

# SEEING THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS

## **John 7:14-31**

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

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

*So Jesus answered them and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. (John 7:14-17).*

There is a debate going on in this passage. The debate is over the authority of Jesus. He doesn't have the right credentials. He does not represent any of the recognized rabbinical schools. Where does He get His authority?

The religious leaders of Israel had a problem with Jesus. He did not have a seminary degree. There were no letters behind His name. What gave Him the right to teach about spiritual matters?

He says, "I get My teaching from God." How do you know it comes from God? "Because I teach it."

Most law libraries are filled with legal precedents. When a lawyer goes to court to argue his case before a judge, he will cite other cases that have already been decided. But if a case goes before the Supreme Court, then precedence is not so much of an issue. Why not? Because it is the Supreme Court that makes the precedence.

Jesus is describing the same situation here. There was no precedent for Jesus because He was the precedent. He wrote the rules of the game.

But that doesn't help the one who hasn't yet recognized the authority of Jesus. And so, He gives five ways that His authority can be recognized.

## **YOU CAN ONLY SEE CHRIST'S AUTHORITY WHEN YOU AGREE TO FOLLOW THAT AUTHORITY**

*"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." (John 7:17).*

Before you come to know God, you have to want to obey the God that you are going to come to know. If you are not willing to do God's will, then He will not make Himself known to you. If you want to know just for the sake of knowing, then you will not know. But if you want to know so that you can obey, then you will find.

We tend to want it backwards. We tend to say, "Lord, show me who you are and then I will think about obeying You." God says, "First you determine to follow Me, then you will get to know Me."

Jesus never reveals Himself to the unwilling heart. This is why the unbeliever cannot see the claims of Christ. He has been blinded to the truth.

*The secret of the Lord is for those who fear Him,  
And He will make them know His covenant. (Psalm 25:14).*

Did you ever stop to think about the calling of the disciples. This Galilean Rabbi comes along and He says, "Follow Me." He doesn't give them a doctrinal foundation. He doesn't set forth 18 reasons why they can know that He is the Son of God. He simply calls them to follow. And they obey. And it is not until later that they come to understand who it is that they have begun to follow.

A man was leaning out of his 8th floor condominium window as he was trying to adjust his television antenna when a gust of wind caught him and he fell out. He managed to hold onto the antenna and he hung there 8 stories up, yelling for help. Soon the feeling started to go out of his hands and he became more frantic. Suddenly he heard a noise above him.

"Is anyone up there?" he called. "Yes," came the reply, "I can help you, just let go and I will catch you."

"Who are you?"

"I cannot explain right now, there is no time for that. You need to trust me and just let go."

"Is anyone else up there?"

We live in a world that is hanging on by its fingertips. And we preach a gospel of salvation through faith - a salvation through letting go.

**YOU CAN ONLY SEE CHRIST'S AUTHORITY WHEN YOU  
STOP SEEKING TO BUILD YOUR OWN**

*“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 7:18).*

If anyone had the right to build Himself up, it was Jesus. Think about what He could have written on a resume...

- Name: That which is above every name.
- Title: King of Kings and Lord of lords
- Home Address: Heaven
- Past Work Experience: Creator of the universe; holds all things together by means of personal power.
- References: God the Father and the Holy Spirit.

But Jesus was not out to build Himself up. He did not seek His own glory. This set Him apart from the Pharisees. They were always trying to puff themselves up. They always wanted to sit in the highest seat. They always tried to pray the most eloquent and lengthy prayer. They always tried to do their good works so that they might receive the praise and the glory of men.

Jesus was different. In John 17:4, Jesus says that He has glorified the Father - that was the work which He set out to do.

It is our work, too. We are here for Him. Our job is to bring glory to Him. Do you remember the incident with John the Baptist and his disciples? Jesus was gaining in popularity and the ministry of John the Baptist was in a decline as a result. His disciples got together for a staff meeting and they suggested that Jesus be reprimanded for stealing John's congregation. But John deferred to Jesus. His statement was: “He must increase; but I must decrease.”

That should be our motto, too. When people get to know us, instead of thinking how wonderful we are, they should think how wonderful Jesus is.

## **YOU CAN ONLY SEE CHRIST'S AUTHORITY WHEN YOU GIVE UP YOUR HYPOCRISY**

*“Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you carries out the Law? Why do you seek to kill Me?”*

*The crowd answered, “You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?”*  
*(John 7:19-20).*

These people prided themselves on their keeping of the Law. That was their claim to fame. But they had already committed murder in their hearts. And before it was all said and done, they would have conspired to have Jesus put to death. The ones who insist upon their own innocence would soon be yelling, “Crucify Him!”

The words of Jesus strip away the mask of hypocrisy. He asks them about their unlawful motives. And they reply, “Who, us? No one wants to hurt you! You must be demon-possessed to make such a statement!”

Do you see what they are doing? They are throwing up a smoke screen. Jesus uncovers their sin and they respond with an accusation. It is a smoke screen. It is a diversionary tactic. It is to take attention away from their sin.

How often does that happen when you share the gospel? You mention how Christ came to save us from our sins and the pagan objects:

- What about all of the suffering in the world?
- What about the man in Africa who has never heard?
- Why are there so many religions?
- Can God make a rock so big that he cannot move it?

Smoke screens. You remember the Samaritan woman. She used one, too. She had been talking to Jesus very nicely and then He went and mentioned husbands. Ohhh! He had to go and bring that up. And so she raised a smoke screen. Her’s was about where you go to worship. What’s the big deal about the Temple, anyway? Not that she really cared. She just wanted to see the subject changed to hide her guilt.

God doesn’t allow us to hide behind smoke screens. He is the God who strips away masks. He calls you to confess what you wish more than anything to cover up. And then He forgives.

## **YOU CAN ONLY SEE CHRIST’S AUTHORITY WHEN YOU TAKE THE TIME TO COMPARE**

*Jesus answered them, “I did one deed, and you all marvel. <sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> 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? (John 7:21-23).*

The Law of Moses said that no work could be done on the Sabbath. It also said that a child should be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. Occasionally this took place on the Sabbath. Those who were into legalism had a real problem because this meant that they were going to break the Law of Moses one way or another. They had finally decided that it is better to circumcise on the Sabbath.

Another situation had arisen during the Maccabean Wars. The Seleucid army heard about how the Jews would keep the Sabbath and so they waited until the Sabbath and then they attacked the Jews. The Jews would not defend themselves because it was the Sabbath and so they were slaughtered by the thousands. It was finally decided that it is okay to defend yourself on the Sabbath if it meant saving your life.

Jesus quips, "You let someone cut on the Sabbath but you won't let someone heal on the Sabbath."

Behind all of this is the terrible specter of legalism - the belief that the keeping of certain rules and regulations could save you.

Jesus holds up two comparisons and lets the crowd decide. He compares the accepted rite of circumcision with His own work of healing a man.

| <b>Circumcision</b>  | <b>Healing</b>   |
|--|--|
| Circumcision is a cutting rite that made a small portion of a man's body correct in the eyes of the Law. | The miracle that Jesus had performed healed a man's entire body. |
| The first rite cut.  | The second act made whole that which was diseased.               |
| Ritual.  | Reality.   |

The mandate of the Law was that circumcision had to take place on the 8th day after birth - even if that 8th day fell on a Sabbath. This was a work which superseded the Sabbath rest. The point is that Christ's work also superseded because it was a greater work.

The comparison is one that you usually see when you compare God with man's religion. The next time that some pagan comes and begins to bemoan the fact that so many wars have been fought in the name of the church, you agree with him. Religion always cuts. It takes the touch of Christ to heal.

## YOU CAN SEE CHRIST'S AUTHORITY WHEN YOU GO BEYOND MERE APPEARANCES

*“Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.” (John 7:24).*

We have a saying that you can't judge a book by its cover. It is a good saying. But our problem is that we nearly always judge a book by its cover.

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| <p>The use of the present imperative indicates that they were to STOP doing what they had been doing - they were to stop judging according to appearance.</p> |
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They looked at Jesus and they saw this little Jewish carpenter turned rabbi with a handful of followers. He hadn't been born into the best family. He didn't have the right kind of pedigree. He hadn't been to the right seminary.

It wasn't until you got to know Him that you found that there was something compelling about this man. He didn't go around trying to convince people of who He was, but after spending a quiet afternoon with Him, Andrew had gone to Peter and had proclaimed, “We just met the Messiah!”

Did you ever look at a sunset and say to yourself, “This didn't happen by accident”? Did you ever wonder how a Nazarene carpenter who was hung on a tree could turn the world upside down? Look behind the appearance and wonder. If you do, you will find that Jesus is the answer to the questions that you ask.

## YOU CAN SEE CHRIST'S AUTHORITY WHEN YOU REALIZE THE IMPOTENCY OF MAN'S RELIGION

*So some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, “Is this not the man whom they are seeking to kill? <sup>26</sup> Look, He is speaking publicly, and they are saying nothing to Him. The rulers do not really know that this is the Christ, do they? (John 7:25-26).*

Jerusalem was filled with people for the Feast of Tabernacles. They had come from all over. And many had not only heard of Jesus, but they had heard of the plot to have Him put to death. They see Jesus preaching openly in the Temple Courts and they scratch their heads and they say, “Gee, I thought that there was a contract out on this man. There is a warrant out for His arrest. Why isn't He in hiding? Maybe the Jewish rulers know something about Him that we do not.”

The Sovereignty of God is seen here to be in control over time and circumstances. The Religious establishment wanted to get Jesus and could not. Why not? Because they couldn't muster the troops? Because Jesus was faster than they were? Because He disappeared? No! It was because God's sovereignty overruled.

God had decreed that the Savior would be captured at a certain period of time and that He would be betrayed by a familiar friend. This was prophesied in the Old Testament. It could happen in no other way.

It would not happen until the right time. That is a precious phrase to the Christian. Whatever your circumstances are right now, there is a time to them and there is a time to their completion.

## **YOU CAN ONLY SEE CHRIST'S AUTHORITY WHEN YOU RELEASE YOUR PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS**

*"However, we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from." (John 7:27).*

As the people wonder whether or not Jesus could be the Messiah, they come face to face with a problem. It is a problem with familiarity.

They assumed that Messiah would be someone with whom they were not familiar. They were familiar with Jesus. Therefore they reasoned that He could not be Messiah.

After all, we can believe in a Messiah who comes from long ago and far away. But how can you believe in a Messiah from Mississippi?

They were prejudiced against Jesus because they thought that they knew where He was from. Where was that? They thought it was Nazareth. Where was Jesus from? Bethlehem? Ultimately, He was from God.

## **YOU CAN ONLY SEE CHRIST'S AUTHORITY WHEN YOU ACCEPT THE OBVIOUS**

*But many of the crowd believed in Him; and they were saying, "When the Christ comes, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?" (John 7:31).*

This is a rhetorical question. The answer is obvious. Messiah was not expected to do more miracles than Jesus did. He had been a whole assembly line of miracles.

A Christian evangelist was challenged by an atheist to a public debate. The evangelist agreed upon one condition. He would bring 100 people whose lives had been changed dramatically by their faith in Jesus Christ. The atheist would bring 100 people who would bear witness that their lives had been changed for the better by their atheism.

Obviously, the atheist never showed up. Why? Because atheism does not produce positive results.

The public school system of America has banned Christianity from the classroom. Are our public schools better as a result? Is there more respect for authority? Do our students do better academically? Are we producing better citizens? No!

A bumper sticker said, "Before you marry the handsome prince, you have to kiss a lot of ugly toads."

If you want to know if a tree is good, then look at its fruit. The genuine can always be tested. And it will be.

## **YOU CAN ONLY SEE CHRIST'S AUTHORITY WHEN YOU ACT ON THE PREVIOUS POINTS**

*But many of the crowd believed in Him; and they were saying, "When the Christ comes, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?" (John 7:31).*

There is a point at which the searcher has to act. You cannot sit on the fence forever. You must choose sides. If the Lord calls and you do not respond, there will come a time when you don't hear Him call anymore.

Jesus goes on to say in verses 33-34, "*I am here now and you do not want to follow Me. But there is coming a time when you will seek Me and will not find Me.*" He is calling you today. There is no guarantee that He will be available tomorrow if you do not answer His call today.