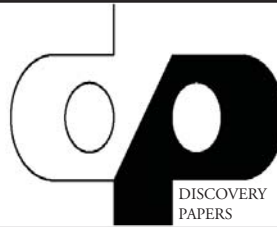




## THE UNEXPECTED MESSIAH



Catalog No. 20131208  
John 7:1-30  
17th Message  
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An enduring question of the Christmas season was asked first by the Magi on their arrival in Jerusalem: 'Where is the one born King of the Jews?'. In this message we return to John's gospel (chapter 7) and we will find other seekers in Jerusalem with a similar inquiry, 'Where is he?' We begin in Galilee.

John 7:1-5:

**After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. <sup>2</sup>Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand. <sup>3</sup>So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. <sup>4</sup>For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." <sup>5</sup>For not even his brothers believed in him.**

Six months have intervened since the feeding of the multitude at the time of the Passover. The arrival, in early October, of the Feast of Booths suggests a good reason for Jesus to go to Jerusalem. The threats on his life are a reason to stay away.

The Feast of Booths (or Tabernacles) was the most joyful of the annual Jewish feasts. Pilgrims lived in tents recalling the nation during its time of wilderness wandering. The celebration lasted a week and featured both a water ceremony and a lamp-lighting ceremony which Jesus will reference in his teaching. Jesus' brothers wanted to participate in the festivities and expected Jesus to join them.

Verse 5 declares that his brothers did not believe him—what does this mean? We can assume that they did not yet believe that Jesus was the Word made flesh. None of his followers had clear beliefs of this sort until after the resurrection. Jesus' brothers are not yet 'disciples' as Peter, Andrew, Philip and others were, but the brothers' disbelief does not mean that they rejected him as an imposter. Likely they saw him as a reluctant prophet who needed to be prodded to take his ideas onto the big stage. Go to Jerusalem. Seize the day. How can you gain more

followers if you don't appear enthusiastic about promoting your message? The only way to win the world is with the world's methods. 'If you do these things, show yourself to the world' (verse 4).

John 7:6-13:

**Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. <sup>7</sup>The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. <sup>8</sup>You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come." <sup>9</sup>After saying this, he remained in Galilee.**

**<sup>10</sup>But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private. <sup>11</sup>The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, "Where is he?" <sup>12</sup>And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, "He is a good man," others said, "No, he is leading the people astray." <sup>13</sup>Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him.**

The question, 'Where is he?' will be answered when Jesus finally speaks in public. But first we should consider his apparent deception of his brothers. Did he lie to them? Did he change his mind? I don't think so.

In verse 8 when Jesus says, "I am not going to the feast." he means, "You travel to Jerusalem on your terms. I am not going along with your plans." They want him to promote himself and they want to benefit from his celebrity. He refuses the journey they invite him to take.

Jesus is aware of a 'time that has not yet fully come.' His enemies are planning his murder, yet the Father has determined an hour when he will give up his life as the 'lamb who takes away the sins of the world.' Jesus must die at the right time.

In verse 7 the Lord describes a growing animosity toward him that his brothers are oblivious to. Jesus can appear in public in Jerusalem only with great wariness,

so he arrives at the festival on his own terms and on his Father's timetable.

Before moving on we should consider the notion that Jesus' message needs to be marketed. 'If you seek to be known openly . . . show yourself to the world.' Our text says that this perspective is a form of disbelief. Therefore, we minister the gospel most faithfully when we turn from managing appearances and major in proclamation and witness.

Proclamation is a clear, realistic, contextualized telling of what Jesus has done for us and of the implications that follow. Paul used a different form of persuasion when he spoke on Mars Hill than he did when testifying before the Sanhedrin, but in both cases he preached Christ without compromise.

Witness is the evidence of changed lives. It goes hand in hand with clear proclamation. When broken lives are healed and loving communities established the power of the gospel is made plain. Flashy showmanship and emotional manipulation are worthless in comparison. Jesus never said or did anything merely to make a good impression.

John 7:14-24:

**About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching. <sup>15</sup>The Jews therefore marveled, saying, "How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?" <sup>16</sup>So Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. <sup>17</sup>If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. <sup>18</sup>The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood. <sup>19</sup>Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?" <sup>20</sup>The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?" <sup>21</sup>Jesus answered them, "I did one work, and you all marvel at it. <sup>22</sup>Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. <sup>23</sup>If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well? <sup>24</sup>Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."**

Jesus chose to come out into the open half way through the festival week by teaching in the temple. The Lord was a subject of widespread fascination and his teaching is both marveled at and opposed. These reactions lead to Jesus' comments about the nature of authority. I want to make four comments on these verses.

1. Formal education, earned degrees, titles, credentials, etc. do not bestow spiritual authority on their recipients. 'How did he learn?' (verse 15). Jesus gave profound attention to his Father's voice, delved beneath the surface of divine truth, and acted obediently, from the heart. Titles and degrees are useful sometimes but they do not confer what we need most to hear—a word from the Lord.

2. In verse 16 Jesus highlights the source of his message, not its packaging. There are many spiritual pretenders who make claims of unique authority based on a powerful personality or attractive appearance. The essential question regarding spiritual instruction is: does it come from God?

3. Moving from teacher to student, verse 17 makes clear that the one who would learn anything from God must have a prior willingness to obey what he learns. We are familiar with the idea that 'getting a good education' consists of accumulating knowledge and passing written tests. This approach does not work with 'teaching that comes from God.' Knowledge and a heart of obedience must go together.

4. Humility is an essential mark of the one who would speak God's truth. 'The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory' (verse 18). Jesus spoke with piercing directness and expected his disciples to be changed, not just informed, by what he said. Jesus ministered with immeasurable authority every place he went. But no one was more humble than Jesus. His only goal was to glorify the One who sent him.

John 7:25-31:

**Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, "Is not this the man whom they seek to kill? <sup>26</sup>And here he is, speaking openly, and they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ? <sup>27</sup>But we know where this man comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from." <sup>28</sup>So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, "You know me, and you know where I come from. But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know. <sup>29</sup>I know him, for I**

**come from him, and he sent me.”<sup>30</sup>So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come.<sup>31</sup>Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, “When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?”**

Jesus’ call to ‘judge with right judgment’ (verse 24) is not heeded. Discussion and debate, human voices using human reason, arrive at faulty conclusions. Putting down what is familiar is an argument we have heard before (6:42). Because ‘we know where this man comes from’ the people claim that he cannot have been sent from God. Jesus acknowledges the facts they do know and then speaks of his Father, the One ‘you do not know.’

John also makes note of the hour which ‘had not yet come.’ Jesus spoke of this hour in conversation with his brothers (7:8). The cross always looms in the future as John tells us the story of Jesus. Like these voices in ancient Jerusalem, we often have questions and misunderstandings about Jesus. His answers will always take us deeper than we intend to go.