

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

### Ch. 7

**T**oday we parachute into the world of two millennia ago. Rome's fist grips tiny Palestine who prays that their Messiah will come and toss Caesar. Bitter, melancholy Tiberius is running the early Roman Empire. The governor of Judea is Pontius Pilate who handed Jesus Christ over to that blood-thirsty mob.

To observe their manmade traditions, 1<sup>st</sup> century rabbis will not stoop to touch lepers, prostitutes, tax collectors -- anyone "unclean." How ironic that these hate-filled, elitist power brokers can't wait to *get their hands on Jesus!* These jealous leaders are incensed that, despite Jesus' miraculous proofs, His exact fulfillment of the Old Testament prophets who'd foretold His coming, and His brilliant teaching. And this Nazarene carpenter has the chutzpah to claim to be God's Son!

Today, after 2000 years Christ's believers are often marginalized as "intolerant, judgmental" because they believe faith in Christ is the *only* way to heaven. If TOLERANCE not TRUTH is the Holy Grail, let's delete our spiritual convictions.

When it comes to ultimate right and wrong, life and death, heaven and hell, who has the supreme right to tolerate only what He chooses? In John ch. 6, Jesus answers this seminal question, this *signpost of civilization*. **Let's read John 6:63-69.**

### DISCUSS:

#### The Posse

John, one of Jesus' twelve *disciples*; was also an *apostle* (Greek for *messenger*). Jesus' original, hand-picked, twelve apostles were: John, Peter and his brother Andrew, James " ,," Philip, Bartholomew, (doubting) Thomas, James "The Less," Thaddeus, Simon the Canaanite (not Simon Peter) and Judas Iscariot. After Judas hung himself following Christ's crucifixion, the remaining eleven elected Matthias to fill the open slot. Later the title *apostle* was bestowed on other messengers of Christ -- Paul, Barnabas and Timothy.

#### Being God's Son Is No Picnic

In ch. 7 Jesus takes hits from both His enemies and His own family, six months away from His date with Calvary. Knowing the town heavies are plotting His death, He's lying low up near the Sea of Galilee. Six months earlier He miraculously took a lad's lunch and fed 10,000 who'd gathered to hear Him teach and pull off more supernatural signs. Late that night He literally walks across the lake to join His terrified disciples who are rowing like mad in a fierce storm.

Next He addresses His followers in Capernaum saying, "I'm the Bread of Life. No one who comes to Me will ever be hungry again. ... you should not be so concerned about perishable

things like food. Spend your energy seeking the eternal life that I, the Son of Man, can give you. For God the Father has sent Me for that very purpose. ... This is what God wants *you* to do: believe in the One He's sent. ... I'm the true bread from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever and not die."

His disciples grouse, prompting Jesus to ask, "Are *you* going to flake on Me too?" Peter replies, "Master, to whom would we go? You have the words of real life, eternal life. We've already committed ourselves, confident that You are the Holy One of God." **Let's read John 7:1-53.**

## **DISCUSS:**

**“Someone’s sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago.”**

**– Warren Buffett**

His Father wrote Jesus' marketing plan, and He was simply following it, day by day, right to the cross and the open tomb. He knew His death would be six months later in the spring at Passover. This ceremony commemorates the exodus from slavery in Egypt 1,475 years earlier when God told Moses to have his indentured people kill a lamb and sprinkle its blood on their doorposts.

That night the angel of death visited Egypt and took the life of the firstborn in every home -- except those covered by the blood. This was the straw that broke Pharaoh's back, convincing him to free the Jews; it also forecast the sacrificial death of their Messiah, 15 centuries in the future. That's God's plan. What's yours? Saul of Tarsus was a radical persecutor of Christ's followers shortly after Jesus' return to heaven. He was bent on eradicating every vestige of Jesus' memory.

Then en route to Damascus, Syria, to do more damage, he was blinded by a heavenly light, and a voice said, "Saul, why are you persecuting Me!"

At that moment he surrendered to the Christ he had hated. God changed his name to Paul, and he went on to write half the New Testament! That Paul said, "All the things I once thought were so important are gone from my life. Compared to the high privilege of knowing Christ Jesus as my Master, first-hand, everything I once thought I had going for me is dung.

“I've dumped it all in the trash so that I could embrace Christ and be embraced by Him. I didn't want some petty, inferior brand of righteousness that comes from keeping a list of rules when I could get the robust kind that comes from trusting Christ -- *God's* righteousness.”

Jesus said, "You *think* you know Me. You've heard Me speak, seen My miracles, read the Scriptures. But My true origin is in the One who sent Me, and you don't know Him at all. I come from Him; that's how I know Him. He sent me here.”

He goes on, "I'm with you only a short time. Then I go on to the One who sent Me. You'll look for Me, but you won't be able to find Me. Where I am, you can't come.”

The Pharisees send their goons to arrest Jesus, but they return empty-handed. His Father was not about to let *anything* happen that wasn't on His schedule. Jesus relied on that. We can too, when

we're walking with Him. That's why Jesus could be so brave, confident, real. When we follow Christ, we know that *nothing* happens to us that God doesn't allow.

## **DISCUSS:**

### **Is Jesus Just Another Big Shot?**

With the temple's SWAT team waiting to pounce on Him, Jesus, the reluctant celebrity, arrives in Jerusalem halfway through the Feast of Tabernacles, one of three feasts each year which were command performances for Jewish men. The city was teeming with people straining for a peek at this man who purported to be their long-sought Messiah.

The crowds were torn; they longed for the coming of their Messiah; they wanted to be free of their Roman yoke; they were riveted by Jesus' incredible feats and the power of His teaching. Yet, they're no dummies; they know their rabbis are out to kill Him.

Jesus' words were not His own, He says. "I didn't make this up. What I teach comes from the One who sent me. Anyone who wants to do His will can test this teaching and know whether it's from God or whether I'm making it up."

It boils down to this: the Resurrection is either the Hinge of History or a Horrible Hoax. Before Jesus came to earth, the we could only guess what God is like. Now we know. Jesus invites you and me to place our total confidence in Him. Our thirst is unquenchable until we drink the Living Water Christ described. Without water we can't live. Christ promised if we trust in Him, we'll be satisfied forever!

Faith is not Old Spice -- you don't rub it on. You *receive* it, like the gift from God that it is. If you've never done that, you can, right now, say to God, "Father, thank You forgiving my sins, paid for by Your Son Jesus on the cross. God, I turn from my sinful past and commit to follow You. Thank You for accepting me as Your son. Because of Jesus. Amen."

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