



**Jesus Astounds His Critics
He Shows Up and Simply Teaches
John 7:15 – 31**

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When last we were together, we were busy following Jesus as He made His rather edgy appearance at the Feast of Tabernacles center of celebration, the Temple itself and the source of death threats against Him.

Jesus simply showed up in the middle of the festival, day four, probably in the middle of the day, teaching in one of the courtyards around the Temple building. He has drawn a huge crowd and even some of the Jewish religious leadership, the same ones that want Him dead, are simply blown away by His teaching.

John 7:15–19

“The Jews then were astonished, saying, “How has this man become learned, not having been educated?” So Jesus answered them and said, “My teaching is not My own, but His who sent Me. If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know about the teaching, whether it is of God, or I am speaking from Myself. The one who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him. Did Moses not give you the Law, and yet none of you carries out the Law? Why are you seeking to kill Me?”” (NASB 2020)



It is the Jewish religious leaders who are acting astonished. In light of the lies and intimidation tactics they have been using on those who are at the festival, I have to ask if this is an honest question or is it one more comment intended to gaslight Jesus and bring doubt into the mind of those who are listening to Him.

It appears possible though that many who have been involved in dogging Him to others, had never actually heard Him. They had taken what was being said on social media and You Tube about Him, and all of the hand wringing going on in the various meetings going on at the Temple and came to conclusions based on innuendo.

This is how many arrive at what they believe about Jesus today. They have heard that becoming a Christian means you must become a narrow-minded hating bigot. Or maybe they think it means you will never have fun again and will wind up dressing like your Amish. But the real question is this, have they ever honestly taken a look at Jesus and what He says?

I recall a conversation I had at lunch a few years ago with someone I considered a friend. He dropped a broad generalized statement into the conversation at the table that “everyone knows the Bible is full of errors.” He thought he was talking to a group that would acknowledge the truth to his statement.

He was an expert in his own field of research used to debating others so he was extending that expertise out and assuming others would simply agree. Or maybe he could verbally take them apart. Who knows? Many in the world tend to believe they are experts about the Bible without ever having researched it or read it. Here is the thing we must remember; they do not understand it and they are totally incapable of doing so without the help of the Holy Spirit.

The first requirement for faithful Bible interpretation is salvation. We cannot expect unbelievers to understand our Bibles. Sure, they can read the words and understand certain aspects of the Bible at one level, but to really grasp Scripture in a life-changing way, well, to put it mildly—they haven’t a clue! (Adams 1998, 23)

1 Corinthians 2:14–16

“The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.” (ESV)

Bluff and bluster aside, with the Holy Spirit indwelling you and providing you the wisdom and guidance that He promises, you are indeed a force to be reckoned with.

This question though was the proverbial bolt from the blue. Others at the table knew I was a believer and one even looked at me and said “Ken, are you going to let this go unanswered?” Yes, I was put on the spot.

After a quick prayer, I asked a question. The Lord led me to ask, “where are the errors, specifically. Could you show me?” “Are these alleged errors in the Greek, Hebrew or Aramaic texts or are we talking about translation issues?” The response, “well, everyone knows.” And with that he picked up his lunch and went to another table.

Much of what is touted as “everyone knows,” is nothing more than a smoke screen for “I have never checked this out for myself, so I am going to rely on conventional wisdom for this issue.”

As we share Jesus with others, simply telling our story of what He has done for us, stick to your story. Let the Holy Spirit do His work, our job is to just be faithful. Be ready for that bolt from the blue.



Colossians 4:5–6 “Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone.” (NLT)

Just like the Jewish religious leadership trying to get John the Baptist to go running down different rabbit holes to draw him off of the truth, the world does the same with us.

As we speak to others in our culture today, the Biblical illiteracy is at all time highs. Do not assume that the person you are talking to knows what the Bible says on any topic at all. Barna tells us, based on his latest surveys, that only 6% of the adult population in this country even has a Biblical worldview. We have good news to tell others about Jesus and what He has done for us.

It is the Holy Spirit’s responsibility to then take what we have shared and use it. We are not called to brow beat anyone into the kingdom. Jesus us our example, He never forced anyone to accept Him. Leave the results up to the Lord. Just simply be alert to those opportunities to assist others in what the truth actually is about Him.

