

Who Is Jesus?
John 7:9-13

This whole section that begins in verse 1 to verse 13 really carries on the response that we saw by the crowds of the ministry of Jesus. And the first section in verses 1-8 has Jesus' brothers coming to him, and challenging him to go to Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles and show who he truly is. We cannot tell if this is a sarcastic statement that and taunting of Jesus because they do not believe who he is, or if they think he is the Messiah but they want a Messiah after their own liking just like the crowds - a Messiah with the crown but not the cross. They want him to go and pronounce him King and bring in a Messianic era. And look at verse 9 because verse 9 is key, **"After saying this, he remained in Galilee."** Now certainly this verse brings an end to his conversation with his brothers but it also separates Jesus from his brothers in an important way and that is - their purpose for why they wanted him to go up. It does not say that he will not go up but will not go up with them and for their purpose. And the reason why that is so important is he will not deviate from the Father's purpose, and the Father's purpose is the cross, that he would die for sinners.

So look at what we read in verse 10 because it bothers many people, **"But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private."** Certainly we can understand why he didn't go up with his brothers, but this idea that he went up privately and not publicly bothers so many. Where is the brave and bold Jesus? Why doesn't he make himself known. And the key is what we read in 5:19-20, **"So Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel.'" This is the Father's will. His time has not come. The Feast of Tabernacles was a joyous feast and it also looked forward to the coming kingdom when all was fulfilled. There was a real zeal among many to crown Jesus king. Jesus would not let that happen. His time for his glory was not now. He came to do the will of his Father. Also, the religious leaders were plotting and looking for an opportunity to kill him, and the time of his death was just over the horizon but it was not now. He came privately because that is exactly what his Father wanted him to do. He came to fulfill all righteousness as the perfect man.**

And what we come to in this passage is different responses to Jesus. And it is so important because remember John's whole purpose in writing this gospel is 20:30-31, **"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."** These are the insufficient conclusions that many were coming to at the Feast. And remember, they are in light of what he said to his brothers and that is the world hates him because he testifies that their works are evil. A.W. Tower wrote, **"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."** And may I add to his words, **"What comes into our minds when we think about Jesus Christ is the most important thing about us."** It is here that the chasm of

heaven and hell lie. What conclusions have you come to about Christ? Who do you say that he is? It is amazing even in the world today that so many have differing views and thoughts of Jesus.

And this passage is even important for us as believers because it does two things. One is that alerts us to what we can expect when we live and proclaim Christ. If the world hated Christ then - then it will have that same response. The greater the light shines the more the darkness is exposed for what it is and the more you elicit a response from that darkness. Something has got to give, some response is necessary. No one can remain neutral when it comes to Christ. And the second way this challenges us is with our own pedestrian thoughts about Christ. If this is God in human flesh, shouldn't we behold with wonder and worship the one who comes and is contained in human flesh, and yet at the same time is uncontainable God, and the one who holds all things together by the power of his will? Stephen Charnock wrote these words about the incomprehensibility of God - that he is beyond us to contain in our thoughts, and the same is true of Christ because he is God, **"This is not God; God is more than this: if I could conceive him, he were not God; for God is incomprehensibly above whatsoever I can say, whatsoever I can think and conceive of him."** These views of Jesus challenge us to really look and dwell on the text and the greatness of the One who was manifest in human flesh as our Saviour and Lord. So let us look at these various views.

1. First, we see the intolerant view. V. 11. & 13

You look at our society, and it describes itself as a society that is becoming or seeking to become more tolerant of all different views and religions. But as D.A. Carson describes it is an intolerance of tolerance. And our society has become more intolerant of any view that condemns another in the name of tolerance. So you have to accept any viewpoint or any philosophy, and not only accept it but say that it is right. An example is gay marriage or transsexuality. And it is amazing that in our society today that there has been no academic debate or biological discoveries that have led to the conclusion that someone can be born physically a man but in actual fact is a woman in the soul of the person. And our society is very hostile and aggressive and even condemning and mean-spirited in those who challenge that position. In other words, in the name of tolerance they have become intolerant. All voices must be silenced who have a different view. Tolerance has always been the ability to defend the right of others to expressive their views but also say they are wrong. Our world that we live in is intolerant of the Christian world view. It is intolerant that there is only one Lord and Saviour and Jesus is his name.

