

Seeing is Not Necessarily Believing – Part 2
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John 7:1-13
September 16, 2012

I invite you to turn over in your Bibles now to John 7. This is our second week back in the Gospel of John. Last week, we began to look at this passage. We began to observe it as we sometimes do when we start a new chapter, where we'll spend some time with the W's and then H: *Who? What? When? Where? Why?* and *How?* so that we hear the text. It's so important that before we try to apply the text to our lives, that we hear it rightly. Really, application is sometimes something we start too quickly with. *What does the text mean to me? What does the Bible mean to me?* That's application. *What difference does it make in my life?* But we don't start there when you read the Bible if you want to read it correctly, because we need to start with: *What does the text say?* That's observation. Just observe what the text says, and then interpretation comes from good observation. *What does the text mean?* And once you know what the text means, then you can ask the question: *What does the text mean to me?*

So we, again, were looking at this passage last week, and we considered some of the W's and an H last week. *When? Where? Who? How?* Today, I want us to gather our thoughts around the last two W's, which are *What?* and *Why?* And then also we're going to come back to *How?* again too. So really, we'll be looking at *What? Why?* and *How?* But it's going to be five points, not three, because we're going to go: *What? Why? What? Why? How?* Just trust me. I think that's the better way to do it this time. Actually, we're going to do *What?* and *Why?* As in what Jesus' brothers asked Him to do, and why they asked Him to do it, and then we're going to look at what Jesus does in response and why He does it in response. So you see *What? Why? What? Why?* and then *How?*

So look with me at John 7:1-13...

John 7:1-13

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

Yourselves 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. 10 But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as if, in secret. 11 So the Jews were seeking Him at the feast and were saying, “Where is He?” 12 There was much grumbling among the crowds concerning Him; some were saying, “He is a good man”; others were saying, “No, on the contrary, He leads the people astray.” 13 Yet no one was speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews.

Let’s pray together...

Our Father, we come to You this morning mindful of the fact that we need Your grace to understand Your word. We need the power of Your Holy Spirit that inspired these words to now illuminate them in our minds and our hearts. We pray, Father, that You would take this passage and apply it to each one of us, to encourage us, and to build us up in the knowledge of and the love for Jesus Christ. We pray in His Name, Amen.

Just to rewind a little bit, last week as we read this passage and studied it, we asked, “When?” and we noted that the author John makes great emphasis on the fact that the *When?* of this passage is during the Feast of Booths or the Feast of Tabernacles, which is one of the high and holy celebrations of the Jewish people that God ordained in the Old Testament. The Feast of Tabernacles was a time where they remembered their wandering in the wilderness between the Exodus and when they went into Canaan. Remember how when they left Egypt, God took them through the Red Sea, then He took them out into the wilderness, and therefore, it was going to be a shorter time, but it ended up being forty years because of their unbelief. But during that time the Lord dwelt with them, they were all in tents, and God dwelled in a tent, the tabernacle. Before there was a temple, the tabernacle was the place of God’s glory. Remember how the cloud of glory was on the tabernacle and a pillar of fire led them by day, and a pillar of cloud by night? The pillar would get up off of the tabernacle and move, and they were to follow it.

So the Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of Booths was about celebrating and remembering this time when God came and took up residence among His people. This is the glory. The glory came to Israel. The yearning of all of our hearts is to

know the presence of God, and so this Feast was a way that the Lord ordained and commanded them every year in September – October. Actually, it's about two weeks from now that faithful Jews will celebrate this Feast of Tabernacles. Part of what they do is they will make little tent-like structures, and a lot of times they'll take branches and greenery and set them up, and then sit under those as a reminder. And when they actually went to Jerusalem, they would dwell in these dwellings while they were at the feast for a week. It was one of the most celebrated feasts. In fact, Josephus tells us it was the most popular, most widely attended of all the three major feasts: Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. This was the one that people tended to come to in the greatest numbers. But it commemorates the dwelling of God in His glory among His people.

Now, it's been a 6-month gap, we noted, between the previous chapter and this one. John has skipped over 6 months of Jesus' ministry. Much of that 6 months is contained in the other Gospels. In fact, Matthew, Mark, and Luke really focus in on the time Jesus spent in Galilee. Here we have John focusing on just selected events and laying them side-by-side so that we see a portrait of Jesus that's somewhat unique and distinct from the other Gospels. What we see in John 6, remember, the last event that we had was the feeding of the 5000, in which 5000 men were fed with 5 barley loaves and 2 fish, so that really about 20,000 people were fed with this small amount of food. The miracle of what Jesus did is, remember, He fed the 5000 and then He gave the "I am the Bread of Life" discourse. The people misunderstood it, though. Remember, they saw the glory of God. They knew a miracle had happened, and what did they do? They wanted to take Jesus by force and make Him king. There's this tendency of simple people, where when we see the truth of God, we misappropriate it. We don't submit and bow down like we ought to. We try to use God for our own means. So they wanted to take Him and make Him king by force, and the Lord Jesus, of course, did not allow that.

