

Keeping the idea, Rejecting Christ.

John 7.

Last week, we saw that Jesus' brothers kept the feast, yet missed the Christ. Today we will see that the Jerusalem people kept their ideas, but rejected Christ.

Let me give you today's scenario: debate. What's the issue with the debate? Pride.

Instead of worshipping the Lord in the feast, or learning about God, they chose to debate the Son of God; and their main accusation was Jesus' *source*.

1. Obscure Knowledge. (vv.14-18)

You won't understand this if you don't immerse yourself in the school system of the Jewish nation in the 1st Century. Every Rabbi would study in Judea (the south) from age 13 to age 30; when they turned 30 years old, they became Rabbis licensed to teach. As you know, Jesus is a carpenter from Nazareth; he did not study in the Rabbinical schools in Judea, but learned the Bible on his own in Galilee. As soon as he started teaching in the feast, his Galilean accent "hits" their ears! The people clearly know he was not brought up in Judea, and they are marvelling/wondering about the source of his teachings. (See v. 30 and you will see their prejudice.)

Jesus is not into pride issues. He replied: "He who speaks on his own authority is selfish; I speak from God's authority." This is a big claim, and I will expand on it more in the conclusion. For now, it is important that you distinguish the difference: the one who speaks on his own defends his idea, his pride, and his ego — he is an idolater. Jesus is selfless, altruistic, and pursues the glory of the Father.

Jesus also offered his listeners the hermeneutics of his teaching: **willingness and obedience**. The skeptic challenges God's Word; disciples accept and heed his Word.

2. Obscure Inspiration. (vv.19-24)

Jesus correctly exposes their malicious hearts: “You guys are trying to keep the Sabbath Law by murdering me. Are you trying to keep the Law by breaking another Law? And you are trying to murder me because of a good action I have done.”

People protect their idols! Thus, they protected themselves (their idol is their ego) by saying, “We are not trying to murder you;” and they added their second accusation to Jesus’ sources: *you have a demon*. The Jewish people couldn’t deny his miracles, thus they denied his source by accusing him of practicing sorcery, divination, and dark magic.

The precise miracle Jesus is referring to is the one of the man at the pool who was a paralytic for 38 years. The Jewish leaders were mad at Jesus, not so much because of the miracle, but because it had been done on a Sabbath. As you know, God had given the people of Israel the Sabbath as a day of rest, worship, and enjoying family. The Sabbath was a symbol that the Israelites were God’s delivered people. In Egypt, they were slaves, working day after day, with no rest and little money. In Israel, they had a day of rest and worship.

Unfortunately, they quickly turned it into a burden to everybody, and they quickly became the self-proclaimed police officers of the Sabbath — judging everyone’s moves.

Jesus adds the theme of circumcision to the conversation because it is also another sign that the Jewish people belonged to God: a physical one. On the eighth day, every male baby was brought to the priest, and he would circumcise the baby. Why brought to the priest and not to a doctor? Because this was a religious sign.

So, the Jewish Rabbis had to deal with a theological question: what happens when the 8th day falls on a Sabbath? Should we circumcise the baby, or should we postpone it to the next day? It felt like a lose-or-lose scenario. They decided for the circumcision: the 8th day is the 8th day! Rain or shine, the baby must be circumcised.

They made the right move! In legalistic eyes, that felt like a lose-or-lose scenario; however, in the eyes of a child of God, that’s a win-win scenario! Two symbols of God’s alliance with his people in one: Sabbath and circumcision! This is a combo, and the

parents must have thought: *My baby is circumcised — what an honour! Especially on the Sabbath, that's even better!*

Jesus points out that if a circumcision is to be celebrated on a Sabbath, how much more the full healing of a man!

App: We have a beautiful lesson here: God did not give the Law to make us hostage to it, but to bless us by it. Submitting to the Law is wonderful; being hostage to it is a problem. When we submit, it's a sign we know our Lord; when we are hostage, it means we see the Lord as our enemy. BE CAREFUL with legalism!

3. “Obvious” Identity. (vv.25-31)

Once again, their prejudice is manifest: *We know where you come from (Nazareth); but when the Christ comes, no one will know where he comes from.* That's a lie — everyone knew he'd be born in Bethlehem.

Where does this mystical belief come from? In ancient Jewish theology, there were many messianic expectations. The Prophet Micah: “Messiah's origins are from the days of old.” The Prophet Isaiah: “He is everlasting Father.” The Prophet Malachi: “Suddenly the Lord will visit his people.”

When they gathered this information, they created a mystical Messiah. You can attest to their expectation in Satan's temptation in the desert: “Jesus, throw yourself down and the angels will carry you on wings to the Temple.” A supernatural and spectacular appearance in the Temple — that's a done deal! Everyone would believe in him.

Jesus points out to them that he fulfills all these prophecies, yet not in a mystical way. Though they know him superficially as the Nazarene, they don't know him spiritually as the Son of God: everlasting Father, with his origins in eternity, who has come to his people suddenly, even during an ordinary tabernacle feast! Yet, they didn't see him.

Jesus' claims of divinity are so explicit that the religious leaders send guards to arrest him. Fortunately, some believed!

Conclusion:

1. Keeping Christ, shunning the ideas away.

I love the phrase: *“God is not my idea; my idea of God is my idea.”* It teaches us that God will always surpass our theology. We will never master God nor put him into a box.

The Jews of Jesus’ day failed because they created a framework for the Messiah (political, powerful, mystical...); but when Jesus did not conform to their framework, instead of accepting him, they threw him away and embraced their ideas.

What is the number one characteristic of a disciple of Christ? **Repentance.** We repent of our assumptions, ideas, frameworks — even if they are “theological!” — and we conform our lives to God’s Word.

2. Keeping the source!

Christ’s enemies attacked the source in the past. Nowadays they attack the source too: **the Bible.** They attack its credibility, its teachings, and its followers.

Voltaire claimed that the Bible would become obsolete. **Friedrich Nietzsche** predicted that Christianity — and therefore Scripture — would collapse within a generation. **Robert Ingersoll** argued that as society became more educated, the Bible would fade into irrelevance.

But God’s Word **stands!** The most reliable, translated, published, read, and quoted book in the entire history of civilization. Scriptures stands! It survived: exile, persecution, books burning, empires rising and fall, language changes, geographic dispersion.

3. Keeping Jesus’ elegance!

During a debate and persecution, we tend to misbehave. However, Jesus didn’t lose his cool, didn’t attack them, nor didn’t he sink to their level. He kept doing what he was called to do: Preach, teach, perform miracles, even though there were severe persecution and the threat of death.