

**"Why Should I Believe in Him?"**  
**(John 7:14-52)**  
**Pastor Peter Yi**  
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**(John 7:14-52)**

<sup>14</sup> Not until halfway through the festival did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach.

<sup>15</sup> The Jews there were amazed and asked, "How did this man get such learning without having been taught?"

<sup>16</sup> Jesus answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me. <sup>17</sup> Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. <sup>18</sup> Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him. <sup>19</sup> Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?"

<sup>20</sup> "You are demon-possessed," the crowd answered. "Who is trying to kill you?"

<sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them, "I did one miracle, and you are all amazed. <sup>22</sup> Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a boy on the Sabbath. <sup>23</sup> Now if a boy can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing a man's whole body on the Sabbath? <sup>24</sup> Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly."

<sup>25</sup> At that point some of the people of Jerusalem began to ask, "Isn't this the man they are trying to kill? <sup>26</sup> Here he is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying a word to him. Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Messiah? <sup>27</sup> But we know where this man is from; when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from."

<sup>28</sup> Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, "Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on my own authority, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, <sup>29</sup> but I know him because I am from him and he sent me."

<sup>30</sup> At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come.

<sup>31</sup> Still, many in the crowd believed in him. They said, "When the Messiah comes, will he perform more signs than this man?"

<sup>32</sup> The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about him. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest him.

<sup>33</sup> Jesus said, "I am with you for only a short time, and then I am going to the one who sent me. <sup>34</sup> You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come."

<sup>35</sup> The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we cannot find him? Will he go where our people live scattered among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks? <sup>36</sup> What did he mean when he said, 'You will look for me, but you will not find me,' and 'Where I am, you cannot come'?"

<sup>37</sup> On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. <sup>38</sup> Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." <sup>39</sup> By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

<sup>40</sup> On hearing his words, some of the people said, "Surely this man is the Prophet."

<sup>41</sup> Others said, “He is the Messiah.”

Still others asked, “How can the Messiah come from Galilee? <sup>42</sup> Does not Scripture say that the Messiah will come from David’s descendants and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?” <sup>43</sup> Thus the people were divided because of Jesus. <sup>44</sup> Some wanted to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him.

<sup>45</sup> Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and the Pharisees, who asked them, “Why didn’t you bring him in?”

<sup>46</sup> “No one ever spoke the way this man does,” the guards replied.

<sup>47</sup> “You mean he has deceived you also?” the Pharisees retorted. <sup>48</sup> “Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him? <sup>49</sup> No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law—there is a curse on them.”

<sup>50</sup> Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier and who was one of their own number, asked, <sup>51</sup> “Does our law condemn a man without first hearing him to find out what he has been doing?”

<sup>52</sup> They replied, “Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee.”

As we explore this passage, in fact as we explore this gospel one of the questions the author is trying to answer is, “Why should I believe in him?” “Why should I believe in Jesus?” “Why should I bank all of my hopes and dreams, even all of my life in this person?” “Why should I drop everything and follow him?” “Why should I forsake all other loves and love him?” “Why should I find my joy only in him?” “Why should I let go of all self-salvation projects and trust only in the salvation that he gives?” That’s what it means to believe? In fact John tells us very candidly why he wrote this gospel in the first place. He writes near the end,

But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (**John 20:31**)

John is saying that he wrote his gospel so that the reader might believe. Believe what? Believe that Jesus is the Messiah. He is God’s anointed, God’s chosen person, but he’s also the Son of God, meaning he himself is God. If we believe that, then we will have life in his name. He’s talking about the fullness of life now, an overflowing life, and he’s also talking about eternal life. Life forever in a relationship with God and Jesus Christ.

That’s the question we are going to try and answer today is, “Why should I believe in him?” One of the reasons you and I should believe him is because of what he said, because of his teaching.

What makes a good teacher? Think of your most memorable teachers. What made them so good?

Well, first content. He’s got to know his stuff. She needs to be an authority on the subject she’s teaching. For example, in seminary, do you know what makes a good professor of preaching? One who has preached, and has preached a lot. One who has studied different preachers throughout the generations. One who has studied thoroughly what the Bible teaches on how to preach, what to preach, why to preach, and so on. Well, it also helps to be a good preacher.

He needs to believe what he teaches. You might call that passion. You can tell that she is excited about the material she is teaching. And of course she wants you to catch that same passion.

A good teacher wants their students to actually learn. It's not just the transfer of information. The goal is understanding. She asks good questions. She uses different tools and techniques to get the teaching across.

Well, those are just some of the things that might make a good teacher. What about with Jesus? What do we know about his teaching? Rarely do we have as the goal of teaching, for the pupil to say, "I will follow you" or even rarer, "I believe in you." Sure, we might want to study the leadership of Winston Churchill and say, I want to learn from him. Or we might have looked at the business savvy of Steve Jobs and concluded that your life's goal is to work at Apple and learn from him. Even when we go to a church, we don't listen to the preacher to place our faith in him or to become his follower. So, what was it about Jesus, and what was it about his teaching that brought about such strong reactions to him. Remember some did believe in him, in fact many did. Others will still trying to figure it out. They were contemplating and thinking through what Jesus had said. Still there was another group that flat out refused to believe. In fact, they wanted him dead. Let's take a closer look.

If you remember, at this point in the story, Jesus is in Jerusalem attending the Feast of Tabernacles. This celebration occurred in the fall and it signified not only giving thanks to the Lord of the fall harvest, but also remembering the God of their ancestors, the God who delivered the Israelites from Egypt during the time of Moses and it was during this Feast that we are told that Jesus taught. He went up to the temple and began to teach. As a result of his teaching, the people were amazed. They asked, "How did this man get such learning without having been taught?" All religious leaders back in the day went to school and learned under their professors. Even the Apostle Paul, we are told, had learned under the famed professor Gamaliel, but Jesus had no such schooling and yet, his teaching was beyond anything they had ever heard before. This is recorded in all the gospels. Even when Jesus was an early teen we are told he went to the temple and blew away the teachers with the questions he asked. And later when Jesus began his ministry and began to teach, it was at a totally different level. How? Let's be more specific.

#### The source of his material

Jesus tells us in this passage, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from the one who sent me." Jesus says that everything that he teaches has its source in God. That's very different from all other scholars. What do most all scholars do? They cite the experts. Pastors do it all the time. John Calvin wrote...Augustine said...Jonathan Edwards preached these words. We even quote many living sources...We quote from our favorite living pastors that have more credibility, more recognition, more notoriety, more intelligence and experience. Even yesterday, at life group leaders training I had 30 minutes to teach on the subject of tolerance and intolerance in our culture. And I basically spent 30 minutes summarizing and regurgitating another author. I don't think I contributed an original thought in the entire lecture. But Jesus doesn't quote the latest scholars or experts.

Here's my reference to a higher authority. Commentator Don Carson points out that with the Old Testament prophets, they says, "Thus says the Lord" having received a word from God, they become God's mouthpiece, his loudspeaker, but with Jesus it's different. What he is saying is this. Everything that I say is what God says. And you can verify that for yourself by going to the Scriptures. That's why Jesus often began his teaching with the words, "I tell you the truth" which in older English was translated "Verily, verily," which in the Greek was, "Amen, Amen." The prophet is only a messenger. Jesus is the very voice of God.

If we were to dig into this a bit deeper we can also say this. The Christian religion (and the Jewish religion for that matter) is based on revelation—not the book of Revelation, but the idea, revelation. That means that Christianity exists because God has chosen to reveal himself to us. He reveals himself to us in history, through real events that have occurred in history. And he reveals himself to us in written form, what we know as the Bible. The Bible that you are holding in your hand is God's revelation to us. Everything that God wanted us to know about himself, about us, about both the physical and spiritual world, about sin, about salvation, about meaning, about purpose, everything we need is found here.

So, Jesus is saying that the teaching that I'm giving you, the content of the words that are coming out of my mouth, are the very words of God himself. He's going straight to the source. He's providing God's revelation.

#### His teaching is verifiable.

This means his teaching can be validated. It can be proven to be true. What's the test that he gives? He says in verse 17, "Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own." Now, what in the world does that mean?

Well, you see that he is giving us a way to prove if Jesus' words, his teaching is truly from God or something he himself has made up. And the way is to do the will of God. What Jesus says here is nothing short of astounding. Look at what's going on. He's gives an experiential test. Jesus says, commit yourself to do the will of God. That means, commit yourself to obey the law of God, to keep the commandments, all of them. And as you get on that journey, it'll lead you to see if what Jesus teaching is from God or not. How?

First, in trying to obey the law, each of us will discover how utterly unable we are to obey it. We transgress the law repeatedly, daily, over and over again. We are lost causes and so, in trying to obey the law of God we discover that we are sinners, law-breakers, not just occasionally, but perpetually. Thus we become deserving of God's judgment and wanting of his grace. This is one of the purposes of the law. It's not meant to see how well we measure up. Rather it's meant to show us we fall way, way short. It's meant to say yes and amen to Paul's words, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We're supposed to say, "That's me!"

In trying to keep the law, and failing miserably, we come to understand that we need atonement. We come to understand that payment must be made for our sin, a blood payment. The law told us that the blood of animals had to be spilled to atone for our sins, but still, even after all that bloodshed, we weren't any less sinful. Trying to keep the law is meant for us to ask, "Is there not a once and for all atonement?" "Is there not something, perhaps even someone that could atone for all of my sins?"

In other words, the problem with many seekers is that they are unwilling to do what Jesus said. Are you willing to commit your life to do the will of God? If you are committed to doing that sincerely, then you will come to discover that what Jesus teaches is in fact the very words of God.

### His motivation

In verse 18, Jesus says, “Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him.”

Now, this is an interesting statement. In the academic world your success is based on your contribution to the academic society. We’ve all heard that adage, “Publish or perish.” That’s how a scholar, a teacher, makes a name for himself, and for his university, for his company. All the tech companies, biomedical companies, pharmaceutical companies, automotive companies say it’s for the betterment of humankind, but we know the real reason. It’s for my glory! It’s to be on top of the mountain. It’s to receive all the praise and accolades. It’s so that I can be filthy rich. It’s for my glory.

However, here Jesus says, my objective is not to gain personal glory, at least not by trying to make a name for myself. The glory I seek is the glory that comes from God. What’s astounding about this statement, knowing what we know about Jesus, being God, being inherently glorious, being inherently deserving of all glory, says, “I’m not teaching to gain personal glory. All I care to do is bring glory to God.” That’s a man you can trust.

This is true especially in the Christian world. When we see false humility in secular leaders, we accept it. We say, “That’s human nature.” I get it, but when a person sniffs personal glory seeking in a pastor, it stinks and it stinks, bad. What’s equally true is that when we come across a Christian leader, who only cares to honor and glorify God, truly, sincerely, with his words, actions, and especially his heart, that’s what we want from our leaders, is it not? We say, this is right, this is the way it’s supposed to be. Christian leaders are not supposed to toot their own horn, they’re not supposed to self-promote. They shouldn’t be talking about themselves more than they talk about God.

This is what Jesus is appealing to. He’s saying, check my motives. Listen to what I’m teaching, and see if my motives are self-serving. You will find that they are not.

There is so much more to be said about Jesus teaching...the actual content, the authority, the heart piercing effectiveness, the boldness, the compassion, the clarity, the simplicity, the creativity, the story telling, the use of parables, the conviction, and on and on, but we’ll have to stop here.

### **The response**

What should the response be to Jesus? Should we believe in him? When we look closely at today’s passage we’ll discover that people had a wide variety of responses to Jesus. Let’s look at some of them.

Some heard what he said and decided he must die. They wanted to arrest him and get rid of him. It was a complete rejection, not only of his teaching, but of him. I’m sure no one here who wishes that upon him, but for some reason, we’ve completely rejected him. The thing with Jesus is this. You can’t just have part of him. You can’t pick and choose which teachings to accept and which to reject. You either take all of him, or you reject him altogether. I hope you will not remain here.

Yet there was another group of people who were uncertain what to think. They didn't know if they should believe in him or not. Listen to some of their responses:

<sup>25</sup> At that point some of the people of Jerusalem began to ask, "Isn't this the man they are trying to kill?" <sup>26</sup> Here he is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying a word to him. Have the authorities really concluded that he is the Messiah? <sup>27</sup> But we know where this man is from; when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from."

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Still others asked, "How can the Messiah come from Galilee?" <sup>42</sup> Does not Scripture say that the Messiah will come from David's descendants and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?" <sup>43</sup> Thus the people were divided because of Jesus. <sup>44</sup> Some wanted to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him.

<sup>45</sup> Finally the temple guards went back to the chief priests and the Pharisees, who asked them, "Why didn't you bring him in?"

<sup>46</sup> "No one ever spoke the way this man does," the guards replied.

This is a good place to be. It's okay not to be sure. It's okay to mull over the evidence. It's okay to continue to learn and investigate. It's okay to remain on the journey of discovery, but stay on. Don't get off. Continue to pursue, not just his teaching, but his person, because eventually and ultimately his teaching will lead you to him.

Then lastly, there were those who believed in him:

<sup>31</sup> Still, many in the crowd believed in him. They said, "When the Messiah comes, will he perform more signs than this man?"

They were convinced. Based on the signs and the evidence, they had concluded that Jesus must be the long awaited Messiah. I know there are many in this room who already believe, but perhaps there are some of you who are really close, but still haven't believed in Jesus. Let me ask you this question. Has Jesus given you a reason not to believe? Is there a good reason not to believe? What about this question? Could you find a better Savior than Jesus? Could you find in one person what you find in Jesus? Could there be anyone who could love you more than him, who would sacrifice for you more than what Jesus sacrificed for you? Stop sitting on the fence, stop standing at the door. It's time to get off. It's time to walk in.

Let's pray.