Then He separated Himself from the crowd. He walked on the water that night. The disciples saw Him walking on the water. The next day, the crowds gathered to hear Him again, and they wanted bread, because they missed the point again. They just saw the glory of God. They should see that this is Yahweh come to take up His residence among us, but they miss it, and He gives the Bread of Life discourse. "I am the bread of life. He who believes in me will never hunger," and they don't understand that He's talking about Spiritual things. What you have in John 6 is though there's this incredible moment of popular enthusiasm right after the feeding of the 5000, you have this dwindling down in this profound rejection of Christ that happens in Chapter 6. In a 2-day period, the crowds are ready to make Him king,

and then they are departing from Him after He tells them, “You must eat My flesh and drink My blood.” He’s saying, “My death, my awful death is going to happen.” It takes that to save you and me, because of the depth of our sin. When He says that, the crowd doesn’t want to hear Him anymore, and even His own disciples leave Him, and that’s where we end up in Chapter 6, where many of those who had been following Him closely departed, and Jesus asked that heart wrenching question to the twelve, “Will you also leave Me?” He felt the pain and the sting of the rejection of the mass of the Jewish people. They saw Him clearly reveal Himself, One greater than Moses. “Moses gave us manna from Heaven, but Jesus gives us bread Himself. He blesses it and just gives it to us,” and yet they rejected Him, and He asked that question, “Are you also going to leave Me?” Peter says, “Where shall we go? Where would we go, Lord? You alone have the words of eternal life.” So there’s this remnant of believers in the midst of this larger number of those who reject Christ.

Then Chapter 7 picks up the same theme. This is why there’s a 6-month gap. John wants us to see these two stories side-by-side. In Chapter 7, what you have is Jesus’ brothers, His own earthly brothers. There are four brothers we know that Jesus had. I mentioned this last week as well. There was James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude. These are four boys that Mary had after the virgin birth of Christ. These are Joseph and Mary’s sons, so they’re half brothers of Jesus. These four brothers who we have met earlier in the Gospel in Chapter 2:12 were with Jesus and the disciples in Capernaum at one point. We don’t hear their voice until now. Here they are expressing some things to Jesus, and what we see in the expression is unbelief and rejection, so that even His own brothers are rejecting Him.

This picks up a theme that builds throughout John’s Gospel, increasing opposition to Christ, and this begins to help us to look at how it applies to us. *What is God saying to us today in this passage? What does this mean to us? What does it say? What does it mean? What does it mean to us?* Well, we’re helped to think about the fact of the original setting, remember, not just the setting of the events in the text – Jesus’ life and ministry – but the setting of when John the apostle wrote these things down on paper, when he gave his Gospel. It’s always important to understand the original audience and the author, what God was doing in the giving of the Gospel. This Gospel was given about 85 A.D., which is 55 years or so after Jesus had been raised from the dead and ascended into Heaven. 85 A.D. is the last Gospel. It’s one of the last books of the Bible given to us time wise. The other Gospels were given in the 40’s. Matthew and Mark were written in the late 40’s A.D., less than 20 years after the events of the cross and resurrection. Luke writes in the 60’s as an associate of the apostle Paul. He writes his Gospel in the 60’s, so

that's about 30 years after the events. And then John, more than 25 years after Luke, writes this last Gospel.

Why is it that the Lord inspired this Gospel to be written? Well, the setting of the people that he writes to is significant. John writes to people who are predominantly Jewish gatherings of people to evangelize them to Christ, that is, to Jews and Jewish Proselytes who have heard about Jesus but are either on the fence or rejecting Him. He writes to implore them to believe.

Think about it. If you were a person considering the claims of Christ in 85 A.D., what would the setting be like? Well, you know that most of the Jews have rejected Jesus, and He's the Jewish Messiah. That seems incongruent. How could this be? How could Jesus truly be the Messiah if the majority of the Jewish people have rejected Him? Is it possible? This was something that was weighing on the hearts of the people and hindering their faith. Those who even had begun to believe Jesus was the Messiah were still continually bombarded with a sense of the rejection. I mean, it's tough to believe something in the face of so much unbelief, and isn't that true today? I mean, don't you feel the weight sometimes of the massive public opinion against the things of God, and how things run contrary to the word? People are so ready to believe everything else but the Gospel. We find ourselves swimming upstream continually, don't we? And so we can be discouraged, because it's hard to swim upstream.