Jesus knows there are some issues with others hearing Him for the first time and having preconceived notions about Him. He responds to the accusation of being anti-intellectual and not having been trained per the accepted system of education currently in vogue among the religious elites.

John 7:16–17

“So Jesus answered them and said, “My teaching is not My own, but His who sent Me. If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know about the teaching, whether it is of God, or I am speaking from Myself.” (NASB 2020)

This is what has just taken place. The Religious leadership have just accused God, the living Word, the Creator of Everything, of being uneducated. So, Jesus tells them, just as He did in John 5, the source and reason for everything He does, the Father. His source is divine. He did indeed sit and learn under an authority, the Father.

Jesus goes on to affirm that any really sincere person would know this. It is not something that can be learned only by those who are expert in theological niceties. Anyone who really wills to do the will of God (i.e., whose whole will is bent in this direction; it is the set of the life that is meant) will have the spiritual discernment required. (Morris 1995, 359-360)

Jesus has just turned the tables back on those who are requiring He must conform to their standards of education.

In other words, “We are questioning whether you have the required educational background necessary to be able to teach the Word. There is a question about your competence on this subject?”

Jesus has just told those advocating that viewpoint, “Your admission of ignorance regarding the source of My teaching shows Me that you do not even meet the basic requirements of being a follower of YAHWEH. Apparently, you are not doing His will, so how are you even competent enough to be a hearer of the Word to identify truth?”

They would cite this Rabbi or that Rabbi as their authority when teaching. Jesus appeals to the Father.

Indeed, Jesus sat under THE master teacher, the Father Himself. He has heard and watched (John 5:19-20) the Father and is simply teaching and relating what He has heard.



The key is doing God's will, not simply embracing or knowing what His word says. The doing of it is primary. His half-brother, James would later make this very clear. I wonder if he was there that day listening in?

James 1:22–25

“Do not deceive yourselves by just listening to his word; instead, put it into practice. Whoever listens to the word but does not put it into practice is like a man who looks in a mirror and sees himself as he is. He takes a good look at himself and then goes away and at once forgets what he looks like. But those who look closely into the perfect law that sets people free, who keep on paying attention to it and do not simply listen and then forget it, but put it into practice—they will be blessed by God in what they do.” (GNB)

Jesus is giving a masterclass on rhetoric and debate. He has turned the argument proposed by the experts, back on themselves. Again, James.

James 2:18–19

“But someone will say, “One person has faith, another has actions.” My answer is, “Show me how anyone can have faith without actions. I will show you my faith by my actions.” Do you believe that there is only one God? Good! The demons also believe—and tremble with fear.” (GNB)

The key is not head knowledge, that's good, but there must be heart knowledge involved here too. I love it when Jesus deals with those who aren't in His camp. We see how the Holy Spirit can use us when we share our story with others.

The first point to remember, just be obedient. But Ken, I am not eloquent with words. I'm not either. But God is.

Matthew 10:17–20

“Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.” (ESV)

We are promised the words to say. We are promised wisdom if we ask believing (James 1:5). It is His responsibility for results. He has provided us the tools to do what He asks us to do.

1 Corinthians 1:26–29

“Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God.” (NLT)

Simply let God use you. He has so much in store for you and so much He wants to do through you. Let Him. You will be great, I know it, and here's why.

John 14:12–15

“Truly, truly I say to you, the one who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I am going to the Father. And whatever you ask in My name, this I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” (NASB 2020)



Jesus is wowing the crowds and confounding the experts with His rhetoric, but “the one who believes in Me...and greater works than these he will do...”. The secret sauce is faith.

Jesus continues in His discussion.

John 7:18

“The one who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.” (NASB 2020)

In the history of Israel, one who speaks for himself is called, a false prophet. Today, we would call them false teachers. What false teachers are looking for are superior metrics. Large attendance numbers, heavy web usage, a need for increased bandwidth online. And on Facebook, likes, lots of them. False teaching tends to lead to that, oh, and a good solid positive cash flow. However, that is not our motivation as believers.

We are seeking to glorify someone else. It is all about Him. We are called to be faithful.

Jesus has also just exposed the Temple leadership for the phonies they are. By insisting on “their” education system and inferring Jesus was not of that system, they also were saying that we, us, are indeed the repository of all wisdom and knowledge. As such all we say must be adhered to as truth since we sweat truth. They are the ones promoting their own glory. And Jesus has just equated them with false prophets. Time to change the subject and let them know that He knows. He is talking to the leaders, but the crowd will be the group responding.

