

The Folly of Arrogance, the Blessings of Humility, the Cost of Choosing Christ, and the Wonder of His Words.

Pride is something that we don't find attractive in other people. Pride is also something that God is absolutely disgusted with (Prov. 8:3).

APPROACHING THE WORD OF GOD AND THE THINGS OF CHRIST WITH ARROGANCE WILL KEEP A PERSON BLIND, BUT APPROACHING THE WORD OF GOD AND THE THINGS OF CHRIST WITH HUMILITY WILL OPEN A PERSON'S EYES.

There are 5 questions asked in these verses. I'd like for us to walk through this one question at a time.

Question #1 - The Pharisees and chief priests ask the officers why they failed to capture Jesus. **7:45**

"What's happening here?" Verse 45 puts us at the tail end of an event that began at the beginning of chapter 7. Jesus is deep into His three year ministry. He is only 6 months away from going to the cross, He has become the most highly debated person in all Judea, and people have begun taking sides (7:43). The Pharisees want Him dead (5:18; 7:19), but many people of the crowds are being persuaded by Him (7:31) even though no one can really pinpoint a clear understanding of Him (7:40-41).

"Who are these officers?" These officers are like temple police. They were assigned to monitor the crowds of the temple. They are to keep people in line with the temple regulations. They work closely with the religious leaders. If the religious leaders had a problem with someone, they could send the officers to take care of the problem. They aren't soldiers, but officers, and their responsibility is to keep the religious leaders happy with everything taking place at the temple in Jerusalem.

"When were they sent to arrest Jesus and why?" The Pharisees and chief priests, back in verse 32 (7:32), had sent these officers to arrest Jesus. This is all taking place during a week long mandatory feast of the nation of Israel (7:2). The problem is that they are fed up with Jesus. They are sick of His teaching. They are sick of His reputation. And they are sick of Him.

Now, at this feast, they aren't about to be embarrassed and silenced by Jesus once again, so instead, they decided, "we'll just arrest Him. That will shut Him up and shut the crowds up." They have no evidence available to truly arrest Him, but that's what they choose to do anyway because they are fed up with Him.

Jesus clearly revealed where the Jewish religious leaders were wrong. He made that obvious, but instead of admitting their guilt and agreeing with Jesus, they fought Him simply because they wanted to win. We better not fall into that kind of trap. I want us to be people who are looking for truth, even if it embarrasses us or if it makes us confess we are wrong.

(Response) - Jesus' words captured us. **7:46**

They give their defense: "Look, no man has ever spoken like this man before. No mere man has ever said if you believe in Him you will have rivers of living water flowing out of your heart. No one has ever said the things He says. No mere man speaks like that. We showed up. Then we hear him. And we couldn't do it. I don't know what to tell you. There is something different about this man."

Question #2 - The Pharisees ask the officers if they too were being deceived by Jesus - the deceiver. **7:47**

What we have is God's sovereign control over this entire situation. Nothing was going to stop Jesus from fulfilling His ministry. It was not time for Jesus to be arrested, even though officers were sent to arrest Him. Nothing was going to cause Jesus to go to the cross prematurely.

God is a planner, and His plans always go His way. He is God. He does what He wants (Isaiah 46:10-11). If you fight against God, then you too will end up frustrated. If you do what the Pharisees did, you will be frustrated. If you, like them, try to work your way to the righteousness of God, then you will stumble and you will fall short of His righteousness (Romans 9:30-10:4). If you try to hide the fact that you are a condemned sinner before God, then you will be frustrated (Hebrews 4:13). And for us believers, if you step off of God's will and get into a lifestyle God is not pleased with, then you will end up frustrated. He disciplines those who are His own (Hebrews 12:6). If you belong to God, then be watchful and be ready. Seek God's plan for you and don't fight it. His plans always go His way, and He is a good God. So, don't fight God. Go with what His plans are, and I promise you it will be better than anything you could come up with (Eph. 3:20).

Question #3 - The Pharisees ask the officers if any of the religious authorities or Pharisees had believed in Jesus. **7:48-49**

They say, "look around. Nobody who is anybody is believing in Him." These guys aren't after truth. They don't say, "let's carefully walk through the Word of God and see if Jesus is right." Instead, they assume Jesus is not the Christ. They assume Jesus is not telling the truth, and they assume they know the Scriptures better than they actually do. On top of their assumptions, they decide to go with whatever the important people of their culture are going with.

We all run the risk of being like the Pharisees. This is a warning for us. Let's not just go with whatever our culture says. Let's not just go with whatever the important people in our minds go

with. Let's do our own research. Let's search the Bible before we become frustrated and confused in life.

