

The Holy Week & The Hated One

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John 7:1-53

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So, I don't need to tell you that we live at a time when fear and especially hatred are rampant because it just happens that fear and hatred are big business. With social media being the perfect delivery system for conflict, you and I, we are all easily manipulated into being whipped up into a frenzy of controversy and even hatred and interestingly, much of what is hated in these days coincides with what Christians tend to believe.

So, what we know is true about marriage and men and women and Jesus being the only way and all of that and a whole lot more is hated today. But that's to be expected, right? I mean, Jesus told us that this would happen, John 15:18 saying, "If the world hates you, just know that it hated me before it hated you." And there's no doubt that Jesus was hated. The prophet Isaiah, 700 years before he was born, Isaiah 53:3 says that he would be despised, abhorred, hated and rejected, and that's exactly what he was.

Now hatred for Jesus is the theme that runs from the beginning of end and ends at Chapter 7, which is where we begin today. Now, Chapters 2 to 4 were relatively peaceful, but just 18 verses into Chapter 5, the plot to kill Jesus becomes clear and what that does is it casts a dark cloud over the entire book that just grows in blackness and intensity until it culminates in pitch darkness for three hours when Jesus died.

This hatred for Jesus in Chapter 7 has been simmering for about a year since the moment that Jesus instantly and perfectly healed a man who'd been paralyzed for 38 years. And Jesus had to die for that, not because he healed the guy, but he had to die because he had the audacity of healing on the Sabbath. You should never do that. And John 5:18, he had the audacity to call God his own father, which makes him equal with God. He had to die for that.

Because of this plot, Jesus realizes that, and he gets out of Dodge. He leaves Jerusalem, even leads the county around Jerusalem, Judea, and he goes 100 miles north to a city called Capernaum at the very top of the Sea of Galilee. He spends about a year up north and he's away from the public eye and he's teaching people and training his disciples and doing miracles. That whole year between Chapter 5 and Chapter 7, that whole year is recounted in Mark, Chapters 3 to 9 and in Luke, Chapters 6 to 9. So, you want to know what happened during that year, it's all there.

Interestingly, there is six months between the end of Chapter 6 and the beginning of Chapter 7 and if you want to know what happens during just that six months, that would be Mark Chapter 7 to 9, and that would be Luke Chapter 9. Well, how do we know it's six months? Well look at

Chapter 6, verse 4. Chapter 6, verse 4 says that the events of Chapter 6 happened just before Passover, which is in April. That's around our Easter.

But John 7, verse 2 says that the events of Chapter 7 happened during the Feast of Booths, which is towards the end of September. So April to September, we're looking at about six months between John 6 and John 7. So while he's up north, his popularity is growing, thousands are flocking to him but just know as his popularity is growing in the north, down in the South, what is growing is hatred for him. And it just happens that in the south is the seat of power and influence and religion, which is Jerusalem.

Chapter 7, he starts up north but by the end of Chapter 7, he's in the very heart of Jerusalem, in the very heart of the temple where hatred for him has solidified. Did they really hate Jesus? Yeah, take a look at verse 1, says, John 7:1, "The Jews were seeking to kill him."

Jesus knows that the leaders were plotting and scheming to kill him. So in verse 19, he asked, "Why do you seek to kill me?" And it wasn't just the leaders, the people in Jerusalem are aware of this plot to kill him because look at verse 25. They ask, "Is not this the man whom they seek to kill?"

So hatred for Jesus has become public. It's not a private thing. Everybody knows that he's hated by the religious leaders and they want him dead. They might disagree on a ton of different things, but they are all united on this one thing. Jesus has to die. Clearly, he's the hated one. But I want you to notice they cannot touch him because he's living according to a divine timeline. Look at verse 30. It says, "No one laid a hand on him because his hour had not yet come."

It wasn't time for him to be arrested and executed, that would come soon, so until that time, he couldn't even be touched by these authorities. By the way, all of this is happening during one of the three holiest times in all of the Jewish calendar called the Feast of Booths in verse 6. So if we're going to check and try to summarize the whole Chapter, we're going to call it the Holy Week and the Hated One, okay? The Holy Week and the Hated One. Holy week is the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles. The hated one is Jesus.

