

The Gospel of John
Lesson #68
The Journey
 Jim Hoffman

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The Gospel of John

- As we progress on in John’s gospel, we will see an ever-increasing intensity in the hatred of the “Jews” towards Jesus.
- Acts 2:22 “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— 23 this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”

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The Gospel of John

This is one of those things that make us go, “huh?” at times. We see the building hatred for Jesus as John writes, and we will see the scheming of the Jews to put Jesus to death. What they are planning to do and will do is sin – it is wrong on so many levels and the hands and minds of those who conspired to murder Jesus and successfully carried it out are accountable to God for such sin. And then we read, “this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God”, and as our minds work at digesting what we read we see that it was God’s plan first, and then, with no coercion from God, the Jews ensure that Jesus is crucified according to their plan. They sinfully willed what God righteously willed. Huh?

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The Gospel of John

• John 7:1 After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him. 2 Now the Jews' Feast of Booths was at hand. 3 So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. 4 For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." 5 For not even his brothers believed in him. 6 Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. 7 The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil.

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The Gospel of John

- Jesus' brothers, his half-brothers, urge him to go up to the feast. (Remember Jerusalem is always up because of its elevation)
- Their rationale for him to attend the feast was from what we call today a marketing point-of-view. ("get out there, do some miracles, make a name for yourself")
- His brothers did not believe in him – not yet, but they will - for now they were most likely caught up in the prevailing view that Messiah must be a political figure.

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The Gospel of John

Mark 6:3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?"

It is likely that his brothers and sisters witnessed the resurrection. James and Judas both authored New Testament books.

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The Gospel of John

- Remember that Jesus has been up in Galilee sort of taking cover from his enemies in Judea – not for his protection, but more so for his convenience.
- He tells his brothers that his time had not yet come – if that sounds familiar it’s because it’s almost verbatim what he told his mother at the wedding in Cana.
- Romans 5:6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.

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The Gospel of John

- At lot went into Jesus dying at just the right time. He could have come to die on a cross as soon as Adam sinned, but that was evidently not the right time.
- He could have come to die just after the giving of the law to Moses, but that was evidently not the right time.
- He could have come to die at any point in history, but evidently prior to “just the right time” there was never a time that was just right.

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The Gospel of John

We could ask, “why wait so long?”. Why allow so many years of mystery and waiting? Could it be that God waited as he did because that is what it would take to fully prepare the world for a message as radical as the gospel. Evidently it takes about 4,000 years to prepare mankind for the message of the cross. The message that would proclaim to the world that the Creator would come and die for the created. The message that would proclaim to the world that the holy would die for the unholy and the just would be substituted for the unjust. That is a message that is so utterly radical that perhaps under any other conditions no one would believe it!

9

The Gospel of John

• John 7:8 “You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come.” 9 After saying this, he remained in Galilee. 10 But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly but in private.

• What are we to make of this sequence – it would appear that Jesus lied to his brothers, but the plain sense of that does make common sense so we must seek other sense.

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The Gospel of John

• Exodus 1:19 The midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them.” 20 So God dealt well with the midwives. And the people multiplied and grew very strong.

• 1st Samuel 16:2 And Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me.” And the Lord said, “Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.’” 3 And invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do.

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The Gospel of John

Is it not obvious that God allows what we might call “righteous deception” when the outcome of the truth may well lead to the death of the innocent? Shiprah and Puah were saving newborns. Samuel’s life could have been forfeited by doing the will of God. What about when Oskar Schindler told the Nazis that he had no Jews in his house? Maybe life isn’t always as black and white as we may think. I don’t think we can construct a rule to follow, but give us a situation, and I suspect we would know intuitively what to do.

12

The Gospel of John

- John 7:11 The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, "Where is he?" 12 And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, "He is a good man," others said, "No, he is leading the people astray." 13 Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him.
- At this point we need to try to grasp the moment that was unfolding at this Feast of Tabernacles – Jesus had been attending these for more than 20 years without incident, but this one would be different.

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The Gospel of John

- We could lay all the blame on the Jews because they were spoiling for a fight – they wanted this threat to their personal well-being eliminated.
- But at the same time, we must remember what Luke wrote in Acts 2, Jesus was delivered up by God's definite plan and foreknowledge.
- There a sense in which Jesus was willing to force a showdown with his enemies to fulfill his mission that revolved around his death.

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14

The Gospel of John

- "And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, "He is a good man," others said, "No, he is leading the people astray."
- The Jewish leaders were not the only ones looking for Jesus at the feast. It would be easy to imagine many attending with some disease or sickness looking for healing.
- Since they could expect that Jesus would be there at this pilgrimage feast, well you could imagine that a lot of the chatter at the feast would be around Jesus of Nazareth.

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The Gospel of John

- “While some said, “He is a good man,” others said, “No, he is leading the people astray.”
- Please understand that to call Jesus a “good man” is to insult him – it is to deny his deity for he is way, way beyond good, he is holy.
- Look at the range of the crowd’s assessment of Jesus – the charges are all the way from “good man” to “one who is leading people astray” – both assessments are wrong.

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16

The Gospel of John

C.S. Lewis had something to say about such a range of positions – “I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”

17

The Gospel of John

- “Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him.”
- Some favored Jesus and some did not – Those who opposed him felt free to speak about it publicly, while those who favored him tended to be careful who they told it to.
- The “Jews” had no political power over their fellow Israelites, but to be shut out of the Temple or even a local synagogue carried with it significant consequences.

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The Gospel of John

- John 9:22 (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.) 23 Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."
- John 16:2 Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue;

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The Gospel of John

- To be put out of the synagogue could mean the loss of your business if you were a shop owner or perhaps the loss of your job if you worked for other Jews.
- It would mean that even your family was to keep six feet from you if you were excommunicated from the temple or your synagogue.
- The length of one's excommunication was at the discretion of the leaders of your synagogue – this is very much like what we call "cancel culture" today.

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The Gospel of John

- In Jesus' day it is evident that the threat of excommunication was used to control the speech of anyone who differed with the "Jews".
- Suppression of speech is the tool of tyrants whether it's in a synagogue, a church, or a country.
- Had just the "Jews" of Jesus' day been for Jesus you must wonder how things may have played out – this becomes an interesting conversation with lots of ramifications.

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The Gospel of John

- Let's suppose that the "Jews" believed in Jesus and the nation of Israel followed them – that would have freed Jesus to conquer Rome and set up his kingdom.
- But then there is this "sin" thing to deal with – our salvation is rooted in the substitutionary death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.
- Now the above can be dismissed as a fairy tale that never happened, but it does make one wonder if the world of Jesus' day was free to choose Jesus or not.

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Questions?

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