WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

Before we get into Chapter 7 we need to finish the few verses of Chapter 6. John identified 2 groups of people as Jesus’ “disciples.” There’s the original 12 made up of Simon Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Thomas, Matthew, James the son of Alpheus, Thaddeus, Simon the zealot, Judas and Nathaniel (also known as Bartholomew). All 12 of these men were called, were chosen by Jesus to follow Him. And all 12 left their families and friends, their jobs, their old life behind and followed Jesus. So that’s one group. The other group is the large crowd of disciples following Jesus around Galilee. As we saw last week, v 66, “many of His disciples turned back and no longer walked with Him.” In today’s terms, thanks to FB, you could say that they “unfollowed” Jesus. The passage says that “many” turned back but not “all.” So besides the original 12 there are other true disciples who believe in Jesus and continue to follow Him – just not nearly as many as before. So Jesus popularity is beginning to decline. And why is that? It isn’t because of His miracles. It’s because of His words, what He’s saying. In the words of the crowd “This is a hard saying” and it begins to turn many people off and they leave.

READ John 6:67-69. Peter, speaking on behalf of the 12, makes an amazing affirmation of faith. The 12 disciples at this point appear to be unified in their belief that Jesus is the Son of God. To which Jesus responds… READ John 6:70-71

I want us to talk briefly about Judas. One of the great Biblical debates is: Was Judas saved or not? The answer is complicated because there are scriptures which strongly imply that Judas was lost and went to hell, though they don’t explicitly say that. There are also scriptures which tie Judas very closely to the other 11 disciples who we have identified as being true disciples of Jesus. I found it interesting as I was studying this that those who hold to the doctrine that a person CAN lose their salvation (which I do not), use Judas specifically as a prime example of an apostate – one who at one time truly was a follower of Jesus Christ but then later fell away and was lost. So the question of whether Judas was saved or lost is not a simple one to answer. The fact of the matter is, we don’t know. We are not to be the judges of Judas’s nor anyone else’s eternal position. Only Jesus is the righteous Judge. He knows a person’s heart. Only Jesus will determine our eternal destiny, and that will be based on our faith in Him. No matter what we think we really don’t know for sure but some day when we get to heaven we will find out. Let me say this for the record. Most evangelicals, most Baptists hold the position that Judas was lost. I’m not sure I really believe that.

As we move into Chapter 7 about six months has passed since the end of Chapter 6. The other gospel accounts tell us what happened during this time. We’re told that Jesus traveled up north to Tyre and Sidon, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. He did more teaching and healing. There was the event where Jesus was transfigured. He fed 4 thousand men with 7 loaves and a few fish. He heals a demon possessed boy. The disciples argue about who is the greatest in the kingdom. John doesn’t tell us any of that. READ John 7:1-2.

So that gives us the timeframe for Chapter 7, the Feast of Booths, held in October, 6 months after Passover.

Remember John’s purpose for writing this gospel. It is so that people who read it will “believe that Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah prophesied in the O.T.), the Son of God (Jesus own claim and affirmed by His disciples), and that by believing…may have [eternal] life in His name.” That’s John’s purpose statement in John 20:31.

Many opinions about who Jesus is have been expressed as we have made our way thru John’s gospel – The claims of Jesus Himself, John the Baptist, the various disciples (Andrew, Nathaniel, Phillip, Peter), Nicodemus a Pharisee, the Samaritan woman at the well and the people of Sychar, the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem, the large crowds who followed Jesus… clearly there are many differing opinions about Jesus. They are not all favorable. Not everyone believes that Jesus is the Son of God. There is growing hostility toward Jesus at this point. Frankly, there is a lot of confusion about Jesus. And so it is even in our day, in 2017, there are a lot of different opinions about who Jesus is.

I need to say something about the Feast of Booths, which was coming up, mentioned in v 2. The feast was held in October and was a time of joyful celebration. It had several purposes: to remember Israel’s time in the wilderness when they lived in booths (temporary shelters); to rejoice before the Lord after the harvest (grapes, olives and fruit); looking forward to a new exodus of sorts, the time when the kingdom of God would be ushered in with all of its blessings. So this celebration (1) looked back at what God had done, (2) looked at what He was doing now, and (3) it looked forward to what He was going to do in the future.

READ John 7:3-6

Jesus had 4 brothers, actually they’re half-brothers – these were the offspring of Mary and Joseph. They were born after Jesus and they grew up in the same house with Jesus. They’re named in Matthew 13:55: James, Joseph, Simon and Judas (also known as Jude). Jesus also had some sisters but they are not named in scripture. And with Jesus declining popularity by the end of Chapter 6 they decide to seek Jesus out and give Him some advice…