So here you have the hated one comes to Jerusalem and teaches in the temple during Holy Week. I just want you to notice it's interesting that even back then holidays brought out the worst in people. It's not just today. I mean, think about it, a week where they stop. A whole week where they stop all activity to worship God and remember his salvation and it is during that time that they plot to kill Jesus. And let's keep in mind that Jesus is the God that they came to Jerusalem to worship. The irony in that.

So today as we look at all of Chapter 7 in one message, I'm going to tell you first, point #1) ***about The Divine Holiday. The Divine Holiday***, the Feast of Booths, also known as the Feast of Tabernacles, is one of the three great annual holidays where every Jewish male, 20 years and older, where they were expected to go to Jerusalem. It's like what were the other two holidays. That was Passover and Pentecost.

So, these holidays reminded the people of specific instances where God acted in history, in grace and in power to protect the people and to provide for their needs and in fact, this feast starts in two weeks. It starts on Friday, September 29th, and it's going to go until Friday, October 6th. Eight total days.

So being in the Fall like it is now, it's a holiday of celebration and gratitude, even thanksgiving for God, for his love and his care and his protection, his provision of a harvest. So in the first century, a Jewish writer named Josephus calls this feast their holiest, their greatest feast because it was a party. There was celebration, joy, true feasting. This was a happy time.

Now celebrate, you think why do they celebrate this year after year? Well, it is to embed certain truths into the people. As you're going about your life, there would be these holidays that would bring you out of the normal, these special moments to embed truth into you, to remind you of history, to unite you with the people. So this in turn would unite people. These holidays would you unite them around certain truths, certain historical events that were to matter most to them.

This, by the way, is the point of, well, not all of our holidays because we have hamburger day and all of that, but this is the point behind most of our holidays too. Holidays unite the people in a nation around history and around truths that shape that people and preserve those people as a people. These reminders of God's actions in history on their behalf were meant to have an ongoing impact on the way the nation thought about itself and the way the nation conducted itself in the centuries that would follow. So, his activity in the past would encourage them that he's with them now, he will act in the future on their behalf, which also gave a spiritual dimension to all of life.

Again, if they got into the everyday food and family and all of the stuff that occupies our lives, these were moments where they were lifted out of the mundane and reminded that the God of the universe was working in their midst. He'd worked in their midst and they were celebrating that knowing that those same truths, that same God, was with them in the future.

Now it's called the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths because on the first day of the feast, the people were to gather a bunch of branches and make shelters to live in for a week. It was like camping for a week. So, all the kids were like, yay, and all the parents were like, oh goodness, living outside? Now this is outlined, Leviticus 23:40 where it says, "You shall take on the first day the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees and bows of leafy trees and willows of the brook." And you take all that and you were to build a shelter to live in for this weeklong holiday.

Why would they do that? Leviticus 23:42 explains, "You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All native Israelites shall dwell in booths," and here's the reason, "That your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God."

So, what are they doing? They're remembering God's act in history to save them from Egyptian slavery and to care for them and all of that reminder is by living in shelters like their ancestors lived in way back in the day. The family goes out into the tent, they live in it for a week, and

when the kiddos ask, "What are we doing out here?" Dad steps up and says, "Let me tell you about what God did for our ancestors." And he tells them the story recounts for them again, the story of the Exodus in the way that God protected them and provided for them for 40 years before entering the promised land.

Like I told you, they celebrate this to this day and one current Jewish website, habad.org says that they expose themselves to the elements in covered huts commemorating God's sheltering our ancestors during the Exodus. Now today, if you don't want to build one, you can just go online and buy one for about \$1,000. That's kind of helpful, \$2,000 with shipping and handling.

So, rabbis have created a bunch of instructions for the shelters that Jews build to this day. If you were to see one, it would just look like a tent. You'd think, oh, they're building a tent, but on top the top of it is completely open to the air. One of the instructions, there can be nothing above your structure like a building or a tree because you have to be able to see the stars through your roof. Why is that? Because the same stars that our ancestors saw when God protected them are the ones that we look at to remind ourselves of the God who's protecting us.

