

# Peer Pressure and Unbelief

John 7:45-53

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**Introduction:** Why did the ancients believe that the Earth was the center of the universe while Copernicus and Galileo had proven that it was the Sun? Why did doctors think that draining the blood out of people would cure fevers when most patients were not helped by the treatment? On a more modern note... Why do people believe in "Global Warming" while the average temperatures of the earth are going steadily down? Or that Islam has nothing to do with the worldwide war with Islamic Terrorists or that you can get out of debt by borrowing more money? What is it that causes people to ignore what is right in front of their eyes and is screaming to be heard in favor of a world view to the exact contrary?

John's gospel offers one dominant explanation. "It is what everyone else believes" Put another way... "it is what the people we want to be with or admired by believe." When we talk about children we call it peer pressure, but it is certainly not confined to young people. They suffer the most from it, of course because they have not yet learned that life goes on just fine without everyone liking you. Sadly, this desire to **NOT** stand out is one of Satan's most useful ways to keep people from trust in Christ. Let's read John's account of events that took place as the Feast of Booths was winding down in Jerusalem.

**John 7:31-32** <sup>31</sup> But many of the crowd believed in Him; and they were saying, "When the Christ comes, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?" <sup>32</sup> The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about Him, and the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to seize Him.....

**John 7:45-53** <sup>45</sup> The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, "Why did you not bring Him?" <sup>46</sup> The officers answered, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks." <sup>47</sup> The Pharisees then answered them, "You have not also been led astray, have you?" <sup>48</sup> "No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he?" <sup>49</sup> "But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed." <sup>50</sup> Nicodemus (he who came to Him before, being one of them) said to them, <sup>51</sup> "Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?" <sup>52</sup> They answered him, "You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that **no prophet arises out of Galilee.**" <sup>53</sup> *Everyone went to his home.*

**But many of the crowd believed in Him [7:31]:** Verse 31 brings out the division in Israel just 6 months before Christ's crucifixion. What follows is the debate....

**"When the Christ comes, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?":** His miracles were having the desired effect upon the people of Israel. Miracles are not the norm in the Bible! We tend to forget that. The Bible records about 6,000 years of human interaction with God. During that time there were only three periods of about 100 years each in which God poured out miraculous signs and wonders through His prophets and preachers. There was Moses and Joshua when God gave the

Law. Centuries later there were Elijah and Elisha when God began to prophecy to Israel through them and then much later, and after nearly 400 years of silence on the part of The Lord, Jesus appeared performing such extraordinary signs that many of those present were fully persuaded that He had come from God. This is the purpose of miracles and signs and wonders! They are to authenticate the message, both spoken and written, that God is giving to mankind.

**John 10:25** <sup>25</sup> Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me.

**John 10:37-38** <sup>37</sup> "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; <sup>38</sup> but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father."

**The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about Him, and the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to seize Him [7:32]:** So here is the antithesis of the belief of the people. The religious leaders have the exact opposite reaction to Christ's miracles. They want to silence Him. They want to kill Him if necessary. Their discussion reveals how confused and divided they were.

**John 7:40-44** <sup>40</sup> *Some* of the people therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, "This certainly is the Prophet." <sup>41</sup> Others were saying, "This is the Christ." Still others were saying, "Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He? <sup>42</sup> "Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" <sup>43</sup> So a division occurred in the crowd because of Him. <sup>44</sup> Some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

The "officers" were Levites who were tasked with keeping order in and around the temple. There were a lot of people during the feasts and they could get unruly as we have seen throughout the gospel accounts. Here we have a perfect example of the kind of sharp contention that Jesus engendered. Many believe, but others wanted Him dead.

**The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, "Why did you not bring Him?" [7:45]:** So....while the feast was winding down on that last and eighth day.....Jesus preached to the crowd offering them the water of life as a spiritual spring. Thirst quenching spiritual satisfaction for the meaning of life producing eternal life in heaven with God. It was during this time that the Temple Police were sent to arrest Jesus by those who hated Him so much. They were in the crowd that day. They heard the invitation to come and drink. They had seen the miracles and looked into the face of the otherwise humble Galilean. They had their orders. They had the authority. They simply did not act on either of them.

**The officers answered, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks." [7:46]:** They do not give a direct answer to the question, but it is an answer nevertheless. These men who were born into their positions and have been religiously trained and sanctified for the service of God since they were born. These men who were tasked with the worship of Israel day in and day out and who have been schooled in the law and the prophets and have heard every great Rabbi that has ever spoken in Jerusalem....these

officers had never heard anything like what Jesus said before. Jesus stood out from the crowd of teachers that inhabited Jerusalem in that day. Even when He was just a boy He had this effect on people.

**Luke 2:46-47** <sup>46</sup> Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. <sup>47</sup> And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.

**The Pharisees then answered them, "You have not also been led astray, have you?:** Translation...."are you as weak minded as the rest of these people out here? You work for us, you are elite religious people. You have been trained. The rest of these people are rabble....we tell them what to do and what to think and what to believe. You guys have not become one of them....have you?

This is the opening salvo. It is the first wave of an emotional and intellectual browbeating that will be poured out on these men. It has been a while since anyone has done this to me, but I can still remember the last time pretty well. There was a ring leader who spoke to others around me publicly in my hearing. He was in full attack mode but used this tactic. "You don't actually believe, counter to all known science, that men were created by a God? You don't actually believe that what has been proven beyond doubt to have taken billions of years happened in just six days? You call yourself educated and you believe something like this?"

**"No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he?:** You don't see any of us believing in Him do you? Remember now....The officers worked for and were accountable to these guys. This is why a precinct in Philadelphia could vote 100% in the last election for the same candidate. And this is how the same crowd that expressed belief could cry out for Christ's murder just six months later.

"If you want to be in good standing with us," these Pharisees said, you better notice which way you are to believe concerning this Jesus guy! But they are just getting started.

**"But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed.":** These people that you are siding with and being swayed by, they are ignorant and uneducated. This is exactly the tactic used on believer today in our schools, workplace and government. If you believe in Creation it shows that you are ignorant and uneducated. Who wants to be thrown into that category. There is no recognition, for example, of the fact that the faculty of CRI has 30 professors with 35 earned doctorates from accredited Universities among them. Their understanding of the data researched is summarily dismissed with an assertion that they are religious ignoramuses while we are men of science.

AND....they get what they deserve. This crowd has had curses called down on them they tell the officers. WOW! Not much has changed in 2,000 years. Representative Whitehouse of Rhode Island said the day after the Tornado in Oklahoma, that the people of that place were to blame for being opposed to Global Warming and environmentalism. In other words...."don't come crawling to us for help. You are the ignorant and the uneducated and the accursed. You don't see any of us believing what you believe do you! This is a political example of something that happens day in and day out in

colleges and universities and work places. "You don't see any of us believing in Christ and His miracles, teachings or claims!

**Nicodemus (he who came to Him before, being one of them) said to them:** But wait! Here is Nicodemus who according to Jesus was "The Main Teacher of Israel." Now don't get too excited here just yet. This is way short of a profession of faith on Nicodemus' part. We won't get anything like that for a long time. In fact we have no overt confession of faith from Nicodemus in the Scripture. We do know, however that he came out publically and claimed the body of a man executed for blasphemy and paid for His burial.

**John 19:39** Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight.

**"Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?":** This is an appeal to Scripture. That was their law. The Pharisees and Scribes and Sadducees were all very dismissive about the Scripture when it came to Jesus. Even the Romans paid more attention to justice than this group of snakes.

**Acts 25:16** <sup>16</sup> .... it is not the custom of the Romans to hand over any man before the accused meets his accusers face to face and has an opportunity to make his defense against the charges.

Nicodemus, unbeknownst to the rest had in fact, already done this personally. He had considered what Jesus said. It seems apparent that the religious leaders had not. They were obsessed with themselves and their position in their culture. Now remember, we began by asking what can get ordinary people to believe things that are clearly nonsense? Why do we let people teach our children things that are not proven as if they were? Because, purveyors of lies use the same tactic in every generation. Woe to the man or woman who does not go along.

**They answered him, "You are not also from Galilee, are you?:** This is a slur! Just like the congressman who branded the citizens of Oklahoma, ignorant people deserving of their fate. He might as well have called them Okkies or hicks or sod-busters or the like. You are not from Galilee are you. And the worst town in Galilee? DO you know what it was? Yes!! Nazareth. Nathanael gave voice to a common proverb in Israel when he first met Jesus....

**John 1:45-46** <sup>45</sup> Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and *also* the Prophets wrote-- Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." <sup>46</sup> Nathanael said to him, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

**Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee.":** You would think that someone with the position of Chief Teacher of Israel would be slurred and then spoken down to like this, but this is Satanically driven unbelief. It ignores obvious realities, will not consider truth claims and does not want to discuss the issue. It simply wants all assertions about God and His Son to cease. If the assertions are preaching it must be

stopped. If there is a call for an objective investigation into the claims of Christ then it must be ridiculed as beneath them. Even when one is highly educated and would otherwise be admired. If such a person would dare to suggest that God is true and Christ is demonstrably His True Son then that person is ridiculed, demeaned and insulted.

So what about the bold claim of the Pharisees? “Anyone who had conducted any real study knows that there are no prophets who come out of Galilee!” John does not record Nicodemus’ response here, but I think it is safe to assume that such a man was beginning to see that his colleagues, in an orgy of jealous hatred and rage, had taken leave of their senses. Here is the reality of that assertion.

**Jonah was from Galilee!!!** And he is one of the prophets. Gath-hepher is in the heart of Galilee as anyone in Israel would have known perfectly well.

**2 Kings 14:25** <sup>25</sup> He restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, which He spoke through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher.

