

# Jesus Christ Superstar?

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Welcome to our Wednesday lunchtime Bible talk. It's so lovely to have you with us, especially when you're getting some nice weather for the first time in about a month or so. It's good to have you come in to hear God's Word.

You've noticed already that there's tea and coffee and sandwiches at the back. If you do have time after the service, it'd be great for you to stick around to have a cup of tea with us so we get to know you. But if you do need to rush off at any time to get back to the workplace, we understand that too. So please don't be embarrassed in having to do that. Our Bible passage today is John chapter 7. So if you could open that up, that'd be very helpful.

And we'll be starting from verse 1. So John chapter 7, verse 1 to 10, and you'll find that on page 892. Excellent.

So John writes, After this, Jesus went about in Galilee. He would not go about in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill him.

[ 1 : 1 4 ] Now the Jews' feast of booths was at hand. So his brothers said to him, Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing.

For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world. For not even his brothers believed in him.

Jesus said to them, My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me, because I testify about it that its works are evil.

You go up to the feast. I am not going up to the feast, for my time has not yet fully come. After saying this, he remained in Galilee.

But after his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly, but in private. Well, it's a tricky little passage we've got today, so let's ask for the Lord's help as we unpack it together.

[ 2 : 2 2 ] Father God, we do thank you so much for your word. And we thank you that as we look at it and open it up together, that you promise to come and present yourself amongst us. That you might show yourself to us, that we might know you better, and that we'll know what you are truly like.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, we need to be careful as we're going through John's gospel not to lose the flow of the narrative.

For if we do, we won't have much of a hope understanding today's passage. So just for a moment, I want you to put yourselves in the shoes of one of Jesus' disciples and just think about what John has recently shared with us in chapters 5 and 6.

Up until chapter 5, the experience of being one of Jesus' disciples had been mostly positive. Jesus had turned water into wine.

He'd preached the gospel, and he'd gathered quite a following behind him. But things take a turn in chapter 5, when Jesus heals the quadriplegic man at the pool.

[ 3 : 3 6 ] At that point, things start to turn sour. The religious establishment are absolutely outraged at Jesus for healing this man on the Sabbath and for the fact that he is calling God his very own father.

Such was their anger with him that they want him dead. And then, while following this, Jesus' teaching seems to start to irk people too.

Not the religious establishment, but just for the crowds. He had gathered a really large crowd behind him with his early miracles, which is evident. In fact, he was feeding 5,000. 5,000 people would come out to hear him teach in the wilderness.

But those who had had an appetite for miracles seemed to have absolutely no stomach for his teaching. In chapter 6, Jesus told the crowds, If they don't eat his flesh and drink his blood, allegory for trusting in his death alone for sin, then they can't have eternal life.

Disgusted at this teaching, the crowds start to desert Jesus, and only a select few remain, who recognize that he is the only one who truly has the words to eternal life.

[ 4 : 51 ] Jesus seems to have gone from an overnight sensation to a disappointing flop in just a couple of chapters. If you're one of Jesus' disciples, there at the time, seeing this unfold before your eyes, the religious establishment not wanting anything to do, and wanting him dead, the crowds deserting him, what would have gone through your mind?

I think you'd start asking, why aren't people accepting Jesus then? The crowds are abandoning ship, the religious leaders want him dead, and we see that in verse 1 of our passage today. And even his own brothers, his own family, are rejecting him, as we see in verse 5 of today's passage too. So the masses were no longer on board, the religious leaders, the juggernauts of the religious day, were against him, and even his own family don't recognize him as the Christ. Alarm bells might have started to ring, mightn't they, if you were a disciple at the time. I think sometimes we have a similar experience. We feel equally somewhat concerned by people's reaction to Jesus.

We often find it very concerning, don't we, when people who are intellectual powerhouses reject the gospel. Or we feel unsettled, when people who are in the same line of tradition as us, who have known the gospel, have seen things up close, turn around and reject Jesus and desert him.

[ 6 : 23 ] And we can't understand, can we, how spouses of believers don't come to know the gospel when they see the gospel up close, played out in their spouses' lives.