One of the reasons this Gospel is given is to give us courage, to give us strength. That was the setting those people were in, and also not just widespread unbelief among the Jews, but in 85 A.D., we don't know for sure if it was 85 A.D., but we think it was 85 to 90 A.D. or something like that, that John wrote this, when there was about to break out a great period of persecution by the Roman Empire against Christians under the Emperor Domitian, who reigned from 81 A.D. to 96 A.D., one of the most intense persecutions of the early Church broke out. It was widespread, whereas the earlier persecution under Nero (you may have heard his name) who reigned in the 60's, was intense but it was more localized to Rome. This was a widespread (throughout the empire) persecution of Christians. So Christians were dying for their faith, or would soon. When John writes, either they had begun to die for their faith, or they would soon be dying for their faith.

Now, think about all of that pressure on them – the pressure of unbelief in the world, the pressure of unbelief among the Jews, the pressure of persecution, and John writes this to bolster them and remind them what really matters. Now, let's continue to consider that. That's looking at last week: *When? Where? Who?*

Now let's look at *What?* and *Why?*

The first two points are, “What do Jesus’ brothers ask Him to do, and why do they ask Him to do it?”

1) What Do Jesus’ Brothers Ask Him to Do?

Look with me at Verse 3. They ask Him to do two things, really:

John 7:3 ~ 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.”

They’re asking Him first of all to go up to Jerusalem to the Feast right now. That’s their suggestion. “Jesus, go up to the Feast now. This is the time.” Remember, I said it’s the most popular Feast, and the way it worked is that Jews from all over the world would make pilgrimages to Jerusalem three times a year. Passover was in March and April of the year. Pentecost was in May and June of the year. In September and October was the Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of Booths. So His brothers are like, “Look, the crowds are down there.” Jesus is in the Northern region of Galilee, which is akin to Northern Israel, well removed from Jerusalem, well removed from the center of Jewish religious life where the temple is. His brothers say, “Go up now to the Feast.” That’s the first thing they ask Him to do.

The second thing they ask Him to do is they ask Him to do His works openly. They want Him to come out of hiding, as it were. They’re saying, “You’re doing things in secret,” and there’s this contrast of words as we read the text, and we see that John is emphasizing by calling to our mind the things that they said. He says in Verse 4: ***For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly.*** In secret versus publicly. You see the same thing, actually, in Verse 10, when Jesus actually does the opposite of what they ask Him to do:

John 7:10 ~ But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as if, in secret.

Do you see that? They ask Him to go up not in secret but publicly, but Jesus went up not publicly but in secret. There’s this contrast going on. It calls our attention to *Why?* In fact, I think if we’re honest, their suggestion to Jesus seems logical. I mean, think about it. There are different opinions about what their motivations are.

We don't have a clear revelation about what their motives are in asking this. I mean, maybe they're just being scornful. They don't believe. They're saying, "You think You're a Prophet, or You're a Messiah, or whatever. Well, go do Your works. Why are you not in Jerusalem?" It could be like that. I tend to think it's not really like that. I think that they have a measure of belief, but it's not saving belief. They have seen His works. They just say in Verse 3: *...Your works which You are doing.* "We've seen Your works. We've seen Your miracles, but why aren't You doing more of them where the gathering of people are?" I think their motivation is they're frustrated. Scorn is not their motivation, but frustration. They're seeing it from their view, from a worldly view, that His mission is failing. "You came to reach Israel, and Israel is rejecting You. What You need to do is go do Your works now. The crowd's there. Take advantage of the moment. *...show Yourself to the world...* is the language of the last part of Verse 4: *"If You do these things, show Yourself to the world."* The verb here means 'to make manifest', and it comes from a root verb which means 'to shine the light upon'. "It's time for You to let the light shine upon Your being who You are. If You're the Messiah, if You are of God, show Yourself to the world." That's their counsel. That's what they ask Him to do.

2) Why Do Jesus' Brothers Say These Things?

We got to it a little bit. I said it's not scorn but I think it's frustration, but let's continue to look at it. Why did they say these things? Well, Verse 5 tells us they were not believing in Him. They have seen His works, and think about this: They've seen His life. Can you imagine what it would be like to grow up in the same house as the Son of the Living God? I mean, as a young man, He wasn't doing miracles, but they saw the greatest miracle of all, a life of perfect righteousness, a life of love and service, a life of continual worship of the Father. They had front row seats to see something that is so far beyond any other human being. I mean think about it. All of us, the Bible says, are sinners. The Bible says that even our righteousness is filthy rags in God's sight. What we think that we've done well, when the Lord looks at it, it's filthy. It's tainted. But in the Man Christ Jesus, there was perfect righteousness. They saw that. It had to have impact upon them, and it did. They saw His works, but they were yet not believing. They had a type of faith.

We see one of John's themes in this Gospel is that there are degrees of faith. There is such a thing as shallow faith that's not saving faith. In fact, turn back over to John 2:23.

