

A Discussion Between the Lord and His Earthly Brothers

John 7:1-13

John 7:1-13 - *“After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for He did not want to walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill Him. ² Now the Jews’ Feast of Tabernacles was at hand. ³ His brothers therefore said to Him, “Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing. ⁴ For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world.”⁵ For even His brothers did not believe in Him.*

⁶ *Then Jesus said to them, “My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready.*

⁷ *The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil. ⁸ You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come.”⁹ When He had said these things to them, He remained in Galilee.*

¹⁰ *But when His brothers had gone up, then He also went up to the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret. ¹¹ Then the Jews sought Him at the feast, and said, “Where is He?”*

¹² *And there was much complaining among the people concerning Him. Some said, “He is good”; others said, “No, on the contrary, He deceives the people.” ¹³ However, no one spoke openly of Him for fear of the Jews.”*

Background Notes

“After these things, Jesus walked in Galilee” (v1). After what things? After the events of chapter 6: the miracle of the feeding of five thousand, the miracle of Jesus’ walking on water, and the Bread of Life Discourse.

About six months had gone by since the events of chapter 6. John 6:4 said, *“the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near.”* Passover is in the spring of the year. Here in John 7:2, the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was at hand. The Feast of Tabernacles, or Succot, takes place in the autumn.

The Feast of Tabernacles was (and still is) a joyous occasion, a little bit like our Thanksgiving. At the Feast of Tabernacles the people remembered how God had led them through the wilderness and into the Promised Land. For seven days the people lived in little huts made out of tree branches that they had cut down. This was a reminder of their forefathers living in temporary dwellings during their wilderness wanderings.

Jewish people still celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles today with little wooden huts, pergolas, booths, or tents in their yards, on their patios or balconies. Our next-door neighbors are orthodox Jews, and they celebrate Succot. They don’t make a hut with tree branches; they have a screened tent. They set it up on their patio, and during Succot they sit out there for part of every day, eating a meal and reading Scripture together. It’s been a great opportunity for us to talk with them about the Scriptures.

The “brothers” who are mentioned in John 7:3-9 were the earthly half-brothers of Jesus Christ. Our Lord had earthly half-sisters as well. They were born to Mary and Joseph after the virgin birth of our Lord. The names of four of these earthly brothers are given in Mark 6:3: *“Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?” So they were offended at Him.”*

At this point the Lord’s earthly brothers didn’t believe in Him (v5). We know that they did become believers, however, after the Lord’s resurrection. Acts 1:14 says, *“These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.”* This gathering took place in the upper room, after the resurrection and ascension of our Lord. So the earthly brothers of Christ became believers after the resurrection. In fact, the Epistle of James and the Epistle of Jude were written by two of the earthly brothers of our Lord.

In John 7, however, the Lord’s earthly brothers were not yet believers, and they challenged the Lord to “go public” with His Messianic claims. *“His brothers therefore said to Him, “Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing. For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world” (v3-4).*

In other words, his brothers were advising Him to leave the “backwoods” area of Galilee, and prove Himself in Judea and in Jerusalem, where the sophisticated religious world could pass judgment on His claims. Our Lord’s answer to this challenge brings us to the doctrinal points.

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. God has a plan for the believer’s life.

Look at our Lord’s response to His brothers’ challenge: *“My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil. You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come” (v6-8).*

In these verses the Lord told His brothers that there was a pre-programmed plan for His life. However, for his brother’s lives He said, *“your time is always ready.”* In other words, “For you, one time is as good as another, because you are not in tune for God’s plan for your lives.”

The Lord Jesus was conscious of the Father’s plan for His life, and the time to go up to Jerusalem in a public way had not yet come. At the present time He would not go to Jerusalem in such a way that He would be noticed and attract crowds. The fact that the Lord *did* go up to Jerusalem a little later is not a contradiction. He was not changing His mind. No. *“I will not yet go up,”* simply meant that He would not yet go to Jerusalem in a public way.

His time had not yet come. That “time” would come, and it would result in His death on the cross. But right now the plan for the Lord was to remain in Galilee, and then go quietly to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles.

