

JOHN

CHAPTER SEVEN

Jesus Teaches at the Feast

JESUS' BROTHERS DO NOT BELIEVE JOHN 7:1-9

Do you sometimes wonder about the timing in your life? I mean you know Ecclesiastes 3:1 NAS: "*There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven,*" but you still wonder, when is it the right time to speak to someone about salvation or some other matter? Or when is it the right time to buy a house, or a car, or to change jobs, or get involved in a ministry? There is an issue of timing in the Scripture we are looking at today. So let's turn in our Bibles and read in John 7.

John 7:1-9 NAS

- 1 *After these things Jesus was walking in Galilee, for He was unwilling to walk in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him.*
- 2 *Now the feast of the Jews, the **Feast of Booths**, was near.*
- 3 *Therefore His brothers said to Him, "Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing.*
- 4 *"For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world."*
- 5 *For not even His brothers were believing in Him.*
- 6 *So Jesus said to them, "My time is not yet here, but your time is always opportune.*
- 7 *"The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil.*
- 8 *"Go up to the feast yourselves; I do not go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come."*
- 9 *Having said these things to them, He stayed in Galilee.*

There is a time gap of about six months from the end of John chapter 6 to the beginning of John chapter 7. We know this because it was the time of **Passover** in John 6:4, which took place in April, and in chapter seven we see in verse 2 that it is the time of **The Feast of Booths (Tabernacles)** which took place in October. This could well lead us to believe that Jesus spent those six months concentrating His teaching on His twelve disciples who had expressed faith in Him at the end of chapter six, and who would be responsible for carrying Jesus' message to the rest of the world after Jesus returned to Heaven.

Now whatever Jesus was doing during that six-month period, we know from John 7:1 that He was doing it in Galilee and not Judea: "*After these things Jesus was walking in*

Galilee, for He was unwilling to walk in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him (NAS).” Ever since He had healed the paralytic on the Sabbath Day, Jesus had been the target of Jewish leaders who wanted to kill Him.¹

Have you ever felt that you were doing good, helping others, and doing the right thing, but that all you got for it was abuse and being misunderstood? If so, Christ knows exactly how you feel because that is precisely what was happening to Him. He did miracles of healing for people and He taught God’s Word, and all the Jewish leaders wanted to do was kill Him for it.

We will see three time divisions in John chapter 7. The first is before the feast (verses 1–10), second, in the midst of the feast (verses 11–36), and third, on the last day of the feast (verses 37–52). The responses of various people during each of those periods can be characterized by three words: **disbelief**, **debate**, and **division**,² as we will see later.

By this time Jesus’ teachings and miracles had become widely known throughout the country. His clear presentation of Himself as God, and His offer of eternal life to those who believed in Him, certainly created an assortment of reactions among the people and these reactions give us insight to what was going on in Israel at this time.

The **first** reaction that appears is **hatred**, which can be seen in the first seven verses of chapter 7. The Jews were looking for Jesus in order to kill Him and the world hated Him because He did not hesitate to point out how evil they were. The leaders of the people had the responsibility of teaching God’s Word to Israel. Yet these same leaders were teaching the people to hate the very Messiah that God had revealed in His Word.

The **second** reaction was **ridicule** as we see in verses 3 and 5. Jesus’ own brothers, most likely out of jealousy, rejected the evidence they had either witnessed directly or certainly been told about by Jesus’ closest and most trusted followers, that Jesus was the One the scriptures had promised. In spite of this overwhelming evidence, what was their reaction? They ridiculed and taunted Him.

A **third** reaction was **conflict** as we see in verse 12. Some were saying He was a good man while others did not trust Him.

The **fourth** reaction in chapter seven was **fear**, which we see in verse 13. Even those who were convinced that Jesus was who He claimed to be were afraid to support Him. They were afraid that the religious leaders known as “the Jews,” would have them arrested and punished.

Based on these kinds of reactions you have to wonder what these teachers of the law were teaching the people. Was God’s Word from the Old Testament causing God’s people to become a community of love, caring, and sharing? Not at all. The people of God were angry, combative, bitter, and afraid. There must have been something wrong with the

¹ John 7:1, 19–20, 25, 30, 32, 44; and note 8:37, 40.

² Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. Jn 7:1.

kind of teaching that produces such behavior. And there was. The Word of God from the Old Testament was not being taught to the people as it had been written and handed down by God.³

As you may recall from last time, Jesus had just delivered the Bread of Life sermon to those who had come to Capernaum to hear His teaching at the end of John chapter 6, following Christ's miraculous feeding of the 5000 (20,000).

John 6:47-51 NAS:

⁴⁷ *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.*

⁴⁸ *I am the bread of life.*

⁴⁹ *Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.*

⁵⁰ *This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die.*

⁵¹ *I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."*

As a result of what these so-called disciples heard many of them left, choosing not to follow Jesus anymore. They rejected His message for one reason or another deciding He was not offering what they were looking for. The intensity of that rejection carries over into chapter 7 where we see Jesus spending His time in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to kill Him. Any time you see the phrase, "**The Jews**," in John's gospel it always represents Jesus' enemies, and His enemies wanted Him dead.

The danger to Jesus becomes increasingly evident as we continue in verses 2-5. In verse 2 we read, "*Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near.*" The Feast of Booths or Tabernacles was a harvest feast. It was a celebration which took place when all of the harvest had been gathered. The **Feast of Tabernacles** looked back to Israel's journey through the wilderness, and looked forward to the promised kingdom of Messiah. The Jews lived in booths made of branches to remind them of God's care of the nation for nearly forty years.

Leviticus 23:33-34, 41-43 ESV:

³³ *And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,*

³⁴ *"Speak to the people of Israel, saying, On the fifteenth day of this seventh month and for seven days is the Feast of Booths to the Lord.*

⁴¹ *You shall celebrate it as a feast to the Lord for seven days in the year. It is a statute forever throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month.*

³ Richards, Larry ; Richards, Lawrence O.: *The Teacher's Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1987, S. 726

⁴² *You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All native Israelites shall dwell in booths,*
⁴³ *that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God."*

The Feast of Booths was a joyous and happy time and for that reason it was very well attended. It was one of the three festivals each year which characterized different periods in Jewish history and that required the attendance of every Jewish male. These three festivals included:

1. The Feast of the Passover, in commemoration of their departure from Egypt.
2. The Feast of Pentecost, in commemoration of the giving of the law upon Mount Sinai.
3. The Feast of Tabernacles, in commemoration of their wandering forty years in the wilderness.

Now as Jesus' brothers were preparing to go to the festival in Jerusalem they started giving Jesus what appears to be a full dose of sarcasm and ridicule. You know how brothers can be and by what we read in verse 5 it appears obvious that they did not as yet accept Him to be the Messiah either. So in verses 3-5 we read:

3 Therefore His brothers said to Him, "Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing.
4 "For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world."
5 For not even His brothers were believing in Him. (NAS)

Jesus' brothers, born to Mary and Joseph after Jesus' birth, were at this time unbelievers. They convincingly argued that the question of who Jesus was could not be settled in Galilee because Jerusalem was the religious capital of the nation. The popular Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem would be just the right time for Jesus to show Himself as the Messiah. They reasoned that if He was willing to display His powers during this well-attended celebration feast, He might be able to get back many of the disciples that had left Him at the end of chapter six. Jesus' brothers in effect said to him, "*You ought to get on up to Judea so that you can show all of the Jews attending this festival your powers and miracle working abilities. Then they will all know you are who you say you are.*" They were probably encouraging Jesus to do these things because they thought he would make a fool of Himself. Siblings can be pretty mean-spirited sometimes and Jesus' brothers were apparently no different. They went on to tell Jesus that no one who wants to become a public figure can keep his abilities a secret and that since He is able to do these things, He should show these abilities to the world. If He really was who He claimed to be, they reasoned, He should publicly demonstrate it. Perhaps they were also thinking that if He did go up to Jerusalem and was not killed it would prove that He was who He said He was.

If that is so, then it reminds me of the second temptation that Satan presented to Jesus in

the wilderness. Let's read that from Matthew 4.

Matthew 4:5-7 NASB

⁵ Then the devil took Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple,

⁶ and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU'; and 'ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.' "

⁷ Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.' "

The basic point Satan was trying to make here was that if Jesus is the Son of God, He can deliberately go into dangerous situations and God will protect Him. Jesus' brothers seem to be saying the same thing in John 7: "If you're really the Son of God why do You have to hide?" And of course it is true, God could protect Jesus, just as He often protects many of His children in dangerous situations. But you don't deliberately go into such danger just to test God. God doesn't do feats just to show off, He does miracles for the purpose of helping others or turning them to faith in Him.

