

Seeking Fame for Christ

[John 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.

[John 7:2](#) Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near.

[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.

[John 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.”

[John 7:5](#) For not even His brothers were believing in Him.

- As John’s seventh chapter opens up, Jesus is ministering in the Galilee
 - The Galilee is the region of Northern Israel surrounding the Sea of Galilee
 - And it was the area within Israel where Jesus conducted most of his earthly ministry
 - This region includes Nazareth, Cana, Bethsaida, Capernaum
 - Jesus was considered a Galilean, the backwater part of Israel
 - e.g., Nathaniel asked if anything good could come from Nazareth
 - The Synoptic gospels cover Jesus’ ministry in the Galilee in greater detail than does John
 - In fact, John 6 occurs around Passover in the year prior to Jesus’ death
 - Then in John 7 , we hear about the Feast of Tabernacles, which occurs after the fall harvest
 - So between John 6 & 7 is an interval of 6 months, where the Synopics present much material
 - But then in John 7, leaves the Galilee and heads toward Jerusalem for the last time

- Even before this point, Jesus would take trips up to Jerusalem at least three times each year
 - Jews were required to travel to Jerusalem to observe a minimum of three feasts during every year, and Jesus would have complied with those expectation
 - 1st - Passover
 - Luke 2:41 tells us that Jesus and his parents traveled to Jerusalem every year for the Passover, as would have been expected of any Jewish family who was able to travel
 - 2nd - Feast of Pentecost or Feast of First Fruits
 - Every Jewish Male was required to celebrate this feast at the Temple after the spring harvest
 - 3rd- the Feast of Tabernacles or just “The Feast”
 - Final feast of the calendar year and the most popular
 - Lasted a week plus one day, and featured the most pomp and circumstance
 - Memorialized several things at once, including the years spent wandering in the desert (booths) & first fruits of fall harvest
- In the six months between John 6 & John 7, Jesus’ notoriety within the Galilee has grow exponentially
 - Most notably Jesus has performed the feeding of the 5,000
 - A very dramatic and public miracle
 - It elevated Jesus to “rock star” status among those in the Galilee (see chap 6)
 - But as we see here at the beginning of chap 7, it’s also produced enemies for Jesus in Jerusalem
 - Which explains why Jesus wants to remain in Galilee for now – He’s not interested in a confrontation until the time is right

- In verse 3 Jesus brothers try to persuade Him that he should go to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast
 - And the brothers give the reason for their suggestion
 - They try to persuade Jesus that He should want to go where His ministry can gain the most attention
 - They say that no one who is trying to be known – to be famous – will intentionally remain working in secret
 - The brothers of Jesus are making a couple of important assumptions
 - First, they are assuming that Jesus’ ministry in the Galilee has been a failure because it’s not drawn enough attention
 - It’s a ministry that’s small time, minor league
 - It’s can’t possibly produce the results that Jesus wanted
 - The result being public acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah
 - Therefore, they suggest Jesus seek the larger crowds in Jerusalem
 - With more people to see His miracles, Jesus could “close the deal” and win approval as Messiah
 - He just needs to convince enough people, and momentum will pull Him across the finish line
 - Which leads to the second assumption, that Jesus’ ministry was about building a public case for Himself to be the Messiah
 - The brothers assume that Jesus must win acceptance of the people in order to become the Messiah
 - That Jesus’ ministry was just a matter of a popularity contest or a public relations campaign
 - If He won enough support, He could make Himself Messiah – a political position in their minds

