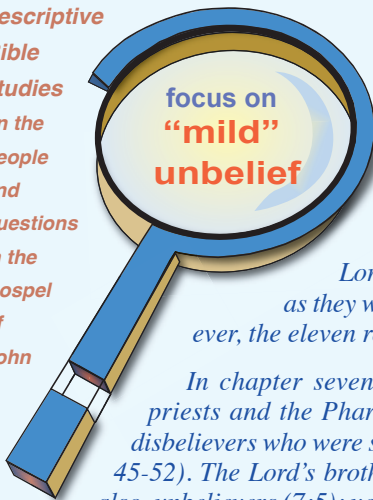


descriptive
Bible
studies
on the
people
and
questions
in the
Gospel
of
John



Is all belief in Jesus the same? Is all unbelief in him the same?

The answer to both questions is no. In chapter six we saw that many disciples were only superficial believers who forsook the Lord when he didn't do or teach as they wished (6:14-15, 60-66). However, the eleven remained faithful (6:67-71).

In chapter seven we shall see that the chief priests and the Pharisees were rigid and violent disbelievers who were seeking to kill Jesus (7:13, 32, 45-52). The Lord's brothers in 7:3-8, however, were, also, unbelievers (7:5); yet, they were trying to be helpful in a worldly way by giving Jesus advice. Many of the people were confused, not knowing what to think (7:12 and 25). So there was variety.

This is reminiscent of the Lord's parable of the soils in Matthew 13:3-8 and 18-23. The different soils represent various responses to the word of God. Some believe and produce varying amounts of fruit, while many others disbelieve in various ways and remain fruitless.

staying in Galilee

7:1 After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him. **7:2** Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand.

Jesus' brothers advice

7:3 His brethren therefore said unto him, **Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest.** **7:4** For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world. **7:5** For neither did his brethren believe in him.

Jesus' answer

7:6 Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready. **7:7** The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. **7:8** Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast; for my time is not yet full come.

going to the feast

7:9 When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee. **7:10** But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.

Let's describe . . .

Jesus' Brothers

* Were "his brothers" in John 7:3 and Mat. 13:55 some of Jesus' disciples as the Roman Catholic Church claims or his physical half-brothers, sons of Joseph and Mary? See Mat. 1:24-25?

* The Lord's brothers were unbelievers according to 7:5. That's directly stated by John, but how and why were they so? What did they believe and disbelieve or misunderstand? If you were to choose just one outstanding characteristic of their unbelief what would it be?

* The brothers' advice in 7:3-4 reveals their character and the nature of their unbelief, but so, also, does the Lord's answer to them in 7:6-8.

* Notice that "the world" is a key topic in both the brothers' advice and the Lord's response. Apparently they thought that Jesus was seeking to be popular or that he should do so. What did Jesus, himself, say about the world in 7:7?

* Another key topic in Jesus' brothers' advice and Jesus response was his work(s). They knew he was doing certain special works (7:3), but did they understand his purpose?

* What was the overall attitude of Jesus' brothers? Were they hostile or trying to be helpful? Were they dogmatic and condescending or humble listeners?

and make applications.

* How have I sometimes been like Jesus' brothers? How should and will I try to be different from now onward?

* How should I be like the Lord Jesus in dealing with the worldly advice of my unsaved friends and loved ones?

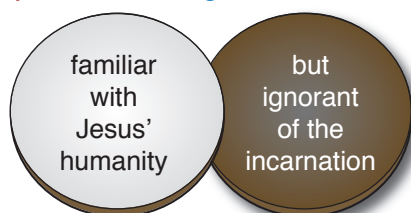
Were Jesus' half-brothers also half-believers?

Dr. Theophilus (1st comments)

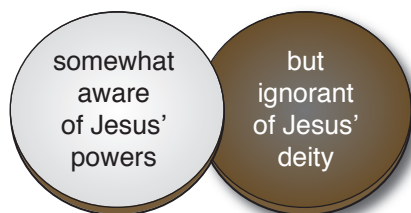
"The answer to the question above is an emphatic, "No!" according to John 7:5. However, Jesus' four brothers (Mat. 13:55) were so mild in their unbelief compared to the hostile leaders, some might wrongly think of them as half-disciples. To correct this I've described them on four coins. The front side of each coin is bright and makes a positive point and the back side of each is dark and negative like their unbelief."

"If they had had genuine faith they would have believed in the incarnation and Jesus' deity and have understood his purpose and the world's opposition."

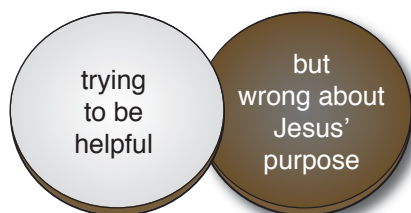
family oriented: talking to Jesus as a brother



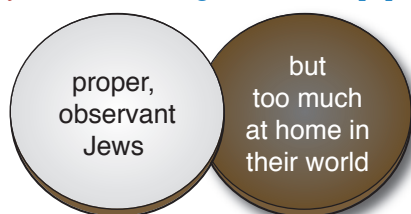
power oriented: talking about Jesus' miracles



work oriented: talking about Jesus' ministry



socially oriented: talking about Jesus' popularity



Neg (comments on the negative points)

"It great to see the dark side stressed for a change! We can summarize all these wonderful negative points by simply expanding what it says in 7:5.

They **didn't believe in the incarnation**.

They **didn't believe in his deity**.

They **didn't understand his purpose**. And they **didn't feel out of place in the world**.

So the emphasis in the passage is clearly on the negative. "His brothers **did not believe in him**." You can't understand genuine biblical faith without seeing what unbelief is really like. Negative examples help a lot."

Socie (comments on relational breakdown)

"Let's talk about what's the biggest negative. I believe it's found in 7:7, that the world hates Jesus. (Cf. 15:25.) Because of this, the world, also, hates believers like us according to 7:7, 15:18-19, and 17:14."

"On the positive side, however, Jesus' brothers apparently **later believed** in him (Acts 1:14). The enmity of the world, however, continues to this day. The breakdown of Jesus' earthly family was temporary, but the tragic breakdown between the world and God is ongoing. John stressed that from the start in 1:10-11."

Theo (comments on selecting a key negative point)

"I, also, wonder which of the negative points is the most important. If I go with what Jesus said about time in 7:6, perhaps their ignorance of his purpose on earth comes first. Yet, if I go by what he said to them in 7:7, perhaps the brothers not being hated by the world is the worst thing. Theologically, their ignorance or rejection of Jesus' deity must not be overlooked. Overall, however, I take their ignorance of the incarnation as their most basic error, since understanding how God became man (1:14) includes having insight into his deity (1:1-2) and purpose (3:16)."

Tec (comments on the brothers' basic error)

"Let's get back to basics. They were **chatting about Jesus' power, popularity, and work**. That's normal, and apparently they **wanted to help him succeed in his social networking**. So they advised him to take advantage of **social hot spots**. Basically, they viewed him as a network builder, who was trying to be popular, but was losing power since many had recently abandoned him (6:66). So I believe, their basic error was **viewing their Jewish world as a good operating system**. It was not and went up in flames in A.D. 70."

When is good advice bad?

Cal (comment of the brother's worldly advice)

"Jesus' brothers advised him on how to become more popular. They were **correct politically**, of course, but look at what they didn't say. They didn't say a single word about God. To me, that shows that they were **worldly rather than godly**. Like many Jews at the time, though they were **about to go up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles**, they were **not thinking about God** very much. Moreover, though they were **familiar with Jesus' special powers in a superficial way**, they didn't attribute his works to God or to Jesus as God. To them, it was just Jesus, their brother, doing "these things" (7:4). So, though they were **practicing Jews**, they were, also, mostly **atheistic in their practice**."

Reid (negative comments of church growth books)

"The brother's advice reminds me a lot of the **god-less** "how to" techniques advocated in church growth books and seminars. The idea that you will normally be more "successful" in ministry if you carefully choose your target audience and church location isn't a recent discovery, for that's basically what Jesus' brothers said 2,000 years ago. They were **right in a worldly way**, of course, but, as Cal said, they, also, left out God."

Dr. Evans (comments on church growth pros & cons)

"What Jesus' brothers said was common sense; so, too, is much of the advice found in the church growth books. That's one of the main reasons they've been popular with pastors for decades. It makes sense in evangelism to be friendly, for example. And we need to be reminded of that sort of thing from time to time."

"However, it is also true that when we focus more on common sense, sociology, and psychology, we have less time and energy left to focus on God, himself. Thus, there is a subtle, **humanistic** temptation in the church growth movement that has gone unnoticed by many. As a result, pleasing God and speaking out against sin (7:7) has become secondary in many contemporary churches. So I agree with Cal and Reid."

Maria (comments on Mary and her children)

"I was shocked when I first read [in Mat. 13:55] that Jesus had half-brothers and half-sisters. But after thinking about it for a long time, I'm happy that Mary and Joseph had a normal life, with **ordinary children**, as well as a special life with the Lord Jesus. I'm glad that they loved each other and God gave them a family."

"I grew up in a large [Catholic] family hearing exaggerated stories about "the holy family," but I now believe it's far better to know the truth about "the whole family," even the sad parts. The truth is that Jesus is **different** from his half-brothers because he has a different Father, God the Father, not because Mary was an eternal, sinless virgin. She was a good mother to several ordinary children, but neither she nor they were sinless."

Ed (comments on the pros & cons of parental advice)

"Jesus' brothers' **correct, but ultimately unhelpful**, advice reminds me of some of the things my unsaved parents say. Like the Lord's brothers, my mom and dad are always **trying to be helpful** and their advice is usually **correct in a worldly way**, but they don't understand that God's will and ways are different, just like Jesus was different. I always listen carefully to my parents' advice, but sometimes I can not go along with it."

Dr. Quest (comments about how to reject advice)

"How should we respond when someone's advice conflicts with God's leading and the word of God? The simple answer is that we should respond like Jesus did, by rejecting the advice and explaining why it is contrary to God's will. Here, the Lord did this by pointing out that his work was testifying against the evil world rather than trying to be loved by it (7:7) and that his time to go to Judea to be killed had not yet come (7:6 and 7:8)."

"Later, in 11:8, the disciples questioned the wisdom of Jesus going to Judea. Their **well-intentioned** advice in question form was, likewise, rejected, even though they were more **mildly opposed to God's will** than the **dogmatic but ignorant** brothers in 7:3-4. In both cases the reasons for the rejection were clearly stated."

the people Jesus' unsaved brothers	the principles (general principles)	to the point my personal applications
Jesus' unsaved brothers were well-intentioned, yet ignorant and dogmatic as they gave their worldly advice.	We should reject the worldly advice of unsaved friends and loved ones, but minister to them as we do.	