

John 7:19-29

Moses gave you the law, but none of you obeys it! In fact, you are trying to kill me.”

²⁰ The crowd replied, “You’re demon possessed! Who’s trying to kill you?”

²¹ Jesus replied, “I did one miracle on the Sabbath, and you were amazed. ²² But you work on the Sabbath, too, when you obey Moses’ law of circumcision. (Actually, this tradition of circumcision began with the patriarchs, long before the law of Moses.) ²³ For if the correct time for circumcising your son falls on the Sabbath, you go ahead and do it so as not to break the law of Moses. So why should you be angry with me for healing a man on the Sabbath? ²⁴ Look beneath the surface so you can judge correctly.”

²⁵ Some of the people who lived in Jerusalem started to ask each other, “Isn’t this the man they are trying to kill? ²⁶ But here he is, speaking in public, and they say nothing to him. Could our leaders possibly believe that he is the Messiah? ²⁷ But how could he be? For we know where this man comes from. When the Messiah comes, he will simply appear; no one will know where he comes from.”

²⁸ While Jesus was teaching in the Temple, he called out, “Yes, you know me, and you know where I come from. But I’m not here on my own. The one who sent me is true, and you don’t know him. ²⁹ But I know him because I come from him, and he sent me to you.”

Background

During the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus was teaching in the Temple courts, as rabbis commonly did. This was roughly six months before His crucifixion. In verse 19, He exposed the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders who were plotting to kill Him. When the crowd questioned Him (v20), many of the visitors at the Feast were unaware of the plot against Jesus, but the locals knew the leaders’ intentions (v25).

Some in the crowd wondered if Jesus might be the Messiah. But many rejected that idea, clinging to the misconception that the Messiah would appear mysteriously, unlike Jesus of Nazareth, who was well known throughout Galilee. This misunderstanding contributed to their rejection of Him as the Christ.

Teaching Points

1. Righteous judgment sees beneath surface appearances.

In verse 24, Jesus said, “*Look beneath the surface so you can judge correctly.*” The Jewish leaders accused Him of breaking the Sabbath because He healed a man, viewing it as “work.”

Yet they allowed circumcision on the Sabbath if it fell on the eighth day, as required by the Law. Jesus pointed out their hypocrisy. If circumcision is allowed, why should healing a man be condemned? Their judgment was based on appearances, not truth. His warning challenges us too: do we judge by outward appearance instead of with righteous, godly discernment?

2. God is not known by those who refuse to hear Jesus.

In verse 28 Jesus boldly “called out” in the temple that He was sent by God. But the crowd did not truly believe. He said if they knew God, they would accept Him. Today, those who reject Jesus don’t truly know God. Believing in God means believing Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). Many attend church but don’t know God because they refuse to accept Jesus as Messiah. Do you know God?

Application

1. Let’s not judge superficially

In verse 24 Jesus said, “*Look beneath the surface so you can judge correctly.*” This does not contradict Matthew 7:1, “*Do not judge others, and you will not be judged.*” In Matthew, Jesus warns against judging motives, which only God can see. However, we’re sometimes called to judge behavior, as parents or church leaders sometimes must do. When we do judge behavior, we must be careful not to judge quickly or superficially based on outward things such as clothing, worship style, or even Bible translation preferences.