Today, it seems like they don't live in it though for the whole week. Can't imagine why, but they only eat in it. So, it's got to be big enough for you to put your table in and for all of your family to sit in and eat a meal. The top can only be covered in plants and tree material, but again, it's got to be open so you can see the stars through it. It should be sturdy enough so that if wind comes by it doesn't knock it over, so it's got to be strong and you want to decorate it, you don't just want a tent and all of that, but you want it to look nice, you can put flowers in ornaments. The rabbis say that's okay, and if you want to decorate the outside, they say it's okay if you put Christmas lights on the outside. So there you have it, Christmas lights.

Now when the temple was standing, it was very different, so they would have a special allotment of sacrifices that were done each of those eight days and the significant celebration that is recounted here in John 6 is that water was taken from pictures in the Pool of Siloam, which if you Google the Pool of Siloam right now, they're excavating that whole thing right now and it is fascinating what they're finding.

But anyway, the Pool of Siloam, they take water from there and they walk it up the hill to the temple. They go into the altar, they pour it out near the altar, and that was a symbol reminding the people that God protected them, how? He saved them, how? Saved them from death by giving them water out of the rock, so they remember his salvation as they pour out the water near the altar, so there's gratitude and joy and that's what you would be seeing as they're recounting all of the ways that God protected and provided for them and so you're overcome by joy. Again, why? Because joy that God protects his people. Joy that God provides for his people. Joy that God is with his people and all of that makes sense. Why? Because it's harvest time.

So, you planted these crops in the ground and you're like, gosh, I really hope they grow, and then when they grow and you harvest them, what do you do? You celebrate that you're going to eat during the winter. That God is provided for you and protected you once again. On the last day of

the feast, so day eight, the water is poured out and during this time, this was the climax, this was the height of the celebration. So everybody goes into the temple at that time, and as they're pouring out the water, they call it The Great Hosanna because this is when they all just scream out in worship and praise.

Now, we'll come back to that in a minute. Interestingly, 16:21, the pilgrims gather in the Fall to thank God for the harvest. They thank him for his protection and his provision, and it is understood that they did that modeling what they were doing after this, the Feast of Tabernacles, which becomes, like I said, if that's the case, then this celebration becomes the model for Thanksgiving.

One last thing. In Jesus' day near sundown during this feast, there were these 75-foot-tall menorahs that were in the temple area, and they would fill these menorahs with candles, and they'd fill the city with candles lit all over the place. Now, why candles when you're remembering the Exodus? Well, if you remember during this time, there was a pillar of fire that would follow them every day and it wasn't just for a little while, it was for all 40 years. There was a visible representation of God in their midst saying, I am here with you to protect you and to provide for you. Two symbols, water and light, right? Now, watch this.

Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 are all one event. This event, Jesus in the temple during the Feast of Booths. Well, in Chapter 7:37, as the water is being poured out, climax of the celebration, everybody's screaming and cheering God's salvation, Jesus screams out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink." There he is in that moment screaming that. Then notice, Chapter 8:12, Jesus in the same celebration screams out, "I am the light of the world." So, the protection and the provision that they are celebrating God for, he is saying, you find all of that in me. I have a lot more to say about that but for now let's turn next to point #2) ***The Doubting Family. The Doubting Family.***

So three times in the first 10 verses, Jesus family is mentioned, but it's not just his family too, you know? It's his brothers. Jesus had brothers; did you know that? Brothers. Matthew 13:55 even gives us their names. Did you know that? Four brothers named James, Joseph, Simon and Judas; those are his four brothers. And Matthew 13:56 says that he had sisters too. Jesus had brother and sisters. It's crazy.

This James is the same James that wrote the letter called James and this Judas, that's the long name, like my long name is Jonathan, but I have a short name Jon. So, Judas, that's his long name, but his short name is Jude who wrote the 26th book of the New Testament, the letter we called Jude.

Now this might confuse some of you because you were taught that Mary had no other children, right? Anybody taught that? What do we do with that? Well, you probably know the New Testament was not written in English, right? It was written in Greek and it was translated into English and so some would say, well, maybe these brothers are his cousins. That's really who it

is because Mary didn't have any other kids. But in Greek there's a word for cousin, and it's not this word because this word in verse 3 is the word brother.

Okay well, there's a Greek translation of the Old Testament where they took the Hebrew and they translated into the Old Testament, that's true, and every time the Hebrew word cousin is translated into Greek, you know what it's translated into? The Greek word for cousin, not the Greek word for brother.