Beside that....Nahum and Hosea were probably also from Galilee. Hosea preached exclusively in Galilee.

Those schooled in the Scripture could not remember the Scripture! Those who knew what the Messiah would look like and do and what He would say, could not acknowledge Jesus when he looked like, acted and spoke like the Messiah. Jesus pointed this out...

**John 5:38-40** <sup>38</sup> "You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent. <sup>39</sup> "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; <sup>40</sup> and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.

The entire Scripture is about Jesus Christ. It was given to point to Christ. The light of His identity grew brighter with every passing century until it was shining like the sun in its brilliance right before the eyes of the men of Israel. The light of the world who....

**John 1:11-12** <sup>11</sup> .....came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. <sup>12</sup> But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name,

Like our world today....unbelief uses our human desire for acceptance and standing against us. No one wants to be considered, much less called..."A FOOL!" We want people to think we are up to speed and somewhat educated. We know that if our boss thinks we are too stupid to believe something that everyone else knows is true then we are not going to get that promotion. If your teacher thinks that you reject what he teaches you, then you are not going to get that "A." If your friend think that you don't know which way is up you are not going to get invited to that event, party or gathering.

This is why the church in much of the world is underground. When it is out in the open it is pounded, persecuted and marginalized. Their solace in this world is with one another. BUT...they know and accept this reality. The doctors, lawyers, physicists, chemists, and professors who are not intimidated into silence are willing to accept their fate.

In America today, the church chooses another course. We will be silent and we will embrace the worlds education, explanation of origins, gender roles, and even theories about everything else. We will prove to unbelievers that we are not the uneducated rubes they say we are.

**CONCLUSION:** This is what Jesus intended when He said...

**Mark 8:34-38** <sup>34</sup> And He summoned the crowd with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. <sup>35</sup> "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. <sup>36</sup> "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? <sup>37</sup> "For what will a man give in exchange for his soul? <sup>38</sup> "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels."

Jesus knew that an infinitesimal number of people would actually be killed for Christ. BUT...almost everyone would be placed in a position of having to deny himself. Subordinate your own feelings, hopes and ambitions to your love for Christ. When you do this you really feel as though you are forfeiting your life and its ambitions. But the entire focus of Christ's earthly teachings is to the contrary. He is offering to replace a finite, earthly life with an infinite and eternal one.

The question is still valid....After you get what you want in this world...you will die and leave it all to another. Solomon knew this well. He tried to gain the whole world and only concluded....

**Ecclesiastes 5:13-16** <sup>13</sup> There is a grievous evil *which* I have seen under the sun: riches being hoarded by their owner to his hurt. <sup>14</sup> When those riches were lost through a bad investment and he had fathered a son, then there was nothing to support him. <sup>15</sup> As he had come naked from his mother's womb, so will he return as he came. He will take nothing from the fruit of his labor that he can carry in his hand. <sup>16</sup> This also is a grievous evil-- exactly as a man is born, thus will he die. So what is the advantage to him who toils for the wind?

Why does this matter? Because it explains to you why you are the way you are. You are not just the worst Christian who ever lived. You are not just a coward when it comes to owning Christ and being His witness to a dying world. You are the object of scorn by Satan, the god of this world. It vital to him that we do not reveal Christ to our neighbors and friends. Satan is deeply concerned about Christ being loved, trusted and followed because he knows that.....

- It is not morality that will change a man's heart and wash away His sins. IT is Jesus who will do that.
- It is not legalism or law keeping that will make you righteous...ever! IT is Christ who will do that.
- It is not Christianity that will destroy this world and establish a kingdom! It is Christ who will do that.

People say to me all the time that they think persecution is coming to America and what do I think. I think it never really left. It is just that the church in our generations has loved the world and the things in the world. There is no persecution of the church in America. Just of Christ. The church can avoid persecution like we have been seeing here in John very easily. She just needs to be intimidated into silence or caused to love the world more than she loves her Savior and His Words to her.

**1 John 2:15-17** If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. <sup>17</sup> The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

What will it be for you then? Is Christ worth owning to you? Do you have any interest in understanding and embracing the "hard" sayings of Christ? Would you prefer His approval or the approval of the world? Remember...you cannot have both! You must chose one. Neutrality was never one of the options Jesus offered to men:

**Matthew 12:30** <sup>30</sup> "He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.

Satan has a purpose in this world and it can be summed up pretty easily. He wants to hide Christ from men. Religion is fine! Morality is fine! Education and culture are fine!! Legalism and ritual are fine! Even Bible believing Christianity is just fine! But not childlike and undiluted trust in the words, works and love of Christ. That is NOT FINE with Satan or His world. Christ exalted and trusted is the true threat and the devil knows that! The question this morning is...**DO YOU KNOW IT?**

**2 Corinthians 4:3-7** <sup>3</sup> And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, <sup>4</sup> in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. <sup>5</sup> For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup> For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. <sup>7</sup> But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves.