

November 4
John 7

Hi! My name is Brian Smith and I sit on the Governing Board of Elders here at CCC. Welcome to the November 4th daily Accelerator. As we look at today's passage, it strikes me again how many Timeless Truths we can glean from God's word. We'll call a few of those out throughout our time today as we look at John Chapter 7.

Our readings today and yesterday have brought us to the portion of John's gospel which deals with the controversy that surrounded Jesus and the growing opposition of His ministry -- opposition so fierce that by the first verse of chapter 7 we are explicitly told the Jews in Judea and Jerusalem were actively seeking the opportunity to kill Jesus. Traveling throughout Galilee, He could still move with a certain amount of freedom and safety, but Jerusalem was a dangerous place for Him.

As an interesting aside, you may have noted that there was one group who was urging Christ to go to Jerusalem: His own brothers who as yet did not believe in Him but who were basically saying, If you want to change the world, go to Jerusalem where the people are -- that's Jerusalem -- and show them your miracles!! His brothers were not trying to get Him killed. It is likely they did not yet know how serious the opposition was to Jesus, but it is clear that they themselves were not yet believers. John makes that quite clear. I would imagine their problem was, in part, very much the same as some of the leaders who said, He can't be the Messiah because we know His family! Joseph is His father and Mary is His mother. He lives in Galilee. There is an old expression, "Familiarity breeds contempt" and it was operating here.

There was a complexity of motivation at play here I'm sure with his brothers. There was likely some sense in which they were confused and felt like by "pressure-testing" Jesus' teaching in a more hostile environment they might gain a better understanding. There was also a certain sense of sibling rivalry...this guy is doing miracles and claiming to be the Son of God! So it is a complex but important question to think about WHY the brothers were encouraging Jesus to go to Jerusalem when John was clear about their unbelief at this point. Is there a decision that you need to make or a situation that you find yourself in right now where you would benefit from looking a little deeper in to you motivations? This is a Timeless Truth that **we should always evaluate WHY we are saying or doing something.**

The leaders who concluded Christ could not be the Messiah were, in all probability, reflecting upon two things: first the knowledge that the Old Testament prophet had named Bethlehem and the House of David as the place of the Messiah's birth. Here, they had just not done their homework, at least not enough to find out that while He came from Nazareth, He hadn't been born there. Another Timeless Truth for today is that it is important for us to do **our homework before we draw conclusions**...about doctrine, about theology, about finances, about being a good parent, a good spouse, about how you vote...take the time to do your homework.

Plus, Galilee was NOT a sophisticated place. Surely the King of the Jews would not be from there! This issue of judging by appearances works its way in to the text multiple times. In another situation, the crowd was being critical of Jesus for having healed a man on the Sabbath. Jesus calls them out by referring to their practice of circumcising a child on the Sabbath without any uproar. He rightly says, "Stop judging by mere appearances and make a right judgment." This type of prejudice is not foreign to us today...and it is another Timeless Truth for us to ponder...I can't say it better than Jesus, **"Stop judging by mere appearances and make a right judgment."**

The second and greatest sentiment fueling the hostile opposition to Jesus, however, had nothing to do with geography, it had to do with His teaching which they found so hard to accept, and with His claim to be more than a man. He claimed for Himself deity, and *He challenged their beliefs and traditions about how a person becomes "right" with God.*

So let us note what Christ says in our reading today about salvation. He said, "I am from him and He has sent me." Then, as now, religious people asked the age old question, "How can I earn salvation?", "What do I have to do to get to heaven?" When that question was asked of the scribes, the chief priests and the Pharisees, they had a ready answer, "Keep the law -- do good works." Jesus' answer, both here and throughout the gospels is "believe in Me." The Pharisees said "works" and Jesus said "faith." He said, "Whoever believes in me will have eternal life." The great division between those who believe that eternal life comes to those who earn it for themselves and those who trust in Jesus for it is, again, an issue that is still with us today. **The fact of scripture that salvation is, in fact, by grace through faith is another Timeless Truth that is as relevant for us today as ever.** When Jesus said to the religious leaders, you cannot attain righteousness on your own, He threatened everything they stood for. He was, to them, a very dangerous man indeed.

The leaders of the Jews were desperate. This man was tearing their whole house down right in front of them. He taught that salvation came by faith, not by works. If people listened they might stop bringing sacrifices and tithes -- they might stop obeying the law and the strict interpretations of the law which had been handed down from previous generations. I would venture to say that the *Status* of the leaders of the Jews was being threatened. Does anyone in today's day and age struggle with status—keeping what we have and gaining more? This would be another Timeless Truth—**don't sacrifice your conscience, your intellectual integrity, or your open-mindedness for the sake of Status.** It's a bad trade...

I hope this exercise will help you to better understand the motivations of Christ's enemies. It is often said they hated Christ because they were jealous of Him and I am sure there is some truth in that, but it was really a much more complex situation than simply that -- they really thought He would destroy their religion -- the fact is that He was simply fulfilling the prophecies and the truths that they themselves had been teaching for years. There is great hope in that for us.