

16 So Jesus answered them, My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.  
17 If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.18 The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory, but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.19 Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?20 The crowd answered, You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?21 Jesus answered them, I did one deed, and you all marvel at it.22 Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath.  
23 If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well?24 Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment. John 7:16-24

How should we understand this surprised expression on the part of the Jews? (vs 14-15) Were they surprised because Jesus, though untaught, was teaching at a level of competency that far exceeded His training? Or, were they surprised because Jesus, who had no proper education, was inappropriately palming Himself off as one who was in fact well versed in the Scriptures? I believe that the latter of these explanations is the best way to understand their surprised expression.

The surprised expression on the part of the Jews in verse 15 was based on the fact that they did not believe that Christ had the proper credentials to teach in the manner that He was teaching.

This is why they were astounded at what He was doing; and their strong criticism, was probably very evident to the people that heard them.

Would this surprised expression of displeasure have any possibility of resonating with the people that heard it? Of course it could.

The Jewish people at the time of this particular incident very much respected the demanding protocol required of those who aspired to be teachers amongst them and certainly Jesus had not in any way followed that protocol. Therefore, the surprised expression of displeasure by the Jewish leaders concerning Christ's teaching ministry especially in the temple area could very easily have resonated with the Jewish multitude.

How will Jesus respond to this charge on the part of the Jewish authorities?

John 7:16. "Jesus therefore answered them, and said, 'My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me.'" Jesus responded to the accusation of the Jews by telling them that His teachings came from God who sent Him (John 7:16). By repudiating their charge in this way Jesus, in effect, is telling them, "if you reject me and what I am teaching you, you are in essence not rejecting My teaching but rather you are rejecting the teaching of God Himself."

The Jewish leaders represented Jesus by their surprised response as never having gone to school. In John 7:16, Jesus in essence tells the Jews He went to school in heaven.

What an amazing exchange for the Jewish multitude to hear. The Jewish leaders had rejected Jesus credentials as a teacher because He had not received His teachings through a rabbinical school or from some famous Jewish Rabbi. Jesus response was, "though I may not have received my teaching from a rabbinical school or a famous Jewish rabbi, I did receive my teachings from God who sent Me."

Who was right? Was Jesus teaching the very words of God and was fully qualified to do so because He had been sent from God and teaching the words of God; or was He, as the Jewish leaders intimated, totally unqualified to represent Himself as a teacher?

If the Jewish multitude applied the criteria that their leaders seemed to value they would have looked at Christ's lack of academic credentials and quickly rejected the teachings of Christ. Hopefully you can quickly see how this approach is not only misguided but also dangerous, which would have been fully demonstrated in the case at hand.

If this approach of using credentials to discern whether or not a particular persons' teaching is from God or not from God is misguided and dangerous, then what is a better approach in respect to discerning whether or not a teaching has originated from God or not from God?

For many who are familiar with the Scriptures, you might quickly answer, "well, the way we can know that if what you are teaching us is true is simply by us checking out what you have said with the rest of the Scriptures and see if it lines up."

If this is your answer, it is an excellent answer. If you are one of those who in fact are committed to doing this, you certainly can be commended, just like the Bereans who were commended in Acts 17:10-11.

"And the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea; and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. (11) Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so."

How were the Bereans protecting themselves from receiving a false teaching or, in other words, a teaching that had not originated with God? They examined the Scriptures to see if it lined up with other Scriptures.

Does this describe you? If it does then you are doing a wonderful thing and certainly this practice will not only help you to embrace teachings that are true but also to protect you from embracing teachings that are not true.

Even though this may be so, if we fail to embrace the teaching of Christ in John 7:17, all the Scriptural examination in the world can easily be for naught.

"If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself."

Those who want to know whether or not a particular teaching has originated from God must first of all make sure that they have the mindset and eagerness for doing *His* will.

Why must this be in place even before we begin to compare Scripture with Scripture? It is because those who do not have this mindset to doing the will of God will invariably reject His will as it is revealed in the Scriptures either by totally rejecting it or by twisting it, even if they go through the motions of a so-called examination of their motives.

Many this morning, are taking the role of a teacher but how will you know whether or not what I am sharing with you has originated from God or has originated from me? In other words, how will you know whether or not what I am teaching you is true or whether what I am teaching to you is false? Certainly you can compare what I am saying with other Scriptures and see if it lines up. This is a wonderful thing to do, but first and foremost we must personally appropriate the teaching of Christ in John 7:17.

