

Devotion on John 7

Carson's *The Gospel According to John* [PNTC]; Pentecost's *The Words & Works of Jesus Christ: a Study of the Life of Christ*.

Day 1

- † Prayerfully read John 7:1-9. Jesus had declared he was the bread of life, and many of his disciples had found this teaching difficult and so had abandoned him. The religious leaders had been so incensed by this teaching that they hoped to kill him, so Jesus went back up north, to his home in Galilee. Now, six months later, the Festival of the Booths [or Tabernacles] was approaching, and all Jewish men were supposed to attend. It should have been a time of family, as they would travel together to Jerusalem for this festival celebrating the harvest. But Jesus' brothers did not believe in his claims to be the Messiah and Son of God. So as they set out for Jerusalem, they were mocking him. Jesus told them, "The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil."
 - † As Jesus' followers were already finding out, they too would face ridicule, persecution, even threats to their lives. Today, the world still hates to hear that its deeds are evil and people still dislike the one who says things that God uses to convict their hearts. There is a saying that if you are not sensing any persecution for your faith then you are not doing enough to show your faith [take a peek at John 15:18-19]. We saw last week that Jesus calls his followers to give up their claim to their lives, to let him be in control. How much are you willing to suffer for Christ if it comes to that? As his brothers mocked him, Jesus stayed calm, friendly, and sure of his position; are you prepared to react the same? How should you handle people who are antagonistic to your beliefs?
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Day 2

- † Prayerfully read John 7:10-24. Jesus sent his brothers along to the festival without him, but then God directed him to secretly go by himself, leaving Galilee for the last time before his crucifixion. He remained hidden for half of the week-long celebration, and the crowds were wondering where he was. They were arguing about him, some saying he was a good man, others claiming he was a false teacher. Half way through the week, Jesus appeared in the Temple and started to teach. He said five important things:
 1. Anyone willing to do God's will would know whether Jesus' teachings were from God;
 2. Jesus' selfless pursuit of glory for God instead of for himself should indicate to them his truth and righteousness;
 3. They – even the religious leaders – were guilty of not following the law from God;
 4. It was hypocrisy to be angry about his healing the paralytic on the Sabbath [during his last visit to Jerusalem] when they did circumcision on the Sabbath;
 5. They should judge righteously, not by appearances.
 - † Let's take the last one first: as finite and fallen human beings, we cannot set ourselves up outside the truth to objectively assess the truth; it must be ascertained from inside; if you choose to do God's will, you will discover Jesus' words articulate it. So, have you learned to be discerning about things and people through the lens of scripture instead of by worldly appearances? We should check our hearts and minds about these issues. Are you really willing to do God's will instead of your own? Are you trying to bring glory to God or to bring praise to yourself? Are you obedient to Jesus' teachings? Do you live out what you say you believe? That is a lot to think about for one day, but give each question a few minutes thought when you can.
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Day 3

- † Prayerfully read John 7:25-36. The crowd began to wonder why Jesus was able to continue teaching in the Temple if the religious leaders were against him, and thus began to wonder if the leaders were unsure about whether Jesus' claims might be true. But they still found reasons to doubt: they thought they knew Jesus was from Galilee, and believed they should not know where the Messiah would be from. Jesus knew their doubts, and he cried out in the Temple, saying that God had sent him from Heaven. This shocked some who tried to seize him, but could not, while others came to faith because they realized all the evidence was in his favor.
- † A few weeks ago, we talked about some of the evidence of Jesus' identity and authority: months of miracles, including healings and deliverances; fulfillment of scores of scriptural prophecies; teachings that rang true as from God; the witness of a true prophet, John the Baptist; the testimony of God the Father; and Jesus' own claims. Yet the people and the religious leaders kept finding reasons to doubt. In this chapter, Jesus accused them of being jaded by sin, not having hearts after God, being stuck on ritual instead of what was important, and not discerning God's will. In addition, the people themselves expressed doubts based on familiarity, discomfort with his teachings,

misunderstandings of scriptural prophecy about the Messiah, and misunderstandings about his miracles. Instead of seeking to understand and come to the truth, they appear to be seeking to find reasons not to believe. What is your attitude toward what you learn about Jesus in the Bible? Even if you are a believer, this is a good question for you. Do you accept what you learn about Jesus in faith, even if your questions are not all answered? Or do you allow your questions to create doubt or even skepticism in you?

Day 4

- † Prayerfully read John 7:37-52. Each day of the feast, the High Priest would fill a golden vessel with water from the pool of Siloam and carry it in a procession back to the Temple. This related both to the provision of water during the Exodus and the promise of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit in prophecy, ultimately symbolizing the promise of a stream that would pour from this site in the Messianic age. On the last day of the festival, Jesus cried out in the Temple, returning to the theme he taught the Samaritan woman, about the living water of the Holy Spirit which was available to believers in himself. Jesus was telling them that he was the fulfillment of all that the Feast of Tabernacles anticipated! At Jesus' exclamation, more people believed or began to believe, but others yet expressed doubts. The doubt recorded by John – about Jesus coming from Galilee when the Messiah should come from Bethlehem as a descendent of King David according to the scriptural prophecy [Micah 5:2] – is ironic, because Jesus *was* born in Bethlehem and spent a few years of early childhood there, and his parents *were* both descendents of King David. The Temple guards [Levites who had responsibility for maintaining order] did not seize Jesus, being impressed with his teachings, but this earned them scorn from the religious leaders. In their rant, the religious leaders accused the crowd of being accursed because they did not know the scriptures [v.49], but in the following sentences they revealed both their own intellectual ignorance and their own neglect of the scriptures. First, they blew off the objections of Nicodemus, one of their own, that they were not following the Law as it pertained to accusing Jesus; second, they claimed that no prophet in scripture came from Galilee. This last claim was not only incorrect about Jesus [who was born in Bethlehem, in Judea], but also was incorrect about previous prophets: Elisha was born in Abel-meholah in what was now southern Galilee [1 Kings 19:16] and Jonah – of whom Jesus frequently referred – was born in Gath-hepher, up near Nazareth [2 Kings 14:25].
- † It is normal to have questions, even if you are mature in your faith in Jesus. The issue is how you approach them. The religious leaders and many of the people in the crowds were not truly seeking God. Whether you are a non-believer looking for truth or a believer looking for truth, you will always have questions, even as you continue to learn from repeated exposure to the scriptures. If you have an open mind and a pure heart, then you will find what you need to strengthen your faith, even if not all your questions are answered. If your questions are obstructing your walk in faith or preventing you from coming to faith, then it is time to get help from your small group leader, mentor, or pastor. Sometimes the problem is that you are approaching Jesus with doubt, skepticism, and rationalizations, but sometimes the problem is a misunderstanding that can be cleared up with the help of someone farther along the path of faith. Write down the questions you still have about Jesus. Decide whether they are holding you back, and if so make plans to talk them over with someone. Pray and ask God to guide you; he might not give you all the answers you want, but he will give you the answers you need if you genuinely are seeking him with a pure heart and an open mind.
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Day 5

- † Prayerfully read John 7:38-39. A few weeks ago, we looked at some scriptures that discussed our *interaction* with the Holy Spirit. Here are some that have to do with the *identity* of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Jesus [Acts 16:6-8] and the Spirit of God [1 Corinthians 6:11]. The Holy Spirit has attributes that are for God only, such as omniscience [Isaiah 40:13; 1 Corinthians 2:12], omnipresence [Psalm 139:7], and omnipotence [Job 33:4; Psalm 104:30]. The Holy Spirit does what only God can do, causing Jesus' virgin birth [Luke 1:35], inspiring the writers of the Bible [2 Peter 1:21], and taking part in the creation of the universe [Genesis 1:2]. The Holy Spirit is identified with Yahweh and Adonai [both translated as "Lord" in the Old Testament]: Acts 28:25-27 begins, "And when they did not agree with one another, they began leaving after Paul had spoken one parting word, 'The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers...' and Paul continued by quoting Isaiah 6:8-10, but Isaiah 6:8-10 says Isaiah spoke after hearing the voice of Adonai; and in Hebrews 10:15-17 there is a similar reference to the Holy Spirit in Jeremiah 31:31-34, which gives credit to Yahweh for inspiration. The Holy Spirit is called God [Acts 5:3-4]. The Holy Spirit has intelligence, knowing the things of God and teaching people [1 Corinthians 2:12-13]. The Holy Spirit shows feelings, loving us and being grieved by our sins [Romans 15:30; Ephesians 4:30]. The Holy Spirit has a will, directing our activities, teaching and testifying [Acts 16:6-11]. The Holy Spirit relates to the Father and the Son as a unique and equal entity [John 16:15; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14].