

Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study [www.intothyword.org](http://www.intothyword.org)

**General Idea:** Jesus was avoiding the pious, fraudulent, Jewish leaders who were seeking to kill him, so He could focus on training His Disciples. Therefore, He left Judea and went back to Galilee and its neighboring villages. It was time for the great Jewish campout, the Feast of the Tabernacles, where more opportunities presented themselves. Jesus' brothers urged him to go and show Himself and do His miracles. They did not believe that their brother Jesus was the Messiah because they felt that He was hiding; they reasoned that if He was for real, He would be more overt, so to test Him they pushed Him to "go" public, this feast being the perfect venue. Jesus challenged them back, saying *you do not know what you are saying; they hate me because I tell the Truth, so they do not want to hear me and they accuse me of evil. Why do not you go if you think it is so important! When it is time that I go, I will go!* For the time, Jesus stayed in Galilee. So, His brothers went to the festival; Jesus followed secretly, staying out of the public, as the Jewish leaders were on the hunt for Him there. Jesus was the hot topic of discussion, some loving Him and others saying He was one of the many frauds throughout the area during that time. Everyone was too afraid of the Jewish leaders, who ruled over both civil and religious affairs, to say favorable things out loud. Then Jesus boldly displayed Himself at the Temple as He began to teach. This sent a *shock and awe* to all, even the leaders who did not expect Him, but were looking for Him anyway. They ridiculed Him but could not combat what He was saying. They wondered how He got all His information when He did not have their "proper education." Then Jesus told them, *I do not teach you my ideas and doctrine; rather plainly state what God, who sent me, tells me to say. If you are doing the will of God, then you should know I am for real. If not, you just want praise for yourself and do not care about Truth; therefore, all of you are disobeying God and His precepts. Why are you trying to kill me?* This caused the crowd to react negatively, saying he was demon possessed, as they sought to please their leaders. Jesus defended His actions and chastised their lack of faith, false teachings, and character.

### Contexts and Background:

This passage gives us a glimpse into Jesus' family and the struggle of conviction over Truth with which his family, the Jewish leaders, and the people at large had to deal. How would they receive God's great news? Would it be with contempt, a fear of conviction, or an acceptance by faith? One of Jesus' brothers, James, would become the first Church leader and write the Epistle bearing his name. Jesus was taking advantage of the cultural and political laws of the time. If someone was in trouble with the local magistrate for a civil disorder, he could flee to a neighboring province for safety. Judea and Galilee were in separate jurisdictions. Yet, this did not stop the leader's henchmen from hunting Him.

### Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Feast of Tabernacles.* There were three major feast days held each year to honor God and His provisions: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (also called Booths). Feast of the Tabernacles was a celebration of how God led the Hebrew children through the desert for forty years, providing for them as He continues to do today. The feast was held in the seventh month of *Tishri* (Sept/Oct), which celebrated the end of the agricultural year that began five days after the Day of Atonement, and it lasted for seven days. During this festival, the Jews built and lived in booths or tents near the Temple/Tent Meeting in Jerusalem; in Jesus' time, they put them on their roofs. Only the men would do this while the women and children stayed in the house and worked the festivities (the women worked while the men took it easy; of course, the men worked hard in the fields for months prior to this). There were many added rituals. One example in Jesus' day was a water drawing ritual, showing God's provision. This feast was a reminder to them of their ancestors, who lived in booths as they wandered in the desert. The word, *Hebrews*, means *wanderer*. The sacrifices of this feast were usually more numerous than at any other festive day, since they had more with which to celebrate. This was a joyous celebration and it corresponds to our New Year's Day. It was celebrated from morning to evening while various types of horns and trumpets were blown. Jesus could not have picked a better day or place to challenge the pious frauds of the day (Lev. 23:34-43; Num. 20: 2-13; 29:12-38; Duet. 16:13-15; Zech. 14:16-19).

