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Questions Demanding Answers

John 7:19-36

Intro: It's the middle of the week long Feast of Tabernacles and we find Jesus teaching publicly and boldly in the Temple. He came to Jerusalem privately so as not to cause a big stir at His arrival but now He has seized upon a great opportunity to proclaim the truth about the Father and Himself to the crowds that were gathered in the city for this well-attended feast. We must identify the makeup of the crowd that Jesus is addressing in order to better understand some of the reactions and comments that will be made in our text today.

There were the religious leaders, of course; the chief priests, scribes, Pharisees and officers of the temple precincts. This was the section of the crowd that John commonly refers to as "the Jews." There was also a section of the crowd that was made up of worshippers who were visiting Jerusalem for the feast. These were Jews from other parts of the country and even from other countries who have made pilgrimage to Jerusalem. These people may have heard of Jesus but probably had never seen Him in person. They also would have been quite unaware of the hatred of the religious leaders towards Jesus and their past efforts of trying to do away with Him. Then, there'd also be a section of the crowd that was from Jerusalem that would be well aware of the malicious plotting of the Jews against Jesus.

So far in [ch7](#), the crowd has questioned the character of Jesus as well as His credentials and authority to teach. Jesus Himself answered the latter by pointing to the ultimate authority for teaching – the Father Himself. He goes on to state in [vs17](#) that it's quite possible for anyone to discover the truthfulness of His doctrine by simply committing themselves wholeheartedly to following it. But, in the very next verse, Jesus brings into question the events of His last visit to Jerusalem. Jesus had healed a man on the Sabbath and the authorities tried to arrest Him on a capital charge because of His attitude to the Sabbath law and for claiming that God was His Father. Jesus defended Himself on that occasion by invoking Moses as a witness against them. Now, He invokes Moses as witness against them again because, for all their professed love of Moses' law, they were guilty of breaking it by trying to kill Jesus.

19-20- Jesus had just stated in **vs18** that He was sinless and true, always seeking the glory of the Father. In contrast to Him, the religious leaders failed to keep the law. They had it but didn't keep it. In other words, Jesus says, "I am sinless and none of you keep the law. Why then do you seek to kill Me? You're the ones guilty under the law, not I."

demon- Clearly, this response is largely from the section of the crowd made up of pilgrims from outside the city, not the Jerusalem mob. This group seems to be quite unaware of the official plots against Jesus and can't seem to reconcile how such an authoritative teacher of the Word could be targeted for death. Their response is to accuse Him of being demon-possessed, which, if you think about it, is just as ridiculous an assumption as accusing Him of breaking the law. Of course, this was the common way of simply saying, "You must be crazy!" But, how could it ever be possible for someone who is either crazy or demon-possessed to have such a command of the Word of God? This isn't the only time people accuse Jesus of this but this simply reveals the depths of their own blind irrationality.

21-23- The crowd of pilgrims may have been completely unaware that "the Jews" wanted to kill Jesus for healing a man on the Sabbath but the religious leaders hadn't forgotten and Jesus refers to that event right here. They had all been amazed at the healing of a man who was disabled for 38 yrs but their amazement was mixed with a large dose of indignation because it took place on the Sabbath. Jesus now argues that this healing was, in fact, especially appropriate for the Sabbath. The argument He presents is somewhat complex but is no less ironclad.

The rite of circumcision was instituted in Abraham's time and codified into law by Moses. The law stipulates that all infant males in Israel are to be circumcised on the 8th day. If the 8th day fell on a Sabbath, the law of circumcision took precedence over the Sabbath law: the child was circumcised, Sabbath day or no Sabbath day. Jesus argues that if it is appropriate to suspend Sabbath law for the removal of a small piece of tissue from one part of the body then it cannot be wrong to heal a man's entire body on the Sabbath. If it was right to perform a negative work on the Sabbath (removing skin) then it can only be more right to make a man completely whole on the Sabbath. This same argument was often used by some rabbis to justify emergency medical treatment on the Sabbath but

Jesus uses it to justify any and all acts of healing on the Sabbath, whether the case is urgent or not.

24- It was only through the most superficial judgment that anyone could ever have condemned Jesus for performing such an amazingly wonderful act on the Sabbath and yet, that's exactly what the religious leaders were doing and what Jesus challenged them to stop doing! He had presented them with ironclad legal proof that His previous action was entirely appropriate but He knew that they would not give in and agree. Why? Because, their standard of judgment was not honest. They evaluated things on the basis of a superficial examination of the facts. They judged on the basis of "perception is reality" instead of "truth is reality." Sadly, too many make the same mistake today.

If you'll notice, Jesus' observation here is the exact opposite of **vs17**, where He called for a sincere devotion to the truth. They failed to judge His actions righteously because they refused to commit themselves to His doctrine. Righteous judgment would make a point to look beyond surface appearances and judge according to the spirit and divine purpose of the law. These men had already decided that Jesus appeared to be a sinner and they appeared to be righteous. They're wrong on both counts! This gives an unmistakable picture of the dangers of trusting in the law.

Like so many people today, the Jews believed they would find salvation by keeping the law but, as Jesus reveals, the opposite is true, for 2 basic reasons. 1) Anyone who trusts in the law will be condemned by the law, because no one keeps it perfectly. These men made the law their standard but it would eventually become their condemnation. The law they tried to use to prove Jesus a sinner would be the same law that condemns them for their hatred and murderous designs. That's what the law does – it condemns. It shows that we have violated it. There can never be any hope of salvation by observing the law because the nature of God's law demands perfection. **If** salvation could come by any law, it would come by God's law because it's perfect. But no one keeps it perfectly so its very perfection condemns us. Anyone trusting in the law will be condemned by the law. If we are to be saved, salvation must come by a different road entirely.

2) Trusting in the law makes one a hypocrite. The legalist will condemn in another what he excuses in himself. Here were Jewish leaders condemning

Christ for healing a man on the Sabbath, but they refused to see that they did things that were basically no different, specifically in regard to the rite of circumcision. Legalism gives birth to hypocrisy. Thus, the law cannot be the basis for a saving relationship with God Almighty.

Well, if that is the case, why did God even give the law? What good could it possibly do humanity? Much indeed! True, God gave the law to condemn us but not so that we would just walk around condemned! No, the law was given to point men and women to Jesus Christ. The law was not given with the thought that anyone would ever keep it as a way of salvation. The law was a standard given in order to convince men of their true and hopeless condition so that they might turn from their own efforts at salvation and come to God for grace.

The law is like a mirror. The function of a mirror is to show you your face and, if your face is dirty, to show you that it is dirty. The purpose of a mirror is not to wash your face. How ridiculous! But it's no more ridiculous than thinking you can be made righteous by the law's righteous standards. The purpose of the mirror is to drive you to the soap and water and the function of the law is to drive the law breaker into the saving arms of Jesus Christ. The law, which is supposed to do us good, actually serves to our hurt and betrays us. We are lost unless we turn to Jesus.

25-27- Now, we here from the locals. This group knew the religious officials were plotting against Jesus, which only served to make His boldness in the temple more remarkable for them. "This is the guy they're after but they haven't tried to arrest Him or even prevent Him from teaching in public. Why is this? Do they believe He is the Messiah? But, how can that be true?"

Vs27 reports a popularly held assumption of Messiah for that day: that Messiah would appear suddenly, as if out of nowhere. Tho not everyone believed this, many did and since they assumed they knew where Jesus was from (Nazareth) they couldn't reconcile what they saw with what they believed to be true. Once again, the people could not see the truth because they were blinded by what they thought were dependable facts.

28-29- Here, Jesus raises His voice so that everyone could hear Him. This first part may well have been delivered with a hint of irony or sarcasm, "You think you know Me but you really don't!" Then He explains why they didn't know Him: *because they didn't know the Father!* This was a serious

accusation to make against an orthodox Jew because they prided themselves in knowing the One true God, the God of Israel. But Jesus went even further: He boldly asserted that He not only knew the Father but was sent by Him! Once again, He's claiming to be God! He wasn't just born into this world like any other human, He was sent to earth by the Father; meaning: He existed before His birth.