John 2:23 ~ Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing.

It sounds like things were going very well on Jesus' mission. Many are believing in Him, it says, but look at what it says in Verse 24:

John 2:24 ~ But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, 25 and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

The word 'entrusting' actually is more of a play on words. It's really the same word for 'believe'. In the Greek, it's like, "Many were believing in His Name, but Jesus was not entrusting, Jesus was not believing in them." What it means, and what we see when you look at John 3, especially right after that, is they had a *type* of faith. They had a shallow faith. They saw signs. They believed He was something special, but they did not truly from the heart submit to Him in saving faith. It was a shallow faith, and there's a difference.

Today, in evangelical culture, we have this idea where shallow faith has become something that's just common expectation, this idea that if you have an experience with Christ, or that if you get baptized, or if you join the church, if you pray a prayer, then you're definitely saved. Well, the Bible teaches that if you're ever really saved, you're always saved, but the question is: Have you really been saved? John is telling us there's a type of faith that's not saving faith. The faith is on the surface. It has to go to the heart. True saving faith comes from a new nature. That's what John tells us in Chapter 3. Jesus teaches, right after what we just read, that many were believing but He did not believe in them, Chapter 3, remember, is the account of Nicodemus. And what did He tell Nicodemus who knew all about the Scripture? He said, "Nicodemus, you need to be born again. Except you're born again, you will not see the Kingdom of God." You have to have a new heart. You have to have a saving faith that goes all the way into your heart.

So His brothers apparently have that kind of shallow faith, so they're not really believing in Him in a saving way. That's one of the reasons they say these things to Him. They don't understand who He really is. They don't understand that He is God in the flesh, or they would not be making a suggestion to Him. I mean, think about that. "Hey, I think I know what You need to do." The irony is our pride is so great that we constantly think we know better than God. "Lord, really do You think this is the right thing to have this happen to that person on top of what else they've

got going on?” Have you ever thought like that? But the Bible says God is sovereign, and I think God knows what He’s doing, so why do I find that in me? Well, His brothers were suggesting to Him that He needed to do something different. They didn’t really understand who He was. ...*show Yourself to the world.*

They also did not understand the magnitude of sin. They did not believe, but they also did not understand the problem with sin, which Jesus in answering their suggestion, makes clear. They say, “Go on up. Do these things publicly. Show Yourself to the world.”

John 7:6 ~ 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.

They had a mistaken view that man only needs more light. “If You will just go up and do Your works openly, if You’ll stop speaking in parables and speak plainly, if You’ll come out of any element of darkness and just shine the light of who You are... (they don’t know fully who He is, but they know He’s from God in some way) ...then just do that and everything will be better.” Jesus is saying here, “You are wrong. You think that men need more light. That’s not what they need. They need more light, yes, but that’s not sufficient. They need more light, but they need a new heart.” That’s what He’s saying in Verse 7: *The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me...* “It’s not just that people need to see more clearly who I am, but they need to have a new heart, because if they see clearly who I am, they’re going to hate Me.” That’s what He’s saying.

In fact, if you think about this, it’s something that I’ve seen lived out in my life. One of the things that as a young believer I remember in College – I was at a Baptist College, actually. Patti and I went to a Baptist School, and we thought it would be a Christian education, but at this point in time, that school was pretty liberal, unbeknownst to us. We didn’t know what we were getting into. We go there, and I think the religion faculty was mostly unsaved, looking back on it according to what Scripture says. They didn’t believe that Jesus was literally resurrected from the dead. One of the guys did, I think, but the others did not. Most of the professors were evolutionists. In the Science Department, all of them were, but even other places. There was this idea that, “Creation, that’s stupid and backward.” This was at a Baptist School! I remember thinking, “This is a Baptist College!”

Sitting through classes and hearing that kind of attitude, I remember thinking, “I just know the Bible says God created the world in six days. The Bible says that sin led to death. Before sin, there was no death, therefore, there couldn’t have been millions of years of animals dying before sin entered the world,” because God makes clear in Genesis 1 that He made everything good. So I was clinging to faith just in the word of God, thinking, “Somehow they’re just wrong. Their science has got to be wrong. The way they measure the rocks and all that’s got to be wrong. It’s just not right.” But I didn’t have any bolstering support out there in the world. At least I didn’t know about anything. I didn’t know about ICR or anything like that, so here I am, Patti and I, just kind of clinging to these things, and there were a lot of other believers there at this school.