So look at verse 11, **"The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, 'Where is he?'"** Now I think often we read this verse and think that it is just talking about the anticipation of many of the Jews of the coming of Christ for the Feast of Tabernacles, and the hope that he will manifest himself as the long awaited Messiah. But notice that the next verse addresses the mass of people here as the "people," but here it is the "Jews." And this phrase is most often associated with the religious leaders who wanted to terminate the life of Jesus. And maybe they are hoping that now that he is in the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas who was responsible for the death of

John the Baptist that they can find Jesus, arrest him, and kill him. So they search for him. Also, look at the question that they ask, “**where is he?**” Literally, it is “where is that man?” And you can almost here the derogatory tone in their voices. That is all that he is - is just a man. He is not only a man but the worst - a blasphemer. The religious leaders even accuse him of being inspired by the devil himself. And to say that they hate Jesus is would be putting it mildly. In their mind, Jesus cannot go on living and faith in him cannot be allowed to exist.

In fact look at the last verse in why there is no public debate over who Jesus is in verse 13, “**Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him.**” We have never been in a society where if you talked about the Bible and faith in Christ you could be arrested, but in many ways we are coming close to that. There are certain subjects and convictions that if you articulate them could get you into legal trouble. And there is certainly a greater intolerance of Jesus and the preaching of the gospel. Here, in Jerusalem it would be the one topic of conversation that people would want to talk about. They have seen and heard about his miracles, many had heard his teaching. There was a buzz in the air about Jesus, especially as many came from Galilee the centre of much of the teachings and miracles of Jesus. The religious authorities who also had political authority, their rage had reach the point where you could not even discuss Jesus openly. Their displeasure of Jesus had reached the point where they do not want others even talking about Jesus - making him more important than he was in their estimation. It was just too dangerous to have people openly talking about him and coming to their own conclusions.

And there is a growing resentment of Christianity and Jesus Christ, and accusations that are made that are just outright untrue. One is that Christianity is against science. And this is basically the belief in miracles and even evolution. But it is amazing to see that most of the top scientists in the last two thousand years have been believers. They realized that God established natural laws and that he gave all for the good of mankind and sought to work for the good of mankind. But the whole meaning is to throw an accusation out there so that you can reject the message. And what is the primary message? The primary message of Jesus is this in John 14:6, “**I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**” We as sinners in our own natural state hate two things. One is to be told that in and of ourselves we are insufficient to come to God. We are sinners. And isn't that exactly what Jesus said to his brothers in verse 7, “**The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil.**” Jesus makes known the works of people are evil before an all holy God. And listen to John 3:19-20 the response to this message, “**And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.**” People do not want their hearts and lives exposed so they hate the light. Jesus must go. People are passionate about this.

And the second aspect that people are intolerant of is bowing the knee to another, accepting that Jesus is the only and exclusive way to God. No one, not me or you or anyone else can come to the Father except through Jesus Christ. That is what the religious leaders hated. Jesus exposed their hypocrisy, and at the same time told

them that they had to trust in him if they were to have any hope whatsoever. And nothing has changed because man's greatest problem has not changed and that is sin. And we as believers realize that this is not the time for glory but the time of suffering for his sake that we might make known that message. We see that response from so many. Who is Jesus? Someone to be eliminated and never considered. There is an intolerance of anything to do with Jesus Christ today. And that intolerance will continue and will grow. But there are other responses.

