

In Chapter 7 the hostility of the Jews continues to escalate. By all outward appearances, Jesus' ministry seems to be in crises. Jesus went to Galilee because the Jews in Judea were seeking to kill Him (4:1-3; 5:18; 7:1). But He was also rejected in Galilee (Jn. 4:44, 48). In John 6 many of those following Him abandoned their discipleship (6:60, 66) and He revealed that one of the twelve disciples would also betray Him (Jn. 6:71). As Jesus returns to Judea, He braces Himself once again for intense opposition (Kostenberger, 225).

***7:1 After these things Jesus was walking in Galilee, for He was unwilling to walk in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him.***

***7:2 Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near.***

"After these things" indicates a loose chronology that simply establishes an order of events.

The Feast of Tabernacles was celebrated in the fall (September/October) after the grape harvest and shortly after the Day of Atonement. It lasted seven days and was the last of the annual cycle of religious festivals that had begun six months earlier with Passover. The festival was to remember God's provision for His people in their wilderness wanderings (Lev. 23:42-43), but was also tied to future messianic hopes (Zech. 14:16-19; Kostenberger, 229).

The next festival mentioned in John's Gospel is the Feast of Dedication which was in the winter (Jn. 10:22). This was followed by Jesus' final Passover in 13:1. Thus, 7:2 marks the beginning of the last six months of Jesus' ministry.

***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.***

***7:4 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."***

***7:5 For not even His brothers were believing in Him.***

Mary had given birth to more children, so Jesus had physical brothers (Matt. 12:46). He, of course, was the oldest.

It is difficult to know what the brothers were thinking. Verse 5 states that they did not believe in Jesus in the fullest sense. Therefore, they could have been mocking Him, or they may have believed that Jesus was a miracle-worker and wanted him to get more attention than He was getting. In either case, they told Him to go up to Jerusalem where crowds would be gathered for the Feast of Booths. Perhaps they assumed that He could display His miracles, get a lot of attention, and gather a following in spite of the big fallout with His disciples in Chapter 6. This sounds at first like the sentiment of a true believer. But John says in verse 5 that the reason Jesus' brothers said this was that they did NOT believe in Him. They assumed that Jesus thought like they did, and had the same desires for human praise that they had.

Worse, their comments resemble the words of Satan when he tried to tempt Jesus with self-seeking interests (Matt. 4).

Jesus had no intention of using His miraculous power to make Himself popular, nor was He seeking glory for Himself. In John 5:41-44 He said, "I do not receive glory from men. . . How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God?" According to Jesus, those who seek their own glory are unbelievers.

The brothers' words betray another misunderstanding they had; it is not the failure of Jesus to show Himself that impedes His mission; it is the failure of the world to receive Him (Carson, 230).

***7:6 So Jesus said to them, "My time is not yet here, but your time is always opportune.***

Greek has two words for time. The word used (*kairos*, καιρὸς) here is not just chronological sequence but it includes the events that take place within it (Morris, 397). The events in Jesus' life were planned according to the will of the Father and so He had to move wisely. In the context, His time is a reference to the time when He was to go up to the feast. When He goes it is in accordance with the appropriate time, but that was not at the beginning of the feast.

Jesus' brothers were of the world, they were unbelievers, so their movements lacked significance. Every moment was alike to them; their time was always opportune. "They had no divine commission to discharge. Their only duty was to be faithful Jews. For this there was little point in careful choice of time. One time was as good as another. . . Their advice came out of their own situation and was completely irrelevant to the situation of Jesus accordingly "(Morris, 398-399).

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

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

The contrast to the brothers continues. In John 15:18-19 Jesus says to His disciples, "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. 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." John said in 1 John 3:13, "Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you." The world will hate Christian brothers, but it cannot hate Jesus' brothers because they share the same values that the world does; they are part of it. They have the same unbelief. Their actions and their words do not make the world feel indicted. These things were not true of Christ. The world hates Christ because it feels condemned by Him. They feel judged, guilty, and dirty. The brightness of Jesus' holiness exposes their evil deeds so everyone who does evil hates the Light and does not come to the Light lest his deeds be exposed (Jn. 3:20).

Jesus separates Himself from His brothers. As part of the world it is natural for them to go up to the feast, but He refuses to go up at their request and with the intent of accomplishing their purposes. He is working out the implications of His messiahship in His own way, not in theirs. He will not act until His time fully comes (Morris, 399-400; also see notes on Jn. 2:4).

***7:9 Having said these things to them, He stayed in Galilee.***

***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.***

The brothers go up to Jerusalem without Jesus and then He goes up privately. This is Jesus' third and final trip to Jerusalem (Jn. 2:13; 5:1; 7:10); He is moving toward His divinely appointed destiny.

Jesus' earlier comment, "I do not go up to this feast" (v. 8) does not exclude a different action later. The context makes that clear as He *did* go to the feast. He was not going up "now" because He acted in accordance with the favorable opportunity. The Father's plan was that He go later, not publicly, nor with a flurry of miracles, but "as if, in secret" (Jn. 7:10).

***7:11 So the Jews were seeking Him at the feast and were saying, "Where is He?"***

***7:12 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."***

***7:13 Yet no one was speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews.***

Verse 11 demonstrates that the brothers' thinking was aligning themselves with the world, for the Jews (In John a term that is used particularly with reference to the enemies of Jesus) also wanted Jesus to be at the feast and were continually searching (imperfect tense verb) for Him.

The role of the crowd in chapter 7 should not be overlooked; there is nothing like it in the book of John except in chapter 12. "The term denotes the uniformed majority, wanting to do the right thing, but not sure what it was. They are distinguished from the Jews and also the disciples of Jesus" (Morris, 402).

The crowd was divided in their opinions of Jesus. Some thought He was a good man, others thought He was a deceiver. But none said anything outwardly for they feared the Jewish leaders, nor was there mention of any thinking that He was the Messiah.

***7:14 But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach.***

***7:15 The Jews then were astonished, saying, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?"***

In contrast to what His brothers had hoped for, when Jesus does go public in Jerusalem, He does so without miracles. About midway through the feast, Jesus came out of seclusion and began to teach at the temple, probably at one of the outer porticoes. The temple was as public of a place as one could get.

Most males were literate, being able to read and write, however, Jesus taught as one learned in the Scriptures. He was unique in the sense that most Rabbis just quoted others who were considered authoritative. Jesus pointed to Himself as the authority, and on numerous occasions said, "Truly, truly, I say to you" or "you have heard it said, but I say to you . . ."

Jesus' breadth of knowledge of the Old Testament was astonishing; His oratory skills were unsurpassed. His insight into spiritual truth was so weighty, that even the Jews who opposed Him were amazed by it. In verse 15 they ask, "How is it that this man has learning, when He has never studied?" We know from verse 19 that these are Jews who are seeking to kill Jesus. So their amazement in verse 15 is not because they were touched spiritually, but because He sounded learned, so scholarly, so articulate, so profound.

The whole situation is ironic. Jesus is the Word incarnate, the revealer of God to man. He is the only one who has come down from heaven. Yet the Jews marvel at how this "uneducated person" can know so much about God and spiritual things.

***7:16 So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me."***

Jesus immediately deflected the glory from Himself to the Father. He claimed that He could speak as He did, because He was not speaking words that originated with Him. He was a mouthpiece of the One who sent Him.

But Jesus' answer also accomplishes a secondary purpose. The age in which He lived did not value originality. Rabbis simply quoted others when it came time to discuss important issues. Had Jesus claimed that His words were His own, He would have been immediately discredited.

Now the question arises: How can the Jews know that this claim to speak for God is true? How can one know if He is an imposter? If we are going to receive Jesus for whom He really is, we must know whether He is God's true spokesman. How can we know?

Notice that it is Jesus who raises the question. "He raises it because it is clear that the Jewish crowds do not know that His teaching comes from God. Their question in verse 15 shows they don't know. 'How is it that this man has learning, when he has never studied?'" (Piper)

Jesus goes on in verse 17 to give the answer as to how they can know if He is speaking for the Father.

***7:17 "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself."***

A certain kind of willing must precede our knowing. To know if Jesus is speaking the truth a person must have to want their whole life to be shaped by the will of God. To paraphrase the verse: "If anyone wills (wants, prefers, desires) to do the will of God, then and only then will that person be able to know the divine authority of Jesus—that His teaching is God's" (Piper).

