

## JOHN 7:1-12

## A "NON-EPIPHANY" IS BEST SOMETIMES

*After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for He did not want to walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill Him*

*Now the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles was at hand. 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. 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." For even His brothers did not believe in Him.*

*Then Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil. You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come." When He had said these things to them, He remained in Galilee.*

*But when His brothers had gone up, then He also went up to the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret. Then the Jews sought Him at the feast, and said, "Where is He?" 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."*

If hunting, when is NOT taking a shot better than firing away? When it won't do any good. Why not? Maybe the quarry is too far away. Maybe there is too much "cover" for a clear shot. Maybe the animal is not turned the right direction so that a shot will "anchor" it. ----- During Epiphany we consider how Jesus manifested Himself—revealed Himself—as the Promised Savior and Light of the world; however, in this text we see that Jesus did NOT manifest and reveal Himself. We could call it an UN-epiphany of Jesus. Why was it so?

In the first verse we are told Jesus kept preaching and teaching in Galilee (the area near the Sea of Galilee) staying away from Jerusalem and the region of Judea, *because the Jews sought to kill Him*. Weren't the people in Galilee "Jews" also? Hadn't Joseph and Mary and other "Jewish" people from Nazareth of Galilee traveled to Jerusalem and Judea for the Passover, with Jesus going along when He was 12? Yes. They were all Jews. However, John uses the term "the Jews" in a narrower sense. He means the Jewish power-leaders in and around Jerusalem, the hardline religious leaders and political patriots, proud of their own prestige and authority—the priests, the high priest, the Pharisees, the scholars of the Old Testament so sure they kept every last rule. These "Jews" were enemies of Jesus. During His earlier visit to Jerusalem, they had wanted to kill Him. Jesus did not want to go back there now. It would render more harm than good. --- Like a hunter taking a poor shot.

We are also told the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths was at hand. It was one of those three feasts from the Old Testament for which God had said all the men should appear before Him at the tabernacle/temple. The Feast was a weeklong observance held in the seventh month—October for us—commemorating how the Lord had cared for His people for forty years when they lived in tents-tabernacles-booths in the wilderness after exiting Egypt (see Leviticus 23:33-44). The text says Jesus' brothers encouraged Him to go, to show Himself there, to "epiphany" Himself, to the world on the grand "stage" of Jerusalem.

But what's this about Jesus' "brothers"? We do know that Jesus was born of the virgin Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit. We do know that Mary's fiancé Joseph was unwilling to marry Mary when he learned she was pregnant. God sent an angel to explain to Joseph in a dream that this child was of the Holy Spirit, and Joseph married Mary. After Jesus was born, nothing in the Scripture says that Mary and Joseph did or did not have other children while Jesus was at home. However, a later passage is very convincing: *Then He [Jesus] . . . came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him. And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, . . . "Is this not the carpenter? the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" (Mark 6:1-3)*. It is true the words here "brothers" and "sisters" could mean "cousins," possibly. But note the names in Mark 6: James, Joses, Judas, and Simon. The Apostle Paul talks about conferring with "James the brother of the Lord" (Galatians 1:19). In the opening verse of the letter from Jude we read, *Jude, a bondservant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James (Jude 1:1)*. It is very likely that these two, though not part of the 12 disciples, later became prominent among the early church.

So Jesus' half-brothers encourage Him to "epiphany" Himself, show Himself, at the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem. They could sense He was leading a cause and that He was set on a mission. They tell Him to "go for it," get Himself out there, if this is His intent. Did they know of the opposition of "the Jews"? Likely so, but perhaps they were thinking that the crowds would back Him as a new popular leader and no harm would come to Him. Or maybe his half-brothers were "spoofing" Him, urging Him on to fail. Maybe not. Even if this were all well-meant

advice, there was one problem. It came from hearts that did not grasp who Jesus really was, and what He had come to do. John says, *For even His brothers did not believe in Him.* Their plan was like all earthly plans to make the church grow: Use mass marketing to promote the cause, get the name in front of the public, so it will catch on. To raise big funds whether from within the congregation or also from without, for a building project or a campaign of some sort, use earthly approaches and media. It works! However, these earthly approaches and plans forget that the Kingdom of God is a truly spiritual entity and spiritual kingdom. The Word of God presented to the heart works by the counsel of the Holy Spirit. The kingdom grows, prospers, and succeeds, not by earthly fanfare, big flash, loud music, and emotional-highs; but it grows by deep convictions of the heart.