John 7:19–20

““Did Moses not give you the Law, and yet none of you carries out the Law? Why are you seeking to kill Me?” The crowd answered, “You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill You?”” (NASB 2020)

Welcome to hypocrisy 101. The leadership went out of their way to insist they were simply following Moses. That is what the over wrought response to His healing someone on the sabbath was all about.

They identified with that statement. Yes, Moses gave us the law.

Suddenly Jesus goes on the offensive against the hypocrites leading the religious life of the nation.

In the middle of congratulating themselves on having the law, Jesus hits them with both barrels, in public, with the crowd listening in.

- But none of you follow the law.
- Why are you trying to kill me.

Those listening are the same ones who were whispering the first few days of the festival in fear of the search parties being thrown out by the Temple leadership. The man hunt and the questions being thrown around Jerusalem and the camps that were all over town was known by all. It wasn't a secret and now Jesus tells them...He knows all of it.

Jesus is God, He knows what is in their hearts and He has just used the nuclear option. The cross is six months away and He knows what those in front of Him listening intently will be saying then.

The leadership attests to loving Torah, but they have hatred and murder in their hearts (John 5:18). So much for the Big Ten. “They professed unbounded devotion to Moses, and yet they broke the Law because they were estranged from its spirit. Their ignorance of the Law had at last grown so great that they were prepared to murder Him who came to fulfil the Law.” (Westcott and Westcott 1908, 119)

Hypocrisy is really easy to slip into. We all hate it, and we have all done it. All of us, at one time or another, have been hypocrites about something. For many of us parents, the one I remember the most,



“no sweets before dinner.” But we think nothing about a quick candy bar around 3pm to fight off the afternoon blahs.

My favorite one from work was utilization of transcription services. It was always first in, last out. You had to wait your turn. But for the boss, when he needed transcription services, drop everything and get it done. That was where I learned to report every 2 weeks on a 4-week diary to make sure I was never late.

I became a boss years later in the same company and refused to engage in that type of behavior. I answered my own phone, maintained my own email and kept my own diaries without using transcription services at all. A standard I later enforced at another company for all.

Jesus here is letting us know that hypocrisy in ministry is unacceptable. By the way, that is one of the rumors going around as to why people don't go to church. To many hypocrites. There is always room for one more, come and joins us.

Many of those listening in from out of town had no idea how bad it really was. They did not know about the death threats. But many were aware something was going on. Jesus is talking to the leadership, but the crowd from out of town responds by saying He has a demon. “The Jews of Jesus’ day commonly thought of mental illness, in this case paranoia, as being demon-induced. This explains their reference to Jesus having a demon (cf. 10:20). These people were not charging Jesus with getting His power from Satan, as others had (Matt. 9:34; 10:25; 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15; cf. Matt. 11:18).” (Constable 2003, Jn 7:19)

And it is the out of towners who responded, not the leadership. The leadership thought, we are going to get an easy win here with the education gambit. But now they are liars and murderers and silent.

The added question shows how unthinkable it seems to the pilgrims that their rulers should be seeking to kill Jesus. But—the rulers stand there silently, with the eyes of the crowd searching their faces. That silence speaks loudly. (Lenski 1961, 549)

John 7:21–24

“Jesus answered them, “I did one deed, and you all are astonished. For this reason Moses has given you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and even on a Sabbath you circumcise a man. If a man receives circumcision on a Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry at Me because I made an entire man well on a Sabbath? Do not judge by the outward appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”” (NASB 2020)

Jesus mentions an event that took place there in the Temple about a year or so back. We are talking about the healing of the paralytic man at the Sheep Gate.

He wants them to know the beginnings of the death threats and where they came from. This healing took place on the sabbath, and Jesus was accused of sabbath breaking because He healed a man and told the man to take his bed roll. It was at that point that the Jewish religious leadership really did try to kill Him. But it was that work, that act of healing someone who had been paralyzed for years that so astonished everyone then and remembering it caused the same thoughts as then.

Jesus then points out a specific Torah approved situation where it is okay to work on the Sabbath...circumcision.