If people do this, what will happen? If they do, this they will find themselves being drawn by the grace of God to the teachings that originate from God and away from those teachings that do not originate from God.

How is the grace of God actually able to accomplish this? It is through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The Jewish leaders had raised the question of His competence as a teacher in John 7:15. He now raises the question of their competence as listeners in John 7:17.

The Jewish leaders were communicating, by their surprised response to Christ's teachings in John 5:15, that Jesus was incompetent and by inference that His teachings were false. Jesus in John 5:17 infers that the Jewish leaders were not in any position to evaluate the truthfulness of what He was teaching. They themselves were not committed to doing the will of God, for if they were wholly and eagerly committed to doing the will of God, they would have received His teachings as true.

John 7:18, "He who speaks from himself (which hopefully the listeners would have known Christ wasn't if they had heeded the instruction provided by Christ in John 7:17) seeks his own glory, but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him (which hopefully the listeners would have known Christ was if they again have heeded the instruction of Christ in `John 7:17), He is true and there is no unrighteousness in Him."

If we are therefore by the grace of God able to see that the teaching of Christ is from God and not from Himself, then whose glory would we have to conclude was He seeking? Obviously, He was seeking the glory of the One who sent Him.

But how perfectly did He do this? Christ answers this question for us in John 7:18

Christ described Himself as "true" with "no unrighteousness in Him" because He so perfectly pursued the glory of the one who sent Him (John 7:18). What does Jesus mean when He says that He is "true" and has "no unrighteousness in Him?"

Christ referred to Himself as "true" (ALETHES). He chose an expression that was used exclusively of God in the Gospel of John (John 3:33; 8:26).

Let me first of all read for you John 3:33, "He who has received His witness (referring to Christ) has set his seal to this, that God is true."

John 8:26, "I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world."

Both Jesus and the apostle John in this gospel have referred to God as "true." But here in John 7:18, Jesus chose to refer to Himself as "true."

Jesus, by using the word "true" to describe Himself, in essence is saying, "Just as God can be trusted to always speak the truth so can I." If I said this to you or if anyone would say this to you I am sure it would cause a reaction, most likely a negative reaction and rightfully so.

But this is not all that He says about Himself. Not only does He say that He is "true" but He also says, "there is no unrighteousness in Him." When Jesus said, "there is no unrighteousness in Him" He said, "You can trust me not only for what I am saying to you but you can also trust me for why I am saying it to you. Jesus is not only someone who is going to say the things that are always true but He also is only going to say the things that are true when they advance the glory of the One who sent Him rather His own glory.

This is an amazing self-portrait and stands in stark contrast to the Jewish leadership. They certainly could not be described either as "true" or as having "no unrighteousness in them."

This contrast will now be portrayed in the most graphic terms by Christ beginning in John 7:19 as He exposes the breadth and depth of the Jewish leaders hatred for Him, or in other words the breadth and depth of their hatred of the One who was sent from God.

Jesus begins this section by asking the Jewish leaders a rhetorical question at the beginning of John 7:19, "Did not Moses give you the Law?" And of course the answer to that question would have been, "Of course Moses gave us the Law." But then Jesus goes on to say, "and yet none of you carries out the Law." I am sure that this statement was not easy for them to hear. Then He follows this hard hitting statement with an even much more troubling accusation in the form of a question,

"Why do you seek to kill me?"

Christ's denunciation of the Jewish leaders in John 7:19 was a response to their earlier accusation that Jesus was an unqualified teacher in John 7:15. He first of all denounces them in a general sense for not carrying out the Law that they had received. Then, He denounced in a much more specific way when He exposed their plot to kill Him, which clearly would have been a violation of the command "not to murder" in Exodus 20:13 and other passages in the Old Testament.

What is Jesus seeking to accomplish by His denunciation of the Jewish leaders in this way? Jesus denunciation was an attempt to establish a stark contrast between His righteousness in John 7:18 and the leaders unrighteousness in John 7:19.

The denunciation aimed at the leaders in John 7:19; accusing them not only of failing to carry out the law, but more specifically of seeking to kill Him strikes them I am sure like a bolt of lightning. But it was not the Jewish leaders who responded to this charge but rather the multitude. Let us now read John 7:20 "The multitude answered, 'You have a demon! Who seeks to kill you?'"

The overwhelming judgment of the Jewish multitude concerning Christ's accusation against their leaders was that He must have a demon (John 5:20). Why would they say

such a thing? The multitude would have thought that Jesus had a demon because they could not think of any other explanation for Christ accusing their "righteous" leaders of a murderous plot.

