

Can This Be the Christ? (Part 2)

John 7:14-36

Where you from? Where did you go to school?

- thank you. If you're new we usually go through books of the Bible. We're in John this year.
- Chapter 7 is filled with questions as **to the identity of Jesus, including those two ?'s.**
- It takes place during the Feast of Tabernacles.
- Thousands of Jewish pilgrims would have been in the city.
- The city is a buzz with really one question, "Can this be the Christ?" [pray]

"Who is Jesus Christ?" What's the word on the street? James Boice describes the responses various people on the street gave when asked this question, (553-554):

- One young woman responded, "Jesus Christ was a man who thought he was God."
- A biology student replied, "Jesus Christ is pure essence of energy. God to me is energy, electric energy because it's something that's not known."
- One man responded, "I think that's something you have to decide for yourself, but the had some beautiful ideas."
- Others responded,
 - "He is one that we look up to as our leader."
 - "He is an individual who lived two thousands years ago, who was interested in the social betterment of all classes, of people."
 - "He was liked; he meant well; he was a good man."
- And then others were just confused, answering, "I haven't any idea ... I don't know."

I wish these could be here for our study of John!

People continue to be confused about Jesus, or seek to reinvent Jesus.

- Dan Brown, *Da Vinci Code*, "Jesus' establishment as the Son of God was officially proposed and voted on by the Council of Nicea."
- Shabir Ally, Muslim apologist, "There is nothing recorded in the Gospels showing that Jesus clearly affirmed his own divinity."

Are these statements true? Did we just make up his divinity? No.

Are there no statements of divinity in the gospels? Hardly.

We are looking at a book filled with statements of his deity: John's Gospel.

Get your theology from the Bible - not from fictional books, or from sound bites on YouTube. God has revealed to us who Jesus is clearly in His word.

Sometimes people have the wrong ideas about Jesus (and Christianity) because they have never actually studied the Scripture.

- Nicodemus addresses this problem later in this chapter (7:50-51):
 - "You're not actually hearing what he's saying; you haven't read/considered..."
 - "You haven't put away your prejudices, and studied with an open heart."
 - Listen **to him before you dismiss him! Don't be intellectually lazy.**
 - You might be surprised what will happen when you do!

Three Scenes/Questions regarding Jesus' identity:

Scene 1: Where did Jesus go to school? (14-24)

Scene 2: Where is Jesus from? (25-31)

Scene 3: Where is Jesus going? (32-36)

The questions are quite earthy... but the answer is quite surprising, and *heavenly!*

The short answer in each case is **Heaven!**

“Your like: “So it’s a short answer, and the same answer. Short sermon?”

Scene 1: Where did Jesus go to school? (7:14-24)

14-15a: Jesus comes out of seclusion and begins teaching at the temple.

- We aren’t told what he teaches at this point, but everyone marvels at him (15a)
- Many in Jerusalem probably have not heard him teach yet, and so there respond with astonishment.

Can you imagine hearing Jesus teach?

- People today talk about certain speakers with great enthusiasm.
- They say you could hear George Whitefield preaching 2 miles away — with no microphones! Crowds of 10-20K! I would loved to have heard him.
- But can you imagine hearing Jesus?
- **Matt 7:28-29.** Immediately after the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew says:
28 And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, 29 for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes. (See also 7:46)
- His teaching brought a certain **freshness**.
 - He wasn’t just citing other Rabbis, which was common then.
 - They *didn’t* praise originality.
- But his teaching also brought a certain **authority**, like they had never heard.
 - And he could speak with unique authority because he was the Son of God!

15b: So they begin to question what’s behind his teaching.

- Where did he study? Who taught him? From where does he derive his authority?
- They are impressed with his **knowledge** of Scripture, and with the **gravity** of his teaching.
- Most teachers attached themselves to a Rabbi, like pre-converted Paul attached himself to Gamaliel.

Who taught Jesus? Where did he get his learning?

In verses 16-24, Jesus addresses these questions. We may break it down in four parts.

A. His Source of His Knowledge (16)

- Jesus says that his teaching was divine. “his who sent me”
- His source wasn't earthly in origin. He didn't learn from a Rabbi.
- Jesus was sent from God (Jn 3:15), and his **diploma was divine**.
- The Father had commissioned him.
- Jesus' curriculum was heavenly.
- He echoed the Father, you might say.
- We are now commissioned to teach His word.
 - **2 Tim 1:11-ff**, teach “these things” - not our stuff, but God's stuff
- Clarifier: This is not a verse to use as an excuse not to study; quite the contrary. Jesus is the exception! You and I are not Jesus!
- We need all the help we can get to rightly understand and his teach his word!

B. His Students (17)

- Jesus moves from his heavenly source of teaching, to his **hearers**.
- What he says here is big.
- Those who receive his teaching **are those who seek God's will**.
- Piper: “I remember sometime in the fall of 1967 at Wheaton College being shocked when someone brought this to my attention — that right willing is the foundation of right knowing. It seemed at the time to make life more complicated, more mysterious, and certainly less under my control. Less rationalistic. The intellectual task of knowing truth suddenly became a moral and a spiritual task.”
- **Willing and wanting** are the keys to *knowing* — Christ. You need this kind of heart:

Ps. 40:8

I delight to do your will, O my God;
your law is within my heart.”
- Those who delight in his word, learn his word.
- “For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry he fills with good things” (Ps 107:9). Longing leads to learning.
- I told my wife concerning our kids, and it was true of me, and all students in general: *you learn what you want to learn*.
- We all know what this is like: Mom is trying to teach her son how to cook, but his heart isn't in it. “Oh, I'll just boil some Ramon Noodles. I'll just go through the drive thru...” he says.
- He doesn't want to learn to cook. She's wasting her time/breath on him.
- But he will learn when he wants to, like when he's on his own, or when he gets a serious girlfriend maybe, and wants to cook a nice dinner to impress her. She says, “Wow, look at this — marinated pork chops, potatoes, roasted Brussels sprouts!”
- What happened to little Johnny? He had a heart change.

- Teenage girl hates her French class ... until she goes to study abroad in Paris, and meets this really attractive Parisian guy at the gym. Miraculously, her interest in the French language changes!
- Jesus says, the people who understand me, are people who have a heart after God.
- The crowd's problem was a heart problem.
- It wasn't an intellectual problem, but a spiritual problem.
 - **NT Wright:** "In their weighing up of Jesus, many of them have settled it in their minds that there are certain things which they do not want God to be saying to them; and if Jesus says those things, then they will rule him out of consideration right away."
- Their wills needed to be broken. Their hearts needed changed.
- Like looking at an object under a frozen pond, you can't fully see it, until it's broken. Our wills need to be broken, and changed to rightly assess Jesus.
- **John 5:42** – "You don't recognize God's voice because you don't really love God."
- Carson: "Divine revelation can only be assessed, as it were, from the inside."
- You must choose to do God's will, to rightly learn and be changed by God's Word.
- Do you want to learn?

C. His Selflessness and His Truthfulness (18)

One sign of a self-appointed, false teacher is that he/she seeks his/her own glory.

- The false teacher's message is self-originating, and self-glorifying.
- **5:44** – "You want glory from one another."
- Jesus deflects glory. His aim is to glorify the Father.

True preachers today preach someone else's word for someone else's glory: God's:

1 Peter 4:11

¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

God provides the message; God empowers the messenger; so God gets the glory.

Jesus goes on to say of himself that he is "**true**" and in him there "**is no falsehood**" (18b).

This underscores the character his teaching, which is set **in contrast to his opponents**.

This leads to an example of how their teaching was characterized by falsehood, and his truthfulness....

D. His Superior Wisdom (19-24)

19: The healing in chapter five pops up again.

- The Jews prided themselves in having the law, but Jesus accuses them of not keeping it!
- Jesus kept the law perfectly, they didn't.
- Their effort to kill Jesus was a violation of the law itself, for he was an innocent man. The law clearly says, "You shall not murder."

20: The crowd (presumably those who had not been around Jesus) acts like they don't know anything about this plot to kill Jesus, and attribute his statement to demon-possession!

21-24: Jesus ignores the charge, and goes on to give a specific example to expose the religious' leaders falsehood.

21: This "one miracle/work" refers to the curing of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda (5:1-9). **And you "marvel" — that is it offended them.**

- On a basic level, this sounds over the top:
 - Jesus heals a guy and you want to kill him? **That seems a bit much.**
 - "Hey what did you do today?" "I healed a guy." ... "Let's kill him"
- But Jesus says your reaction was wrong *theologically*.
 - Why the reaction? Because it was on the Sabbath.
- But Jesus didn't violate the Sabbath; he violated the extra-biblical rules of the religious leaders.
- His action actually pointed to already-not-yet purpose of the Sabbath.
 - In Christ, we have rest. In his first coming, he gave a preview of the rest and wholeness we will fully know in the new heaven and new earth.

22: Jesus points out their inconsistency and hypocrisy.

- If a male child became eight days old on the Sabbath day, it was permissible to circumcise the child.
- They had no problem overriding the Sabbath to perform this ritual.
- They believed they were justified in doing this, since circumcision took precedence over the Sabbath (as it did historically in terms of its inauguration, "the Fathers").

23: In the same way, Jesus claims his healing on the Sabbath takes precedence over Sabbath rules.

- This one act of healing was of greater importance than circumcision.
- He argues from the lesser to the greater...
- Jesus says in effect, "If you have no problem healing someone partially on the Sabbath, why do you have a problem with healing someone completely on the Sabbath?"

Milne says: "If the cutting of one small part of the body is acceptable on the Sabbath in the interests of the covenant being fulfilled, how much more defensible was Jesus' healing a whole person on the Sabbath (23). His action was in fullest accord with the

healing and redeeming purposes which lie at the heart of the old covenant. Thus, far from being the enemy of Judaism and the law, Jesus is, in fact, the one in whom the historic purpose of Judaism is affirmed by being fulfilled.”

The healing of this man meant that the fulfillment of the Sabbath has arrived in Jesus. He gives us true health, true healing, true rest.

Ultimate rest doesn't come by observing a day,
but by resting in a person — Jesus.

You need more than a day off for renewal — you need the Messiah. There is a rest underneath all types of other rests: a good nap, good night's sleep, vacation, etc. “Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.”

24: Finally, Jesus points out the problem of inaccurate judgment and discernment and application of the law.

If they would judge things properly, they would see that Jesus is not a lawbreaker, but the one of whom Moses wrote, the fulfillment of the Sabbath.

Summary:

- Jesus' diploma wad from heaven. His source of material was different than the religious leaders.
- He possessed superior wisdom to the religious leaders.
- He possessed superior authority.

- Now, those who humble themselves before him, and commit to do God's will, are his disciples. They are those who continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of their Lord...
- The Lord who gives us rest and renewal.

This opens up a new line of questions...

Scene 2: Where Is Jesus from? (7:25-31)

This is not the first time we've read about the pre-existence of Jesus, and it won't be the last.

The gospel of John is like one of those spiral staircases.

- We keep circling back to the same themes that we read in the Prologue, but we keep going up, learning more about these themes. (Jn 1:1-18)

25: Jesus' words were very striking, and so the people raise more questions regarding his origin.

26: They begin to wonder why the authorities are allowing him to teach openly – **Do they secretly believe in him?** Is that why they are reluctant to punish him?

27: More misunderstanding. The crowd is analyzing Jesus from a mere earthly perspective.

“We know where he came from.”

- There were teachings floating around during this time that the Messiah would appear suddenly and mysteriously. He wouldn't grow up as a carpenter's son.
 - “Is this not the carpenter's son” (Mark 6)
 - “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph?” (Jn 1:45)
 - “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”
- For many in this crowd, the commonplaceness of Jesus disqualified him.
- It's like, “Hey, I heard the Messiah lives in Youngsville.”
- “Or, Hey you know Jesus that works over at Home Depot, yeah, he's the Messiah.”

28-29 Jesus doesn't deny that his human upbringing is identifiable; that he grew up in Nazareth. Instead he goes on to point to his divine origin – and this blows their minds.

- Dad doing family tree: “Son, were not who we thought we were.”
- Jesus is saying, “Guys, I'm not who you think I am.... I'm further back than Nazareth, or Bethlehem. I'm the eternal Word”
- He talks about knowing the Father intimately [read 28b-29]
- “I come from heaven.”
 - He is separating himself from the common notions of the Messiah.
 - He's claiming divine origin; He's claiming to be the pre-existent Son of God.

There's no one like him.

“In the fullness of time, God sent forth his son...” (Gal 4:4)

Jesus, how old are you? “On mother's side, I'm 12, but on my father's side, I'm eternal.”

- He has all authority – authority that didn't come from his education or his upbringing, but the authority that comes from being one and only the Son of God.
- He's claiming a status with God that exceeded what they envisioned.

30-31: Following this discussion we find a **division** in the crowd.

30: A word about Jesus' sovereignty. His time had not come yet.

- He will lay down his own life – they won't take it!

31: Reactions

- Some are open to Jesus.

- They “believe” – but this is not genuine faith yet, for they are still working things out it seems, “Will he do more signs than this?” (31b)
- Others want to inflict harm on him (30, 32).

The light of the world causes a reaction!

Scene 3: Where is Jesus going? (7:32-36)

32: The scene shifts from the crowd to the chief priests and Pharisees, who are not favorable to Jesus, but instead want to arrest him. The intensity has picked up.