- It's easy enough to see from the text why Jesus' brother offered such cynical advice
 - John tells us they were not believers
 - If they had believed in Him, then they would have never offered this kind of advice
 - They would never have suggested that Jesus' claims to being Messiah were dependent on the public's perception of Him
 - Furthermore, as unbelievers, they could not understand the meaning of Jesus' words, much less appreciate the purpose of His ministry
 - And as unbelievers, they were hardly capable of offering godly advice – they merely gave the worldly advice that made sense to them
- Yet the advice they gave – wrong as it was – was based on principles that are still common today
 - This worldly view sees truth as a popularity contest
 - Whatever is position is accepted by the majority is truth
 - The more people who agree with a given position, the more it becomes worthy of belief – a kind of relativistic thinking
 - You can see this kind of thinking in the fact that people used to think that sex outside of marriage was immoral because most people agreed with this thinking
 - But when popular thinking began to reject that idea, then truth “changed,”
 - Now such behavior is morally acceptable to the world because it's widely practiced
 - It was this kind of thinking that led the brother to advise Jesus to go to Jerusalem
 - They thought that If He wanted to be accepted as the Messiah, He needed to go where He could gain more support – the Big City
 - Look at verse 4: “to be known publicly”

- Remember, the brothers didn't actually accept that Jesus was the Messiah
 - So they didn't necessarily want to see Jesus exalted on David's throne, as only the Messiah could be
 - It was merely a suggestion designed to help Jesus build a case for Himself
 - They implied that if Jesus could gain a public following in Jerusalem, perhaps he would succeed in His quest to be the Messiah
 - They assumed that though they didn't believe He was the Messiah, perhaps He might become the Messiah if enough people accepted His claims
- The truth, therefore, was to be based on public acceptance
- But truth is not determined by public acceptance
 - Truth is truth, regardless of how many people may accept it or believe it
 - For example, prior to the 15th century, most people were convinced that the Earth was a flat square with edges
 - To travel too far in any one direction would result in falling into Hell
 - If that thinking were true today, I would never had taken the trip to visit you here in Las Vegas
 - I would have assumed that traveling this far would have resulted in me arriving in a place of scorching heat, surrounded by sin and debauchery
 - Oh, wait...
 - Obviously, the truth was different than popular opinion
 - But the truth never changed...it was always true that the Earth was round, and it remained round even during the centuries when public view was to the contrary
- Likewise, the truth of Jesus' claims to be Messiah didn't rest on how many people accepted it

- Jesus is the Messiah even before anyone accepted Him
 - And Jesus didn't orchestrate His earthly ministry to obtain public acceptance
- We have plenty of evidence of how Jesus went out of His way to avoid attracting people on the wrong basis
 - We only need look back a few verse in John's Gospel
 - To the scene following the feeding of the 5,000

[Summarize]

[John 6:22](#) ¶ The next day the crowd that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other small boat there, except one, and that Jesus had not entered with His disciples into the boat, but *that* His disciples had gone away alone.

[John 6:23](#) There came other small boats from Tiberias near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks.

[John 6:24](#) So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats, and came to Capernaum seeking Jesus.

[John 6:25](#) When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You get here?"

[John 6:26](#) ¶ Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled."

[John 6:27](#) "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal."

[John 6:33](#) "For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world."

[John 6:34](#) Then they said to Him, "Lord, always give us this bread."

[John 6:35](#) ¶ Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst."

[John 6:36](#) "But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe."

- After traveling to the other side of the sea of Galilee, Jesus was confronted by an unbelieving crowd
 - But if they were unbelievers, why were they so persistent in following after Him?

- Why were unbelievers willing to travel across the sea of Galilee to find Jesus?
 - Because they are seeking after their own needs
 - And Jesus has become popular with them because they think He offers something they want
 - But Jesus calls them out for who they are
 - In verse 26 Jesus exposes their true motives
 - They want more of the food Jesus provided
 - They have no interest in Jesus true reason for being there
 - So long as their physical and fleshly needs are met, they are content with that alone
 - I find it so helpful to see that Jesus doesn't pander to the crowd
 - He doesn't continue to feed them bread in an attempt to keep their attention longer so they might hear the Gospel
 - He doesn't play a bait and switch
 - Jesus doesn't try to sneak the Gospel in while distracting them with something that appeals to their hard hearts
 - More food, or perhaps a nice band, or carnival rides in the parking lot, etc.
 - All those things can add value to our ministry, but they should never become a substitute for the Gospel itself
 - When Jesus confronted these people, He spoke in terms that likely offended them
 - And He did so not because He didn't want followers
 - But because He wanted followers who came to Him on the right basis
 - And so should we
- Remember, Jesus knew that He would ultimately be rejected

- Numerous prophecies of the coming Messiah included references to His public humiliation and death
- Ultimately, we know He comes to glory and to ruling over the entire world in a future day we still await,
 - But this was not to be the way He was received in His first coming
- Not only did Jesus expect to be rejected, but He said that we should expect the same when we preach the Gospel
 - Matt 21:17 tells us that His disciples should expect to be hated because of Jesus' name
 - And John 17 tells us that as a result of our faith in Jesus, the world will make us their enemy
 - Jesus referred to his message as a narrow path that few find in Matt 7:14
 - A narrow door that some will enter but others will seek to enter and will not be able (Luke 13:24)
- Based on scripture, we know that the Church's mission is not a public relations campaign orchestrated to win men's approval for Jesus
 - We don't establish the truth of the Gospel in the minds of men by building popular acceptance
 - We aren't called to testify to the truth of the Gospel on the basis of how many people agree with our view
 - Neither are we discouraged by the fact that billions of people don't agree with it
 - Christ Himself will build His church without regard for public approval
 - For scripture tells us that in the end, every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess Christ (Isa 45:23)
- In fact, turning back to Chap 7, look at what Jesus says in response to His unbelieving brothers

[John 7:6](#) So Jesus *said to them, "My time is not yet here, but your time is always opportune.

[John 7:7](#) “The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil.

- It was Jesus testimony itself that brought the hatred He experienced and the rejection
- In our calling to be disciples who carry the message of the Gospel into the world, we cannot allow ourselves to think like Jesus’ brothers
 - We can’t reduce the truth of the Gospel to a popularity contest
 - We can’t measure our success by how many may receive the truth on our watch
 - Because when we do, we will inevitably slip into seeking ways to dress up the Gospel message
 - To make it more appealing, more acceptable
 - Like Jesus’ brothers, we seek the bigger crowds in the false assumption that number prove us right
 - We’ve assumed that the reality of the Gospel is to be found only when large numbers of people approve of the message
 - And in times when the plain truth found of the scriptures doesn’t win enough converts to suit our desires, we may be tempted to look for something else that does
- But fundamentally, this will never work
 - God has appointed one means by which men may be saved
 - Romans 10:17 - Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ
 - We are to deliver the word of Christ as we proclaim the Gospel
 - Because the message we were given is true
 - And it’s truth and power are absolute without respect for how many people accept it
 - Consider how greatest evangelist of all time – Paul – approached his ministry:

[1Cor. 2:2](#) For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

[1Cor. 2:3](#) I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling,

[1Cor. 2:4](#) and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,

[1Cor. 2:5](#) so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

[1Cor. 2:6](#) ¶ Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away;

[1Cor. 2:7](#) but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God predestined before the ages to our glory;

[1Cor. 2:8](#) *the wisdom* which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;

- Like Paul & Christ before him, we should anticipate rejection at times, many times
 - We should expect the hatred that comes against the convicting message of the cross
 - Though we desire to see men accept the Savior, and to repent and believe, we should be prepared for the opposite
 - Because if we aren't prepared for rejection, we will be tempted to consider whether we need to do something different to gain the acceptance of Christ that we so desire
 - Even worse, we may begin to doubt whether the power of the Word of God is sufficient in all its convicting power to bring new life
 - God tells us it is, and He commands us to bring its message to the world
- We can't see public acceptance of the Gospel as the ultimate measure of whether God is granting us success in our efforts
 - We must rely on Him to stir the ears and awaken the hearts of those who hear the message
 - And let us never tire of delivering it, in humble obedience to our Lord's command

[Closing]