The basic reason why people do not recognize the truth of what Jesus teaches is not that they lack sufficient evidence, but that their hearts are against God. "The fundamental problem is not intellectual but moral. The great obstacle to recognizing the truth of Christ is not deficient resources but deep rebellion against God. People cannot see and recognize the truth of Christ's teaching because the prevailing tendency of their will is insubordination against the authority of God" (Piper).

John 8:44 is a close parallel to John 7:17. It is exactly the reverse of what 7:17 says, but it sheds much light on the meaning of our text. John 7:17 speaks of one whose will is to do the will of God. John 8:44 speaks of those whose will is to do the will of the devil.

In John 8:43 Jesus asks the question, "Why do you not understand what I say?" He answers in the next sentence, "It is because you cannot hear My word." The reason they can't hear his word is that they are of their father the devil, and their will is to do their father's desires (8:44). "If our will is to do the will of God, we will recognize that his teaching is divine. Here he says that if our will is to do the will of the devil, we will not be able to hear or know his teaching. The same truth lies behind both texts: before we can hear the word of Christ and recognize it as sent from God and worthy of being received, our will must be brought into alignment with the will of God. Something has to happen deep down in the root of our will to remove the rebellion against God that we all have by nature. Something has to happen to take away our antagonism against the authority of God" (Piper).

In Romans 8:7-8 it says that the mind of the flesh is hostile toward God, for it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. "In other words, apart from the work of the Holy Spirit (v. 9), our wills are deeply, often unknowingly, antagonistic toward God and resistant to his authority, insubordinate to his law, and so unable to please him" (Piper).

If we stopped here at verse 17, we would have a general truth before us without specifics. The general truth would be: You will discern that Jesus is a reliable spokesman for God when your will is so transformed that you will what God wills. When your desires are God's desires, when your passion is God's passion, when your preferences are God's preferences, then your reason will be able to see Jesus for who he really is. When your willing is in sync with God's will, your knowing will be in sync with truth.

But Jesus does not leave us with verse 17. He goes on in verse 18 and gets specific. He has in mind at least one particular kind of willing that has to be transformed if we are to know Him for who He is (Piper).

***7:18 "He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him."***

John Piper does a great job at putting verses 17 and 18 together:

When the crowds were impressed with Jesus' learning, He deflected attention away from self-exaltation to God-exaltation. "If you are going to be impressed, be impressed with God. My words are His."

Now He explains in verse 18 that this is how you can know that He is true: "The one who seeks the glory of Him who sent Him is true, and in Him there is no falsehood." So verse 17 says that if your will is to do God's will, you can know whether Jesus is a true spokesman for God. And verse 18 says that the way you can know if He is true is whether He seeks the glory of God above all things.

Now how do you put verses 17 and 18 together? Verse 17: Willing God's will enables us to know who Jesus really is when He reveals Himself to us. Verse 18: You can know who Jesus really is because He lives totally for the glory of God. The way I put those two together is like this: Verse 18 describes specifically the deepest change that has to happen in my will so that I can see Jesus as true.

Here, Jesus gives an objective criterion for assessing His truth. If His life is devoted to enjoying and magnifying the glory of God, and not His own private glory, then He is true.

But now put verses 17 and 18 together and see what you come up with. Verse 17 says that in order to recognize the divine truth of Jesus' teaching, the rebellion of your will must be overcome so that it wills what God wills. Verse 18 says that in order to recognize the truth of Jesus, you need to see that His life is devoted to the glory of God.

The mark of His truth is a passion for God-exaltation, not self-exaltation. "The one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true" (John Piper. © Desiring God Foundation. Website: [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org)).

***7:19 "Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?"***

Verses 18 and 19 are reminiscent of John 5:41-47. The Jews saw themselves as Moses' disciples (Jn. 9:28) and yet they did not follow Moses, for if they had, they would have received Christ instead of wanting to kill Him.

**7:20 The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?"**

The crowd responds to Jesus' comment by saying He has a demon (see 8:48; 10:20; Matt. 12:24, and of John the Baptist in Matt. 11:18). The people had no idea what the leaders were scheming to do and misunderstood Jesus completely as one who had delusions of grandeur (My words are God's) and paranoia (you seek to kill Me).

**7:21 Jesus answered them, "I did one deed, and you all marvel.**

**7:22 For this reason Moses has given you circumcision (not because it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and on the Sabbath you circumcise a man.**

**7:23 If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath?**

**7:24 Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."**

The one work Jesus did (v. 21) is probably the healing of the man on the Sabbath in John 5, for in verse 23 He says, "are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath?"

Jesus raises a question about Sabbath practices to help them see that their judgments about Him are superficial (v. 24), that even they do not follow the Law of Moses as they claimed (v. 19).

The question Jesus poses probably came up because the law seemingly conflicted within itself. The Jews were required to circumcise males on the eighth day (Lev. 12:3) and yet they were also commanded not to work on the Sabbath. However, if the eighth day fell on the Sabbath then they would do that "work" and circumcise the infant. In their zeal to follow Moses, they didn't have any problems of "working" on the Sabbath by performing circumcision, but they were angry when Jesus makes a man whole. Jesus argues, if the lesser act (ritual circumcision) superseded the Sabbath law, surely the greater one (healing a lame man) should be allowed as well.

They had come to their conclusions about Jesus' work on the Sabbath superficially so Jesus admonishes them not to "judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." Had the Jews judged correctly, they would have realized that Jesus had fulfilled the intent of the Sabbath law. Man was not made for the Sabbath; the Sabbath was made for man (Mk. 2:27). In other words, Jesus is not arguing that the Sabbath law needed to be liberalized, He is arguing that His work was in accordance with the purpose of the Sabbath itself.

Jesus' point is that if they wanted to know if what He was saying was true, they needed to be willing to do God's will, and for them His will was revealed in the Law of Moses. Verses 19–24 confirm to the crowds that they do not will to do what God wills (v. 17). This is evidenced in that they wanted to kill Him and were angry that He made a man well on the Sabbath. And yet why, Jesus asks them, would you approve of circumcising a man on the Sabbath to keep the law (v. 22), but disapprove of my making a man's whole body well on the Sabbath (v. 23)?

Concluding Applications by John Piper**1) Realize that the deepest obstruction to knowing the truth of Jesus is a heart-obstruction, not a head-obstruction.**

It is a problem with our will, not first a problem with our reason. Our natural love for human glory makes it impossible to know and follow a person whose whole life is bent on emptying Himself in order to glorify His Father and save sinners. To know him for who He is, we must be changed, not just in our ideas, but in our wills.

This is why the Gospel of John puts such a clear emphasis on the need to be born again. We need to will God-exaltation more than we will self-exaltation. We need to love making much of God more than we love people making much of us. Being opposed to this is the greatest obstacle to knowing Jesus.

**2) Therefore, pray that God would cause his name to be hallowed—glorified, treasured—in your heart above all things, so that your eyes would be open to who he really is.**

If you feel deficient in God-exaltation, ask him to change you. Is that not what he taught us to pray every day in the words, "Our Father, hallowed be your name"? Pray for a will that is more and more passionate for God's glory. And less and less addicted to you own.

**3) Strive to increase your spiritual taste for the glory of God as your favorite pleasure.**

If you wanted to increase your love for the glory of classical music, you would study it and spend time talking with people who love it, and you would listen and listen and listen.

If you wanted to develop a love for the glory of visual art, you would study it and go to museums and spend time with those who love it, and you would look and look and look.

If you wanted to develop a love for the glory of the heavens above, you would get a telescope and you would read astronomy and you would spend time with people who love the stars, and night by night you would gaze and gaze and gaze.

And if you want to love the glory of God above all other glories, then you will study God and spend time with lovers of God, and listen to God and look at God and gaze and gaze and gaze at the revelation of the glory of God—especially in Jesus.

**4) Finally, know that Jesus is true.**

Jesus does not merely speak from Himself. He speaks for God. When He says, "Before Abraham was I am," He bears true witness that He is the Word and was with God from the beginning and was God. And when He says, "The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep" (John 10:11), and, "Whoever comes to me I will never cast out" (John 6:37), He is true. And you can trust Him. Amen.