

*John 7:1-24. The desire for praise and glory can be destructive. This desire was strong with the religious leaders who persecuted Jesus. Loving the praises of men, they ended without the praise of God.*

King Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 BC) was one of the most powerful kings of Babylon. His father's reign was characterized by fighting to keep control of the region. The son built upon this, conquered his enemies, and expanded into a great empire. Nebuchadnezzar's goals were ambitious with building projects that became legendary.

The major cities of the empire were rebuilt with Babylon shining as the crown jewel of the ancient world. The city boasted of its triple-walled fortifications, a moat, a tunnel under the river, and a beautiful stone bridge above. Cedar, gold, and silver were used throughout. No expense was spared on the king's palace, and the splendor of the Hanging Gardens became one of the Seven Ancient Wonders.

Jerusalem fell to this empire in 587 BC, and Daniel was one of the exiles taken to Babylon. He served in Nebuchadnezzar's court telling him to give glory to God. And did the king respond? Slightly (Dan 2:47-49, 3:28-29, 4:36-37). He started to believe in the existence of the Living God, but he refused to worship Him until his last days.

What kept Nebuchadnezzar from worshipping the Lord? The same barrier that keeps most people from ever worshipping Him—pride. The king's thirst for his own glory was unquenchable, and the God of Heaven and Earth shares His glory with none.

The first time Jesus entered Jerusalem He cleared the temple and confronted the leaders for turning worship into a business (John 2). More than a year later, He returned and healed a paralytic on the Sabbath (John 5). Here in John 7, at least another year has passed. Jesus enters the temple for the Feast of Booths and again confronts the religious leaders. They didn't serve for the glory of God but were in ministry for themselves.

#### A TIME FOR EVERYTHING

(JOHN 7:1-10)

The Feast of Booths or Tabernacles is a Jewish festival that's been celebrated in September or October for more than 3,400 years. Pilgrims would travel to Jerusalem to stay in makeshift dwellings for a week. It was a remembrance of God's provision during the 40 years their ancestors wandered in the wilderness. It was also one of the three major feasts everyone attended.

John tells us Jesus' brothers prepared to travel to the feast. Jesus had brothers? Yes—half-brothers. Joseph and Mary parented other boys, none of whom believed in Jesus (John 7:5). They tested Him saying something like this: *If you really are the Messiah, come with us to Jerusalem. Perform miracles. Show yourself to the world!* (John 7:3-4).

They found it very hard to believe that their older Brother was the long-awaited messiah. They had heard of His miracles and couldn't understand why He chose to work in back-hills of Galilee. In their mind, messiah would build a name for Himself in Jerusalem, the Capital city. He would arrive on the scene like lightning and storm Rome. The Lord did nothing of the sort.

If Jesus wouldn't wonders in public at the feast, His brothers thought it meant He wasn't their messiah. They wanted Him to travel with them and to stun all Jerusalem upon arrival—if He's truly messiah. What did they really want? To ride Jesus' coattails to receive a bit of the glory themselves. Their desire was entirely self-centered.

The time for Jesus to receive glory would come, but it wasn't here at the Feast of Booths. He did go, but didn't publically perform any miracles. He went in secret with only a sermon. The Lord was on a timetable; His brothers were not (John 7:6-8).

Like Jesus' brothers, the world has no real timetable. It is one event after another in the throes of life rising and falling from day to day, not tethered to anything eternal or absolute. Worldly living is a free-wheeling existence of *carpe diem*—seize the day! Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die. It seems Jesus' brothers weren't living for anything greater than the here and now.

Jesus' refusal of glory at the feast was part of His pursuit to glorify the Father (John 4:34, 5:30, 6:38). His life was so consumed with this it affected, even determined His plans (John 2:4, 7:6, 12:23). The Lord's life wasn't a stream coursing to nowhere but brought glory to God and mattered eternally (Eph 4:16). Consider His purposeful example in your own life.