30-31- Well, the religious leaders had heard about enough of that blasphemous talk and tried to take Him into custody but the divine timetable overruled them yet again. The time of His death had not yet arrived and, try as they might, His enemies could not bring that time forward. But, in stark contrast to the entrenched hatred of Jesus by the religious leaders, many people chose to believe on Jesus that day. Despite the fact that many opposed Him or even wanted to kill him; a Jesus made public is a Jesus believed upon. Their faith was partially based on miracles He had previously performed, but at least it was a beginning. Their question in **vs31** demands an honest answer. Would the signs that Messiah was expected to perform be greater than those Jesus was performing before their very eyes?

Who has done more than Jesus? If Jesus isn't the Messiah, when Messiah comes, will He do more miracles than Jesus? Will He teach with more authority, love more remarkably, suffer with more courage, atone for more sinners, raise the dead with more victory, ascend to heaven in greater glory than Jesus? Will he present a greater gospel, change more lives, free more addictions, comfort more grief-stricken minds, heal more broken hearts, restore more marriages, triumph over more tyrants or gain more faithful followers than Jesus? None of this could be possible! No one could ever do more than Jesus did and Jesus deserves all our confidence, life and faith as the true Messiah!

32-36- To be verbally accosted by Jesus made the religious crowd mad but when they saw people believing in Him, they went ballistic! Apparently, these believers weren't afraid to speak about their new faith in Jesus as the Christ. This time, the rulers sent officers from the temple guard out to arrest Jesus but, ironically, it was Jesus who arrested them! He warned them that they only had a little time left to hear the truth, believe and be saved. It wasn't Jesus who was in danger here; it was those who were trying to arrest Him!

Of course, in keeping with their spiritual blindness; not only were they clueless as to the true origins of Jesus, they were also completely clueless concerning His eventual departure. Jesus is referring here to His death and ascension into heaven not more than 6 months in the future. They incorrectly assumed He was planning to leave the area and go out to all the Jews who were dispersed all over the world, not just to teach them but to teach the Greeks as well. They envisioned Him going into Jewish synagogues and using them as springboards for an outward mission to the Gentiles. They immediately dismiss the idea as being too fantastic to be considered a proper activity of the Jewish Messiah. But, while Jesus Himself never did this, it is the exact method that was followed by nearly all His disciples.

I want to by making one final observation. In [vs34](#), Jesus delivers a promise but it's not a very pleasant one. He said, "And where I am, you cannot come." Now, who was He speaking to? He's speaking to the religious rulers who made the law their standard of morality and salvation. He was speaking to the part of the crowd who just couldn't reconcile what they saw in Jesus with what they believed about the Messiah. He's speaking to those who only judge according to appearance, superficially, and never seek to move past what they assume to be correct to discover the truth. The only promise Jesus can give them is that, regardless of how hard they look for Him, they'll never find Him because they can never go to where He is going to be. The real tragedy is knowing that, had these individuals been willing to do God's will, they would have known the truth and could have benefitted greatly from it. Soon it would be too late! The day of God's grace to them would not last forever.

There's another promise Jesus will make in [ch14:1-3](#), "...where I am, there you may be also." This is a blessed promise, a glorious promise if you think about it. Jesus promises the ability to live in His presence for all of eternity! Who does He make this promise to? To those who believe in Him. Not just accepting facts about Him as truth but believing to the point of total and complete commitment to His person, His doctrine and His commands. That's what faith in Jesus means: you not only believe what He says, you obey it and you obey it faithfully.

The members of this crowd in [ch7](#) have 2 choices set before them; 2 promises available for the claiming. The choice is determined by how they

respond to Jesus Christ. The members of this crowd here today have the same choice available to it and the choice is still determined by how you respond to Jesus Christ. Which promise would you rather claim? The day of God's grace to you will not last forever. Are you willing to look beyond the lies and misinformation that our worldly culture offers and see the truth of Jesus Christ and respond to it in faith? 😊