WHY SHOULD WE BELIEVE JESUS?

In our journey thru the Gospel of John we’ve seen Jesus do miraculous things and we’ve heard Jesus make some amazing claims. Crowds have flocked to Jesus by the thousands primarily because of the signs and miracles He performed. Now, just 6 months from going to the cross, Jesus’ ministry is winding down. Many of Jesus’ disciples who once followed Jesus are now turning back and no longer walking with Him – not because of His miracles, but because of His words, what He says. At the heart of Jesus’ teaching are His claims about Himself. In Palestine there are many rabbis, but none of them teach like Jesus or make the claims that Jesus makes.

Jesus claims… that He came down from heaven…to have existed eternally…to be the Son of God…to be the only Savior of the world…that He will be the only Judge of our eternal destiny…that He is one with the Father…equality with God…to have the power to give life and raise the dead…to be the anointed one of God that the Old Testament prophesied so much about, the Messiah…to have lived a sinless life (Jn 8:29, 46)…to have all authority in heaven and on earth…to be the only way to God (Jn 14:6)…to have shared the glory of God in heaven (Jn 17:5)…to have authority to forgive sins (Luke 5:20-21)…to be a heavenly king (Luke 22:69)…to be the only source of eternal life (Jn 6:40)…that He is going to die but then come back to life (Jn 10:17)…that He will return again one day to judge the world (Matt 25:31-32)…to be Lord of the Sabbath…to have the right to answer prayer…to be greater than the temple, greater than Abraham, greater than Jacob, greater than Moses, greater than Solomon…mind-boggling claims!! And these all these claims come from a man from Galilee (everyone knew that Jesus was from Nazareth). These claims come from a man who physically looks like any other man!

So, this begs the question: “Why should we believe Jesus? Why?”

Clearly some DID believe and they verbally professed their faith in Jesus (John gives written testimony to some of those). However, most of the people in His day did NOT believe Him. Most rejected Jesus’ claims. The Jewish leaders, the Pharisees led the opposition against Jesus. To them Jesus was dangerous, a false teacher, a blasphemer, empowered by Satan. They wanted Him dead! Now as for the Jewish people, some were influenced by their religious leaders and so they too rejected Jesus. Some thought He was crazy. Most of the people, frankly, were confused about Jesus. There’s several reasons for their confusion – what Jesus said was difficult to understand, or they didn’t like what He said, or they just weren’t sure they could trust Him. I mean all those claims! They didn’t really know what to believe about Jesus. And that’s where we left off last week – people are expressing all sorts of ideas, wrong ideas, about Jesus.

Jesus tells His brothers that He’s not going to the annual Feast of Booths (or Feast of Tabernacles) that is about to be celebrated in Jerusalem. He tells them: “Go on without Me, My time has not yet come.” We know from what Jesus has said in the past that He doesn’t do anything of His own initiative, but only as directed by His Father. So even though John doesn’t tell us, apparently God the Father prompts His Son, Jesus, thru the Holy Spirit, to go on up to the feast.

READ John 7:14

So Jesus goes to the feast. At midweek, Jesus and His disciples arrive at the Feast of Tabernacles and, like the other rabbis, Jesus finds a place in the temple and begins to teach. So that’s the setting.

READ John 7:15-17 – ***point out that “the Jews” = the Pharisees***

Jesus attracts a large crowd. The people have been talking about Him and wondering where He is (v 11). So when He finally does show up, the word spreads fast and people gather around Him eager to hear what He has to say. These would be people from all over – from Jerusalem, Judea, Galilee, Perea and the outside areas of the Jewish dispersion. The Jewish leaders know that Jesus is there. He’s apparently caught them off guard but they’re in the temple and some are listening to Him teach. They marvel at His teaching – how can Jesus know so much without ever having any formal education? The people of Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth had also wondered the very same thing. In Matt 13:54 the folks from Nazareth were astonished and said, “Where did this man [this fellow] get this wisdom and these mighty works?” So even Jesus’ main detractors can’t help but acknowledge His learning. Jesus responds to them by saying that the truth He teaches comes from God (v 16). Many of the other rabbis would quote other rabbis. Jesus never did that. His source of truth is a divine source. It comes directly from God Himself. In John 17:8, Jesus is praying to His Father and John records His prayer: “For I have given them (the people) the words that You gave Me, and they have received them…”

So why should we believe Jesus? Well one reason is because what He says comes directly from God.

READ John 7:18

Jesus’ desire, above all else, is to do God’s will. That’s what drives Him. The things that Jesus says and does are NOT done in order to make a name for Himself. He’s not seeking fame. He’s not seeking His own glory. What He says and does are all for the glory of God – “the glory of Him who sent Him.” So Jesus’ motivation for ministry is to please God, to bring glory to Him. Philippians 2:5-11 reminds us that Jesus “emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men…He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross… Therefore God has highly exalted Him…” So, another reason we should believe Jesus is that His words are spoken to glorify His Father in heaven. And because that’s Jesus motivation, we can be assured that what He’s telling us IS the truth…”in him there is no falsehood.” We can rely on what He says.

A quick point of application here – what’s our motivation for following Jesus? Do we come to Him in order to get what we want (have a better life, get rid of guilt, have sins forgiven, receive physical blessings, spiritual blessings, to improve reputation)? Or do we come to Him because want to please God, to do His will?