- *Jesus' brothers.* Jesus had a real, earthly family with a mom, a step father, brothers and sisters; a central aspect of Jewish life, respect for family and loyalty was essential. Most Christians, especially Catholics, forget that Jesus had an earthly family too (Ex. 20:12; Duet. 5:16; Matt. 13:55; 12:46; 15:4; 19:19; Luke 8:19; Eph. 6:2).
- *You ought to leave.* In first century political theory—and even today, public speaking and rhetoric as well as promotion required a degree of boldness and strategy. Jesus' brothers were correct in this challenge and Jesus does what they suggested. But, Jesus is not to be challenged or disrespected as His brothers were also doing. And of course, Jesus had something greater in mind and His perfect sovereign timing would not be changed.
- *Public figure.* Just as today, Greek, Roman, and Jewish leaders and orators would use public events to promote their causes. The difference here is that Jesus was promoting God and they were promoting themselves for pride's sake.
- *Acts in secret.* This was a retort; public speaking was considered a high virtue in Greek and Roman cultures as it was to Jews. Acting in secret was considered deceitful, yet was practiced by people who thought they were cunning. Jesus was not acting in deceit—rather with wisdom.
- *Did not believe.* This example was used to challenge and strengthen John's audience concerning the struggles they were facing and for the hard times ahead. We are to accept God's will and timing and not rush into something; yet, at the same time, we are not to be apathetic and do nothing. To be effective, faith needs to seek wisdom.
- *Right time.* Jesus was living and working in God's timing, doing God's will. He was also trying to get His brothers to seek faith and to understand His true mission and God's timing. Also, Jesus was concentrating on training His Disciples and did not want to rush into martyrdom (Matt. 26:18; John 2:4; 8:30; 12:23; 13:1; 17:1).
- *Hate.* The world does not understand God or His will and timing. The prime opposition is because people want control when God is the One who is unequivocally in control. Jesus' Disciples and most of the crowd were in the world's camp of fear of conviction and unbelief (Psalm 31:14-15; John 8:20; 13:1; Acts 1:14).
- *Go to the Feast.* The issue was not about the going; Jesus did not want to travel in the group with His brothers that could entail a mass pilgrimage for the entire town or intermingle with the people who were trying to kill Him. Pious Jewish men traveled to the temple in Jerusalem for the feast. They added an extra day of celebration to honor those who had to travel so far to it.
- *I am not yet going up to this Feast.* This is not a contradiction; rather a retort to His brothers. *I will not go in the way you want me to.* They wanted Him in the main family pilgrimage to be a showboat.
- *Not publicly.* Jesus was being wise not to confront unnecessarily or recklessly; He was smart and would take the fight at the right time and place. This would upset the balance and give Jesus the upper hand (John 2:4; 5:18).
- *Widespread whispering...* perhaps because it was dangerous and/or because they wanted to connive, people were divided about Jesus then just as they are today. Many liked Him for the show and miracles. Others wanted to please their leaders to gain more benefits in their synagogue and standing in the community, so they sought to rally others against Jesus.
- *Deceives the people/who leads astray.* This means apostasy, which means to defile the teaching of the Law (Old Testament) and purposely lead people away from God. This was a serious charge that would have caused Jesus to be removed from His synagogue, not be allowed in the Temple, and to become a social outcast, perhaps even stoned. But of course, Jesus was not doing this; He was merely challenging the leaders who were doing it (Deut 13; 18:9-12).