As there was a plan for Jesus' life, so there is a plan for our lives as believers. God is sovereign! He knows everything! Certainly He knows what plan is best for your life, and He has the power to work it out if you follow Him. There are many passages in the Bible that teach us that God can direct us in our decision-making process so that we can know and follow His plan for our lives. Proverbs 3: 5-6, a well known promise, says: "*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and don't depend on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths.*"

God certainly knows what job is best for you, and what location is best for you. Young people, God certainly knows what college is best for you (Emmaus Bible College, of course!) And if you're unmarried - God certainly knows what Christian spouse is best for you, if marriage is in His plan for your life. God has a plan for the believer's life.

But I want you to notice that **God's plan** is not in line with the **world's way** of thinking. The worldly way for the Lord to prove His Messiahship would have been to go up to Jerusalem, enter the city as a king, and do a major miracle - like blow away the Roman occupation forces! That is the natural way, the world's way. That is man's way - but it was not God's way of carrying out His plan.

Notice that God's plan may involve the hatred of this world: "*The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil*" (v7). Don't be surprised if God's plan for your life involves dislike, or rejection, or even hatred from this world. In fact, we read in 1 John 3:13, "*Do not marvel [don't be surprised], my brethren, if the world hates you.*" It's to be expected.

In John 15:18, the Lord said: "*If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.*" You may experience the loss of a promotion on a job, or the loss of a better grade in high school or college. Why? Because the world hates the followers of Jesus! But even these disappointments can be part of God's plan for your life. God has a plan for the believer's life.

2. Common sense is a part of God's plan for the believer's life.

When following God's plan for your life, you don't "kiss your brain's goodbye"! You don't throw caution into the wind. Look at verse 1: "*After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for He did not want to walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill Him.*" That's common sense! Why put yourself in danger? The Lord was not going to put His life at risk at this point.

When the Lord did go up to the Feast of Tabernacles, He did it quietly, in secret (v10). Again, this was common sense. The point is that the Lord Jesus, as the perfect Man, was following God's plan for His life - but that plan involved common sense.

This should be true in our lives as well. We shouldn't throw caution to the wind or do stupid things. We should try to use our God-given common sense. Common sense is not normally opposed to God's plan for your life. Missionaries in other lands need to keep this in mind when they find themselves in hostile situations.

When Emmaus Bible College students go out to witness as part of our Christian service program, we don't purposely send them into dangerous situations. Even though we know that God has promised that He'll protect us, we use common sense. Common sense is a part of God's plan for the believer's life.

Practical Applications

1. When you witness, you will be accused of deceiving people.

"And there was much complaining among the people concerning Him. Some said, "He is good"; others said, "No, on the contrary, He deceives the people"(v12).

This was a mixed response. Why was Jesus accused of deceiving the people? It was because of our Lord's claim to deity. You don't get accused of deceiving people by saying, "Love your neighbor"! He was accused of deceiving people because of He claimed to be God.

A mixed response is what you will get when you witness. Some people will accept your witness, but others will accuse you of leading people astray. I've been accused of leading people astray because I teach creation, not evolution. My wife Margie teaches a women's Bible study, and one woman left the study group because she felt she was being deceived when Margie said the Bible teaches that Satan and demons are real entities.

The same will happen to you. When you witness, you will be accused of deceiving people.

2. Family ties will not save you.

"For even His brothers did not believe in Him"(v5).

These men were the flesh-and-blood relatives of the Lord Jesus, but that was **not** enough to get them into Heaven! They weren't saved because of their family ties. They had to **become believers in Jesus as the Son of God**, just like everyone else. And, praise the Lord, they did!

Is it possible that you think family ties will save you? Let's say your parents are (or were) godly Christians, and you were raised in a Christ-centered home. That's wonderful - but it won't save you! You must become a believer yourself.

Recently an Emmaus Bible College student became a Christian. This student had come from a Christian home, and he thought he was a Christian. But when he began to study the Bible at Emmaus he realized that he wasn't really a believer! He realized that he had been depending on his Christian background and family ties.

Remember – family ties will not save you!