REACTIONS TO JESUS

The Pharisees are confused about what Jesus has been saying. They’re also angry at Jesus for what they perceive as blasphemy. They think He is dangerous so they’ve sent the Temple police to arrest Jesus. Well, did they arrest Jesus or not? Apparently not as we pick up our study in verse 37…

READ John 7:37-39

In John 7:14 we’re told that Jesus arrived at the feast (the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths) in the middle of the feast. It’s an 8-day celebration so Jesus arrived mid-week (4th or 5th day). Here in this passage it’s now the last day of the feast and Jesus is still teaching. So a few days has gone by and Jesus has not been arrested. Why not? Well, the Temple guards’ are about to explain their reason for not arresting Jesus, but the bottom line is that they were restrained by the sovereign hand of God. God is protecting Jesus. Why? Because His time has not yet fully come. That’s what Jesus Himself had told His brothers earlier in Chapter 7. The fact is that it will be another 6 months before Jesus is betrayed by Judas and arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus, of course, is fully aware of this.

Throughout the Gospel of John Jesus continues to preach His message of salvation. He presents the message using a variety of analogies, sometimes teaching in parables, but basically he drives home the same message. Here in our passage Jesus’ message is: “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.” He gives the 3 essential elements for saving faith: (1) “if anyone thirsts” – there must a recognition of our need to be saved; (2) “let him come to Me” – we must go to the right source to have that need met, we must go to Jesus in response to His personal invitation; (3) “and drink” – we must receive by faith the gift that Jesus offers. I like the way John MacArthur puts it… The thirsty, needy soul feels the craving to come to the Savior and drink, to receive the salvation He offers.”

Acts 2:21, “Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Acts 4:12, “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men [the name of Jesus] by which we must be saved.” Acts 16:31, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved…” The message of salvation taught by the apostles in Acts was just a continuation of the same message that Jesus taught.

Jesus says, “Whoever believes in Me…out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” At the time the people weren’t sure what Jesus meant so John interjects a helpful commentary to explain. In v 39 John tells us that Jesus is referring to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which will take place after His resurrection on the day of Pentecost. Here’s the point: when we get saved we not only receive the water of eternal life, but we become the channel thru which that water flows out to the world. It is the Holy Spirit who equips and empowers us believers to be witnesses for Jesus Christ.

READ John 7:40-44

As I said before, Jesus time to accomplish His mission of redemption, to go to the cross and die for the sins of the world, hasn’t yet fully come. So God thwarts any attempts to arrest Him at this time. Some of the people believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah – “the Prophet” that Moses talked about in Deut 18:15. Another messianic term used here is “the Christ.” Other people are skeptical because they think Jesus is from Galilee (which is where he grew up) and the scriptures teach that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem, which is down south in Judea. And besides that, the Messiah must come from the lineage of David. Clearly in regard to Jesus, they don’t know what we know. We all know that Jesus WAS born in Bethlehem. We have the N.T. scriptures. Matthew and Luke tell us this. And we know that Jesus WAS from David’s line. Matthew traces Jesus’ genealogy back to David thru His earthly father, Joseph’s line. Luke traces Jesus’ genealogy to David thru His mother, Mary’s line. So their argument for denying that Jesus could be the Messiah is based on their own ignorance.

V 43 tells us there is a division among the people about Jesus. Even today there is no consensus among people about Jesus. Few deny that Jesus really existed, that He was a real historical figure. But most people don’t view Jesus as the Messiah, as the Savior of the world. Certainly they don’t believe that He is the Son of God. Most people today will say that Jesus was a good, moral teacher and many will say He was a prophet from God. So there are all sorts of ideas out there about Jesus, most of them false. And so it was even in Jesus’ day.

Now we get to the explanation as to why Jesus was not arrested by the Temple police. READ John 7:45-46.

Nobody ever spoke like Jesus. How did Jesus speak? Matthew 7:29 says, “For He (Jesus) was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.” Jesus was different! Even the Jewish religious leaders had to acknowledge that Jesus spoke with authority, though they didn’t like His message. Mark 1:22 says that the people in Capernaum were “astonished” at Jesus’ teaching.”

READ John 7:47-49

They accuse the Temple police and the crowd of people gathered in the Temple of being deceived by Jesus. “You don’t see us following Him do you? We’re not fooled by Jesus. What’s wrong with you guys?”

Oh, but hold on a minute! There is at least one Pharisee who is not completely dismissive of Jesus. We met him earlier in John Ch 3. His name is Nicodemus. In Ch 3 we’re not told that Nicodemus believed in Jesus or that he committed himself to follow Jesus. No, he left thinking about what Jesus had told him. And now here at end of Ch 7, a year or so later, Nicodemus, a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews, speaks up…

READ John 7:50-51

Nicodemus isn’t exactly taking Jesus’ side. He’s not defending Jesus at all. We know that by John Ch 19 after Jesus’ crucifixion that Nicodemus was a believer in Jesus. But at this point he may still be undecided about Jesus. We’re not sure. Nicodemus is simply reminding his fellow Pharisees about what the Law of Moses says. Deut 1 says that you need to judge righteously and not be partial in your judgment. Hear them out. Deut 19 says that you cannot convict a person on the testimony of just one witness. You need two or three witnesses. So Nicodemus is saying, “Hey, let’s not rush to judgment on Jesus. Let Him have a chance to defend Himself.”

The Pharisees quickly respond to Nicodemus…

READ John 7:52

Basically they scorn Nicodemus and accuse him of being one of Jesus’ deceived followers. The Pharisees are so hostile toward Jesus that they don’t even listen to the voice of reason from one of their own. By the way, that last little comment about no prophet coming from Galilee – I guess they forgot about Jonah and Nahum, both O.T. prophets, both from Galilee.

So here at the end of John Ch 7 we see several different reactions to Jesus. Some are convinced that Jesus is who He claims to be. They believe in Him. Some are undecided, Some are confused. Some reject Jesus outright. The bottom line is, they don’t believe in Jesus. For application let me go back to the question that John is challenging his readers to answer: Who is Jesus? Who do you say that Jesus is? You really only have one of 2 choices. Either Jesus IS who He says He is or He’s NOT. So, you either believe in Him or you don’t. There really is no middle ground position.

We’re going to sing an old hymn of invitation, one that we haven’t sung in years. Hopefully you will remember it. It’s based on Jesus’ message to come to Him… “Jesus, I Come.”