We find that very concerning and worrying. It makes us uncomfortable. We wonder how intelligent, rational people, sometimes with great theological insight, who have heard the good news of Jesus and seen the work of God with their very own eyes, can still reject him.

And sometimes we ask, well maybe, perhaps I'm the one who's got it wrong. Is Jesus really who he says he is? Well, let's see how Jesus speaks into our sense of anxiety.

Let's look at our first point this afternoon, which is why do people not believe in Jesus? The core to that answer comes in verse 7. So let's head there first and look at that verse and then we'll unpack the rest of the passage after.

So verse 7, Jesus is talking to his brothers, who John has told us already, haven't believed in Jesus. And this is what he says to them. He says, The world cannot hate you, but it hates me, because I testify about it, that its works are evil.

[ 7 : 49 ] The simple answer to why people reject Jesus is that they belong to a different kingdom to Jesus. All through John's gospel, the world is described as this anti-God state.

It's the realm of those who rebel against God and knowingly or not are subject to another king, not Jesus, but Satan. The attitude we see expressed here in Jesus' brothers, their mocking and goading of Jesus, encouraging him to go on to the big city and make a name for himself when they don't even believe in him, which is an attitude that's somewhat similar, isn't it, to unkind friends in the schoolyard encouraging their seemingly talentless friend to go on to a talent show so they can fall flat on their face.

This kind of attitude is characteristic of those who belong to the world, the kingdom of the world. This attitude of mocking and rejection isn't rooted in an intellectual objection or reasonable suspicions due to a lack of evidence.

Jesus has plainly revealed who he is in both his words and his works all the way through the gospel so far. Jesus' brothers have had front row seats and seen more clearly than most.

And the religious leaders who want him dead in verse 1 should have been able to listen to Jesus and see his works and easily see that he maps perfectly onto the picture of the Messiah that were given in the Old Testament.

[ 9 : 27 ] Now the evidence is plain. Their intellects are more than sufficient. This attitude of rejection they have rather is rooted in a deep, visceral prejudice.

They're unwilling to see the truth that has been clearly revealed to them because Jesus belongs to another kingdom. He's the leader of the opposition. He is the king of heaven come to earth to reveal God to man and those who belong to the kingdom of the world who live in rebellion against God instinctively want to shut him down and drown him out.

It's somewhat like what you see in the House of Commons. I don't know if you ever watch it. But have you ever noticed that even when the speaker or the prime minister, whoever it may be, makes a good and valid point, the opposition party never, ever acknowledge it.

What do they do instead? They attack the person's character. They change the topic. They attack from another angle. But what they cannot do is admit to the truth because all that they're interested in is promoting their own interests.

Battle lines have already been drawn. What matters is towing the party line, getting into power, not arriving at truth. Or think of the book *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

[10:56] I don't know if you've ever read it, but in the book there's a man called Tom Robinson and he is sentenced to death for a crime that he did not commit. Why? Because he was black and living in a time in Alabama when it was split into two kingdoms, the white people and the black people.

The white community were absolutely unable to take stock of the overwhelming evidence proving his innocence because of this deep, visceral prejudice.

And John, the writer of this gospel, says the exact same thing is true of our world. All humanity under the power of the devil has an instinctive bias against Jesus.

They don't want to follow him. In fact, they want to mock him and kill him just like the religious leaders in verse one. So they can pretend that they're in charge instead.

And the same was true of us Christians, wasn't it, before God worked a miracle in our lives. We're by nature no better than the world. We were part of it.

[12:09] It's only because of God's work in us that we're any different. And we need to realize if we're going to avoid discouragement that John wants us to see this afternoon that people reject Jesus not because they're intellectually superior to us or because they have a better understanding of Jesus than us, but because they belong to the world and their allegiance to that kingdom is more important.

And on top of that, nobody likes to be exposed and shown to be evil, do they? And that's exactly what Jesus' words and works do according to verse 7. They testify that the world's works are evil.

The hard truth today is that those who reject Jesus back then and those who reject Jesus today do so because they don't want to hear that they're a long way off God's glory.

In fact, that they're a rebel against God deserving of his wrath and that they need the Son of God to come and die for them in order for them to be washed clean. That's, after all, what put people off in the last chapter, was it not?

