

Series : JESUS AMONG THE SKEPTICS

JESUS VS THE WORLD JOHN 7:1-13

INTRO: YOU NEED A LOT OF FAITH TO BE A SCEPTIC

This week a new series is beginning at church that will run for some time called Jesus Among the Skeptics.

It's a great theme for a series and it will be a great series to follow every week. Jesus among the skeptics – he got a lot when he walked on earth and he still does today.

I read a book years ago by Frank Turek – **I don't have enough faith to be an Atheist.** Frank changed the way I thought about skepticism and about how I could talk to people who disagree with the gospel.

Frank said:

*“people say to me – there is no truth – so I ask is that true?
People say there is no absolute truth – and I ask is that absolutely true?
People say we can't know anything – so I ask How do you know?
People say You can't prove Jesus exists – and I ask can you prove that?”*

We could go on for along time couldn't we, but I think perhaps today while we are focusing on Jesus among the skeptics, we can assume safely that there is such a thing as truth.

And truth isn't something we decide or invent – we discover it. Whether we decide to believe it or not doesn't change that its true.

Someone said – *“Anyone who claims to be a skeptic of one set of beliefs is actually a true believer in some other set of beliefs.”*

So everybody in the world is a believer. When it comes to life and death and meaning and purpose, and God, we all believe something, and so we all have faith in something.

And in John's gospel, John intends to make it crystal clear that in the end what the world is skeptical about is - Jesus – who he is and what he did. And when it comes down to it – its Jesus vs the world when it comes to truth – about God and about us.

1. FAMILIARITY BREEDS CONTEMPT - VS 1-8

7 After this, Jesus went around in Galilee. He did not want^[a] to go about in Judea because the Jewish leaders there were looking for a way to kill him.² But when the Jewish Festival of Tabernacles was near,³ Jesus' brothers said to him, "Leave Galilee and go to Judea, so that your disciples there may see the works you do."⁴ No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world."⁵ For even his own brothers did not believe in him.

In Mark 6:3, a crowd asks about Jesus, *"Isn't this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and aren't his sisters here with us?"*

And John writes that after Jesus performed his first miracles in Cana, *"he went down to Capernaum with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples; and they remained there a few days"* (2:12).

But as you can see here, at this stage in Jesus' life and ministry his brothers seemed to be quite skeptical about Jesus. Skeptical as in – convinced he was either mad or misguided.

Their advice was that Jesus should "go public" and convince everyone he was who he said he was.

They seemed to want him to put up or shut up – and they expected him to crash and burn publicly.

In Mark 3 his brothers came to take him home because they thought he had lost his senses – i.e. was mad.

Jesus is among sceptics even when he is at home, especially at home.

And the Bible makes it clear what the nature of scepticism is: What Jesus is saying and proclaiming – about God and himself and us – cuts across what his brothers believe to be true – about God and themselves.

That is the first truth about skepticism – believing one thing means you won't believe something else.

In the case of their brother Jesus – either they were for him or against him. And they were against him at first. Familiarity bred contempt.

That they were later converted is clear, for they are described in Acts as uniting with the disciples and others in "prayer and supplication" prior to Pentecost (Acts 1:13-14).

We understand that the books of James and Jude were written by Jesus' brothers.

2. SO BLIND THEY CANT SEE - VS 9 - 11

⁹ *After he had said this, he stayed in Galilee.*

¹⁰ *However, after his brothers had left for the festival, he went also, not publicly, but in secret.* ¹¹ *Now at the festival the Jewish leaders were watching for Jesus and asking, "Where is he?"*

Then there are the Jewish leaders..... They are skeptical with a S – *vs 1 the Jewish leaders there were looking for a way to kill him*

Now John has made it clear that the timing of this event of Jesus going up to Jerusalem is the Jewish Festival of Tabernacles.

This was one of the top 3 festivals of Jewish year – Passover, Pentecost and Booths or Tabernacles (shelters)

This is important – Booths = celebrating the exodus, and God's provision of sustenance and direction in wilderness.....

And looking forward to the great day when God would send the messiah and finally fulfill Israel's destiny.....

Water and light were the two great themes of the festival and this was the most joyous festival of the year.

The leaders were so blind to Jesus that they couldn't see who he really was.

Instead of being caught up in celebrating the true meaning of the feast of booths, and on the very day that they should have had most in their mind the joy of being loved by a God who keeps his promises to send the Messiah to save

and provide and guide them to Life Eternal, they had murder on their mind, and self interest in their hearts.

On the very day they should have been most motivated to look for the coming of the messiah, they were looking for Jesus with minds closed to who he was.

That brings us to the second truth about skepticism.

The first truth about skepticism – believing one thing means you can't believe something else. You have to choose what to believe based on reasonable evidence.

The second truth is: *No amount of evidence can compel anyone to believe it.*

Belief requires assent, not only of the mind, but also of the will. While many not-Christians have honest intellectual questions, many more seem to have a resistance to Christianity.

In other words, it's not that they don't have the evidence to believe, it's that they don't want to believe."

3. DAMNED BY FAINT PRAISE – VS 12-13

¹² *Among the crowds there was widespread whispering about him. Some said, "He is a good man." Others replied, "No, he deceives the people."* ¹³ *But no one would say anything publicly about him for fear of the leaders.*

We've looked at 2 groups of skeptics – Jesus' brothers and the Jewish leaders. Both have their own selfish reasons for being skeptical about Jesus.

But then there's the ordinary people. What do they think?

2 responses – He's a good man, and He's a bad man – misleading people.

To call Jesus just good is to damn him with faint praise.....

Jesus with the rich man – Why do you call me good (teacher)?.....

Some people are happy to call Jesus a good man, a prophet, a teacher, ...

All are correct but in the way they are said, and what is meant, is to damn Jesus with faint praise.

Just good....and nothing else?

But these people seem probably to have decided in favour of Jesus – yet there is no indication that they believe in him.

The skepticism that calls Jesus good requires a logical further enquiry and commitment to why he was so good....

The other group are skeptical of Jesus because they think he is leading people astray.

But from what? Have they considered what he said and did. Looked into it. Given it a fair hearing?

This group had decided against Jesus, despite the evidence ...but at least they are thinking and talking about Jesus. Evaluating perhaps.

But the thing that stops any further discussion is the public mood, the politically correct mood, that produces fear to talk further.

Either way, what we think about Jesus, what others think about Jesus will be a binary discussion. For or against. Good or bad.

But skepticism will kill honest enquiry. If truth about Jesus is really what is being sought then having already made up our mind or refusing to consider the evidence, or being afraid to do so, will prevent us finding the truth.

1. Believing one thing means you can't believe something else. You have to choose what to believe.

2. No amount of evidence can compel anyone to believe it.

3. Third truth about skepticism is that it becomes self defeating.

CONCLUSION:

VS 8 The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that its works are evil.

Family, friends, leaders, ordinary people – all skeptical for their own reasons. Its Jesus against the world.

There are two things that Jesus said in this passage that are the key to understanding its importance, why John made sure it was recorded here.

When Jesus' brothers said – go up to Jerusalem and hit the big time – if you can

Jesus says ⁶ “My time is not yet here; for you any time will do.” ⁷ *The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that its works are evil.* ⁸ *You go to the festival. I am not^[b] going up to this festival, because my time has not yet fully come.”*

My time is not yet here, my time has not yet come.....

What time? The time when God directs Jesus to go up to Jerusalem for the greatest of all confrontations that would lead to Jesus being crucified.

And that time is not yet. Why? Because God the Father has not directed it to be so, and because Jesus has more work to do before that time.

A Battle is coming which will end with blood and death for Jesus, but He will finally defeat Satan, Sin and Death and rise again.

Today, in Australia in 2018, Jesus hour has come and is completed. He died, and we believe that on the cross he paid for our rebellion to God. And he was buried, and we believe that on the third day he rose up and busted out of death, and defeated Satan sin and death for ever.

And yet, today, there is widespread skepticism about Jesus.

“In the race of life, always back self-interest; at least you know it's trying.”
Jack Lang 1930s....

1. *Believing one thing means you can't believe something else. You have to choose what to believe.*

I am happy to let xns hold their faith as long as they don't force their faith onto me....

Everybody has faith, in something. We all believe something – xns have a reasonable faith based on evidence...

2. No amount of evidence can compel anyone to believe it.

Peter Fitzsimons – flabbergasted.....

3. Third truth about skepticism is that it becomes self defeating.

“Jesus would have to stand in front of me today.....”
Hard skepticism will kill honest searching for truth.

Jesus vs the World – we stand with Jesus. Skepticism, derision, opposition maybe even persecution.

But Jesus is Lord....