We’re told here that Jesus’ brothers are not believers. Isn’t that interesting? They grew up with Jesus. They knew all about Him. They were quite familiar with Him. But they didn’t believe in Him. We know that after His resurrection at least two of Jesus’ brothers came to faith – James and Jude. But as of Chapter 7 none of them believe in Him. They’re not sure about His claims. Notice they say, “if he seeks to be known openly” and “if you do these things.” They’re not sure about Jesus. They don’t know His plans. More than likely, they view Jesus the same way the crowds of people in Galilee viewed Jesus. They see Him mostly as a political Messiah who can deliver Israel from Roman tyranny. Recall that earlier in Chapter 6 the people tried to make Jesus their king. So, if Jesus’ miracles, which his brothers had witnessed, means that He is, in fact, the promised Messiah, then Jesus needs to go establish His claim in Jerusalem with the Jewish authorities and with the masses of people who will soon be gathered there. Jerusalem is where Jesus needs to go! He doesn’t need to stay here in these obscure villages in Galilee. So, they offer Jesus their opinion of how He can best establish His claims if they’re true. But, of course, their advice is based on a complete misunderstanding of Jesus’ divine origin and His mission (which He has explained in Chapters 5 and 6). They have a completely worldly view of Jesus.

Jesus’ reply to his well-meaning worldly brothers is, “My time has not yet come, but your time is always here.” Jesus is doing His Father’s will. He is following God’s timetable. He’s on a divine mission which is going to lead Him in about 6 months to the cross. Now is not His time to die. And Jesus knows that the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem want to kill Him and they’ve probably been trying to figure out ways to get rid of Jesus ever since Chapter 2 when He threw the money changers out of the temple. Certainly since Chapter 5 when He claimed equality with God, they want Him dead.

When Jesus says, “but your time is always here” He’s basically telling his brothers, that for them anytime that Jesus goes and establishes His claim as the Messiah is good, but preferably as soon as possible. They don’t perceive that God has a timetable. They’re oblivious to this because they’re worldly minded. How does the world think? “It’s all about me, about getting what I want, getting it my way, and getting it right now!”

READ John 6:7-10

V 7 gives the main reason why most people reject Jesus Christ. Because He says that their works are evil. Jesus exposes people’s sin. And they don’t like it. They want to be told that their OK and they want to feel good about themselves. But Jesus doesn’t teach that. First John 1:8 says, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” So Jesus’ message is not a popular one, is it? And as a result, the world hates Jesus and they hate His followers who also preach and teach this same message (or should be) – “You are a sinner and you need to repent and be saved. And if you don’t you’re going to hell!” You’re not going to make many friends preaching it. But that’s what we are called to do as Christians – “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that [Jesus] commanded…”

Now, Jesus’ brothers want Him to go with them to Jerusalem to the Feast of Booths. But Jesus doesn’t operate according to His brother’s plans. Instead of going up with them and the larger group, He remains in Galilee until He gets direction from His Father. And then Jesus and His disciples travel thru Samaria (Luke’s acct) headed toward Jerusalem to the Feast of Booths. When Jesus does go, He does so in secret, v 10 “in private,” which is the complete opposite of how His brothers wanted Him to go (drawing attention to Himself, promoting His message).

Jesus doesn’t do things His brother’s way. He follows the Father’s plan.

READ John 7:11

The Jewish leaders are looking for Jesus to show up at the feast. They’re not seeking Him in order to learn more spiritual truths from Him. They’re not hoping to see Him perform another sign. No, they want to kill Him. They perceive Jesus as a dangerous deceiver and a threat to their power and influence. They hate Jesus.

READ John 7:12

Notice the two main views of Jesus held by the people. Both are wrong views. One is that Jesus is a good man. That’s only partially true. But it doesn’t go far enough. He’s not just a good man. He’s the Son of God, the Savior, the Messiah, the bread of life, the source of eternal life. The other view is completely false, which is, that Jesus is leading the people astray. This shows the influence that the Jewish leadership had on the people because that’s what they believed also.

So it’s not just enough to believe in Jesus, that He really existed and that He was a good man or a good teacher. You must believe the right things about Jesus and we pointed these out last week. Two things you must believe about Jesus – that He is the eternal Son of God, the Holy One, the Messiah sent to earth on a divine mission by His Father. The other thing is that His death on the cross was for your sins, that you are a sinner and that He took your place on the cross and His death paid the penalty for your sins. But clearly that is NOT what the people believe is it?

READ John 7:13

The people debated among themselves who Jesus was but because of the religious leaders they did so in private and not openly. By the way, this points out another reason why people reject Jesus – remember the first reason was that Jesus exposes people’s sin – the second reason is a fear of what others might think.

Conclusion, Application

1. We can be familiar with Jesus, grow up in the church, know a lot about Him, but not truly believe in Him. Nobody is saved by just being familiar with Jesus. And you don’t get into the kingdom heaven on the family plan. Everyone who comes to faith in Christ must believe individually that Jesus is who He says He is.
2. If we follow Jesus we can be expected to be hated by the world. You’re either a friend of the world and an enemy of God or a friend of God and an enemy of the world. “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” (1 John 2:15)
3. Jesus didn’t do things His brother’s way and He doesn’t do things our way either. He’s God and He has a plan.
4. So, what do you think about Jesus? If you are walking down the street one day and some reporter walks up to you and sticks a microphone in your face with camera rolling and asks you, “Who is Jesus Christ?” What are you going to say? Are you prepared to give an answer if somebody asks you?

OK, let’s sing this hymn as a testimony, just like the Jews remembered what God had done for them at the Feast of Booths…God is so good!