

The Lord Teaches in the Temple Area

John 7:19-29

John 7:19-29 - *“Did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law? Why do you seek to kill Me?”* ²⁰ *The people answered and said, “You have a demon. Who is seeking to kill You?”* ²¹ *Jesus answered and said to them, “I did one work, and you all marvel. ²² Moses therefore gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. ²³ If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath? ²⁴ Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”*

²⁵ *Now some of them from Jerusalem said, “Is this not He whom they seek to kill?”* ²⁶ *But look! He speaks boldly, and they say nothing to Him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is truly the Christ?* ²⁷ *However, we know where this Man is from; but when the Christ comes, no one knows where He is from.”*

²⁸ *Then Jesus cried out, as He taught in the temple, saying, “You both know Me, and you know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know. ²⁹ But I know Him, for I am from Him, and He sent Me.”*

Background Notes

“Now the Jews’ Feast of Tabernacles was at hand” (John 7:2). The Lord’s remarks were made to the people and the Jewish leaders as they gathered in the Temple area in Jerusalem, during the weeklong Feast of Tabernacles, about 6 months before the Lord was crucified.

“Now about the middle of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and taught” (v14). The Lord was addressing the crowd in the Temple courts. This was a common practice of the Jewish rabbis of that day. They would pick a spot in the large outer courts of the Temple area, and begin to teach. Soon a crowd would gather around to listen and discuss with the rabbi what he was teaching.

Possibly the Lord began to teach something about the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles, and then He moved on to the question of His authority to teach. In verse 19 He began to talk about the Law of Moses. *“Did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law? Why do you seek to kill Me?”* The Jewish people were proud of the Law, and they made a practice of always appealing to it. But the Lord told them that they were not keeping the Law – **not one** of them!

The Lord gave one example. The Law said, “Thou shall not kill” - and yet the leaders were seeking to kill Him. At this point the people said, *“You’re demon-possessed! Who is seeking to kill You?”* (v20). In other words, “You’re crazy! No

one is seeking to kill you!” Remember, the crowd the Lord was addressing consisted of Jews from all over the Roman world that had come to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. Many of them would not have known of the plot to kill Jesus, so probably they were the ones who asked, “Who is seeking to kill you?” However, some in the crowd knew that the Jewish religious leaders were out to kill Jesus. Look at verse 25: *“Now some of them from Jerusalem said, ‘Isn’t this the man they are trying to kill?’”*

Some of the Jewish leaders themselves were in the crowd, and the Lord particularly had those self-righteous religious leaders in mind when He began to talk about the Sabbath and circumcision. *“I did one miracle, and you are all amazed. Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision... you circumcise a boy on the Sabbath. Now if a boy can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing a man’s whole body on the Sabbath?” (v21-23).*

“Jesus answered and said to them, ‘I did one work, and you all marvel’ (v21). The “one work” that the Lord referred to was the healing of the paralyzed man in John 5. That miracle had taken place during the Lord’s previous visit to Jerusalem, and this miracle was done on the Sabbath. The Lord said, *“I did one work, and you all marvel.” “You all marvel”* - not in the sense of that they admired him, but in the sense of they were shocked and astonished and dismayed! They found fault with the Lord for doing an act of mercy. Why? Because they claimed He was “doing work” on the Sabbath - and thus He was “breaking” the man-made Sabbath laws.

If we look back at John 5, we find that it was after the healing of the paralytic that “the plot thickened” – the plot to kill Jesus grew more intense. *“Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God” (John 5:18).*

Verses 25-27 tell us, *“Now some of them from Jerusalem said, ‘Is this not He whom they seek to kill? But look! He speaks boldly, and they say nothing to Him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is truly the Christ? However, we know where this Man is from; but when the Christ comes, no one knows where He is from’”(v25-27).*

The Jews who knew about the plot to arrest the Lord couldn’t figure out why the religious leaders were letting Him continue to speak boldly, right in the Temple courts! “Could it be,” they reasoned, “that the leaders suspect that He really is the Messiah? But no, He can’t be the Messiah because we know where He’s from. He’s from Nazareth! He’s Jesus of Nazareth, the son of a carpenter, Joseph.”

These comments show that the people were following a traditional misconception - the idea that the Messiah would remain hidden, and then suddenly and mysteriously appear. So they reasoned among themselves in this way: “This man Jesus can’t be the Messiah! Jesus is well known. He grew up in Nazareth, and He’s well known in the Galilee area. He’s only a man, the son of Joseph the carpenter!”