I know that when we think of the Jewish leaders we may think of them in the worst possible terms. But obviously this was not the case with the Jewish multitude. The Jewish multitude had a very high view of their leaders, certainly a higher view than most Americans have of our own leaders. Why? They were judging their leaders according to outward appearance (Matthew 23:27-28). Let me read for you the words of Christ in Matthew 23:27-28, when He confronts another group of Jewish leaders on a different occasion, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. (28) Even so you too outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."

Jesus is saying that the very people that He is condemning in Matthew 23 are by-and-large seen by Jewish masses as righteous. This is exactly the problem that we see in John 7. This multitude of Jews listening to Jesus in the temple viewed their leaders as righteous. Judging accurately is a very difficult thing to do and this certainly was a problem for this Jewish multitude. How do we know this? They had just accused Jesus of having a demon.

So how will Christ respond to their very severe judgment of Himself? Jesus responded to their accusation that He had a demon by showing them, from their own experience, that what might on the surface appear wrong might actually be right (John 7:21-23).

And of course the point that He will be attempting to make is that though, what He is saying about their leaders may on the surface appear to be wrong, the truth is that He is right. We see this explanation in John 7:21-23.

Let us begin with John 7:21, "Jesus answered and said to them (referring to the multitude), 'I did one deed, and you all marvel.'" What is this one deed that Christ is

referring to? There were many deeds, miraculous deeds that Christ performed in Jerusalem but there was one deed that was performed on the Sabbath that particularly stands out and is most likely the one deed that Jesus was referring to. What was that one deed? The "one deed" that caused the multitude to "marvel" in John 7:21 was most likely the healing of the man on the Sabbath day by the pool of Bethesda.

Once again as we saw in John 7:15 the reference to their marveling should not be understood in a positive sense but in a negative sense. They were not marveling because they had seen Him heal a man. They were marveling, or in other words they were shocked because they had seen Him heal the man on the Sabbath. But they need to be careful not to be too hasty in this judgment.

John 7:22, "On this account Moses has given you circumcision (not because it is from Moses, but from the Fathers), and on the Sabbath you circumcise." Jesus points out to the Jewish multitude that circumcision came before Mosaic Law, and was not nullified by Mosaic law. Which takes precedent? And which is more important, a perfecting rite, a ritual or the perfecting of a body? They had at times chosen to do circumcise on the Sabbath. He did a miracle once on the Sabbath day.

Was this practice of circumcising Jewish boys on the Sabbath when the Sabbath fell on the eighth day right or wrong? The Jews would say that it was right even though it might on the surface appear to be wrong.

Circumcising Jewish boys on the eighth day might appear wrong because it required work, but the judgment of the Jewish people was that it must be done if it fell on the eighth day. This is interesting because on the one hand, the Law taught that no work was to be done on the Sabbath. But on the other hand, the Law also required the Jewish males were to be circumcised on the eighth day. So when circumcision fell on the eighth day what would the Jewish people do? Would they choose to avoid work or would they circumcise their male children?

They chose to circumcise. Why? They made this judgment because the Jews believed



that the bodily member that was to be perfected at the time of circumcision must be perfected on the eighth day. Jesus will now use the practice of the Jews and their belief about circumcision perfecting a single bodily member to show how what He had done, in healing the man at Bethesda, though it might appear to be wrong, should really be considered right.

**John 7:23, "If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath that the Law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on the Sabbath?"**

Jesus, in John 7:23 said, "If you can righteously circumcise on the Sabbath to perfect one member of a man's body, then I should be able to righteously heal the whole body on the Sabbath."

This whole explanation by Christ of why healing the man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath was right when it might have appeared to them to be wrong, was done for one simple reason.

Jesus shared with them all that He shared with them in John 7:21-23 in order to challenge them in John 7:24, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

The challenge to not judge according to appearance, but to judge with righteous judgment was given to the Jewish multitude in the hope that they would see Him and their leaders clearly (John 7:24).

But the question that is crying out to be answered is this? How can we exercise righteous judgment in spiritual matters? There are two important steps that we must do if we are going to be able to do this.

First of all we must positively respond to the instruction of Christ in John 7:17 and have the mindset to pursue the will of God, regardless of our failures. And secondly we must follow the example of the Bereans in Acts 17 by committing ourselves to searching the scriptures.

If we do these things we will be able to exercise righteous judgments, and if we do not we will forever find ourselves stumbling about in the dark as we are relegated to making our judgments based on appearances alone.