2. Second, we see the pacifying view. V.12.

If you can normalize Jesus is some way, make him less than who he is, then he becomes a lot more tolerable and also a lot more safe. And there has been a push through the history of Christianity to somehow take the God-ness out of Jesus, to take out the greatness of Jesus. And there are many that will look on Jesus and will say all kinds of polite things about Jesus. And there has been some high and noble statements about Jesus from those who would never say that Jesus is Lord and Saviour. Let me give you a few examples, **“Even those who have renounced Christianity and attack it, in their inmost being still follow the Christian ideal, for hitherto neither their subtlety nor the ardour of their hearts has been able to create a higher ideal of man and of virtue than the ideal given by Christ of old.”** -- Fyodor Dostoyevsky. **“A man who was completely innocent, offered himself as a sacrifice for the good of others, including his enemies, and became the ransom of the world. It was a perfect act.”** --Mahatma Gandhi. **“I am an historian, I am not a believer, but I must confess as a historian that this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very center of history. Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all history.”**--H.G. Wells. **“Jesus was the greatest religious genius that ever lived.”** -- Ernest Renan.”

Now here is the question because these are lofty quotes and thoughts about Jesus that many never go to or never raise their thoughts to. What is wrong with these statements? The thing that is wrong in these sayings is simply they do not go far enough. They are not high enough. They are all insufficient views of Jesus even though some might call them high and noble thoughts. It is just like the crowds that are gathered discussing who Jesus is in private away from the notice of the religious authorities. That is the meaning of “much muttering,” they were whispering in secret hushes not to be heard. Look again at verse 12, **“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.’”** There are two views among the people. Both of these views are insufficient.

Some were saying that he was a good man. And just like the many quotations that I just gave, many think this today. They marvel at the beauty and the morality of the Sermon on the Mount, or marvel at Jesus' wisdom of the greatest command to love God with all your being, and the second to love your neighbour as yourself. He is the highest of what we all should be.

But did Jesus leave that option open? Listen to what Jesus' discussion in the next chapter with the religious leaders, **“Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.’ So the Jews said to him, ‘You are not yet**

fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.’ - John 8:56-58. He claimed not to be a good man, but to be God in human flesh. In John 20:28-29 after Thomas sees Jesus he makes a profession of faith and Jesus accepts it, **“Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’”** And here is my point: Jesus can be God in human flesh or he can be a lunatic or a deceiver, but he cannot be just a good man. He doesn't leave that option open. That option is not available from his words.

C.S. Lewis wrote these words, **“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the son of God: or else a madman or something worse.”**

The other option presented here is that he was a deceiver. If he was a deceiver he was the worst deceiver ever because he claims were so great. He came to a particular nation and announced to that nation who believed in One God that he was God in human flesh at the same time separate from the Father and at one with the Father. And he claimed not only that but that he came for a particular reason and that is man is sinful, and he came to live that perfect life and die that death in their place taking the eternal wrath of God upon himself that all who believe on him would have eternal life. And if he did not do that then all those who followed him throughout the last two thousand years are people most miserable. And the world should try to erase Christianity because he has caused billions to go off into everlasting judgment without a Saviour. And yet the one thing that we cannot escape from is he rose from the dead vindicating all his claims.

The church historian Philip Schaff writes, **“How, in the name of logic, common sense, and experience, could an imposter — that is a deceitful, selfish, depraved man — have invented, and consistently maintained from the beginning to end, the purest and noblest character known in history with the most perfect air of truth and reality? How could He have conceived and successfully carried out a plan of unparalleled beneficence, moral magnitude, and sublimity, and sacrificed His own life for it, in the face of the strongest prejudices of His people and age?”**

The question now becomes who do you say Jesus is? Are you thoughts like many in the crowd he is either a good man or deceiver? Jesus and the testimony of Scripture leave the only conclusion that you can come to and that is he is Lord and Saviour. It is now time to bow to him. A denial of him will not change who he is. It is now time to trust him and follow Him. And for believers, so often our thoughts of Jesus are so pedestrian and common. Marvel once again at the one we call Saviour and friend. Marvel at the mystery of God in human flesh the Saviour of the world.