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. Righteous judgment sees beneath surface appearances.

In verse 24 the Lord said, *“Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”* The Jewish leaders found fault with Jesus because He healed a man on the Sabbath. He was “working” on the Sabbath. Because of their man-made rules that distorted God’s Sabbath law, they accused Jesus of “breaking the Sabbath laws”!

I’ll paraphrase what the Lord said to the Jewish leaders: “Why, that’s ridiculous! You circumcise a male baby on the eighth day according to the Law of Moses, right? [Leviticus 12] And if the eighth day falls on a Sabbath, you still circumcise the baby, right? Sabbath or no Sabbath, you circumcise on the eighth day. Well then, why do you find fault with me for making a man who has been paralyzed for 38 years completely well on the Sabbath? That’s not righteous judgment!”

Our Lord made a very emphatic statement: *“Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”* Do we ever commit this sin? Do we ever judge according to appearance without seeing what’s beneath the surface? Judging by appearances only can very easily be unrighteous judgment!

One summer I was speaking at a teen camp, and one of the teens who was not a Christian gave the staff a really hard time. He was disruptive in the seminars, he ran away from camp, and as I remember the situation, the police had to become involved. On the last night of camp we were having the traditional testimony campfire, and as the other kids were giving their testimonies, I noticed that once again that “Randy” seemed to be causing a disturbance. He was sitting with a group of kids, his head was down, and his shoulders were shaking. It looked to me like he was laughing at the testimonies of the other kids. I was just about to take him back to his cabin and talk to him when I noticed that he wasn’t laughing – he was crying! He had become convicted of the sin in his life. “Randy” became a Christian that night! I almost made a terrible mistake, because I had judged by surface appearances only. Righteous judgment sees beneath surface appearances.

I could give other illustrations, and I’m sure you could think of some too. We must be very careful! *“Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”* Righteous judgment sees beneath surface appearances.

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

“Then Jesus cried out, as He taught in the temple, saying, “You both know Me, and you know where I am from; and I have not come of Myself, but He who sent Me is true, whom you do not know”(v28).

As the crowd was questioning whether Jesus was the Messiah or not, the Lord essentially shouted out to them that He was indeed the Messiah! *“Then Jesus cried out, as He taught in the temple...”* I think the Lord was saying, in no uncertain terms, “I **am** the Messiah! You know that I have come from heaven, but you won’t believe, therefore, you don’t

know or believe God. I know Him! He is my heavenly Father! He sent me, and if you knew Him, you would automatically receive Me. But because you refuse to hear what I have to say on this subject, I'm telling you that you don't know God!"

It's just the same today. People today who refuse to hear Jesus do not know God. Jesus claimed to be God. In John 14:6, He said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."* Do you believe that? If you don't, you don't know God! You don't know the God of the Bible! You may say you believe in God, but if you don't believe what Jesus taught, that "God" you claim to believe in is a "god" of your own making, not the God of the Bible.

Many people who go to church every Sunday don't really know God because they refuse to hear and believe Jesus in two critical areas: They don't believe He is Messiah, and they don't believe He is God.

What about you? Do you know God? Remember, those who refuse to hear and recognize Jesus do not know God.

Practical Application

Let's not judge superficially!

"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." Does this statement contradict what our Lord said in Matthew 7:1, *"Judge not, that you be not judged"*? No! In Matthew 7 the Lord was talking about judging **motives**. We are not to judge motives. However, sometimes we are called upon to judge **behavior**. Parents have to judge behavior. Church leaders have to judge behavior.

When we do have to judge behavior, let's be very careful not to judge quickly and **superficially**. Don't judge people too quickly by the clothes they wear. Don't judge a person's spirituality by the kind of Christian music that he or she enjoys, or the translation of the Bible that he or she prefers. (Hey, if I told you I like Christian country music, would I go up or down in your "spirituality" scale?) [Laughter]

I almost wrote off one of my students during the first semester of this academic year. He often cut classes and when he did come, he fell asleep! I really wondered about his spiritual state and why he wanted to study in a Bible college? But second semester was totally different. He didn't cut classes. He was alert in class. You know what? It was not a spiritual problem at all - he had a medical problem! It was diagnosed and treated. I had judged him superficially, when I didn't have all the facts.

So let's be very careful. **Let's not judge superficially!**