

He Loved Me...

He Loves Me Lots

The Gospel of John

Text

7:1-24

Topic

Jesus' brothers do not believe He is God in human flesh dwelling among them.

Title

"He Ain't Heavenly, He's Our Brother"

All I really need to know I learned on Saturday mornings watching *The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle*.

- I learned history from Mr. Peabody.
- I was exposed to the Classics from *Fractured Fairy Tales*.
- *Dudley Do-Right of the Mounties* provided a moral compass and taught me that 'character counts.'
- Critical thinking was the purview of *Aesop's Fables*.

I later learned that Aesop was a sixth century Greek storyteller. His fables would illustrate a wise saying. For example, the following is attributed to him:

"Beware that you do not lose the substance by grasping at the shadow."

We have no way of knowing if Aesop plagiarized the apostle Paul's first century letter to the church in Colossae. Paul wrote, "So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a **shadow** of things to come, but the **substance** is of Christ" (2:16-17).

Shadow and substance are illustrated during the only recorded conversation between Jesus and His brothers.

The brothers were rushing out the door to attend the annual Feast of Tabernacles. They would join the other pilgrims and erect makeshift shelters, camping outdoors for a week, to remember the Exodus from Egypt and the subsequent forty years in the desert.

God was among them in the wilderness in His own 'tent.' His glory was in the Ark of the Covenant housed in the portable tent sanctuary called the Tabernacle.

God tabernacled with Israel.

In the opening chapter of the Gospel of John we were told, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (1:14).

"Dwelt among us" can be translated *tabernacled among us.*

The brothers of Jesus, and the nation of Israel, were intent on observing a feast commemorating God tabernacling with them when all the while *God was tabernacling with them in the Person of Jesus Christ.*

The Feast of Tabernacles, and the six additional feasts, were shadows prefiguring the substance, Jesus.

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 The Shadows Diminish Jesus, or #2 Jesus Dispels The Shadows.**

#1 - The Shadows Diminish Jesus (v1-10)

At the end of the Michael Mann crime story, *Heat*, cop Al Pacino is chasing crook Robert Di Nero in a gun battle in a field at night between runways at LAX. Di Nero positions himself behind a barrier so he can surprise Pacino and shoot him. The runway lights come on causing Di Nero to cast a shadow, alerting Pacino, who shoots him dead.

He didn't shoot the shadow. The shadow revealed the substance. We don't want to mistake shadows for substance in our relationship with Jesus.

Joh 7:1 After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for He did not want to walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill Him.

Jesus was no coward, but followed His Father's schedule. It was too soon for Him to be killed, so He remained in Galilee.

He used the time to travel around ministering to folks. His calling was the Cross, but it did not keep Him from serving all along the way to Calvary.

Stay busy serving the Lord. Or get busy. Exhaust yourself. Serve with everything you've got. "I am coming quickly," He promised us in the Revelation.

Joh 7:2 Now the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles was at hand.

The Feast of Tabernacles is also called *sukkoth*, the Hebrew word for "booths" or "tents." It coincided with the harvest and was intended to be a joyful seven days of National Night's Out.

Joh 7:3 His brothers therefore said to Him, "Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing.

Joh 7:4 For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world."

Jesus had brothers and sisters (Mark 6:3):

- His younger brothers were James, Joses (or Joseph), Judas and Simon.
- He had sisters who are unnamed.

His brothers sounded like political pundits or admen with their advice. They told Jesus He needed better promotion. Maybe a manager.

The world has its methods and will always try to impose them upon the church. We must exercise discernment and not fall into the trap of thinking that a spiritual end justifies worldly means.

Joh 7:5 For even His brothers did not believe in Him.

Jesus had been living with them over thirty years.

They did not believe He was God in human flesh, tabernacling among them. It is part of what makes this exchange an intriguing substance/shadow issue.

We are not given much detail about Jesus' life before He begins His ministry, but I think it is safe to assume that He was unique. He was, after all, without sin. Think about how being sinless might have impacted their family life:

- Did His brothers ever get frustrated and say to Jesus, "You think you're SOO perfect, don't You?"
- Did they try to get Jesus to do something wrong?
- Did they blame Him for things He did not do?