But Jesus knew that God's way for Him to reveal His deity was a public display on a cross of humiliation. So when it would have been natural for Jesus to look to His family for some support, John explains that **even His own brothers did not believe in Him.**

So what does Jesus have here? The Jews want to kill Him. Many of the people rejected His message at Capernaum. His own flesh and blood did not believe Him and were urging Him to go to the celebration at the risk of His life. But did such discouragement change Jesus' resolve to follow His Father's plan? Not on your life.

Here is where God's timing comes into play. Jesus' reply in verse 6 reveals why He chooses to remain behind for a few days: "So Jesus said to them, 'My **time** is not yet here, but your time is always opportune.'" Christ was so in tune with the Father that He could trust God's timing completely. The word Jesus uses here for "time" (*kadiros*), is the word that gives the idea of **opportunity**.⁴ Jesus is telling them that the opportune time had not yet come (though that time would come soon as we see in John 7:10). He was simply saying that the right moment had not arrived, and He was waiting for that moment. Jesus was waiting for the opportune time to go up to the Feast to teach. Just as Jesus completely trusted the timing of His Father, it is important for us to allow God's timing to work out for us. We need to stay in the Word and in prayer in order to be tuned in on God's timing and God's opportunities in our lives.

Jesus tried to explain to them that His time and place were not the same as what they considered to be the proper time and place. They could come and go as they pleased and for them any time was right. But Jesus knew He must always obey His Father, so His

⁴ Robertson, A.T.: *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Oak Harbor : 1997, S. Jn 7:6.

time and place were dictated by His Father. It was not yet time for His public demonstration on the Cross. In fact in John's gospel, John comments several times that Jesus' time had not yet come.⁵ Then in Jesus' prayer just before He went to the Cross, He began, "*Father, the time has come.*"⁶

The world was not a dangerous place for the brothers of Jesus because they were part of it. But the world hated Jesus because He was not part of it and had come into it as Light, pointing out its sin and rebellion against God. The world has its own way of establishing its values and Christ was in no way reluctant to let them know that their ways were evil. He went on to make this point to His brothers.

John 7:7-9 NAS:

7 *"The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil.*

8 *"Go up to the feast yourselves; I do not go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come."*

9 *Having said these things to them, He stayed in Galilee.*

Jesus tells them that His time for showing Himself to the world as the Son of God has not yet come. He knows the Father will reveal that time to Him soon. But He tells them that it does not really matter when they go up. The future of the world does not depend on what happens to them or when. So it really does not matter when they go up to the feast. However, it means a great deal that Jesus Himself stick to His Father's schedule because everything that takes place in the world, past, present, and future depends on adhering perfectly to God's schedule. So Jesus must be careful about where He goes and when He goes there because the world hates Him for what He says about their evil behavior and would kill Him at the first opportunity. Therefore, Jesus says, "*You go to the feast as soon as it suits you; I will follow at just the right moment.*" So Jesus' brothers went up to Jerusalem, but Jesus stayed behind.

Are you patient to follow God's schedule in your life? The psalmist said,

Psalm 31:15 ESV:

My times are in your hand; rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors!

Many Christians find issues of timing difficult: not to run ahead of God, yet not to lag behind. They struggle for patience to wait while God is working behind the scenes to bring everything to pass at the right time and in the right way. Even unbelievers sometimes say, "*If there is a God, why does He not act now to do something about all the bad things in this world?*" They fail to understand the teachings of the Bible that tell us that God withholds His judgment so that more people have time to come to believe in Him (2 Peter 3:9).

⁵ John 2:4; 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20.

⁶ 17:1;12:23, 27; 13:1.

Yet, as we look around today at all that is going on, and going wrong, in our world many believers are currently wondering if the time for the second coming of Jesus is at hand. Only time will tell, but the thing to do while waiting is to be sure you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and to live in such a way that your life shows you love Him. We also need to be telling others about the Good News that the Babe who was born in Bethlehem and who grew up to die on the cross wants to be their Savior, their Helper, and their very Best Friend. Just as Christ could trust **God's timing** we can trust His timing and know that God does all things well.