So what does that all mean? It means the plain reading of the text is the true meaning of the text that Jesus had brothers, children of Mary and Joseph. I want you to notice verse 5, because at this point in Jesus' life, his brothers do not believe in him. You see that? They don't believe in him. I mean if you had a perfect brother. Wouldn't he be the most annoying person in the history of the world? Everything, oh, of course, you say, I'm wrong again, Jesus. Yep, you're right. I mean he probably drove them crazy. I don't know. It's not in the text, but who knows? Maybe it's true.

But I want you to know that their rejection of him actually fulfills prophecy. Psalm 69:8, a thousand years before Jesus was born says, "I become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's sons." My brothers are my mother's sons. Interestingly, they're called his mother's sons, right? Why is that interesting? Well, since Jesus is not Joseph's biological son, it is only through Mary that Jesus would have brothers. So his mother's sons, actually technically making them his half-brothers. Well, to tie a bow on this, you might be thinking, well, how did they go from rejecting him in John 7 to writing books of the Bible? What happened between this text and those texts?

The answer to that is the resurrection. Jesus rose from the dead. In 1 Corinthians 13:7 says that Jesus appeared to James. It says he was not one of the 12, so this is James, his brother, and James probably went home and said, guys, we've been wrong about our brother. He is actually the son of God. So, Jude and James both describe themselves as servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is their brother.

Now Chapter 7 says Jesus is up north. He wants to avoid being arrested, but his brothers are like, hey, you need to go down there. You need to go back to Judea where all the people are, and people try to figure, what are they talking about with that? Why would they say that? If you read it in context, they might be saying, hey, you just lost a ton of people with that stunt you pulled with all that food. You had all of those people there, but then you started preaching and you went from 20,000 people down to 12. You really killed your movement. So, you need to go where all the people are and you need to pick this thing back up again. Build your platform. Come on, get out there. That's what they think. You want to be known, don't you?

Verse 6, Jesus responds, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here." Cannot wait for you to dig into what that slam is against his brothers. Verse 7, "The world cannot hate you because you're part of the world, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil."

I said last week, no one has a problem with the works of Jesus, right? His works, everybody loves those. Healings and miracles and all of that compassion and kindness. I mean, as long as

people can extrapolate love and compassion from his works, you know what people do with that, is they then just ignore his words. It wasn't his works that got him in trouble. It wasn't his works. He just healed so many people, we had to kill him. No, no. It was what he said about them. Notice, "I testify that their works are evil."

Well, verse 8, he says, I'm not going to go up to this feast notice. He says, "You go up to the feast. I'm not going up to this feast. My time hasn't really come yet." But verse 10, it says, what? Look, "After his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up." But he said, "I'm not going to this feast," and then he goes to the feast. Was he lying to them? He contradicts himself. Was he just messing with them?

Well, you'll have to come back for the answer to that. Let's keep going. One last thing I want to point out to you before we move on. If you know rejection from family members for your commitment to Jesus, just know that Jesus knows that pain. Matthew 10:36, Jesus says, "Our enemies could be people in our own homes." And he knew that was true because he lived it.

As we just saw, they rejected him at least for a time. People who lived with him, people who were with him from the moment they were born and they wanted nothing to do with him. Maybe people that have been around you since the moment they were born think you're crazy. They've rejected you. You're a goody two shoes, or they've rejected you because of what you believe. Or out of all the people that you talk to about Jesus, they're the hardest to reach.

As the pain of family rejection can be the most painful just know that you can pray about this pain to a Jesus who knows this pain. He knows what it is to have family think you're crazy. In fact, Mark 3:21, his family said, "He is out of his mind." That's what they thought about him. But listen, your family might think you're out of your mind for being a Christian. They might reject you for your commitment to Christ, and not only does Jesus know this rejection, but he says, hey, if they reject you, you can be in my family.

Mark 3:35 says, "Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother." Well, we're just two points down and only into this 11 verses. So we got to pick this up now, the bulk of Chapter 7 is concerned with point #3) *The Divided People. The Divided People*. Verse 43 makes it clear that people are confused about Jesus saying, "There was a division among the people over him."

They don't know what to make of him. If you count up all the questions in Chapter 7, there are 14 questions about Jesus. It shows they don't understand. They don't know what's going on with him. They can't come to any conclusions about him yet, at least the people don't. The religious leaders, they've all come to the conclusion that he must die. So, this Chapter actually gives us seven ways that people are divided about Jesus, and I want to go through each of them quickly. The first area are divided over his character.

Look at verse 12, "And there was much muttering about him among the people while some said he is a good man." There's one side. The other says, "No, he's not a good man. He's leading the people astray." In Jewish thought when you lead people astray, you're a false teacher and the

penalty for that is execution. So he's a good man. No, he's a criminal that should be executed. You've got total disagreement, division over his character.

So, is Jesus a good man or is he a false teacher? Well, CS Lewis put it this way. He said, "Jesus could not merely be a good man because good men don't run around calling themselves God." I don't know about you, I know a lot of good men, but the moment they start saying that they are God, they have removed themselves from that category. You're no longer a good man. You're insane, so either Jesus is a false teacher, or he is who he says he is, he's the God man, which is what Christians just have taught about him since he rose from the dead. That he's the God man, God who became one of us to save people from our sins when we put our hope and our trust and our confidence in him and not in ourselves or anything else to save us from our sin.

Second, they're divided over his doctrine. Look at verse 15, "The Jews therefore marveled saying, 'How is it that this man has learning when he has never studied?'" At that time, you became a trusted teacher based on where you were taught. So, the authority to teach was passed down from rabbi to rabbi to students. Well, Jesus is self-taught and that in the words of the kids today, that's suss, that is unacceptable. That is suspicious. We do not like this, so he says, "No, no, I have a rabbi." Look at verse 16.

"My teaching is not mine but his who sent me." God the Father is my rabbi. He's the one who taught me everything that I know, and I only say the stuff that he tells me to say anyway, and so here he is going, the source of my teaching is not some human rabbi. I don't need them. I have a direct line to God the Father because he's, my father. If you want to know of what I'm saying is true, he says in the next verse, you just got to be overwhelmed by knowing and doing the will of God and once that's true of you, then you'll know whether or not this is true.

Third, the people are divided over the miracle he did in John 5 where he healed this paralyzed man. In verse 23, they're like, how could you heal this guy on the Sabbath day? And he says, wait a minute, you guys are inconsistent because if you had a little baby that was born, a little Jewish baby boy born, and the eighth day he's supposed to be circumcised, but that eighth day is the Sabbath day, guess what? You're going to break the Sabbath and have him circumcised in order to keep the law. And he says, so that's the lesser, here's the greater. So here, I've got to man that's been paralyzed for 38 years and you're knocking me for healing him, his entire body instantly, and you're knocking me for doing that on the Sabbath. Stop it. I mean, that's not in there. Stop it is not in there.

But as he's saying to them, what is wrong with you people? There's a double standard. He goes after them for that fourth, they're divided over his history. Look at verse 26. Halfway down it says, people are going back and forth on this and, "Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ?" That's one side. "But we know where this man came from and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from." Well, that's not true.

I want you to notice how Jesus responds to this. Remember, it's Jesus' words that get him in trouble. I mean, growing up, I remember my mom would always say, if you just never opened

your mouth, you'd never get in trouble. Well, the same is true of Jesus. Look at verse 28. He says to them, "You know me, and you know where I come from, but I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true,' and here's the part, 'and you do not know him.'"

Whoops, what are they there doing in Jerusalem? They are there worshiping God and he's like, you don't even know the God you're worshiping but I know him. "I know him," verse 29, "and I came from him, and he sent me." So he's like, you might think you know where I came from, which is Nazareth, but you really have no idea where I'm from because you don't know God. If you knew him, you would know me.

And then I want you to remember when you see those words, end of verse 29, "He sent me." I want you to remember that that phrase is a declaration of his deity. Why? Because if God sent him, he existed before he was born and nobody exists before they're conceived. Jesus, existing before he was born indicates that he's the eternal one who never had a beginning and the only being that never had a beginning is God.

Fifth, they're divided over his future. His future. Look at verse 33. Jesus said to them, "I will be with you a little while longer." And just so you know it's September and in April of the next year is when he will be arrested and executed. So he's got about, what is that, about eight months or so? So that little while longer, eight months, "and then I'm going to him who sent me." I'm going to ascend to heaven. I'm going back. "You will seek me, and you will not find me, where I am you cannot come."

All right, well, what are the people going to say to that? I want you to see this. This is comical. The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we can't find him? Does he intend to go to the dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? What does he mean by saying you will seek me, and you will not find me and where I'm going, you can't come?" And Jesus isn't like, okay guys, hold on. Let me tell you. I'm going to die and then I'm going to ascend to heaven and I'm the son of God. He doesn't do any of that. He's just like, "You can't find me," and he just peace out.

That's the middle of the feast. He comes back three days later to say the rest in verse 37. So he just walks away, "You can't find me. You can't go where I'm going." These people are just mystified at Jesus. He can do all of these mind-blowing miracles and yet at the same time say the most confusing and combative truths to them, and just know that at moments like this, he's fulfilling Isaiah 6:9 which says that the people will hear him but will not understand him. That they will see him, but they will not perceive the truth about him.

Six, the people there were divided about his preaching, divided about his preaching. Verse 37, the most dramatic moment. Everybody in the temple, that the great day, it says there in verse 37, and in that moment pouring out the water, everybody watching with bated breath, Jesus screams out, "If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me," showing the connection. Drinking is a metaphor for believing "Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart, shall flow rivers of living water."

Now, I want you to notice how the people responded to those words. Look at verse 40. "When the people heard these words, some of the people said, 'This really is the prophet.' Others said, 'This is the Christ.' But some said, 'Is the Christ to come from Galilee? Has not the scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?'"

So, there was a division among the people over him and then there's even more, "And some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid their hands on him." I mean, talk about a division. The people are all over the map. On the one side, "This is the Messiah, the long-awaited king that the prophets told us about for thousands of years." And on the other side, you have, "We need to arrest him right now."

They could not be more divided, and I want you to notice that the seventh and finally, the people are divided about his influence, his influence. The religious leaders tell the temple guards to arrest Jesus in verse 32 but they become frustrated because those guards didn't arrest him. They got caught up in his preaching. They're like, we've never heard anybody talk like this. The best preacher we've ever heard, we couldn't arrest him and I want you to notice, verse 47, they scolded these guards. The Pharisees answered them, "Have you also been deceived?" You of all people? "Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him?" Has he influenced any of us? We're the elite. We're the ones who know the Bible. Why? Because of this crowd, these morons out there, "but this crowd that doesn't know the law, they're accursed". They're following this guy, but they're cursed. We're the ones who know the law.

Oh, the irony of that statement. Those people, they don't know the truth like we do. To follow this Jesus is to be deceived. It's to be out of the mainstream, not part of the elite and idiot like the crowds of people out there. Sound familiar a little bit? Chapter ends with Nicodemus. Yes, the Nicodemus from Chapter 3. He tries to do in this moment what Jesus says in verse 24 that people should do. They shouldn't judge him based on outward appearance. They shouldn't judge him based on superficial judgment, but they should judge with right judgment.

So he says, hey, we need to get the Bible and we need to try this guy. We need to make sure that this guy, maybe he's the real thing, and they shoot him down. Verse 52, last verse of the chapter, "Are you from Galilee too?" Are you one of his followers? You secretly following him?" And then they scold him for his lack of Bible knowledge, "Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee." Except Jonah, he came from Galilee. Whoops.

And they're mistaken too because Jesus wasn't from Galilee, he was from where? He was from Bethlehem. He was born in Bethlehem, the exact city where Micah 5:2 says 700 years before Jesus is born that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. And could it be that actually Nicodemus had been studying the Bible? He had searched verse 52 and saw a text like Isaiah Chapter 9:1-2 which says, tells of a day when the people who walk in darkness in Galilee, darkness because they're a hundred miles north of Jerusalem, that a people who walk in darkness will see a great light. The idea of being truth is going to burst forth from Galilee as it was doing when Jesus walked the earth.

Well, obviously that gets us ready for Chapter 8:12, and Jesus being the light of the world. Now to close, like the events in John 7, we live in a day when people are divided over Jesus too, right? I mean, why is it that the religion Jesus founded is attacked in your college classes and on television every Easter, every Christmas, and times in between. But every other religion is treated with velvet gloves and never really criticized. I mean, he is the dividing line between all the world's religions, right? Judaism says he's a false teacher. Islam says he's merely a prophet. Hindu and Buddhism, they exalt him, but you could be the same way if you just follow their teachings.

Mormonism, he's the physical child of God the Father, with Mary, yikes. He's the spirit brother of Lucifer. Became a God through his obedience just like you can. This division continues as everyone, but Christianity denies that he's the son of God. I mean everyone would think we lost our minds thinking that anybody could be the God man, let alone Jesus. Some peasant carpenter living in Israel some 2000 years ago, come on.

But Jesus is called a stumbling block in foolishness, right? 1 Corinthians 1:23, that Christian stuff would be great. Love your neighbor and be kind and all of that. If you just didn't have this unbelievable view of Jesus, about God becoming a man, a dead man, rising to life again, come on. That's just idiocy. It would be idiocy if it wasn't true.

See, 1 Corinthians 1:25, "The foolishness of God is wiser than men." The things that people think are foolish from God's word. God goes, that's the height of my revelation to all of humanity. This is the greatest truth in the entire world. It's the expression of my wisdom when I tell you about my son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Because the story of Jesus is the true story of reality because the book that the story is in is from God himself and because of that, you can confidently stand when the world is divided from you.

See, it's you and other Christians all over the world on one side, and it's the world. So, at the end of the day, it's you against the world. In the dark days that seem to be ahead for us. People being divided about Jesus, people mocking and hating Christianity, people escalating conflict about the Bible. All of that is coming and none of that should surprise us, right? None of that should cause us to question the truth of Jesus is true. Why? Because everyone was divided back then about him. Nothing new is happening today. It's all the same stuff that we've been seeing in Chapter 5, in Chapter 6, in Chapter 7. Rejection, hatred, ridding the earth of Jesus. People not seeing how important he is, like you do. Some believe and many reject. That's just the way it is in the text and in reality, and Jesus pastors us on this. He helps us with this in Chapter 17, so turn there as we close. In Chapter 17, he's praying to the Father. He's praying just hours before he is going to be executed, and in verse 14, he says words that'll encourage you and will put steel in your spine as hatred for Christians and hatred for what we believe continues to grow darker.

He says while praying to the Father, verse 14, "I've given them your word and the world has hated them because they are not of this world." Christian, you might live in this world, you might be involved in the same activities of this world, as others, but you are not of this world. This is not your home. You don't belong here. Have you ever felt that? Things are just so crazy, it's

almost like I don't belong here. Yeah, you don't, and you don't belong here to the same level that Jesus doesn't belong here because look at the end of the verse.

"They are not of this world just as I am not of this world." Instead, verse 18, "Even though we are not of this world as you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world." Christian, you're not of this world but you are sent into this world. Whether it's love or hatred, whether it's comfort or trial, whether it is acceptance or rejection, you are still here, and we still remain here to go into this world that hates us. To go into this world that rejects us. To go into this world just like Jesus went into this world, a world that hates everything about what Jesus stands for and which is by extension what we stand for, to go into that world with grace and truth.

I mean, do you really need popular opinion to encourage you and help you? Do you need majority acceptance? Do you need other people to affirm what you believe, or will you stand with Christ regardless of what other people think about you? Because this whole thing is true, that's the bottom line. If this is not true, we all shouldn't be here. We should be watching football right now. But if this is all true, then the kindest thing you can do is tell somebody who hates it, hey, this is true. You need to give your life to Christ.

See, as the day grows darker, it's men and women that will have this kind of courage and this kind of conviction. They will be the ones that push the darkness back. They will be the ones that make a difference for the truth and I pray that hundreds of those men and women are right here, right here. Who will all say together, I may not be of this world, but I am still here for this world until God takes me home. Let's pray.

Jesus, Chapter 7 is probably the least familiar Chapter in all of John, but the truths of this Chapter are more relevant than what's going to be in our newsfeed tomorrow. These truths that we see in this text help us now as we see a world growing darker and more antagonistic to the truth, and we experience that antagonism not just separated safely on our computer screens, but we see it in family and friends and coworkers and other students and teachers. We see it, and here you were, Jesus. Here you were graciously giving people the truth, and so I pray that you would help us to do the same. That you would give us the courage we need because we're overcome by your kindness to us that you would give us the courage and conviction, we need to take your truth to the people that we know and love who need it most. Use these truths in all of our lives, I pray for the glory of your name, Amen.