- *Fear of the Jews.* Refers to the local Jewish leadership like the Pharisees and their representatives, not to the culture or people as a whole. The issue was that Jesus was violating the rules of the leaders, not the Law of Moses or God's precepts. The leaders used rules to promote their positions and issues and, in so doing, oppressed the people and hid the real truth. Jesus challenged the leaders and people to seek truth, not the grandstanding of personal or political ideologies and subjugating people by them (Matt. 23).
- *Temple courts.* Herod's Temple was grander than the previous ones built by Solomon, ones rebuilt by Ezra and Nehemiah, or many more since. This was one of the grandest buildings of the ancient world and the prime symbol for Judaism. This refers to the Gentile outer court in the building's outer enclosure where people who were not Jewish could gather; many teachers would use this platform. By teaching in the middle of the feast, Jesus would have had the maximum attendance.
- *Without having studied.* Referring to not having received a higher education or the education from the "right" school or mentored by the "right" person. Most male Jews were able to read and write in Hebrew. Those in a business, like a carpenter, a very noble and tough to get in trade, or a fisherman, a very profitable career, would also be able to read and write in Greek for commerce. They had the equivalent of a high school, some even a college education today, and went to the local synagogue schools. There were also private schools for the rich and this may be in view here too. Jesus did not go to the "right" school in their opinion, nor could He cite references like theirs, yet He had knowledge and wisdom beyond them so they were astonished and perplexed. Yet, instead of listening to Him, they hated Him (John 3:2; Matt. 7:28; Luke 2:47).
- *Chooses to do God's will.* Meaning to earnestly and sincerely desire to please God and seek Truth as opposed to being self-seeking. This is an attitude of life that should be the goal of a mature person of faith. The battle is between belief and unbelief, centered on how one views God and self. If God is first, then belief comes easy; if one's self is first, then belief is pushed aside or rationalized away. Who is first in your life (Psalm 25:14; Matt. 6:33; John 2:4; 8:44; 14:6; 18:37; 2 Cor. 11:10; Rev. 3:7-14)?
- *Comes from God.* The source of genuine wisdom and truth versus some whimsical theory. This also means Jesus did not cite other's teaching as most Rabbis did, but rather spoke for Himself. We learn by trusting, obeying, and then applying and doing. We can't just learn; we need to follow through. Our selfishness, superficiality, prejudice, and pride will get in the way!
- *Demon-possessed.* Referring that Jesus was insane. Here, the crowd is saying He was paranoid. They missed His point (Matt. 11:18; 12:24-32; Mark 3:22-30; John 8:48-52; 8:48-52; 10:20-21).
- *Circumcise a child on the Sabbath.* Jesus is pointing to their hypocrisy, inconsistency and lack of faith, and following trends and pride rather than the Law of Moses. They operated on a child that did not need it right away and forsook a person in dire illness (Gen. 17:9-14; Ex. 12:44, 48; Lev. 12:3; Rom. 2:17).
- *Judging by mere appearances.* Greeks and Romans were famous for judging people by how they dressed and talked, and the Jews were picking up this bad habit. This does not mean Jesus was a slob or a bad speaker; on the contrary. We are not to bow to pretences but to truth. In context, this is a call to faith and reason, to think soundly and honor real, true truth and not personal ideologies or vain arguments.

### **Devotional Thoughts and Applications:**

Whispering and seeking one's own view first is also the formula for power plays in the church. People want their way, their vision, and their direction and issues placed first; these all converge into conflict as each one's will is put to the test against another's. Ironically, each may think he/she is doing the right thing, but in fact, the more likely result is dysfunction and missing the point of worship and church. In so doing, self-will placed first will prevent one from truly seeking how to honor Christ, which is what Church is supposed to be about.

Unbelief is usually a symptom of a deeper issue like a refusal to give up one's will and mindset, or a person who likes to be in control and thus will not acknowledge the One who really is in control. People do not want conviction or to be moved from their complacency. Jesus' mission for His children is for us to move our rears off the pew and into the engagement of life, faith, and reason. He calls the non-Christian to know and trust Him. He then calls the Christian to grow deeper in Him with conviction and confidence so that our daily schedules and mindsets display Him.

**The Essential Inductive Questions** (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

**Additional Questions:**

1. If you had siblings growing up, how did you interact with them? How would you have felt if Jesus had been your big brother?
2. What is your attitude in life? How did or how can Christ change it? How did you first receive God's great news? Did you struggle with contempt, a fear of conviction, or a rejection of faith before that? Or?
3. Why do you think Jesus was keeping away from the Jewish leaders? Why would the Incarnate, Most Powerful God follow secretly, avoiding the public eye?
4. How does understanding the precepts of God's Word reap a reward of faith? How should it be? Would this help people take a more interested look at Scripture?
5. If your faith is for real, is it easier to do the will of God? How so? Why does faith need wisdom to be effective?
6. Have you ever defended Jesus' actions? When would Jesus have chastised you for a lack of faith or character?
7. Have you ever struggled over conviction or truth? What happened?
8. How do you see pastors today promoting God? What happens when church leaders spend their energies on prompting themselves for pride sake?
9. How can your church better convince and model to its people the seeking of truth as opposed to self-seeking?
10. Why should seeking God and not self be the goal and attitude of life for a mature person of faith? How can you make it your goal?
11. What do you need to do to better understand God's will and timing and not rush into something? How can you balance God's timing and yet not be apathetic, doing nothing?
12. What happens when Christian leaders do not care about truth? What should a church do if her leaders or pastor wanted praise for themselves? How does this dishonor our Lord? What can you and your church do about this?