#### AFRAID TO SPEAK UP

(JOHN 7:11-13)

John records several feasts that Jesus attended. He also lets us in on the reactions Jesus' received. With the threat of death, the Lord's activities became increasingly covert with each entrance into

# Driven by Glory

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Jerusalem. After more than 2 ½ years of ministry, the anger of the religious leaders had risen to a point where Jesus couldn't enter the Capital city without care and leave alive. He had become a marked man.

The Sanhedrin was the Jewish ruling council and Supreme Court comprised of 71 members. They had the power to decide civil and moral cases, to determine criminal charges and interpret the Law. They also held the power to excommunicate. The weight of this is hard for us to grasp. In this culture, excommunication destroyed a man financially and made him socially unacceptable. No faithful Jew, even family members, would interact with the excommunicated.

To speak favorably about Jesus would've meant severe consequences from the Sanhedrin (John 7:13). The people throughout Jerusalem knew it and said nothing.

## IMPAIRED JUDGMENT

(JOHN 7:14-24)

Jesus was expected at the Feast of Booths but arrived late and in secret. With threats against His life, why did He attend at all? The feast was kept each year, and faithful Jews observed it (Lev 23:34-44). Yet, even Jesus didn't attend the entire feast strictly according to the letter of the Law.

The Lord attended in keeping with the spirit of the Law, but He attended primarily to teach. The feasts were golden opportunities for ministering to a people He considered to be "sheep without a shepherd" (Mark 6:34). Who would teach them about the messiah if not Jesus? Who in that day would tell them of sin and redemption? Certainly not their leaders.

It wasn't the Law that forced Jesus back to Jerusalem, but love. He had come to save the world, and so, He found a way to attend and teach the people. Knowing within six months these same people would cry out for His crucifixion, it was love that motivated Him to visit Jerusalem.

During the middle of the feast, without a single miracle, Jesus' words astonished the people, and they questioned Him. No one could understand how an uneducated man knew so much about the Hebrew Scriptures. They marveled having never encountered such a

thing (John 7:15). Rabbis quoted other rabbis who quoted others as the basis for their authority. Jesus appealed to the Father as His authority (Matt 7:28-29). Who else could He appeal to?

Cult leaders and lunatics may say their teachings come from God, but Jesus' claims were different in many respects. For instance, He never sought His own glory (John 7:16-18). The pattern of Jesus' ministry in all four Gospels shows a messiah who never did what brought Himself glory and fame. A person consumed with another's glory and honor, who wants nothing for Himself and has nothing to gain is a person worth listening to.

When offered the glory of the world by Satan, the Lord rejected it. When offered a crown by the Galileans, He sent them away (John 6:15). Jesus told some He healed to say nothing of Him, and He instructed His disciples to keep quiet about the glories they beheld (Matt 17:9; Mark 7:36; Lk 5:14, 8:56). If ever a man had the right to glorify Himself and the power to do so, it was Jesus. The world could've been forced to fall at His feet while angelic armies fell in worship, and yet He came for a cross (Phil 2:5-11).

The religious leaders and much of the crowd didn't understand. They remembered that Jesus had somehow healed a paralytic more than a year earlier (John 5:1-18; 7:21). The miracle was performed on the Sabbath, so Jesus must be a heretic. To the contrary, the Lord says they entirely misunderstood the Sabbath. How so? If a medical procedure such as circumcision could be performed on the Sabbath, how is it wrong to touch a man's entire body (John 7:22-24)? How could it dishonor the Lord by showing grace on the day of rest?

*Jeremiah 29:13—"You will seek Me and find Me, when you seek Me with all your heart."*

Many were bent on condemning Jesus which impaired their ability to use the Law correctly. Why were they so determined to have Him removed? As with Nebuchadnezzar and Jesus' brothers, so with the religious leaders and the crowds: All were guilty of a desire to glorify themselves, and nothing keeps people further from God or the truth than this desire.

Rather than being happy, many would rather be right at all cost. In the end when they stand before the Judge, they find they were wrong as well as eternally condemned.