Question #4 - Nicodemus, one of the Pharisees, questions his own on their un-Scriptural actions. **7:50-51**

The Pharisees have just made bold statement to the officers. They say, "none of us Pharisees or others with high authority have believed in this man Jesus." And now walking back onto the pages of Scripture, we have Nicodemus. The teacher of Israel - a ruler of the Jews - a man of high ranking authority. A Pharisee - an elite separatist. Nicodemus is the Pharisee who came to Jesus by night and had a one on one conversation with Jesus about eternal life and entrance into the kingdom of God. This was recorded in John chapter 3, verses 1 through 21. One of the most famous all of Bible verses, John 3:16, is written in the context of that conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus.

The courage it took for Nicodemus to say what he said was more than the courage that I have ever needed to muster up. Nicodemus was an intelligent man. He knew if he stood up for Christ, in that moment, he too, would be rejected, just like Christ.

Question #5 - The Pharisees ask Nicodemus if he is becoming a trader. **7:52**

What a low blow to one of the most respected men in all of Israel. "Are you from Galilee too? Are you one of them? Are you one of His? Have you really just said that? Are you ready to be one of them? Are you ready to be a part of those no name, lo life, ignorant and gullible people who are deceived by that awful man? You are dead to us." No love. No concern. No care. No respect. They immediately turn on him.

People brought up in fear-driven religious systems do run the risk of being suddenly turned on just like Nicodemus. This does happen. You make a choice. You take a stand, and religious people who you thought were your allies turn on you in a moment.

Again, we have irony in verse 52. They tell Nicodemus, "search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee." The irony is shown I think in two ways. First of all, these men are confident and assertive, but their arrogance leaves them saying something long before they should have spoken up. They say there is no prophet that arises out of Galilee. They must have not considered Jonah, who was from Gath-hepher (2 Kings 14:25), a Galilean town. The other irony is that it's possible they are saying this in light of the discussion from verses 41 and 42 that the Christ/Messiah was supposed to come from Bethlehem and not Galilee. With this in mind, the Pharisees are on the right track, but the irony is that they knew the Christ was to be born in Bethlehem. But, because Jesus grew up in Nazareth and spent time in Galilee, the Pharisees assumed Jesus was born there. They failed to ever ask Jesus where He was born. If they had been willing to listen to Jesus, they could have asked Him where He was born, and Jesus could have given them the answer to their

debate. But they never cared to find out where Jesus was actually from. They made dogmatic statements based off of assumptions.

V. 53 - What we find is everything building up to this climactic moment when Nicodemus defends the Word of God and defends Jesus, and all John tells us is that everything just fizzles out after that. The day comes to an end. The Pharisees, the chief priests, and the crowds all go home. Jesus, however, remember He didn't really have a home to go to. He went up to the Mount of Olives for the night. I imagine He spent time in prayer, and He prepared Himself for the next day of ministry that was ahead of Him.

I wonder what Nicodemus did that night.

I don't know what your background is. I don't know what you believe. What I do know is what I believe. I believe the Bible teaches me that I am a sinner (Rom. 3:23). The Bible teaches me that sinners deserve the wrath of God in eternal fire (Eph. 2:3; 2 Thess. 1:8-9). And I'll admit, that's me. That's what I deserve according to the Bible. But the Bible teaches me that I don't have to face that day. I could, instead of wrath, receive eternal life, standing in the presence of God with great joy (Jude 24; Rom. 6:23). How do I get that? The Bible says that Jesus died as a sacrifice for me, in my place (1 Cor. 15:3; Gal. 2:20). Jesus died and rose again. He rose again to prove that God's wrath would be removed from anyone who believes in Him (Rom. 4:24-5:1). By putting my trust in Jesus, I have eternal life given to me by God (John 6:47). So that is what I believe. And according to the Bible, if you believe in Jesus, if place your faith in Him, if you trust in Him, then you too have eternal life (John 3:16). You can make that choice in the privacy of your own mind and heart. You make the choice in your mind: "I do believe in Jesus. I believe He died for me. I believe He rose again. And all my confidence for eternal life rests solely upon Him." You make that choice and you too will be given eternal life by God.

I'd like to leave us with five thoughts of application.

- #1 - Wanting to win even if you're wrong makes you just like the Pharisees.
- #2 - Abandoning God's way of life for you makes you just like the Pharisees.
- #3 - Going with what others say instead of doing personal research makes you just like the Pharisees.
- #4 - Ridiculing people who stray from what we believe makes us just like the Pharisees.
- #5 - Standing up for the Word of God and for Christ makes us just like a humble man that is honored in the Bible.

Who do you really want to be like?