

The Right Time

HN/SS 20/02/05 am

Reading: Ecclesiastes 3, John 7: 1-31

Study Text: John 7:1-7

Psalms: 31:1-5, 31:7-10, 31:15-18, 31:21-24

Watch out for him on the TV! The cameras were there and they said he would be on the evening news. The word went out and all the relatives and friends flocked to watch, excited that they will see him on the screen. Wow! Will he become famous? Will people start coming up to him in the street wanting his autograph. How fantastic that would be!

Some people think that if Jesus were on the earth today he would be headline news. They think he would be on every news bulletin – a man of miracles, a great teacher. He would have his own show beamed all around the world! What a celebrity he would be!

Is this really what we might expect from Jesus of Nazareth? Some people think so. His brothers did. They told him – *if you do these things*, if you can do miracles, then *show yourself to the world*. Go to where the crowds are. Do your thing before them and you will have a great following. You will be the most popular man around.

But his brothers did not believe in him. They did not believe that he was the Son of God sent down from heaven. Like the crowd at Capernaum they saw him as a miracle worker. They thought he would want to become famous and therefore advised him to go to Jerusalem where Jews from all over the world were gathering for the Feast of Tabernacles.

Jesus said to them *you go up to this feast – I am not yet going up*. Why? Why did Jesus not go up and show himself to the world?

Feast of Tabernacles

After these things. Many had left Jesus finding his words too hard to accept. He miraculously fed over 5000 but refused to perform at their demand. His claim to being sent from heaven by the Father and his call for them to believe in him was all too much. They walked with him no more.

Jesus stayed on in Galilee because in Judea *the Jews sought to kill him*. He healed a man on the Sabbath there remember. It seems that for six months or more (probably 18 months) he traveled around Galilee. The Synoptics record much of his ministry at this time. He spent some time in his family home it would seem for that is where this next account in John's gospel begins, before quickly transferring to Jerusalem.

The Feast of Tabernacles was at hand. Jews flocked to Jerusalem (males were obliged to go) for this October harvest festival. The 7-8 day festival included the Day of Atonement

sacrifice. It was time for the Jews to remember their past – the wilderness days particularly. They built small booths to live in for the week. They celebrated how the Lord led them in the pillar cloud by day and of fire by night, and how he gave them water from the rock. Josephus, a Jewish historian, wrote that this was ‘the holiest and greatest feast of the Jews’.

For any aspiring prophet or preacher, Jerusalem was the place to be and now was the time to be there. But Jesus did not go up – He was not on a mission to make Himself popular. He was on a divine mission and He was following a divine timetable.

Divine mission

At the very beginning of his ministry the devil took Jesus to Jerusalem, set him on the pinnacle of the temple and told him to throw himself down. God would save him and he would instantly become famous. He could rule over the nation – in fact all the kingdoms of the world. But this was not the mission he was sent on by his Father.

The crowd that was fed at Bethsaida wanted to make him king, ruler over their nation, a ruler who would rid them of the Romans. But Jesus said my kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). Jesus ushered in the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is not built upon popularity but upon truth. This kingdom is not built upon the backs of men but upon the hearts of men. Jesus was sent to speak to peoples hearts, to call them to repent and believe in him. He did not promise tax cuts, riches or power but eternal life.

The message Jesus proclaimed was not one that sinners wanted to hear. His presence, his power and his propositions were a threat to those walking in the way of the world, walking in the way of sin.

The world...hates me because I testify of it that its works are evil (7:7). Jesus exposed sin, the sin of unbelief. Proud and self righteous people, when challenged by the truth that they are sinners, object strongly and become abusive. When told to repent and humble themselves before God, when called to believe in Jesus Christ, their hearts burn with anger.

Jesus had been in Jerusalem before. Remember how he cleansed the temple. He claimed authority from his Father in heaven. The Jews were threatened by Jesus. Their positions, their power, their corruption was under threat. They hated Jesus and sought to kill him. Later Jesus would tell his disciples, *because you are not of this world...the world hates you (15:19).*

Jesus came not just to feed the multitudes and heal the sick. If that had been the extent of his mission the world would have loved him – although for some it depended on which day he did this. But he told those he healed to go and sin no more. He said ‘your sins are

forgiven'. He came proclaiming the kingdom of God. He proclaimed *I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me.*

Like their master, his disciples were sent out on a divine mission. The church today has been given a divine mission to fulfill. Sure there is a mission to heal the sick as Jesus did but that is not the end of our mission. Many think the primary mission of the church is welfare. The world loves a church like that. It will not be condemned by the press. But a church that presents the exclusive claims of Jesus Christ as found in the gospel will be roundly condemned by the world.

True followers of Jesus Christ will be hated by the world because the world hated Jesus. It hated Him because He testified that its deeds are evil.

Divine timetable

When Jesus was just 12 years old He went up to Jerusalem with His parents to the feast of Passover. They went in a company of relatives and friends (Luke 2:44). Maybe the family was going up once again in a group with relatives and friends.

His brothers were not exactly inviting Jesus – more like taunting Him to go and 'do His thing' in Jerusalem. Jesus had a number of brothers (Matthew 13:55) who at this stage did not believe in Him. Later, after His death and resurrection, they were among His followers (Acts 1:14).

Jesus said to them my time has not yet come (7:6) – and again in vs.8 he said I am not yet going up to this feast for my time has not yet fully come. Jesus was not going up when his brothers suggested, nor was He going up when He felt like it Himself. He was on a divine mission and this mission included a divine timetable. He went where His Father directed Him, and when His Father directed Him.

At the wedding in Cana his mother told him 'they have no wine' (2:1f). Jesus told her *my hour has not yet come.* Again in this chapter (7:30) we read *his hour had not yet come.* The time for Him to be manifested, the specific fulfillment of His mission was at the Cross, the hour of His death.

Jesus words in our text are the same as those He spoke at Cana except He said time and not hour. *My time has not yet come or fully come.* In Jerusalem the Jews were seeking to arrest Him and kill Him. But His time to die was not yet. In the context of course His words are understood as His time for going up to the feast in Jerusalem but the broader reference of His words cannot be avoided.

Jesus knew where He had come from and where He was going. He knew His Father's will and was doing just that. What about you? Are you seeking to do your Father's will? Are you where God wants you to be, doing what He wants you to do and when He wants you to do it. God has a plan for your life and will reveal that to you (Romans 12:2). There

is a right time, a divine timetable for you to follow if you will seek the Lord and his will for you.

For you any time is right Jesus told his unbelieving brothers. What an indictment this was. It was almost like saying they were outside the scope of divine sovereignty – ‘not that God suspended his providential reign in their case but that what they did was utterly without significance as far as God was concerned’. They belonged to the world – *the world cannot hate you*. They could come and go as they like and the world will take no notice.

But the world will notice when you say now is the time for me to pray, now is the time for me to go to the house of God. The Sabbath is time God has given for us to rest and to worship the Lord. You cannot stop the clock dear friend but did you know that God is the giver of time. God is no man’s debtor and that includes time. Yes there is a right time for everything – God’s time.

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