

Religious Opposition to Jesus

Livin' the Life

John 7:14-24

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We are looking at the life of Jesus and the life he promises in our series on the Gospel of John, Livin' the Life. We are in chapter seven today, 7:14-24. Today we look at Religious Opposition to Jesus from John 7:14-24.

In the middle of the seven day Feast of Tabernacles Jesus begins teaching in the temple (14). The Jews are impressed with his teaching but are suspicious of someone who is untrained and without credentials (15). Like his brothers, who were amazed at his miracles but did not believe in him, they are amazed at his teaching but are not willing to embrace him. They do not hear the voice of God in the word of God. They are religious but opposed to Jesus. This excitement over Jesus' message and miracles is not spiritual and does not lead to eternal life. So, Jesus answers their question by telling them that his teaching is not his but originates with the one who sent him (16), God the Father. Jesus reveals God the Father to us (1:17-18). Now Jesus' teaching is impressive but they do not see or hear truth in it. It's like they are captivated by the shell but not the nut. Do not be enamored with the shell of any preacher and overlook the truth.

Then Jesus explains how they can know if his teaching is true. If anyone wills to do God's will then he will know whether my teaching is from God or not, if it is true or not (17). One must want or desire to do God's will to know whether Jesus' teaching is from God and true. The condition of the heart determines the receptiveness of the mind to knowing truth. When your will is in sync with God's will then your knowing will be in sync with God's knowing. You can be impressed with biblical teaching and not embrace the truth or embrace Jesus. You can be religious and opposed to Jesus. Religion is sometimes a substitute for knowing and following Jesus.

Then Jesus gets even more specific with them about the source of his teaching. The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent me is true and in him there is no falsehood (18). In others words, the way to tell if Jesus' teaching is true is if he seeks God's glory. Jesus is describing one specific way of willing God's will or desiring God's will that is necessary to see Jesus as God's revelation of truth. Your desire for glory must line up with Jesus's desire for God's glory (see 1:10-13; 3:1-8). This is what I think he is saying. If you want to know who Jesus truly is, as the revelation of God, then God must do something deeply spiritual and supernatural in your heart so that you see Jesus for who he truly is. It must be supernatural because we are naturally opposed to Jesus. We are like his brothers, excited about what Jesus can do but not believe or submit to him; we are like the crowd, amazed at his teaching but not impacted by it; or we are like the Jewish leaders, who want to get rid of Jesus. The human heart wants Jesus to exalt us, make a big deal of us, not God. Only God can change that want within all of us.

Then Jesus turns the conversation more personal. He uses the law of Moses to show them that they do not will to do God's will (19-24). Moses gave you the law yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me? (19). The fact that some of them want to kill Jesus shows that they have no desire to obey the law! Their wills are opposed to the law of God (Rom 8:7-8). Their opposition to Jesus is rooted in their opposition to God and his law. Your biggest obstacle in believing in and obeying Jesus is not your mind but your heart.

The crowd accuses Jesus of having a demon and ask him, who is seeking to kill you (20)? Jesus points back to his healing the paralytic on the Sabbath (5:1-17). Healing on the Sabbath was work according to Jewish interpretation of the Law. You marvel over one miracle because you think I violated the law yet you violate the law all the time (21). Jesus answers their question, Moses gave you circumcision and you circumcise on the Sabbath. If a man is circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses is not broken, then why are you angry with me because I made a man's whole body well on the Sabbath (22-23)? The law stated that a male child must be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. So, if a boy was born on one Sabbath, eight days later would be the next Sabbath.

But obeying one law, circumcision on the eighth day, violated another law, observing the Sabbath. Rabbinic teaching stated that circumcision took precedence over observing the Sabbath because as a sign of the covenant, it perfected a person. But if perfecting one part of the body on the Sabbath is legitimate then how much more is healing or restoring the whole person on the Sabbath. The intent of the Sabbath was restorative. Jesus is fulfilling the Sabbath. Jesus' point is that they are looking at the law all wrong, if you approach God's will, the law of Moses, without faith you will misapply the law. But someone greater than Moses and greater than the law is here, the one to whom Moses and the law pointed to, Jesus. Here is the issue for every one of us. We are fundamentally opposed to God's law and to seeking God's glory. We follow our own law and seek our own glory so we do not naturally embrace the truth. God must change our wanters, which is what he does in salvation. Religious people need God to save them as much as irreligious people need God to save them.

Questions for Life Groups:

1. Why do you think Jesus chose to speak in the temple?
2. How can someone love Jesus' teaching but not embrace it as true?
3. Is there biblical truth that you have a difficult time believing or that you resist?
4. How can someone be religious yet opposed to Jesus?
5. How does Jesus reveal the Father to us (1:17-18)?
6. What is our wanters?
7. How do you know if someone's will is to do God's will?
8. In what ways do you not desire to do God's will?
9. As Christians, how do we overcome our own rebellion, unbelief, and resistance to God?

