

# Jesus Ridiculed by His Half-Brothers

## John 7:1-10

We begin our study with Jesus' return to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles after staying away for about 18 months. More open opposition and hostility awaited Christ from both the Religious and Jewish leadership, marking a turning point that will prove to be the beginning of the end, climaxing in about six months at the cross.

### I. Background

“After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him. <sup>2</sup> Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand.” John 7:1-2 These are bridge verses that move us through approximately eighteen months of time. John does not cover much of the time of Jesus' popularity during the Galilean ministry or the time of private, focused teaching of the disciples. He simply states it with verse 1 and sets up Christ's return to Judea with verse 2.

**GEEKY Fact:** John will only give 7 miracles and deal very little with Jesus' time in Galilee within his Gospel. But will clearly articulate his purpose for those events he chose in John 20:30-31.

“he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him” – Jesus had left Jerusalem, being targeted by the Religious leaders. John mentioned, “after these things,” let's review what “things” caused such a hostile reaction among the Jews.

1. John 5:5-16 – **Jesus broke the sabbath** by healing the lame man
2. John 5:17- 47 – Jesus plainly **taught that God was His Father** – John 10:24-30; 37-39

John 6:1-4 – Jesus moved His ministry into Galilee, where great crowds gathered (Passover of v. 4 was about six months after He left Jerusalem). Please realize, they still sought Jesus. They had hounded Him while in Galilee and tried to discredit Him among the people. The Sanhedrin had no authority outside of Jerusalem to kill Him, yet they continued to hinder Christ's ministry.

“Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand” – Jewish males were required to attend three feasts a year:

**Passover** – commemorates the Exodus, the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt

**Pentecost** – commemorates the giving of the books of the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai

**Tabernacles** – commemorated God's leading and provision during the wilderness wanderings

I read several times that the **Feast of Tabernacles/Booth** was the most popular feast at the time of Christ.

- Instructions for the feast are found in Leviticus 23, Deuteronomy 16, Exodus 23, 34
- About 2 million people would attend each year
- Occurred late September/early October and lasted 8 days
- It had been 5 months since the last feast. Pilgrims often arrived early to set up and perform the needed sacrifices that had occurred since the previous trip to the temple.
- Very festive and joyous atmosphere
- People would build and stay in small huts all around the Jerusalem area in remembrance of the tents Israel lived in during 40+ years in the wilderness. Little campground cities sprang up all around the greater Jerusalem area.
- Began with the Day of Atonement - sacrificing 70 bullocks – Making a sacrifice for the world's nations

Reminding them of their place in the world as a testimony for God

- Temple Mount Activities:
  - Daily Law readings
  - Great lanterns were lit at night – God’s leading by fire
  - Daily water was carried and poured like a river – God’s provision of water from a rock
- Days of thankfulness for the coming harvest of olives and grapes
- 8<sup>th</sup> day was the “Great Day” – the last day with prophetic significance of the coming Messiah (v. 37-38)

## II. Brothers and Their Agenda

“His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see (Gk - gaze on – very strong word) the works (Lit. - miracles, signs, wonders) that thou doest. <sup>4</sup> For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, show thyself to the world. <sup>5</sup> For neither did his brethren believed in him.” John 7:3-5

“His brethren” – In Matthew 13:55, we are given the names of four half-brothers of Jesus; James, Joses, Simon, and Judas. These would be the sons of Mary and Joseph. Remember, Jesus’ father was the Holy Spirit, and would be called “the Son of God.” (Luke 1:35) Let’s just think for a minute, how old do you think these four fellows were? Please don’t picture middle-aged men! These were likely young men, aged 25-30. Jesus would have been around 33, and being the oldest, He would have grown up with them, played with them as children, watched over them, and after Joseph’s death, helped to provide for them. By this time, some may have been married, but not necessarily. It seemed they had moved from Nazareth to Capernaum. As far as they knew, Jesus was their older brother in every sense of the word. As verse 5 tells us, they did not believe in Jesus; they did not see Him as the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

“Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest” – Jesus’ half-brothers did have some understanding of His ministry and message. Like others, they knew of Jesus’ **great miracles**, for His miracles were never denied. We can be sure they had observed them. They also seemed to understand His **claim as the Messiah**. Don’t forget the message that Jesus gave in the synagogue of his hometown at the beginning of his ministry, as recorded in Luke 4. He openly read from Isaiah 49 and 61, two Messianic passages that told of the Messiah’s work, and after closing the scroll, said, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” Everyone in the room knew He was declaring His Messiahship, and for that, they sought to throw Him off the city cliff!

