

## MAKE RIGHT JUDGMENTS

John 7:1-24

Key Verse: 7:24

“Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment.”

Today we begin the study of John chapter 7. In verses 1-24, Jesus teaches us how to make right judgments. If we make a right judgment about something we will be fruitful and happy. Wrong judgments lead to disaster. Most of all, we must make a right judgment about Jesus, for this has eternal consequences. Let's learn how to make right judgments.

First, Jesus quietly served Galilean people (1-5).

Look at verse 1. “After this, Jesus went around in Galilee, purposely staying away from Judea because the Jews there were waiting to take his life.” Jesus had become a popular and controversial figure in Israel. Political and religious leaders were in turmoil. According to verse 1, the Jews of Judea were waiting to take Jesus' life. In chapter 5, they had persecuted Jesus for healing an invalid man on the Sabbath (5:16 ff.). Jesus boldly testified to them that he is the Son of God who has authority to give eternal life and authority to judge. Then Jesus exposed their evilness. They did not love God or his word. They were self-glory seeking and unbelieving. They should have repented. Instead, they wanted to kill Jesus. Jesus realized that he would die at their hands. It was God's will. However, it was not God's time. So Jesus purposely stayed away from Judea. Jesus went around in Galilee where he quietly carried on the work of the Messiah. Jesus cared for the nameless among the sick and needy one by one. Jesus' ministry to the ordinary Galileans while under the threat of death moves our hearts to tears.

Jesus' brothers, however, had a different agenda. Look at verses 2-4. “But when the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles was near, Jesus' brothers said to him, ‘You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that your disciples may see the miracles you do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world.’” Jesus' brothers could not understand why Jesus remained in the Galilean region. It just did not make sense to them. They urged Jesus to show off his miracles in Judea and become a public figure. They thought that then he could do something great. In fact, they were driven by human ambition and they were spiritually blind.

Jesus knew that showing off in a big display in Jerusalem was not the way to carry out God's work. Rather, surrendering to God's will as the Lamb of God was God's way. Man's relationship with God can never be restored on the basis of miracles alone. Man's relationship with God is restored through the cross of Jesus; there is no other way. God is not pleased simply because crowds of people follow Jesus to see his miracles. God is pleased when one sinner realizes his love, repents of his sins before the cross, and becomes a child of God. In fact, the saints in heaven sing praises to Jesus because he is the Lamb of God, not because he performed many miracles (Rev 5:12).

Look at verse 5. “For even his own brothers did not believe in him.” Jesus' brothers knew that he could work miracles. But this is not saving faith. Saving faith is to personally accept Jesus' sacrifice of his body and blood to forgive our sins. Without saving faith, Jesus' brothers remained bound by human ambition. They could not make a right judgment. Instead, they pushed Jesus to be a political opportunist.

Like Jesus' quiet Galilean ministry, UBF USA began with one-to-one Bible study. Sacrificial missionaries and shepherds taught God's word to others, person by person, until they met Jesus. This required a great investment of time and effort. Sometimes it looked too small to make a difference. Yet God has blessed this ministry to raise spiritual leaders across America. God is answering our prayers to make North America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. But sometimes we become like Jesus' brothers. We want to see a big show and show off to others. We must overcome human ambition and continue to carry out one-to-one Bible study. We must pray to raise 1,000 one-to-one Bible studies and 10,000 house churches for campus mission.

Second, Jesus shepherds his unbelieving brothers (6-9).

Verses 6-9 contain Jesus' response to his brothers. Jesus told them, "The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil. You go to the Feast. I am not yet going up to this Feast, because for me the right time has not yet come." As we consider Jesus' response, we see that Jesus was a good shepherd for his brothers. They were pushy and unbelieving. Yet Jesus helped them to see God in the hope that they would discover who he really was.

Jesus first explained that there is God's time. Jesus repeated, "the right time for me has not yet come." Jesus knew he must go to Jerusalem. But Jesus followed God's time schedule. Jesus did not go ahead of God. Jesus' obedience to God is amazing. Jesus followed God's time schedule precisely. When we want to follow Jesus' footsteps, we too must learn to live according to God's time schedule. Many times it means waiting on God. This is not easy for young people. Moreover, we live in a society that demands instant gratification of every human desire. But we must not try to put God into our time schedule. We must accept God's time schedule. For example, David was anointed King of Israel when he was just a teenager. But at least ten years passed before he took the throne. During that time his life was constantly in danger and he lived like a fugitive. He found that his life was in God's hands. After God's training was over, he became king step by step. He did not take advantage of political opportunities, but prayerfully followed God's leading. He had learned how to follow God's time schedule.

How did Jesus know God's time schedule? It was through his prayer (Mk 1:38). We cannot know God's time schedule by looking only at the present situation. To know God's time schedule, we must discover it through earnest prayer. At the beginning of this new year, Mother Barry encouraged Chicago UBF fellowship leaders to pray more, especially early in the morning. Through prayer we can overcome our human desires and discover God's time schedule. Jesus taught his brothers about God's time to help them open their spiritual eyes.

Jesus also explained his relationship with the world. Jesus said that the world hated him. This must have been a big surprise to his brothers. They assumed that if Jesus put on a good show, he would gain the world's favor. They were blind to the spiritual conflict in the world between God and the devil. The devil hates God. The devil hates Jesus. The devil hates the children of God unconditionally. Jesus calls the devil the prince of this world. As long as the devil is in the world he will exert all his power and craft against the work of God. Jesus did not come to negotiate with the devil. Jesus came to destroy the devil. God's children must see the world in light of this great spiritual conflict. We should not be naive about the world. We must stand on God's side in order to make a right judgment about how to live in this world.

In this part we have seen Jesus help his brothers spiritually as a shepherd. It is difficult for children of God to bear with unbelieving family members. But we learn from Jesus. We must be clear about our obedience to God. Also, we must have a shepherd heart for our brothers. Jesus did not look down on his brothers for their spiritual ignorance. Jesus loved them, understood them and shepherded them. Jesus was willing to explain spiritual things to them. God blessed his labor. Later, Jesus' brother James became a great Christian and a spiritual leader.

Third, Jesus teaches us how to make right judgments (10-24).

Though Jesus did not go to the Feast with his brothers, he did go to the Feast secretly. The atmosphere was charged with emotion. All people were talking about Jesus. The Jews wanted to arrest him and kill him. People in the crowd were of differing opinions. Some said, "He is a good man." They believed his healing ministry was a genuine labor of love. However, they did not accept him as Messiah, only as a good man. Others claimed that he was deceiving the people. However, no one said anything publicly about Jesus. They were afraid of the Jews.

We can imagine Jesus' reaction. He attended the Feast in secret, maybe disguised in sunglasses. As he listened to the lifeless droning of the religious leaders and saw the people's thirst for God's living word, he could not keep quiet. Halfway through the Feast, Jesus was compelled to go up to the temple courts and teach. John does not mention the contents of his teaching. But his message was so amazing that even his enemies, the Jews, were flabbergasted. They asked, "How did this man get such learning without having studied?" They were awestruck by the profound content of Jesus' teaching and the spirit with which he spoke. They tried to look down on him because he did not have a seminary degree. Yet they could not but admire him from their hearts. None of the religious leaders had ever delivered a message like Jesus. In spite of themselves, they praised Jesus. Jesus' courageous faith to teach the word of God and his inspiring message had gained the attention of the religious leaders; they were listening to him. Jesus

used this opportunity to give them the word of truth. Usually those who have a secret for success sell it for a lot of money. But Jesus gave away three secrets to the religious leaders freely. It was to help them learn how to make a right judgment about him. What are Jesus' criteria to make a right judgment?

In the first place, Jesus taught the word of God. Look at verse 16. "Jesus answered, 'My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me.'" Jesus meant that he taught God's word. God's word gives life. Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." The word of God convicts us of sin and leads us to repentance. The word of God reveals God's love and saving grace and leads us to salvation. The word of God is universal truth for all men. Jesus' teaching was powerful because it was nothing but the word of God.

The problem of the religious leaders was that their teaching was their own. It was not God's revelation. God's word is the basis of truth. To make right judgments we must have God's word in our hearts. Therefore, we must empty our human reason and desires until we can hear God's word and accept it. By God's grace we have all chosen key verses for 2005. But choosing a key verse is just the beginning. Now we must meditate on these words day and night until the deep meaning comes into our hearts. The word of God is God's wisdom from above that leads us to salvation and eternal life. 2 Timothy 3:15 says, "...and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."

In the second place, Jesus taught the necessity of a decision of faith. Look at verse 17. "If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own." Jesus promises that those who choose to do God's will receive enlightenment from above. We cannot know the true meaning of God's words simply by hearing a message. The word of God is not meant to be accumulated in our heads only; it is meant to be obeyed and practiced. Only those who have a decision to obey God's will can see God in Jesus and have eternal life. There are many people who say that they would do God's will if only they knew what it was. But this is rebellion in disguise. They are prisoners of fear and selfishness. God knows their hearts. God is not deceived by their claims to be open to his leading. God will not give them revelation until they first make a decision to obey God's will, whatever it may be. Here we remember Mary. She was ready to obey God's word absolutely. Then God gave her the most marvelous revelation of his good purpose for her. God also revealed to her his world salvation plan for all mankind (Lk 1:31-33). Jesus says that we must decide to obey God first; then we can receive God's revelation. God told Father Abraham, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you" (Ge 12:1). Abraham obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. Abraham entered the world of faith. Gradually God showed him his great world salvation purpose (Ge 15:12-16; 22:15-18).

Making a decision of faith is a very practical matter. For example, those who want to marry with God's blessing should first decide to obey God's leading, no matter what it may be. After surrendering to God, they can find God's revelation and blessing. Again, those who want to live a blessed missionary life must first decide to go wherever God wants them to go. Then they can find God's leading and providence. Those who make right judgments about marriage and mission are the most blessed people in the world.

In the third place, Jesus taught living for the glory of God alone. Look at verse 18. "He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him." Jesus contrasts those who want to gain honor for themselves with those who work for the glory of God. Jesus' single desire was to glorify God, that is, to reveal God through his message. Those who want to be used greatly by God must be completely sanctified from the sin of self-glory seeking until they have a pure desire to glorify God alone. From the contrast in verse 18, we learn further that living for the glory of God alone is not only a matter of speech, it is a matter of work. Their inner motive and lifestyle, and especially what they do when no one else is watching, are very important. Our speech can glorify God when our lifestyle matches.

The religious leaders knew the law of Moses (19). Perhaps some of them had just delivered messages from the Ten Commandments at the Feast of Tabernacles. Though they spoke well, in their hearts was hatred and murderous intention toward Jesus. They had broken the law of God completely. Jesus spoke directly to their consciences. It was out of his broken shepherd heart to help them repent. In verses 21-23, Jesus exposed the hypocrisy of their Jewish

legalism. They circumcised children on the eighth day according to the law of Moses, even though it was a Sabbath day. At the same time, they criticized Jesus for healing a whole man on the Sabbath. They were inconsistent and irrational. Those who are blinded by legalism cannot make a right judgment.

Look at verse 24. “Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment.” The religious leaders should have had spiritual insight to accept Jesus as the Messiah. They should have led their people to eternal life. But when their Bible study was superficial, their spiritual eyes were blinded. Still, Jesus had hope for them. Jesus rebuked them to bring them to repentance and right judgment.

Today, Jesus teaches us to make a right judgment. We can do so when we have the word of God in our hearts and a decision to obey God unconditionally for his glory. Let’s make a right judgment before God.