Come on. You know how siblings can be.

Joh 7:6 Then Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready.

Joh 7:7 The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil.

His brothers could come and go as they please, attend the Feast or not. They were not rocking the proverbial boat. Jesus was following a prescribed course that brought Him into conflict with the world.

The “works” of the “world” are “evil.”

We are being nuked in a campaign to obliterate biblical marriage, which includes (among other things) God’s roles for men and women; God’s gift of sexuality; and His plan for the home to be the building block of a righteous society.

The apostle Paul says Satan causes spiritual blindness. “The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (Second Corinthians 4:4).

Satan blinds, then binds, in the sense that he influences nonbelievers to do his will. A kind of spiritual Stockholm Syndrome sets in.

No earthly argument, no human wisdom, not even common sense, can open blinded eyes and set free bound captives. What’s our response?

Satan’s tactics tell us that what he fears most is the preaching of the Gospel.

Spiritual problem; spiritual solution. God opens blind eyes and sets captives free. Let’s keep Him the main thing.

Joh 7:8 You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come.”

Joh 7:9 When He had said these things to them, He remained in Galilee.

Jesus refers to “this Feast.” It sounds like He was referring to at least two feasts. One commentator offers this insightful analysis: “What makes this statement remarkable is that the implied other feast is *the same feast*, the Feast of Tabernacles. The contrast Jesus makes suggests that there is a distinction between the annual Feast of Tabernacles and the true tabernacle - **Jesus Himself.**”

Joh 7:10 But when His brothers had gone up, then He also went up to the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.

Jesus did not deceive His brothers. He wasn't trying to ditch them.

D.A. Carson explains, "He is not going to the Feast when *they* say He should. The "counsel of the wicked" could not be permitted to set His agenda."

Sabbatarians are the easy example of diminishing Jesus by living in the shadows. They 'observe' the Sabbath on Saturday in conformity with the letter of the fourth commandment. Jesus is our sabbath rest, everyday.

If you go back to the shadow, you end up becoming a Pharisee.

Peter Pan's is the most famous shadow of all. It seems to have a life of its own, and it is mischievous.

As long as we remain in our current unredeemed bodies, we will be drawn to the shadows.

Watch out for mischievous shadows. The apostle Paul names some of them, saying, "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ... Let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in *false* humility and worship of angels" (Colossians 2:8 & 16-18).

It has become popular in the last few years for believers to return to what is called a higher church experience.

Robes and rituals from medieval times *seem* more spiritual when in reality they are distancing us from Jesus, diminishing Him. Be careful.

#2 - Jesus Dispels The Shadows (v11-24)

We have been saying that Jesus is the substance. If it makes it any easier to understand, we can say that Jesus is the fulfillment of all things that prefigured Him, e.g., the Feasts, foods, holy days, etc. He therefore dispels anything that He has fulfilled. We are not to continue in them, or return to them as if they would make us more spiritual.

Joh 7:11 Then the Jews sought Him at the feast, and said, "Where is He?"

"The Jews" is the term the apostle John uses for the religious authorities. They put out a BOLO for Jesus, pressuring the worshippers to be their CI's.

Joh 7:12 And there was much complaining among the people concerning Him. Some said, "He is good"; others said, "No, on the contrary, He deceives the people."

"You are without doubt the worst pirate I've ever heard of," said Norrington. Captain Jack Sparrow replied, "But you *have* heard of me."

The name of Jesus was on everyone's lips. Whether for good or for ill, they were judging Him.

If by judging him we mean evaluating His works, that's great. Jesus was going about proving He was the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament.

Why did the Jews fail to see Him for who He was? For one, they were evaluating Him by their first century politics. The 'Jesus' they were looking for was a military man who would deliver Israel from Rome. They wanted to Make Israel Great Again.

Is my Jesus the One I read about in the Bible? Or am I interpreting Him through some strong bias?

Joh 7:13 However, no one spoke openly of Him for fear of the Jews.

Gestapo tactics have no place in the church. Maneuverings and manipulations, guilting and goading, are *not* Christ-like. Don't succumb to them.

Joh 7:14 Now about the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and taught.