I want to point out an interesting phrase, “that thy disciples also may see the works” – the disciples mentioned by Jesus’ brothers are the crowds of Judea who were considering the person of Jesus. Those who are curious and those who desire to hear more. They hadn’t come to a full conclusion on Christ, but they were listening followers. Jesus’ brothers are telling Him to go back and show these disciples His miracles and signs again. Let them see or “gaze,” which is a very strong Greek word, that has the idea of the listeners seeing and considering.

By these statements, one can see that Jesus’ half-brothers understood His claim as the Messiah, but much like the twelve, they only viewed it as an earthly kingdom. But unlike the disciples, they didn’t believe Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God!

So with this statement, His brothers were taunting Jesus to go to Jerusalem and prove His claims...

“For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly...show thyself to the world” – Shepard translated it this way, “Remove hence (urgent command), and be gone to Judea that thy disciples may gaze at the works which thou art doing. For nobody who aims at public recognition ever keeps his actions secret. Since you can do these deeds, display yourself to the world.” p. 340 **They wanted Jesus to reveal Himself in a very public way if He was the Messiah.** They told Him to go to Jerusalem at this busy time and show Himself to all of Judaism. To Jesus’ brothers, this made perfect sense. Jesus could extend His popularity and influence. This might have made a lot of sense to His disciples, too. When Jesus fed the 5000, what was the immediate reaction? They wanted to make Him king! (John 6:15) At the Feast of Tabernacles, there would be about 2 million people in Jerusalem! “Go show yourself off,” they taunted! There was no sincerity here, only ridicule and mockery. “If you’re the Christ, stop hiding! Stop being a secret Messiah!” They desired to force Him to take a decisive step and come out of His hiding. “If you want a following, use the opportunity and do something spectacular!” I can’t help but think that they might have had a selfish motive also. If the people were to really make their brother king. If He had the power to get Himself on the throne, what would become of them? Maybe territorial governors? Judges? Some kind of nobility? Right-hand advisors? At least the group of them would become princes? Can’t hurt to be the brother of the king!

Yes, all of this was man’s wisdom, ambition, and logic and just as Jesus said to Peter, He could have said to these brothers, “Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto the: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.” Matthew 16:23

“For neither did his brethren believe in him.” – Matthew Henry said, “It was an honor to be of the kindred of Christ, but no saving honor.” p. 1693 Jesus had not sought greatness or honor, but this was what His younger half-brothers sought. The unbelief of Nazareth had permeated Jesus’ home. They saw the miracles and heard His message, but they did not believe Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God! Please realize that this disbelief among Jesus’ family was all prophesied. Psalm 69:8 “I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother’s children.” **Believers’ Application - #1**

### III. Jesus and His Agenda

**“Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready. <sup>7</sup> The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. <sup>8</sup> Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast: for my time is not yet full come.” John 7:6-8**

“my time is not yet come” – Jesus will use the term “my time” or “my hour” to mean the cross. We find it twice in this passage and again several other times – John 2:4; 7:6, 8. 30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1; 17:1 The Greek word for time means, “time that is suitable, right or opportune.” This was not Jesus’ time for the cross; it was not right. It was not time to reveal Himself.

“your time is always ready” – Jesus’ half-brothers had no set timetable from God. They were not of God. They had no time constraints, but Jesus did. They were part of the world and the world’s timetable. Jesus was living in accordance with God’s will and agenda. This is a recurring theme of the Gospels: Jesus came to do the Father’s will in the Father’s time. But Jesus’ brothers’ time to travel to Jerusalem was “always ready.” For them, anytime was right.

“the world cannot hate you; but me it hateth” – Jesus is not switching topics here. He is giving the reason why He would not go at their suggestion with a big flamboyant entry to the feast and why there was no bearing to when they could go to Jerusalem. They were of the world, and they were not hated as He was. The world loves its own. They were in line with the world; they liked the world, but Jesus was out of line with it. What do we mean by “the world” in these verses? Here, the world refers to the system, beliefs, and general culture that are in opposition to God. It would include values, pleasures, and sinful activities. These are worldly and are not to be a part of a Jesus follower!

“Me it hateth,” this is very strong in the Greek. **“The world loves to hate me.” “The world cherishes the thought of hating me.”** It was a very personal hatred. Why? Because He exposed the unbelieving world, their evil and sin! v. 7

1. The people refused to accept Jesus’ condemnation of Pharisaism and legalism. (Matt. 5:20) They loved religion more than God!
2. They also refused to accept Jesus’ judgment that they were unrighteous and that God would not accept them unless they received His righteousness. John 8:31-32
3. The Jews saw their position as a Son of Abraham and following the law as a means of attaining a right standing with God. John 8:34-41
4. The people refused to accept Jesus’ words against their evil works, and it pricked their conscience. John 3:19-20

Please realize, it is the same today! People still refuse to hear the truth of Jesus when He says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”

“I go not up yet unto this feast” – Jesus tells His brothers to go ahead without Him. The original text is very strong; He commands them to go. Christ would not go with the crowds and make a great spectacle. He is not telling them that He was not going to the Feast of Tabernacles, but the Greek reveals that He was not going yet. Jesus tells them, “For me, the right time has not yet come.”

#### IV. Jesus Lives by God’s Agenda

**“When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee. <sup>10</sup> But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret (Lit. - under cover; privately; no fanfare ).” John 7:9-10**

“then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret” – When traveling from Galilee, most Jews would take the longer way to Jerusalem, avoiding Samaria. It would add at least a day to their trip! But we will learn that Jesus will take the direct route, straight through Samaria. This would be one reason that Jesus didn’t need to leave earlier. However, that way would also be significantly less traveled, more private. The Jews viewed the Samaritans as impure; no “good” Jew would knowingly defile themselves on the way to Jerusalem to worship! We actually find that when Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, no one knew it. (John 7:11 – “Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he?”)

**GEEKY Fact:** Did you notice the phrase “his brethren were gone **up**” and that Jesus also went “**up** to the feast?” The word “up” is used in connection with traveling to Jerusalem, regardless of what direction one might be traveling. It had to do with the elevation, the high rocky hills on which Jerusalem was built. From whatever direction you travelled, you were going to go up!

So, Jesus did leave Galilee seemingly for the last time. This is the first of three trips into Jerusalem before His death. The Feast of Tabernacles proved to be a vital situation indeed. When Jesus reappeared in Jerusalem, the Jewish and Religious Leaders continued their desire to kill Jesus and end His influence with the people. After the Feast of Tabernacles, He will spend time in the “wilderness” beyond the Jordan River. He will return for the Feast of Dedication. Later, He will return to the area to raise Lazarus, but not to Jerusalem. Lastly, there will be the great triumphal entry at the beginning of His Passion Week. Jesus is on God’s timetable, heading toward the cross, to provide our redemption.

### **Believers’ Application:**

1. The half-brothers of Jesus were certainly honored to have been raised with Him. It was an honor, as Matthew Henry said, “but no saving honor.” Many of us have been honored. Perhaps raised in a Christian home, educated in a Christian environment, attended a good church all our lives, surrounded by good and godly people. But just as these half-brothers of Jesus, these advantages do nothing to save our souls or bring us to a personal belief in Jesus. We are still responsible ourselves! Let’s not miss this glaring truth found in this event of Jesus. His own brothers didn’t believe that He was the Son of God! They saw His sinlessness from childhood, it is certain they had seen miracles and heard Him preach truths that amazed the multitudes. Yet, John is very plain as He records His book; they did not believe!

