

Gospel of John Chapter 7 - John Karmelich

The most appropriate title I can think of for Chapter 7 is "dealing with rejection." Chapters 7 and 8 are both chapters where Jesus goes from one place to another mostly dealing with rejection. Notice it does not slow Him down from doing what God called Him to do. As anyone who's worked in sales will tell you, it is a matter of "percentages". Not everyone will buy what you're selling, but if you've have a life changing product there will be some success. So why do people reject Jesus as being the Savior? We'll see Jesus get rejected by His own brothers, religious leaders, and others in the area. We will see Jesus attends the last big feast before the whole crucifixion saga. So again, why do so many reject Him? Part of the answer is different expectations of who the Messiah is. Part of the answer is many people want to prove their worth to God and don't believe that He wants to pay the full price for sins Himself. Keep in mind that Jesus calls us to make disciples so, whether we like it or not, we need to learn why people reject Jesus and what that means for us as who've dedicated our lives to making a difference for Him!

Let me expand on the "why should we care" question. Obviously, we're not Jesus and we can't pull off any miracles like He did to prove who He is. We can't just start preaching in a church like He did when He entered the synagogue and started preaching in effect, "I'm God, deal with it." I realize it's hard for us get past our shyness about opening up a discussion about Jesus with the people around us. Pray for boldness (like the disciples did in Acts Chapter 3) and opportunities for us to use our life for His glory. I guarantee God can't resist a prayer of surrender and for us to be used for His glory. Keep in mind we don't get rewarded based on how many people are saved. We are just called to be witnesses for Him. Who gets saved is His business.

Let me go through the chapter and explain how Jesus was rejected, but pushes forward, despite the fact that people around Him saw all sorts of miracles. The chapter opens in the Lake Galilee area. The last chapter ended in Jerusalem, so we have another time gap! The chapter opens with a dialogue between Jesus and His brothers. (A quick side note here. Most Christians correctly argue that Mary and Joseph went on to have a larger family after Jesus was born. Some argue Jesus half-siblings came from Joseph before he married Mary, but there is no evidence of that.) Keep in mind that Jesus' brothers were there when water got turned to wine. At the least, they must have heard from Mary growing up about all the promises made to her about Jesus. They probably witnessed other miracles as well. Still, a major feast was coming up. His brothers said in effect, "Go show off at the big feast in Jerusalem and not the "hick town" we live in." The text even says His brothers didn't believe He was the Messiah. Given what they saw why didn't they believe Him? Maybe they expected the Messiah to overthrow Rome as a powerful political figure. Whatever the reason, Jesus told his brothers in effect, "You're time to believe in Me is now!" What is a miracle is that at least two of his brothers (James and Jude) believed in Him after the resurrection, and wrote epistles in the New Testament.

Gee, John, Jesus couldn't convince His own siblings He was the Messiah? How can we convince those who live with us then? Again it is not our job to convert people. Our job is to be a good witness as we are His disciples. What happens when we mess up? Ask for forgiveness and move on. All I'm saying is Jesus doesn't call us to convert people but to be a witness for Him. Obviously, we do not have to hit our family over the heads with a Bible screaming "Repent or burn in hell." We're called to live as those who are convinced He died for our sins make it obvious by how we live that we're disciples of Jesus. It should make people want to ask questions. God draws people to Himself. I'd argue our role is to pray for others to be good witnesses, and when the time is right be bold for Him.

Meanwhile, Jesus did go up to the feast in Jerusalem, but privately. The original Greek text implies He said He was going up later as opposed to saying He's not going at all! In the middle of that week-long feast we read that Jesus was in the temple court (a large area) in effect preaching the Gospel. I have no idea specifically what He said, as John focuses on the debate that went on about Him! John makes the point that despite the miracles He did and the fact a lot of witnesses saw them, there was a great debate about whether or not He was the Messiah. (It's amazing that after 2,000 years, Jesus is still a big topic. Never start with forcing one's opinion. It's always best to ask people what they think about Him and go from there!)

Anyway, Jesus makes the point that He's not trying to glorify Himself but His Father. He takes time to point out the inconsistency in the arguments against Him. As an example Jesus states how Jewish male babies go through the rite of circumcision even if that day falls on a Sabbath. Jesus also points out that the Jewish leaders wanted Him killed because people were looking to Him for guidance and not them! It boils down to the question of who you are going to believe. Of course, some will refuse to believe in Jesus no matter what we say. In such cases, I don't waste a lot of time debating. I pray for such people, but I also know I'm not the one God has called to witness to them! After all that discussion, John points out that the debate about Jesus continues.

By the way, most of the people hearing this lecture walked away at this point. They just wanted to eat free food for the rest of their lives. Let's be honest, if a sign reads, "Come here for all the free food one can desire" and another sign said "Come here to learn how to have eternal life," which will get a bigger crowd? Jesus even asked the "12" if they wanted to leave and they said, "Where can we go? You're the way to eternal life." So they chose correctly, and, obviously, I hope we do as well!

If you liked this little study, I wrote a more detailed account about twenty years ago! To read the other one, click on one of the two links on this page. Thanks again for reading this. John