

# Explore the Bible: He Sent Me

January 18, 2023

- *The Explore the Bible lesson for Jan. 29 focuses on John 7:14-29.*

In John 7:14-29, we find Jesus in Jerusalem during the feast of booths. While there, a group of Jewish religious leaders searched and found him teaching publicly in the Temple (John 7:13). From this encounter, a series of questions is heaped on Jesus posed by three different groups, each doubting his authority and true identity. Jesus' response not only showed off his brilliance in "turning the tables" on the questioners, but also provided a defense of his identity.

## Jesus' Credentials Questioned (John 7:14-18)

The first question was posed by what John calls "the Jews," a term clearly meant by John to be understood as the Jewish religious authorities and not simply an ethnic designation. The Jewish authorities find Jesus teaching in the Temple and immediately question his credentials.

Leaning on the rabbinic tradition of a student mastering the opinions of prior teachers of the Law and then from there presenting his own thoughts, Jesus' lack of rabbinic pedigree was called into question.

Jesus, as far as they knew did not have the right accreditation. The phrase in John 7:15 translated as "without having been taught" carries the connotation of one who lacks a formal education. On this alone, the question of authority is posed to Jesus. "How did this man get such learning without having been taught?" (John 7:15).

Jesus' responds in 7:16 not by reciting the name of the rabbi who he has learned under. He instead points to God as the source of his teaching, admitting his teaching is not his own. Here is a foundational concept to understand how Jesus thought about the source of his mission. He is sent by God. All of his credentials are wrapped up in this fact, to either deny or accept.

He follows this statement with a litmus test of sorts, concerning (1) the motives of the teacher and (2) the ability on the part of the listener to discern truth or falsehood for themselves. In so doing, Jesus is turning the question back to the motives of the Jewish leaders to transgress the Law in desiring to have Jesus killed.

## **Jesus' Proclamation Ridiculed (John 7:19-24)**

A second group of people, noted by John as "the crowd," interject their own thoughts on the dialogue. They suggest Jesus is "demon possessed" in 7:20, another way of saying he is out of his mind. It does not appear to them that his life is in any danger and with that they ask in 7:19, "Who is trying to kill you?"

Jesus' responds not by detailing the plans of the religious leaders, but by comparing two laws side by side. He posits that when the commandment of circumcision is compared to the commandment of Sabbath, the command of circumcision is currently taking priority. If this is so, then why does Jesus' healing a man's "whole body" give cause to anger? The question is asked as one sent by God with a mission that would honor such acts as healing and restoring a man to health.

# Jesus' Origin Questioned (John 7:25-29)

The last group of people enter into this miniature scene of verbal back and forth with Jesus. They are defined by John as “some of the people of Jerusalem” in 7:25. Their entrance is made by the asking of another question, “Isn't this the man they are trying to kill? (John 7:25).

This group of people are acutely aware of what “the crowd” seems to deem as lunacy: that the religious leaders are set to kill Jesus. Their question continues with two further ones: (1) Have the authorities concluded that Jesus is in fact the Messiah? (2) If he were the Messiah, his origins would still be unknown, and yet why doesn't Jesus fit this expectation?

The second of these two questions is founded on the tradition that the Messiah will not be known potentially even by himself. The question here also carries the concern important not only for those in Jerusalem in the narrative, but also for John's own readers: What is to be understood about the origin of Jesus? While John's readers should remember the answer to this question (see John 1), those asking it here desire to have the messianic dilemma solved.

Jesus' response is once again a turning of the tables for the audience. He declares these hearers know him and where he is from. This is not a problem for Jesus because, ultimately, he is from the one who sent him. And in such a statement, Jesus declares what he had stated earlier about his mission: “I am not here on my own authority, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, but I know him because I am from him and he sent me” (John 7:28-29).

Jesus' credentials, believability and mission are founded on the simple truth that Jesus was sent by God. This was too much for the audience in

Jerusalem to accept (John 7:30). The question for the readers of John is whether or not Jesus' identity as one sent from God is worth accepting for themselves.

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