READ John 7:19-20

Jesus is speaking to the crowd but His remarks here are really directed at the Jewish leaders. Their whole religious life has been centered around keeping the Law of Moses. Yet here Jesus is accusing them of not keeping the Law. Why would He say that? John 5:18, “The Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him.” John 7:1, “The Jews were seeking to kill Him.” Jesus reminds them, not so subtly, that murder is forbidden in the Law…Exo 20:13, “Thou shalt not kill.” So Jesus asks the religious leaders, “Why do you seek to kill Me?” (a clear violation of the Law). The people from out of town or outside of Jerusalem are completely unaware of the plot by the Pharisees to kill Jesus. So they speak up. They are indignant at Jesus for making this accusation that they want to kill Jesus. Of course the Pharisees are sitting over in the corner quietly while the crowd gets worked up.

I find the statement by the crowd in v 20 quite interesting in light of the fact that we know what will happen in 6 months. No doubt many of these same people will be standing in a crowd before Pilate screaming for Jesus’ to be crucified. And Jesus knows this. But they don’t.

Jesus continues and, again, He’s primarily speaking to the Jewish religious leaders…

READ John 7:21

What’s Jesus talking about? Go back to John Chapter 5, the healing of the man at the Pool of Bethesda who had been an invalid for 38 years. Jesus healed that man completely and then He was berated by the Pharisees for healing on the Sabbath. Remember that?

READ John 7:22-24

Jesus says that they have no reason to be angry at Him for healing that lame man on the Sabbath. Why not? Because they also work on the Sabbath! Jesus points out that the very act of circumcision, which fits in their definition of “work,” is routinely performed on the Sabbath Day. The sign of circumcision was instituted by God prior to the Law being given to Moses. God directed Abraham to circumcise himself and the other male members of his household as part of their covenant with God (Gen 17). God further directed Abraham to circumcise any newborn male children at 8 day. So, in essence, circumcising someone was taking precedence over keeping the Sabbath rest. As long as they were the one’s doing it and it was for religious purposes then it was OK. But if somebody else did anything, even something good, like restoring the full use of a man’s legs, on the Sabbath then that was a sin worthy of death! Such hypocrisy! “You judge rightly, make the right verdict. Do not judge on appearance.” We must be very discerning about what we are passing judgment on. Here Jesus is chastising them for the wrong decision they came to about Him back in Chapter 5 and which led them to want to kill Him in the first place.

Like I said before, the people are confused about Jesus.

READ John 7:25-26

The people of Jerusalem would have been aware of the Jewish leaders plot to kill Jesus. They survey the scene in the temple. Here’s Jesus teaching and trashing the Jewish leadership. And there sit the Pharisees saying nothing and doing nothing about Him. Is it possible that they realize that Jesus is the Christ? So, some of the people in the temple are beginning to think that maybe Jesus really is the Messiah! Oh, but then they realize He can’t be because He’s from Galilee…

READ John 7:27

The people actually reach a false conclusion which has no scriptural basis. In fact, the scriptures tell them where the Messiah will be from. And here is where the religious leaders could have helped the people out. READ Matthew 2:1-6. They knew the Messiah would be from Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) and all they had to do is go check the records on Jesus and they would see that He was born Bethlehem!

READ John 7:28-29

Jesus “proclaimed…” Actually, the Greek word here means “to scream, to cry out.” I believe there are two aspects to what Jesus is saying and the religious leaders understand both of them. One aspect is the fact that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, where Micah said the Messiah would be born. They knew that. “You know where I come from!” The other aspect is what Jesus claimed in Chapters 6 – that He came from heaven (6:38). The Jews understood Jesus’ claim to be equal with God and His claim to have come down from heaven and they considered this to be blasphemy. So they decide its time to take action…

READ John 7:30-31

The leaders want to arrest Jesus, but they can’t. They’re paralyzed! John tells us the reason for this… they are being restrained by the sovereign hand of God. He is protecting Jesus. Why? “Because His hour had not yet come.” At this point many of the people start to believe in Jesus. They are beginning to put all the pieces together – His words, what He had been teaching and these were all validated by His many signs. “When the Christ appears, will He do more signs than this man has done? He’s got to be the Messiah!” So, many believe in Jesus. And the Pharisees realize this…

READ John 7:32, also 45-49

The irony here is that it is the Pharisees, the religious leaders who know the law and do not believe in Jesus that are actually the ones who are accursed. They are so blinded by Satan that they cannot see the truth. Even one of their own, Nicodemus, attempts to reason with them in v 50 but they refuse to listen to him.

READ John 7:33-34

You can sense some sadness in Jesus’ voice. Jesus knows it will only be another 6 months until His death. After that He will go away. Go away to where? What place is Jesus talking about? Heaven – back to the Father. Of course the Jewish leaders don’t get it. Look at their response…

READ John 7:35-36

Is Jesus going to go away outside Palestine and into Gentile territory? They have no idea what Jesus is talking about. The people are confused. The Jewish leaders are confused. And the state of confusion is not the place to be. Not when it comes to Jesus.

And that’s where we leave our study of John for the time being. There is much confusion about Jesus. The people are divided. Some believe and some don’t. In fact, most don’t. How true it is what John stated in Chapter 1: “He (Jesus) came to His own (the Jews), and His own people did not receive Him” (1:11) – that’s a general statement. By and large Jesus was rejected by His own people. But there’s another statement which follows, the very next verse, which is also true: “But to all that did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God” (1:12).

Jesus message is, “Come.” “Whoever comes to Me I will never cast out” (6:37). “These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name” (20:31). So, have you come to Jesus? Have you believed Him and made Him your Lord and Savior? Do you know you have eternal life?

The Gospel message is this: Come, believe, live!

We’re going to sing a song about that. Hopefully you know it – “I will arise and go to Jesus…”