33a: Jesus knows it will only be a short time before they will get their wishes, and will proceed to crucify him, “a little while longer...”

33b: But Jesus doesn't view this “going away” as a tragedy but rather as a departure.

- **He is going back to the Father:** “I am going to him who sent me.”
- (cf., Phil 1:21ff; John 14:1ff)

The same is true for all who are in Christ.

This verse highlights how we view **preparation for our deaths**.

- We certainly grieve the loss of our loved ones, but we can see death as a departure... and what Paul calls “far better.”
- “To live is X and to die is gain... My desire is to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.”
- John 14:3 — he says he is going a way, and he is preparing a place for us (a reference to the cross, not a construction process) ...
- Now he's at work *preparing us for that place*, weaning us off the pleasures of this world and giving us a longing for heaven.

If you may permit me a bit of hip hop.

This for your edification about the longing to be with our King.

Beautiful Eulogy by Beautiful Eulogy

There used to be a time when we were fine
 Living life with no particular religious bend
 Pretending to be our own gods
 Inventing our own systems of belief so as to not depend.
 On anything other than our own self-governing consent
 Defending an impending doom with no perceived need
 To concede or repent, presuming our innocence in a sense to sin
 The sting of death was only the inevitable end.
 Of everything we could never rightly understand or comprehend.
 We used to fear the unknown 'till God made himself known

And atoned, mending the relationship between God and men.
Giving His life as a ransom for many when He died and ascended
And in that one event the certainty of eternal death was circumvented.
Making a way for the day when history stops and time suspends
Spending eternity in fellowship that never ends
We see the greatest expression of God's love extended in that moment
When those who were once enemies instead became God's friends.

And when it's my time to go
Go ahead and take me home
I know I'll be with you
I know I'll be with you;
When it is my time to go
Go ahead and take me home
Nowhere that I'd rather go
I wanna be with you

How sweet the Gospel sounds to ears like mine
Well acquainted with pain and strained relationships
Friendships that suffer from long distances
Or even worse they get severed from something more severe
And He still hasn't wiped away all my tears yet
My cheeks get wet every now and then
Even when I give my best, I know I fall short
I get scared when the ball's in my court
Focused on my performance, wretched and poor
It makes the message more real when I preach it
I'm not there yet so I'm reaching, reaching for a goal:
To stand before my King and be speechless
Then, never again will I question if His grace is sufficient to cover my sin
Cause death is gone, and all the effects of evil and wrong
Will be conquered when His Kingdom comes
So this is my hope and my prayer
The air that I'll breathe in eternity with lungs that never fail me
If it pleases my Lord, and only by Your grace
Use my life 'til it's poured out for Your sake
Until then I'll remain where You have me
With joy when I feel unhappy
And a peace that surpasses all my understanding
My life is in the hands of Your love everlasting

[Hook x2]

And when it's my time to go
Go ahead and take me home
I know I'll be with you
I know I'll be with you;
When it is my time to go

Go ahead and take me home
Nowhere that I'd rather go
I wanna be with you

Yes, we will be with him. He will wipe away our tears....

Jesus was about to return to his father, after finishing his work at the cross.

And now all who are in Jesus, who have trusted in his finished work, are assured of that same destination.

34: This departure will mean Jesus is out of their reach.

- **He will return to the glory of the Father (17:5)**

35-36: As before, they misunderstand Jesus. They begin to question what he means, and wonder if Jesus is talking about going among the Gentiles (that he is leaving Israel).

But Jesus is talking about going to heaven, not Babylon or Rome or some other place. He will return to the Father.

Psalm 24, the early church applied these words to Jesus:

- 7 Lift up your heads, O gates!
And be lifted up, O ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
- 8 Who is this King of glory?
The LORD, strong and mighty,
the LORD, mighty in battle!
- 9 Lift up your heads, O gates!
And lift them up, O ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
- 10 Who is this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts,
he is the King of glory! *Selah*

The King of glory would return to his place of glory....

And tragically, many in Jerusalem didn't embrace the promised King.

They missed him.

“Christ is a jewel worth more than a thousands worlds, as all know who have him. Get him, and get all; miss him and miss all.” (Thomas Brooks)

Do you have him?

Have you received him, or do you want to reject him?

Can this be the Messiah? Yes.

Embrace the one who left heaven for earth, lived a sinless death, died an atoning death, rose from the dead, ascended back to the Father, poured out the Holy Spirit and promises to return again to make all things new.