That's the teaching that Jesus declared after he fed the 5,000. If you do not partake in my death, then you cannot have eternal life. And that is offensive to people's pride.

[13:31] So if you're a Christian here today and you are discouraged that friends or family don't want anything to do with Jesus, then please don't go away thinking it's just because the historical evidence for his life and resurrection isn't enough or because God hasn't made himself plain enough in the Bible.

He has. He sent his one and only Son into the world to reveal exactly what he is like. He's gone above and beyond what is needed. The truth is your friends and family don't believe in Jesus because they belong to a kingdom of the world that is dead set against him.

And they can't bear to accept that the opposition leader is the rightful king of this world and that they desperately need him if they're going to have any hope of eternal life.

Only a powerful work of God within them by the Spirit will make that happen. Well moving on let's see how belonging to different kingdoms is expressed in the contrast we see in this chapter between Jesus and his motives and the motives of his brothers.

So our second point how did Jesus' motives differ from the world's? The answer is he is utterly concerned with truth and cares nothing about earthly fame.

[14:56] This comes out in verses 2-6 The feast of booths has arrived a time when all Israel will have flocked to Jerusalem in Judea to celebrate and Jesus' brothers who have no doubt heard about what has just happened with all the followers of Jesus deserting him in the wilderness at Capernaum point to Jesus how strategically it makes sense for him to head to Jerusalem to this religious epicenter and get more followers for himself to show his works there verse 3 Notice they don't encourage him to teach there It's not the words that they're interested in but the works After all it was Jesus' words his teaching about how people needed to partake in his death for salvation that put people off at Capernaum so we don't want that give the people what they want They say something like this If you want to make a name for yourself

Jesus if you want your moment in the limelight again then just give the people what they want Give them the miracles again and stop this business of proclaiming the truth and making people feel uncomfortable Do you see that in those verses?

Verse 4 Nobody works in secret if he seeks to be known openly and that's what you want Jesus is it not? In verse 5 Show yourself to the world let them see you have your moment in glory But Jesus is not concerned about fame or celebrity That isn't the reason why he came He isn't out for self-advancement like the rest of the world He will go up to the feast but he's going to go up incognito for he has come to be a saviour not a celebrity not a superstar If he was set on becoming a superstar then he wouldn't have left his throne in heaven to be born into our frail humanity and suffer and die on a cross for us would he?

He would have taken the devil up on his offer in the wilderness wouldn't he when he offered to give him all the kingdoms of the world if he would just bow down to him and call him king but he didn't for Jesus is utterly different to the people of the kingdom of the world the world tries to map their motives and concerns onto him like Jesus' brothers do here in this passage and are utterly confused as to why he doesn't behave like them they can't get their heads around him because his motivations are so foreign to him foreign to them that's part of the reason why they don't believe they can't grasp him and his motives and why he does things the way he does we live in a world where in our least restrained moments people will do whatever they can to get to the top we saw that last week in the sports news I don't know if you follow swimming at all but there's a Chinese swimmer called

Sun Yang who has recently been caught for doping he's won 11 world championships over the last 11 years and two Olympic titles and interestingly at the last Olympics there was a moment was caught on camera and on microphone of him and the Scottish swimmer Duncan Scott they both ended up on the podium Sun Yang had won Duncan Scott had come third but he refused to share the podium with Sun Yang because even back then it was so obvious that he was doping and he had a history of missing drug tests but what was caught on the microphone at the very end was Sun Yang screaming at Duncan Scott saying all that matters is that I'm the winner and you're a loser he didn't care how he got to the top all that mattered was he had his moment in the limelight that kind of behavior the quest for self advancement is what the kingdom of the world lives for perhaps not as brazenly as

[19:23] Sun Yang but his attitude encapsulates the world's desires when all restraints are loosened for those who belong to the kingdom of the world they just want fame and position ultimately they want to be king and to dethrone God himself it's Babel all over again humanity has not changed but one man Jesus Christ is not like the rest of humanity Jesus is the one man who is driven by truth and not fame that's why he goes up to the feast in secret and preaches anonymously there he cares about the words that come out of his mouth not what people think of him we serve a king who is motivated by revealing truth to the world that people might believe and be saved rather than winning the world's approvals and that is a marvellous thing well finally building what we've just looked at how does