Joh 7:15 And the Jews marveled, saying, "How does this Man know letters, having never studied?"

The Jews would later likewise marvel at the teaching of the apostles. Today we'd say, "The apostles never went to seminary."

God gifts His followers as He sees fit. He will often gift you in harmony with your natural abilities, but natural abilities must never be confused with an anointing from God the Holy Spirit. In fact, natural abilities can distract from the Lord.

Joh 7:16 Jesus answered them and said, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me.

"Doctrine" is another word for *teaching*. Jesus' teaching came directly from God the Father. It was not His rabbinical opinion or interpretation.

Teach verse-by-verse through the inspired Word of God and you can (with humility) say, "My doctrine is not mine, it came from the Father."

Joh 7:17 If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.

Joh 7:18 He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him.

Is someone promoting himself in the ministry? Is someone behaving unrighteously? It isn't ministry. It is dangerous.

Don't be overly critical, or overly skeptical. Be discerning and check things out.

The prerequisite for recognizing and receiving the Word of God is that you "will" to "do His will." Simply put, you have predetermined to be a doer of

God's Word *before* you hear it. No matter what it says, *you will obey it once you hear it.*

Dr. Michael Svigel writes, "Obedience is the *effect* of sanctifying grace, **not** the cause of it."

If you are willing to do God's will, *you can do it.* His will is presented in His Word, and obedience enabled by God the Holy Spirit.

Nike's *Just Do It* ad slogan has been wildly successful. Ours could be, *I Read It & Just Do It.*

Joh 7:19 Did not Moses give you the law, yet none of you keeps the law? Why do you seek to kill Me?"

Jesus will explain what He meant by "none of you keeps the Law" beginning in verse twenty-one. Before He does, He wants to talk about the elephant in the Temple. The authorities wanted Him dead.

Joh 7:20 The people answered and said, "You have a demon. Who is seeking to kill You?"

Is it woke to say to someone, "You have a demon," if it's true? We can't say "crazy," or "insane" anymore.

Joh 7:21 Jesus answered and said to them, "I did one work, and you all marvel.

We deduce from verse twenty three that the "one work" was the healing of the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath.

These Jewish authorities never missed the opportunity to criticize. They would have loved blogging. Have you noticed how critical everyone is on the Internet? It seems to empower the worst in us.

Joh 7:22 Moses therefore gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath.

Joh 7:23 If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath?

Certain laws overrule others. Jesus offered the command for circumcision as the prime example. The child must be circumcised on the eighth day of life. When the eighth day fell on a Sabbath, the command to circumcise took priority.

It was the Jews who were not "keeping the law" by refusing to do good on the Sabbath.

Joh 7:24 Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

Jesus only appeared to be violating the Sabbath. In fact, He was keeping it as it was intended, making people whole.

We are told in the New Testament that Jesus comes "in the volume of the book" (Hebrews 10:7). One of the things that means is that He has dispelled **all** the shadows of the Old Testament.

One of the problems that the writer of Hebrews was dealing with was Jews returning to Judaism in order to alleviate persecution. Living in the shadows was not the solution. They must embrace the substance and receive the empowering of grace sufficient to endure.

Shadows are a danger to us all. The apostle Paul describes the tendency among believers, all of whom begin in the Spirit, to attempt to live the Christian life in the energy of their flesh.

We retreat to the shadows of legalism or traditions or intellectualism or programs or methods. We trust in material resources rather than spiritual. We must become convinced that we are complete in Jesus, having all we need for life and godly living. It is our uncertainty about this that makes the shadows so appealing.

Listen to these trustworthy saints:

- A.W. Tozer writes, "The **Spirit-filled** life is not a special, deluxe edition of Christianity. It is part and parcel of the total plan of God for His people."
- Oswald Chambers writes, "When it is a question of **God's almighty Spirit**, *never* say, 'I can't.' "

The almighty Spirit; the Spirit-filled life. You have the first, therefore you can live the second.

- God's Almighty Spirit tabernacles in each believer. He tabernacles in our church.
- If you are saved, He is in you. He is among us right now, saved or not.

How would your life look if you were walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, with what Christians like to call victory? To paraphrase Aerosmith, "Walk that Way."