Each one of those men needed to realize who Jesus was on their own. It wasn’t something they absorbed or grew into; it was a conscious decision each one of those brothers needed to make. And that is the same for us. No honor or advantage can gain us heaven. No heritage of a godly home, no church attendance, or good deeds, can save us from our sin; only Jesus can! Each one of us individually needs to come to Him humbly, admit we are not worthy on our own, can’t get to heaven without Him, and acknowledge Jesus as our Savior and Lord! We must admit that there is no salvation in any other place; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved – (Acts 4:12) And we must remember that it’s not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy Jesus saved us. Which he shed on us abundantly on the cross– Titus 3:5-6. Have you put your trust in Jesus’ work on the cross for you? You can’t have forgiveness for your sin, have power over sin, and live with Jesus forever in heaven any other way!

Lastly, I would like to provide you with some insight as given later in the New Testament into the lives of Jesus’ half-brothers. It is wonderful to realize they did come to believe in Him and were faithful to the message of the Gospel!

1. We are told in 1 Corinthians 15:7 that Jesus appeared to James after the resurrection. I’m sure that was a turning point in his life and it seems like he shared it with his brothers!
2. After Jesus’ ascension into heaven, all His brothers were with the disciples in prayer at the giving of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:14) Yes, their lives were changed!
3. James became the pastor in Jerusalem and wrote the book of James.
4. Judas wrote the book of Jude!
5. 1 Corinthians 9:5 alludes to the fact that they were all active in itinerant preaching!

Is it amazing to realize that their lives were changed? They came to believe that Jesus was their Messiah, the Son of the Living God! Let’s close today by reading some very words of two of these brothers; Jude, the writer of Jude, and James from the book of James. Jam. 1:1, 16-18; 2:5; 3:13; 4:8-10; 5:7-8; Jude 1-3; 20-25 **HW 2#1**

2. Is God’s timetable important to you? Are you determined to live your life according to His schedule for you, or are you impatient and opt for your wants when you want them? Let’s be like Jesus and make God’s agenda

and timetable for us our greatest priority. Regardless of our age or how long we've been believers, let's not quickly dismiss these questions. The Devil would love us to think we are pleasing God with our lives, when instead we are not fixed on God's will for us on a daily basis. Too many times, we hand to God our plans, our schedule, and desire Him to sign off on it instead of giving Him our life and allowing Him to do as He wills! Let's be careful to make God's will first in our lives, even when it might be unpopular or inconvenient!

Here's a test to check your willingness to follow God's plan for you. What's your **frustration level** when your day or even life is suddenly changed? How do you react to a car that won't start, waking with a fever, a chatty distant relative calling and taking up too much time, or an unforeseen health diagnosis, the death of a close friend? How long does it take you to align with God's plan for your life?

May I suggest the following:

- 1) Start each day by **committing your schedule** to God. (Ps. 143:8) vs. Running through your to-do list
- 2) Pray for a very real **sensitivity to God's agenda** for you. Look for it and obey it! (Col. 1:9-10)
- 3) Be ready to suddenly **change your day's plan**, without frustration, to do God's will. (Prov. 16:9; 19:21; James 4:13-15)

To live with this attitude may not be in accordance with your usual way of doing things, but whose are you? Are you a servant of the Most High God? Is He able to count on you to do His bidding? Can He call, and you answer? Or are you like a stubborn child, who has to be asked several times and then disciplined? We must trust in the Lord with all our hearts and **not rely** on our own understanding. We must acknowledge God in all our ways, and then He will direct our paths! Proverbs 3:5-6 The writer of Hebrews finished his letter with this benediction, Hebrews 13:20-21, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,<sup>21</sup> Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." Let's be like Jesus and be careful to make God's will and His agenda first in our lives, even when it might be unpopular or inconvenient! **HW 2 #2**

3. Jesus made it very plain that the world hated him. That is the same for all those who follow Him. Are you of the world and its system? Do you love the world, and does it love you? Or are you of God? A lover of God will not love the world and will be hated by it. What's your relationship with these polar opposites!?! Warren Wiersbe had this wisdom to share: "History reveals that the 'religious system' often persecutes the very prophets of God who are sent to save it!" p. 252 We certainly see this to be true in the life of Jesus, as well as throughout history, when faithful Christians who have taken the truth of God to the unbelieving world have suffered greatly. This will be one of Jesus' last lessons to the disciples in the Upper Room before the cross, and the Epistles are filled with this truth. Let's finish by reading a few. John 15:18-21; 16:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:10-17 **HW 2#3**