Jesus' agenda different to the world's then answer Jesus lives for God's agenda not his own notice that Jesus says in verse six my time has not yet come but your time is always here and then again in verse eight you go up to the feast for my time has not yet fully come when Jesus is talking about his time not having come he isn't talking about the moment when he's going to go to the cross that's what he normally means when he says my time has not yet come but here it's a different word he uses rather here he's simply just saying that this is not time for him to go up to the feast yet that's not because he lacks control by these Jewish leaders who are already baiting for blood and waiting for him we'll see as we go through

John's gospel that Jesus is in absolute control of his own life and will lay it down exactly when he intends to no rather Jesus is simply concerned with living every moment of his life by the father's agenda he's on a divine mission to save sinners and will not be goaded by men to deter from that mission Jesus says to his brothers that it really doesn't matter what they do with their time when they go up to the feast they can do what they like but the people of the world well they live for their own agenda they're free to do as they will in their lives of rebellion against their creator it doesn't matter what they really do but for he will live every moment of his life in obedience to his heavenly father just like mankind was intended to do that he might die as a perfect human representative bearing the weight of humans the punishment for sin he will not be distracted or tempted from that

path and what that is a wonderful truth just think for a moment how life would be if Jesus danced to the tune of his creation if he was a needy and desperate God who was so desperate for our approval if he could be moved by his creation to do their bidding endorse their behaviour massage the world people of the world with lies so they feel comfortable submit to man's agenda rather than God's what would the world be like well truth would go out the window wouldn't it God would cease to be God Jesus would never have gone to the cross he would never have lived that perfect life of obedience which was needed to be our substitute we would still be dead in our sins not knowing what the truth was and not having any idea how to attain eternal life and Jesus would have given up his throne in heaven a long time ago to a different king to the king of this world Satan that's what the world would be like if

Jesus danced to our tune so we should be so thankful that Jesus lives by the father's agenda and not his own and that he's not goaded by his creation but a world who lives for self will never ever be able to get to grips with Jesus motivation for it's so foreign to their own they will continue to be perplexed by him and not receive him unless God works a miracle in their lives by the Holy Spirit well how does this affect us going into this week well firstly some of you might be here today and you are more than aware of the fact that when you do honestly look at yourself that you realise you do naturally not want to give Jesus a fair hearing and you wonder could

[ 24 : 50 ] Jesus be right do I actually belong to this kingdom of the world that you've been talking about this biased anti God state well can I encourage you if that is you to try and fight that bias but if Jesus is right then it isn't an intellectual objection you have against him but rather a prejudicial one and none of us wants to base our life decision on our prejudices so can I encourage you give Jesus a fair hearing why not come along to the mark drama we're putting on at the end of the month sit through all the words of Jesus Christ see what he said for yourself and then decide what you think of him and if you do believe in Jesus and you do have eternal life if you're a Christian then what I'd like for you today is to go away and not be unsettled by other people's rejection of

Jesus rather to see that the reason why they object to him is not because they're intellectually superior to you not because there's something innate with them but because they belong to a different world and pray for them because it will take a miracle for them not to be perplexed by Jesus and confused by him and to actually receive him and let's finally be thankful that Jesus is not swayed by his creation he isn't driven by public opinion like the spineless politicians we know he gives us exactly what we need not what we want truth that leads to eternal life well let me pray for us father god we thank you that the lord Jesus is not like any man that we know we thank you that he was not driven by fame and celebrity we thank you that he is concerned with truth and doing your will and we thank you that he came we thank you that he has disclosed to us the truth and that truth when believed leads to eternal life and we thank you that you've worked that miracle on our lives that we've come to believe and that we no longer reject you and we do pray father that as we reach out to the world around us that you stop help us father to be a praying people and a persevering people who keep holding out the truth of the gospel to those who do not want it who belong to a different kingdom who mock

Jesus and some would have him dead help us we pray in Jesus name Amen