



SO...WHO ARE YOU FOLLOWING?

“Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.”

John 7:17

I choose to follow Jesus!

John Chapter Seven is so descriptive of humanity...in relationship to Jesus! If you have your Bibles turn to John chapter 7. This chapter gives us such a look...behind closed doors...into the thinking of the people in that time who were encountering Jesus. These people I will be mentioning came from all walks of life...and with Jesus right in front of them here are some of the descriptions that John the Apostle wrote down for us in John chapter 7.

- Jesus did not want to go about in Judea because the Jewish leaders there were looking for ways to kill him. (John 7:1). *Yep...Jesus' life was in jeopardy...because of what He was saying and because of what He was doing...and because of who and where He was saying it to.*
- Jesus' own brothers did not believe in him. (John 7:5) *That is hard to believe...it is a difficult thing to hold...but his own brothers were not on board with Him...and they had known Him and had grown up with him all of His life.*

- At the Festival of Tabernacles the leaders were watching for Jesus and asking: “Where is he?” (John 7:11) *The question was not asked in the sense of wanting to learn or truly hear...the question was asked with animosity...with challenge...with fear. You see...their positions were going to change if what Jesus was saying was really true. There would be a change of mindsets...on the part of the listeners...and then the “power positions”...those positions that people had claimed all of their lives...would be disappearing...because of the Gospel of Grace rather than the Law. In essence...the power brokers would be powerless.*
- Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him...that is...Jesus. (John 7:12) *The common people were afraid to say much of anything...about Jesus...and for sure they could not say anything positive because of the fear of being rejected and/or persecuted by the political/religious leaders of the day. But “the people” were listening gladly...happily...because the message of this JESUS was resonating with them in their hearts and in their lives...whether that message was connecting with the current leaders or not.*
- Some people were saying “he is a good man.” (John 7:12) *And these people were saying these positive words...in spite of the fact that they stood the chance of being rejected...mocked...and even persecuted.*
- Other people replied, “No, he deceives the people.” (John 7:12) *We all wish that all people would fall to their feet at the Name of Jesus. That will happen in eternity...but it is not going to happen now. People who were on the front row...in the seats next to the platform of the places where Jesus preached and taught...in the moment...I mean right there...were calling Jesus a deceiver....*
- Note: **“But no one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the leaders.”** (John 7:13) *What was true then...is...sadly...in many instances...true today! I could say many things about this fact and how it plays out today...but I will refrain for this message...for the most part. Just let me say that I preached...right across the street...from one of the largest University’s in California...with a student population of 40,000 plus. Many of the students who attended the church where I preached could not stand up in the Sociology Class at the Univ and give testimony to Jesus if they wanted to pass the course. Students were limited...in many instances...from writing*

anything in term papers that might have had the references of the Bible...if they wanted to pass the course. In some instances...all kinds of clubs and organizations were approved to be on campus...but often the Christian Clubs were prevented from having the same access to the students on the campus that every other club had. Consequently...Christian students would not say anything publicly...if they wanted a passing grade.

- Jesus did show up at the Festival of Tabernacles...and when he did he began to teach and everyone was amazed and here is what was asked: **“How did this man get such learning without having been taught?”** (John 7:15) *Jesus was the Son of a Carpenter...a very noble profession. But because He did not attend the right schools...or have the right experiences...or know the right people...He was questioned as to His credentials...who He was...and ultimately what He was saying! That is what you do when you reject the content of the teaching...you accuse the instructor some way and cast doubt on him or her.*
- As he taught here are some words that were shouted out at him: **“You are demon possessed...who is trying to kill you?”** (John 7:20) *That is a pretty heavy accusation! **You are demon possessed!***
- The argument among the people took a whole new twist:

“At that point some of the people of Jerusalem began to ask, ‘Isn’t this the man they are trying to kill? Here he is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying a word to him. Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Messiah? But we know where this man is from, when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from.’” (John 7:25-27)

This simple statement...as recorded by John...gives us an understanding of what Jesus was up against. People were saying things about Him and against Him...making definitive statements...and they didn’t have all of the facts...in other words...they were saying things about Him without knowing the whole story...or if they knew the whole story they were purposefully rejecting it.

Look at that Scripture again: ***“Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Messiah? BUT WE KNOW WHERE THIS MAN IS FROM...when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from.” (John 7:27)***

WHAT?

When the Messiah comes no one will know where he is from! That authoritative statement was dead wrong. They all knew where the Messiah would come from.

1. Their own prophets told them where he would come from: ***“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.” Micah 5:2***
2. As John continued to record these words in this 7th chapter, there were people who knew where Jesus would come from: ***“Does not Scripture say that the Messiah will come from David’s descendants and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?” John 7:42***

To put it very simply...there was bedlam all around Jesus...it was a mess...but...and this is important...in the very middle of the confusion...and the mass of misinformation about Jesus...

“Still...many in the crowd believed in HIM!” (John 7:31)

- As Jesus continued teaching many in the crowd believed in him...and here is what they said: ***“When the Messiah comes, will he perform more signs than this man?” (John 7:31) Really...the people had no other comparison. They heard the messages...and they witnessed his actions and reactions...but all in all...they looked at “the signs”...what He was doing...and they asked that question that demanded a response: No, really...no one will perform more signs than this man...He must be for real!***
- And isn’t it interesting...that the authorities heard ***“the crowd whispering such things about him...”*** and so these authorities sent some “temple guards” to arrest him. (John 7:32) ***What? “Whispering?” And this is what caused these “authorities” to panic...to demand that their henchmen arrest him?***

- On the one hand you have people being officially sent out to arrest Jesus...and on the other hand you have people who are trying to connect the dots with what He is saying!
- LET'S LISTEN IN FOR A MOMENT TO THE PEOPLE:

“Where does this man intend to go that we cannot find him? Will he go where our people live scattered among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks? What did he mean when he said, ‘you will look for me, but you will not find me’ and ‘where I am, you cannot come.’” (John 7:35-36)

JESUS COULD SENSE AND SEE THAT ALL THAT WAS UNFOLDING ON THE STAGE OF HIS LIFE WAS SLOWLY...COMING TO A HEAD...SOMETHING WAS ABOUT TO HAPPEN. AND THAT IS WHEN HE STOOD UP IN THE FESTIVAL...AND MADE THIS AMAZING PROCLAMATION:

- **“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.”** (John 7:37) And as people continued to listen some of the people said: *“Surely this man is the Prophet.”* (7:40)
- But Jesus continued...and this is important:

“Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” (John 7:38)

And then John Himself gives the explanation of what Jesus just said:

“By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.” (John 7:39)

Let me say on this verse...and this amazing insight and revelation from John the Apostle...that the Spirit did pour out...in Acts 2...not only on the twelve...in a very amazing powerful way...but also INTO all who repented and were baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ...and in the process those baptized people received “the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38)

The descriptive expression then is this: ***“...rivers of living water...began to flow from within them.”*** Just as water gives life...so people who have received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior...and have been baptized into HIM, have this “life giving flow” of the Spirit pouring from within themselves...to those who they come in contact with!

- Others said, *“He is the Messiah.”* (7:41)
- Still others said, *“How can the Messiah come from Galilee? Does not Scripture say that the Messiah will come from David’s descendants and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?”* (John 7:42)
- And what observation does John make? **“Thus the people were divided because of Jesus.”** (John 7:43)

Let’s be honest...generations of people have been DIVIDED BECAUSE OF JESUS! That has been true over the past 2,000 years...it is true right now...and will continue to be true until the Lord comes again!

- But let me give you just a little insight from a life of experience.
- Many people will acknowledge that Jesus lived and died and rose again...and that He will return to take those who have loved HIM back to heaven with HIM. That general principle usually stands.
- But why are the people divided then...even today...2016?
- For the same principle that they were divided in John 7:43.
- Some questioned whether or not He came from Galilee or Judea
- Others were quoting scripture...“He will come from Bethlehem”
- **And so everyone got all bent out of shape over where Jesus came from and in the process missed Jesus!**

So...how are we missing Jesus today?

- When I was in college many years ago we hosted a HUGE debate as to whether we should have a piano in the church building for worship or NOT have a piano in the church building for worship. Guess what...we missed JESUS!

- In the 70's the Body of Christ argued and debated over whether people could speak in tongues...or people could not speak in tongues! Whether those who did speak in tongues were going to heaven...or whether those who did not speak in tongues were going to heaven. Guess what...we missed JESUS!
- In one church in the 80's that church claimed that you needed to have a communion table up in front with the communion placed on it...and another church said "no, all we need to do is get the communion to the people...we do not need tables up in front." And guess what...we missed Jesus!
- One church claimed you had to read from the King James Version and another church said you needed to read from the New International Version...and guess what...we missed Jesus!
- One church claimed you need to baptize people in running water...to wash sins away...and another church said "no, you can baptize in a pool..." and guess what...we missed Jesus.
- One church claimed the "Emergent Church" was off base and a fraud...and another church claimed the Emergent Church was the real deal...and guess what...we missed Jesus!
- And some people said "He came from Galilee" and others said "no, we are not for sure where He came from..." and in the process...they missed Jesus!

LET ME STATE IT AGAIN: I CHOOSE JESUS!!!

In the final verses of chapter seven of John's Gospel...the conversation gets testy...judgmental...and at least from my perspective...very instructive into the thinking and reactions of people.

- So the Temple Guards, who had been given the responsibility to go and arrest Jesus came back with these words when they were questioned and challenged about NOT arresting Jesus: "***why didn't you bring him in?***" The Guards response: "***No one ever spoke the way this man does.***" (John 7:45-46)
- Listen carefully to the response of the Pharisees:

“You mean he has deceived you also? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law- there is a curse on them.” (John 7:47-49)

- But...one of “their own” ...NICODEMUS...who was a Pharisee spoke up! (7:50). Nicodemus had gone to Jesus earlier and now he asked a very simple question of his Fellow Pharisees in the heat of this moment: *“Does our law condemn a man without first hearing him to find out what he has been doing?”* (John 7:50-51)
- And these leaders missed the point and made a very extreme accusation: *“Are you (Nicodemus) from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee.”* (John 7:52)
- In their minds...case closed! And in the process...they missed Jesus!

I CHOOSE TO FOLLOW JESUS!

- I choose to follow Jesus when the way is not clear.
- I choose to follow Jesus when others question me
- I choose to follow Jesus based on what I know about Jesus...not on what someone else claims to know and or see
- I choose to follow Jesus when following Jesus is not the most popular thing to do
- I choose to follow Jesus when those around me are caught up in the minors...and the incidentals...those issues that have nothing at all to do with salvation and my personal relationship to Jesus
- I choose to follow Jesus when others choose to follow some human philosophy...or some man...or some religious guru...or some (and you fill in the blank)
- I choose to follow Jesus when people get following Jesus all bent out of shape and very confusing
- I choose to follow Jesus when the culture continuously rejects Jesus and His Word...and when the night of darkness tries to envelope the light of truth all wrapped up in Jesus Christ!

In other words: I CHOOSE TO FOLLOW JESUS...AND IT IS MY PRAYER...THAT YOU MAKE THAT SAME...BASIC...SIMPLE...YET VERY PROFOUND...CHOICE...JUST TO FOLLOW JESUS!