Well, think about what’s happened in the 25 years since we graduated College, how much light God has given in the area of understanding creation, with this whole argument of irreducible complexity that’s out there now, the idea basically if you haven’t heard it, is it’s come up not through Christians studying it – actually, the most famous proponent of irreducible complexity is a guy named Michael Behe who has a PhD in Biochemistry at Cornell University, and it’s him studying the cell that led him to conclude this world has a Creator. And what basically it is, the idea of evolution, is that single cell things are less complicated, and then they mutate any evolve into more complicated things, so that you go from an amoeba, eventually to a monkey, and then to a man, right? That’s basically the mindset, and so over hundreds of millions of years, this happens.

Well, irreducible complexity basically strikes at the very heart of the argument, but it says look, the reality is that first of all, a single cell organism is so incredibly complex, it’s staggering. Things are happening in that single cell that are not just really simple and easy. Then the other thing is that when you take any animal, and this is basically how Behe does it – he says any animal when you break it down cannot evolve through sequential mutations, because you don’t have the animal until you have all the systems at one time. I mean, think about every living thing. Every animal has a respiratory system, has a circulatory system, has a nervous system, has muscles, bones, a skeletal system and all that, right? Well, all those things have to be there together, and Behe’s argument was, as you look at it, he said, “Imagine a mouse trap. You don’t have a mouse trap until you have all the parts of a mouse trap. You can’t trap any mice until you have all the parts there. So the mouse trap isn’t complete.” And every animal’s like that.

Dr. Joe Martin is one of our missionaries that many of you have heard talk. He talks about how illogical it is to think that a giraffe evolved, and he does this with a

lot of different creatures. A giraffe has a heart that is so strong. I forget how big it is, but it's just huge. A giraffe is a big animal anyway, but it has to be incredibly big even for its size, the heart, because it has to pump blood all the way up that neck to the brain. That's a massive task. And he said the complexity of the giraffe's heart is phenomenal, because what happens is when the giraffe is up there reaching for leaves in a tree, it needs all that blood flowing so it can focus its eyes, and it can make that bite, and get that leaf. Now, then it goes to drink some water, and it takes that head and it goes down like this. He said if the giraffe did not have a certain mechanism in its heart, it would blow its brains out, because its heart is pumping blood at such an incredible power, but as it comes down to this level, the giraffe's heart cuts it off with amazing precision so that it doesn't blow its brains out. And the idea is, think about it, did the long head come first? All these things have to be there together. I didn't mean to go off into so much on creation, but the idea is that more light has come, and in fact, it comes more every day. If you're interested, so go the Answers in Genesis website and read on it. It's an outstanding ministry by Ken Hamm. More and more light is coming to the surface on how God has revealed Himself. As Romans 1 says, He's always been there. He's revealed Himself through what He's made. When you look at what is made, you see His eternal power, His God-head, His wisdom. It's there. "It's clearly seen," Romans says, "so that men are without excuse."

Now, my point is that just in the last 25 years, the light has come on, but have atheists decreased by that much? Have people really become Christians? Has there been a revival that's happened? The reality is no, just shining more light doesn't mean the difference. This is true in all kinds of areas. More light is not the answer. We need a new heart.

So Jesus' brothers had a mistaken view. They thought man only needed more light. "Jesus, just do some more miracles. Jesus, just be more sensational, and it'll fix everything." If that were the case, Jesus should have just come down and done some really impressive miracles that would have staggered everybody. He could have taken the moon and spun it on His finger like a basketball. Would that have been too hard for Him? No. Why did He not do that? That would have had everybody believing. Well, apparently that wouldn't have solved the problem of man. That wasn't the best way. It wasn't the way that brings glory to God and really brings salvation to man. Now, that's the *What?* and *Why?* of what the brothers asked him to do.

Now, what does Jesus do and why? These are points 3 and 4. Point 3 is pretty quick. I mean, basically, they ask Him to go up immediately. They ask Him to do His works openly.

3) What Does Jesus Do?

We see in Verse 9 that He does not go up immediately. Verse 10 tells us that He does not do His works openly. He does the exact opposite of what they said. He had said in Verse 8, “My time has not yet fully come. Any time is opportune for you. Go on up to the feast yourselves.”

John 7:9 ~ Having said these things to them, He stayed in Galilee. 10 But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as if, in secret.

He doesn't go up publicly. He goes up secretly. That is, He's not making an attempt to draw crowds. He just makes His way up to the feast like anybody else without trying to draw attention to Himself, because He knows that if He draws attention to Himself at this point, it will not be the right time for Him, for His hour has not yet come. His time is not yet there. So I'm moving to the next question.

4) Why Does Jesus Not Go Up Immediately or Openly?

What does Jesus do? He does not go up immediately. He does not go up openly. Why does Jesus not go up immediately? Why does He not go up openly? He says in Verse 6 and Verse 8 that His time is not yet. Verse 6: ...***“My time is not yet here, but your time is always opportune.***

John 7:8 ~ Go up to the feast yourselves; I do not go up to this feast because My time has not yet fully come.”

