

MAKE RIGHT JUDGMENTS

John 7:1-24
Key Verse: 7:17,24

Lesson #18

In this passage Jesus' brothers, the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, and the people in the temple all judged Jesus by external standards. There are also people today who judge Jesus and Jesus' people by external standards.

Jesus' brothers grew up with him in Galilee. They believed his mighty works--but they did not believe that he was from God and that his life and work was directed in detail by God. They saw him as a man, their brother. They wanted him to make use of his extra ordinary abilities in order to become famous. He should go to Jerusalem, the capital and do miracles there. If he went at Feast time, then many people from all over the world would see him and hear about him.

The Jews judged Jesus by external standards. "He has not been to school (in Jerusalem). How does he know so much?" But they didn't listen to the content of what he said. "He works on the Sabbath. How can he be a good man?" They ignored the fact that he brought the healing life of God into the life of a man who was dead in sin and sorrow. The crowds in the temple whispered about him, but they didn't talk openly because they were afraid of the Jews. They could not see Jesus clearly because they had one eye on the Jewish leaders. Thus, they also could not judge Jesus by true standards.

Jesus' conversation with his brothers shows that he is living on a different level from theirs. They were worldly men. They knew how to seize worldly opportunities and succeed in the world. They were not aware that God is working. They had no spiritual life, no aim to serve God. So they were free to come and go anytime. Jesus, however, was sent by the Creator God. His purpose was not to gain worldly fame and popularity and glory for himself. Because he sought the glory of God who sent him, he must be honest with the men of the world. Because he keeps telling the world that its ways are bad, the world hates him. When he went to Jerusalem, it was not to increase his popularity and fame. The Jews aware seeking to kill him. When he spoke the truth of God in the temple in Jerusalem they hated him all the more. Jesus did not compromise with the world; he challenged its evil. But Jesus did not speak and work on his own authority, or according to his own time-table. He taught what God gave him to teach. He came and went according to God's leading. "The right time" was God's time.

In this passage Jesus tells us how we can make right judgments and how we can know the truth.

First, we must open our minds and hearts to really listen to God's word. Some people are so interested in how the Bible writers could know the things they wrote and how they could write such a book that they do not really study the contents of the Bible. We must study the contents with a humble heart and mind.

Second, The Christian life is not based on legalistic rules but on a personal relationship with Jesus. The Jews were legalists. Some people study the Bible in order to find ethical rules for living. This is good, as far as it goes. The rules in God's Book are indeed the best. But this is not enough. A life built on legalistic rules will fail. The Jews said that Moses' Law was absolute, but they themselves could not keep it. They tried to kill Jesus, thus breaking the law, "Thou shalt not kill." They criticized Jesus for breaking the Sabbath law, but they themselves broke the Sabbath law when it was necessary.

Third, We must seek the truth with a desire to live by it. If we only have academic interest in truth and no commitment to follow it, we cannot know the truth. We must seek to know God's will so that we can follow God's will. If we only study in order to acquire knowledge so that we may be honored and respected as knowledgeable people, then we can never know the truth. We must study prayerfully with a deep desire to learn and obey God's will (17). Jesus said, "Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment.