior. We may ignore them. We may put them away if their delusions are dangerous. But we don't kill them. Yet this is what those who rejected Jesus tried to do to Him.

2) It's possible He was a deceiver. Anybody can claim to be God, it doesn't mean they are. If Jesus was a deceiver, He was the best deceiver who ever

lived. He claimed to be God, but this claim was not made in a Greek or Roman society where the idea of many gods or half-gods was acceptable. It was made at the heart of monotheistic Judaism. Nowhere else in the ancient world could a strict belief in one God be found, but this was the Jewish belief in Christ's day. Jews were ridiculed and at times, persecuted for it. Still, they stuck to this doctrine and fanatically defended it. It was in this hostile theological climate that Jesus made His claims. What happened? The amazing thing is that He got people to believe in Him. Lots of people: men and women, peasants and sophisticates, priests, even members of His own family, eventually. So, if Jesus was a deceiver, He wasn't just a good one. He was the best.

Of course, if Jesus was a deceiver, He was also the worst deceiver; so much so that He could be called a devil if He weren't God. Think about it. Jesus did not just say, "I am God," and leave it at that. He said, "I am God come to save fallen humanity; I am the means of salvation; trust Me with your life and your future." Jesus taught that God is holy and we are separated from Him because we're not holy. Our sin is the great barrier between us and God. We can't enter God's presence. Jesus also taught that He had come to do something about our problem. He'd die for our sin; He'd bear our punishment. All who trusted in Him would be saved. This is good news, even great news—but only if it's true. If it's not true, then we're of all men most miserable and Jesus Christ should be hated as a fiend from hell. If it's not true, Jesus has condemned millions. He has sent generations of gullible followers to an eternity in hell.

Did Jesus do this? Was He a deceiver? Again, the facts of His life and His teachings do not line up with this conclusion. So, if Jesus is not a deceiver (a devil) and He is not a lunatic then there's only one possibility left to us.

3) It's possible He was God. If Jesus is God, then we must believe what He says and obey what He commands. There's no other logical option for us. Either we recognize Jesus as God, accept Him as Lord and Savior of our lives and follow Him completely and faithfully until the end of our days or we reject Him out of hand and walk away from everything He has to offer us. Of course, you would have to be crazy or completely deceived yourself to do that!

Who is Jesus Christ? You may not have arrived at a satisfactory answer to

that question in your life just yet. But, the one thing you must not do is to try to escape the question. Many try to escape the question by running away from it. That's not a valid solution because each person will eventually be required to answer that question in the end and if you haven't answered it correctly before the end comes then you will be doomed by the truth of it.

Do you need evidence of the claims of Christ? Read one of the gospels and ask God to help you understand what is written there. He will, but as He gives understanding, you must respond to it with faith and obedience.

Maybe you're already a believer but have been hedging your bets of committing every area of your life to Jesus. Let me just say, resistance is futile – and foolish. Jesus can do a much better job of guiding and ordering your life than you ever could. He's God and as such, He knows exactly who you are, where you came from, what you are capable of - your faults and your abilities – and most importantly: He's laid out the best course of action for your life that will lead to the greatest blessings for you and those associated with you. [Jer 29:11](#) “For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.” Do you believe that applies to you? Does your life reflect that belief? It should, it can. You must take Jesus at His word and then resolve to walk in that belief. 😊