Three times the word ‘time’ there is in the text, and it's actually an interesting word. In Greek, there are two words that are used for ‘time’. One is the word ‘chronos’ and this is a separate word ‘kairos’ which means it's two words which mean two different things, and this word means not so much time on the clock, which is chromos, but this is an opportune time, or an appointed time, or a fixed moment. It's the idea of set appointment. He's saying, “It's not yet My appointed time to go up. My appointed time has not yet fully come.”

Now, they ask Him to go up immediately, and He's basically saying, "No, I'm not going up immediately, because My time's not yet here." Well, what's He talking about? I think one of the things He's saying is He does everything according to the moment by moment revelation of His Father, and the Father's not told Him to go up yet.

In fact, if you turn back over a couple of pages to John 5, you see this. Though Jesus is fully God, the eternal Son of God, equal and power and glory, He is submitted to the will of the Father. In His earthly ministry, He does only that which the Father calls Him to do or tells Him to do. Look at Verse 19 of Chapter 5:

John 5:19 ~ Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.

John 5:30 ~ "I can do nothing on My own initiative..."

So the idea is He's making clear that as the Redeemer, as the God-Man, the eternal God, God the Son comes and becomes man, takes humanity to Himself, and lives a life of complete dependence upon the Father. Depending upon the power of the Holy Spirit, He listens for the Father, and whatever the Father tells Him to do, that He does. And what He's saying to His brothers is, "Hey, I'm on God's timetable. I'm on the Father's timetable. My time is not yet, because He's the One that tells me when to move."

It's interesting how He makes a subtle rebuke to them when He says in Verse 6: ***...your time is always opportune.*** What He's telling them there is, "You're not on God's timetable, because you're of this world, so you can go up whenever you want to, but My time is not yet at hand. I must do what the Father has called Me to do." I think there's sort of a double meaning here, too, with another phrase that's used throughout the Gospel. In the idea that His time to go to Jerusalem is not at hand, He's also, I think, thinking about the fact that His time to go to the cross is not yet. "So I can't go publicly, because if I go publicly, I will hasten the cross, and God has not yet set the time for the cross." If He were to make Himself known, and this is the reality, if Jesus had made Himself known by spinning the moon on His finger, what would have happened is they would have killed Him quicker. It's counterintuitive to us, isn't it? It doesn't seem like that. Or they would have misused Him. They would have taken Him like they did in John 6. They wanted to take Him and make Him king. They wanted to take Him by force.

He has just revealed His glory from Heaven. He's clearly from God. If they were understanding, He is God, and here in the Feast of Tabernacles, where they celebrate when the glory of God came to dwell among them in a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire in a tent, there's this irony behind all of Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 which takes place at this Feast of Tabernacles. They did not see that though they were celebrating when the glory of God came to dwell among the people of God in the tent, how much greater is their visitation right at that moment? God Himself has come in a tent, the tent of flesh. John 1:14 ~ *The Word became flesh and dwelt among us*. That word 'dwelt' in the Greek, literally can be translated 'tabernacle' among us. "The Word became flesh and pitched His tent among us."

Here at the Feast of Tabernacles where God has pitched His tent, is right there. They should be celebrating. They should be falling before Him, but they're not. In fact, we're going to see they're going to be seeking to kill Him over, and over, and over in the passage, and God basically is restraining them from killing Him, because His time is not yet. We see the hatred of the world. The more clearer the revelation, the more overt the rejection.

We read from Psalm 2 earlier. "Why do the peoples rage, and the nations gather against the Lord and against His anointed?" Do you see? That's a picture of kind of the Armageddon, but it's also a picture of what's always gone on in the world, that in sin there's a spirit of rebellion, that when man sees God, he wants to reject God and assault God. You see this in the Tower of Babel. Man's trying to make a name for himself, remember? They all gather together. They're gathering together against the Lord there, and we see it here pictured in Psalm 2 in a way that shows that throughout history and ultimately the end of history, this will be played out. When the world sees God coming, they're going to gather to fight.

Now, when they see Him coming on the clouds, you would think this would be where finally they would submit, but the reality is all of us would be in exactly the same predicament if God had not changed our hearts. And if God has not changed your heart, that's what we need. We need God to change our hearts.

Jesus tells a story in Matthew 21, days before His crucifixion. He's teaching in Jerusalem, and He tells us the parable about the workers in the vineyard. He says a certain man had a vineyard and he hired out tenant workers to work the vineyard, and this man sent other slaves of his to collect the wages for the vineyard. The idea was you're a tenant farmer, you worked the land, and you give the owner some of the produce as payment for the privilege of working his land. This was a clearly understood practice throughout history, but particularly in that day. So he sends a

slave to collect the payment, and what did the workers in the vineyard do? They beat the slave up, insult him, and send him back.