Think about it: How many times did Jesus instruct His disciples and the crowds to tell NO one of a certain miracle? Many. Jesus was not interested in crowds following Him for a “show,” He was not interested in people being caught up with the wave and spirit of a “mob,” He was not a holder of pep rallies. Jesus came to reach into the heart. Likewise, how many times did Jesus tell anyone straight-out that He was the promised Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed one sent by God to be King, Prophet-Messenger, and Priest-to-offer-the-one-Sacrifice-for-sin? I believe it was twice—the Samaritan woman at the well, and the High Priest on the night of Jesus’ trial. He came to let the Word that He taught and message that He brought lead hearts to the conviction of faith that “Jesus is Savior from sin.” *But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life! (John 6:67-68).* In the same way Jesus’ message for you today is a message for the heart, a message of of brutal and blessed facts. “There is none that does good, no not one.” “The soul that sins, it shall die.” “I lay down My life for the sheep that I may take it up again.” “Whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life!”

The brothers of Jesus had it wrong. At best they were following mere earthly ideas, and at worst they were egging Him on into failure. *Then Jesus said to them, “My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you, but It hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil. You go up to this feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, for My time has not yet fully come.” When He had said these things to them, He remained in Galilee.* Jesus wanted no part of such an “epiphany” at Jerusalem and the Feast of Tabernacles as they were suggesting. It’s always the right time for unbelievers to do and promote what they want. Just like, for a hunter who wants to fire a bad shot, it’s always the right time. There can’t be a bad time for a bad shot. Likewise, iff one wants to do something against God, there’s never a bad time for it. Plus, a supporting cast of ne’er-do-wells will always support any bad shot—for it hinders from the real goal. The world stands behind those who hinder the Kingdom of God and of Christ—no matter wherever or however they strike. The world does not stand for Jesus and Jesus’ truth. *It hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil,* Jesus said. Just try putting something on Facebook that testifies to the Truth: co-habiting without marriage is wrong, ending the life of a child in the womb is wrong, men with men is wrong, women with women is wrong, trying to remake and retool the gender God has made you is wrong, the crucified and risen Jesus is the only Savior for these sins and those that seem infinitesimally small. Try putting any of that on Facebook and see how long before the world shows its hate for you and for Christ.

Jesus was not yearning for the approval of the world. *Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man (John 2:24-25).* There would be no epiphany at the Feast of Tabernacles such as his half-brothers suggested. It was not time for massive opposition to be stirred up. The time for such opposition would come, that is for sure, but only when the time before the Father was just right. Six months later Jesus would go up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover. That would be the breaking point. He would allow “the Jews” and Pilate to crucify Him. The blood of the innocent Lamb would free us from our captivity to sin, death, devil, and hell. Why then and not now? Was He waiting for more hearts to be won for the forgiveness of sin by the grace of God? Likely. There were many who were still uninformed. *Then the Jews sought Him at the feast, and said, “Where is He?” 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.”* People were still trying to come to grips in their hearts about Jesus. God would give them time. In six months the crowd of followers would unabashedly shout Hosanna to the Son of David! The haters would shout, Crucify Him! Then He would deliver Himself for sinners everywhere, that the Gospel of forgiveness might be preached in His name.

Jesus did go not go up to the feast His brothers were pushing. But He did go up to the feast in His own quiet way. *When His brothers had gone up, then He also went up to the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.* As it were in secret. If your idea for God’s Church is a big production, high emotion, thumping music, getting a “sugar high,” if you will, but no meat and potatoes for the hard road ahead, you’re missing something. You need to know that Jesus has redeemed you for each and every day of the grind of this sinful life. He has forgiveness and heaven awaiting you. That’s something to hold onto. This UN-epiphany is a reminder that Jesus always has the best shot in mind for you—without flash, without fanfare, but with FACTS.

So be it! Amen.

Pastor Kanzenbach---