Jesus points out that there are no issues with circumcision taking place on the Sabbath if it is indeed the 8th day after birth. That was routinely done even though it did constitute work. Point, those who want to kill Jesus for breaking the Sabbath, do so on a regular basis, possibly weekly.



So, why are they so upset because on one Sabbath, one, Jesus healed a man who had been paralyzed for years. Demonstrating at the same time that He is Messiah but that is a point they passed over.

The Sabbath breaking by those doing circumcision, well it is a matter of precedence in the Torah. Jesus doing a healing is as well.

(1) Since circumcision came through the patriarchs, it had priority over the laws of Moses, especially oral traditions. (2) This established a legal precedent followed by Jesus when he healed on the Sabbath. The “work” of circumcision is the higher good and valid as a Sabbath activity, and as such it does not violate the Sabbath laws. If that is true of circumcision, which affects only a small part of the body, how much more is it true of healing, which affects the whole body. Moreover, Jesus is doing the work of God in bringing God’s saving presence to bear on the lame man and healing him. (Osborne 2018, 191)

John 7:24

“Do not judge by the outward appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.” (NASB 2020)

Even though they have gone silent after being accused of plotting murder, in violation of the Torah, Jesus is still talking to the religious elites. He has accused them of not keeping the Torah, and of breaking it, and doing so most egregiously.

Those who think they know the law, need to double back and make sure they do and are interpreting it correctly and not taking things in God’s word out of context.

We run into well-meaning folks every now and then who do the same thing with the Bible. They have favorite verses or phrases they have memorized and then use regularly. That isn’t bad, but in the Bible, context is everything. Some have built false doctrines on out of context scripture. Others simply struggle with a Biblical worldview.

For example, John 3:3 “Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”” (NKJV) Some will take the phrase “one must be born again” as support for reincarnation. It isn’t, not at all.

We must look at the entire context of what is being said and not just the one verse. “Jesus is referring to the new birth, that is, a spiritual birth. He explained this when He said, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit” (v. 6 NKJV). Further, the Greek word for again ἀνωθεν (anōthen) is better translated “from above,” meaning a spiritual birth. There is nothing here about another physical birth after death.” (Geisler 2005, 696)

Why even bother with this?

Amazingly, substantial proportions of people associated with Christianity embrace the possibility of reincarnation. For instance, one out of four (24%) theologically identified born-again Christians accept reincarnation as a possibility. Don’t overlook just how mind-blowing that statistic is: people who acknowledge their sins, and ask God through Christ to forgive them, nevertheless say they may come back as some other life form rather than reside eternally in God’s presence! In addition, more than one-third of all self-identified Christians (36%) also believe that reincarnation is a real possibility for them. (Barna 2022, 93-94)

One of our goals here at Calvary is to build families in the faith and make Biblically based believers. We do this by studying the Bible verse by verse and in context. I had multiple false assumptions destroyed the first time I read the entire Bible. And I continue to have them shaken each time I reread it. Our true north is His word.



This is the same thing Jesus is expressing to the leadership who know Torah but are not currently using it as they should.

After the interchange has completed, it appears we overhear some of what the people of Jerusalem are now saying about Jesus in the crowd.

John 7:25–27

“So some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, “Is this man not the one whom they are seeking to kill? And yet look, He is speaking publicly, and they are saying nothing to Him. The rulers do not really know that this is the Christ, do they? However, we know where this man is from; but when the Christ comes, no one knows where He is from.”” (NASB 2020)

We know these are locals because they are fully aware of the death threats unlike the folks who came in from out of town. Those from out of town knew about the searches for Jesus, but not the entire reason. But the locals knew. Those in the Temple may have thought that they had kept this on the down low, and no one would know. Sin though, tends to not stay unknown.

In his discussion with those tribes desiring to settle east of the Jordan and the requirement placed on them by the Lord to be part of the army to kick out the usurpers in the land, Moses had this to say if they decided they did not need to follow the Lord in this.

Numbers 32:23

“But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the LORD, and be sure your sin will find you out.” (ESV)

There is no such thing as secret sin. Did you know that the 10th Commandment is one that deals with secret sin? Nobody knows you are coveting, but you do. Achan though found out the hard way that coveting can lead to other consequences and trying to keep it all a secret, just will not work.

For Israel, secret sin can infect the entire community and have ripple effects that were unforeseen.

Joshua 7:1

“But the people of Israel broke faith in regard to the devoted things, for Achan the son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the devoted things. And the anger of the LORD burned against the people of Israel.” (ESV)

Here, in John 7, the words of the locals reveal to the leadership, they know too. The hypocrisy is out, and the sin is out.

Since the locals know that and have done nothing with Jesus as a result of His appearance in the Temple and teaching, that must mean they have concluded He is the Messiah? Right?

The locals had never seen this group act so tentative in the past. What’s going on here?

By the way, yes, He is Messiah. This does reveal something to us about secret sin that is no longer secret and what happens when others learn about it. They will draw conclusions based on how it is dealt with.

Ever wonder why, when a Pastor is found to have failed morally, that action is taken quickly. So quickly it seems as if mercy is disregarded.

As a church, sin corrupts. Sin in the camp corrupts and impacts the entire operation. See Achan.



For the folks in Jerusalem though, the conversation moves from the possibility that Jesus is the Messiah, because the enemy is busy working to blind them to that fact, to Him not possibly being the Messiah because He fails to meet their expectations of who and how He is supposed to arrive.

There was a popular belief at the time that either “the Messiah would be hidden by God until the divinely appointed hour for his manifestation (see 1 Enoch 48:6; 4 Ezra 7:28; 13:51–52; 2 Baruch 29:3) or, perhaps more likely, that he would be born normally but not recognized until he was made known by God (see Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho 8). They figured that since the local Jews had known about Jesus, he could not be the Messiah.” (Osborne 2018, 192)

What we are seeing here is a lot like what we see when we examine things related to the end times. A general idea of the facts but a lack of clear understanding of all of the facts. This is why Jesus had to explain to the two He was walking with shortly after His resurrection about what had just happened. “Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” (Luke 24:26–27, ESV)

There was confusion about His first coming. This was intentional to keep the enemy on edge. They didn’t know either.

1 Corinthians 2:8

“None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” (ESV)

What we see though is some of those who were local, were beginning to put the pieces of just who He is, together.

Jesus appears to have overheard this conversation taking place among the locals.

John 7:28–31

“Then Jesus cried out in the temple, teaching and 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. I do know Him, because I am from Him, and He sent Me.” So they were seeking to arrest Him; and yet no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come. But many of the crowd believed in Him; and they were saying, “When the Christ comes, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has done, will He?”” (NASB 2020)

Jesus confronts the urban myth being tossed around about Messiah by answering the topic directly.

First of all, they do indeed know where He comes from, Galilee. That though is not the real issue. The real issue is do they know where He really comes from.

With His first comment, Jesus exposes their error by directly challenging it. He then immediately declares to them that He is not there on His own, but He has been sent by God.

Jesus’ point is not that God exists (none of his interlocutors would have doubted it) but that God, as the one who sent him, is real—or, in modern idiom, he really is the one who sent Jesus, regardless of what the Jerusalemites might think of Jesus’ origins. But, sadly (Jesus tells them), You do not know him. (Carson 1991, 318)

The people of Jerusalem, Jews who prided themselves on knowing the one true God and His law, have just been told, that since they do not recognize who He is, then they do not know God. The last time He was in Jerusalem He had told them “For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me.” (John 5:46, NASB 2020)



The assertions they have just made, that He overheard, reveal they do not know God. Jesus continues by telling them He knows God, because God sent Him.

It isn't that they do know God but aren't sure if Jesus comes from God; it is, rather, that they don't even know God, and so naturally cannot associate the Jesus they are seeing with the true God. (Wright 2004, 102)

Yes, the Jewish leadership still wanted to arrest Him, but couldn't at this point. Jesus first of all appeared seemingly out of nowhere to begin teaching, drew a crowd of locals and those from out of town, and even blew the minds of some of the ruling elites who came to check out what was going on. Some were still making decision about Him.

But for many others, they had heard enough and had decided that He is the Messiah.

What about us. Are we firmly convinced that He is who He says He is?

Conventional wisdom would say to think this over a bit before making a decision, but the truth is simpler, none of knows how much time we have left. Right now, is decision time.

Romans 3:21–24

“But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.” (NLT)

Romans 10:9–13

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”” (NLT)

ABC's of Salvation

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.



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