Now, imagine the owner of the vineyard getting this message. He's expecting the payment from these guys that he's agreed to let work his vineyard, and they beat up his slave and send him back. "I can't believe it. This is incredible. Why would they do that? What kind of foolishness is that?" So he sends a couple more and they beat them up, and they kill one, and the owner thinks, "If I send my son, surely they will show respect to him. Surely if they have a more clear revelation, they will bow and show proper respect here." So he sends his son, and what do they do? They kill the son, because the son is heir. Jesus says that to the Pharisees right in the shadow of Calvary, "because that's exactly what you're about to do to Me." The point is the Jews did not put Jesus on the cross because they did not understand who He was. In reality, what the Bible says is they did understand who He was. They hated him because they saw in Him and they heard in Him the voice of God that they truly hated. Though they were religious people, they used their religion to keep God at bay.

So the message of this passage is that Jesus illustrates for us in John 7, in giving us this passage right after John 6, the rejection of Christ, and He's basically saying, "You've got to understand some things." In fact, I want to now move to *How?* We've looked at *What? Why? What?* and *Why?* Now let's look at *How?*

5) How Are We to Respond? How Are We to Apply This Passage?

I mentioned the original audience contemplating the claims of Christ, the message of Christ amidst widespread Jewish rejection, growing threats of persecution, darkness coming in, and the world becoming more and more filled with antipathy to the truth. What do you do in that setting? That's a very relevant message for our day, isn't it? I mean, we look at our society, and many lament the fact that we're no longer a Christian nation, and folks point out we were founded on Christian principles and all of that, and I don't dispute all of that. I think it's a little misguided to focus on the argument that way, though. I think that argument's going to win very few people over, and what do we really gain anyway? So we were founded on Christian principles. What does that matter today? To most people it doesn't matter. But it's not about that anyway. It's mixing up God's Kingdom and America. America is not the embodiment of God's Kingdom. It never has been and it never will be. It was an expression of His kindness, yes. It's an expression of amazing kindness. The principles that undergirded America are wonderful principles, and I hope that we will keep America alive. My preference

by far is for that, and we should vote, and we should do everything we can to see that, but we should not put our hope in that, and we should not be unduly discouraged if it falls apart. This isn't just politics. This is antipathy to the Gospel. I'm talking about persecution, if persecution breaks out, which is coming more and more near every day. I mean, in Canada, they're shutting down churches which preach that homosexuality is a sin. How far is that from America? I mean, the Bible is clear that homosexuality is sin. Sin is sin, and it's loving and kind to tell people the truth. We don't condemn. We're all sinners. We don't speak in a condemning way. We all struggle with sin. Those of us who have been born again continue to struggle with sin, but Jesus Christ is the only answer, and there is no life anywhere but in Christ. So we proclaim that and we endanger ourselves. Well, what are we to do? This passage tells us the implications.

There are really two things I think that we should see from this passage – two implications, two imperatives that I want to draw from the passage. So how do we respond?

First of all, we understand our setting. We realize that we dwell in the kingdom of darkness, that in this world, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:4, “The God of this age has blinded the eyes of unbelievers,” that there is a prince of darkness who is the god of this age, and the world's system is opposed to the things of God. So we understand our setting, that this is the reality, and that the light, when it comes into that, there is an antipathy, a hatred of it. I mean, Jesus made this clear. Look with me back at John 3, when Jesus was talking with Nicodemus and He told him, “You need to be born again.”

John 3:19 ~ This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

He said, “Look, I'm the Light that's come into the world, and men hate the Light.” In fact, that echoes what John had said in the prologue, if you go back to John 1. This is the theme throughout John's Gospel. Look with me at John 1:9.

John 1:9 ~ There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

Do you see that? Do we need more light? Well, we do, but it's not enough. The Light comes into the world, and such is our sin that we reject it. It's suicide, yes. It's spiritual, intellectual suicide, but sin does that to us. In fact, Jesus said it's going to be that way. It's going to continue to be that way for His followers. In John 15:18, He's talking to His disciples the night before He's crucified, and He says this:

John 15:18 ~ "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you;..."

So the idea is that this is something to be expected. The reality is though things may get better and there may be ebb and flow in history where there are moments where more light in God's general revelation is informing the culture, like for instance America, the way we were founded, yet there were problems even then. There have always been problems where we're missing it, but that's not the point. That's just a little bit of common grace. The reality is that the Gospel is always opposed unless God does something in the heart. So we have to be aware of that. We need to understand our setting so we're not shaken by unbelief. Don't let that affect our faith. The fact that people reject Christ, the issue is that it shouldn't affect us. Why are we surprised? I know it hurts. When we share Christ with someone and they don't believe, it hurts. It hurts for them. It hurts us when they reject us, but really we shouldn't be surprised. We should not be shaken. To understand our setting is the first implication.

The second implication is to focus our vision. I think one of the things John is saying in his epistle throughout is that there are these settings. There's widespread rejection of Christ. There's coming persecution, and the key is to focus our vision. Focus your vision not upon what's going on in the world, but upon one face, and that's the face of Jesus Christ. All that matters is Jesus, and why you or I should believe is not rooted in like a survey. We don't need to see how many people in America believe it in order to decide. We just need to look at Jesus. Look at Jesus on His own claims. Look at Jesus on His own merits. Look at that perfect righteousness. Look at the power that He possessed, the power to lay down His life and to take it up again. In every other world religion, you can find the tomb of the guy who wrote the books, but there's one tomb that is empty, the tomb in Judea,

the tomb of Jesus of Nazareth. He alone is Lord. So look at that, and believe in Him because of the works that He's done and the Person that He is.

Not only should we focus our vision on Him, but we need to focus our message on Him. Our message is not what's going on in the world. Our message is Jesus Christ. This is why so often we get the culture war in our heads and we start worrying too much about the politics, or we start worrying too much about the laws. I mean, it's not that those things are unimportant, but they're secondary. They're far secondary. What is primary is that person and their relationship to Jesus Christ.

Someone had said, and I think it's a great statement, that one of the problems we have when we play political games is we see the opposition in terms of that. We see them as opponents. Well, that should never be our thought process when it comes to the moral culture war. We can tend to see the homosexual lobby as opponents. We can tend to see the pro abortion lobby as opponents. No, they're the mission field. They're the people that need Jesus Christ. They're the people that need the forgiveness that comes through the Gospel. We're no better than them. We're sinners just like they are. We're murderers. We're adulterers. We're people that have sinned from our mother's womb just like David. The only difference is we have come to know One who can make us clean, who can give us life and transform everything about us. So they're the mission field. Don't get caught up in all of the other stuff. That's what this passage is saying. Don't get amazed by the darkness of the dark. Stay focused on the Light and bring the Light to bear. Live your life in such a way that they see the glory of Christ in what you treasure. Live your life in such a way that you're speaking about Jesus as you have opportunity, pointing to Him graciously but earnestly.

So we need to focus our vision on Him, who He is, focus our vision on Him in what we say, and then focus our vision on Him, knowing that we will soon be with Him. When the darkness gets darker, what it ought to make us want to do is, say, "Lord, I can't wait til You come back." That's one of the good things about it. It's something that we've talked about in my family and at different times with my kids, and we've talked about the fact that we should want Heaven more than we do. I wish I wanted Heaven more than I do. Why don't I want to be in Heaven more? Lord, help me. What you do with that is you ask Him to help you. But one of the things that He's doing in stuff like letting the dark get darker is helping us to want Heaven more. That's good. So we can rejoice even in that. We can rejoice even if things go a certain way in our lives or a certain way with America, if there's an economic collapse worldwide, or whatever, or if the one world system

actually happens. It doesn't change that Jesus Christ is all we need, and He's all we have, and we're headed to be with Him. So we need to stay rooted in that. That's what this passage is saying, and that transforms whatever we're going through.

How good it is to know that our Savior was hated so He can be a comfort to those who are hated. He was hated a lot more than we ever could be. How wonderful it is to know that He suffered more in every way than you or I have ever suffered. I mean, think about that. He knows what rejection is far more than you or I could ever know. He knows what it is to be abused far more than you and I could ever understand. And there are some of us in this room who have been abused horribly. Look to Jesus. He is your High Priest. Someone else? They don't understand what we've gone through, but Jesus always understands. He is our Savior, and John is saying, "Keep your eyes upon Him." As the dark gets darker, what do you do? You focus on the Light. Stay the course. May God help us.

Let's pray together...

Our Father, we rejoice in the glory of our Savior and the beauty of Jesus Christ. Lord, we're thankful that He is the Light of the world, that the man who believes in Him will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. Father, we pray that You would continue to help us, everyone in this room, to look clearly and uniquely at Jesus. For those that are here this morning who have not yet really placed their faith in a saving way in Jesus, help them even now to look only at Christ, only to Christ, and to see in Him a perfect righteousness, a perfect offering for sin, full payment at Calvary for every sin that we've ever committed or ever will commit. His blood is sufficient. He said, "It is finished!" before He died. Paid in full. Father, grant new hearts. Grant eyes to see and ears to hear. Grant repentance and faith. Father, for those that have already come to know Christ, may we continue to treasure Him more. May we continue to see that He's all that matters. May we not be anxious or worried by what's happening in our lives, but may we be filled with peace and strength because of who's at the center of our lives. Lord, forgive us for our foolishness, and help us to be strong in Jesus. Thank You that He is everything that we need. We pray this in His Name, Amen.

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