

## **BE ASSURED THAT CHRIST IS IN CHARGE**

*7 After this Jesus stayed in Galilee; he would not stay in Judaea, because the Jews sought to kill him. <sup>2</sup>Now the Jewish feast, the Feast of Tabernacles, was about to take place, <sup>3</sup>[so] Jesus' brothers said to him, Leave here and go to Judaea, so that your disciples may see the works that you are doing. <sup>4</sup>No one who wants to be known publicly does anything in private. Since you are doing these things, make yourself known to the world. <sup>5</sup>(Not even his brothers believed in him.) <sup>6</sup>Jesus said to them, The right time for me has not yet come; but any time is right for you. <sup>7</sup>The world cannot hate you; but it hates me because I testify that its works are evil. <sup>8</sup>Go up to the Feast; I will not go up to this Feast; because the right time for me has not yet come. <sup>9</sup>After having said these things to them, he remained in Galilee. <sup>10</sup>But after his brothers had gone up to the Feast, then he also went up—not publicly, but secretly. <sup>11</sup>The Jews were looking for him at the Feast and asking, Where is he? <sup>12</sup>Now among the crowds there was much quarreling concerning him. Some said, He is a good man; others said, Not so; on the contrary, he is leading the people astray. <sup>13</sup>Yet nobody would say anything publicly about him out of fear of the Jews. <sup>14</sup>At the mid-point of the Feast Jesus went up to the temple [courts], and taught ...*

*<sup>37</sup>Now on the last day, the great [day] of the Feast, Jesus stood and cried out, If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. <sup>38</sup>Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, From within him shall flow rivers of living water. <sup>39</sup>Now he was referring to the [Holy] Spirit, whom they who believed in him were to receive; for the Spirit had not yet been [given]; because Jesus had not yet been glorified. <sup>40</sup>When they heard these words, some of the crowd said, Certainly, this is the Prophet. <sup>41</sup>Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, What, does the Christ come out of Galilee? <sup>42</sup>Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the family of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David lived? <sup>43</sup>So there arose a division among the crowd because of him. <sup>44</sup>And some of them would have arrested him; but no man laid hands on him. (Jn. 7:1-14, 37-44)*

**See the attached Appendix for the Complete Text of John 7:1-52**

### **Introduction**

Despite the circumstances, you can put your confidence in Christ, because He is in charge. Margaret Hillis learned this truth in dramatic fashion.

It was January 15, 1941, and the invading Japanese army was only a few miles east of Shenkiu, the town in central China where missionaries Dick and Margaret Hillis were stationed. Margaret was alone in the mission compound—the previous day her husband had become sick and had been taken to a hospital 115 miles away—when the colonel of the Chinese army arrived at her kitchen door. The colonel announced that the Japanese were advancing towards the town and that his orders were to evacuate as quickly as possible. As he departed, the enormity of her danger suddenly overwhelmed Margaret: she was alone in a war-threatened Chinese town,

totally responsible for the safety of her two infant children, one-year-old Johnny and two-month-old Margaret Anne.

Margaret later admitted that up to that point in her life she had not yet experienced the full wonder of God's sufficiency and power to guide and protect—the full wonder of the fact that Christ is in charge. It was now—in the midst of these “impossible” circumstances—that she would personally experience that wonder, as Christ would employ something as simple as a daily calendar hanging on the kitchen wall.

By mid-afternoon the Chinese army had left. In the wake of their departure the residents began their exodus from the town in panic; that night Margaret went to bed shaking with fear. Early the next morning Margaret hurried to the kitchen to start the water boiling for Anne's bottle. As usual, she reached up to the wall calendar and tore off yesterday's date, the Scripture verse for the new day read: *“When I am afraid, I will put my trust in you”* (Psl. 56:3)—Margaret put her trust in Christ.

God's promise recorded in Psalm 56:3 sustained her through that tense day. The city was now being evacuated rapidly; some of the Chinese Christians invited Margaret to accompany them, but for the sake of her two infant children, she refused—she knew that exposure to the January cold and to those primitive conditions meant certain death for them. Through that Scripture verse (Psalm 56:3), Christ sustained Margaret; she was not to panic, but to trust.

By mid-morning of the next day the town was nearly deserted. The gatekeeper of the mission compound urged Margaret to come with him. Margaret weighed the options: The deserted city would be an open invitation to bandits and robbers, what would she do without the protection of the gatekeeper? But to expose her infant children to the cold and the primitive conditions outside the compound would be certain death for them. She declined the offer and continued to put her trust in Christ as He instructed her from Psalm 56:3.

It was noon before Margaret remembered to pull the page off of the little daily calendar that hung on the kitchen wall—the Scripture for this new day read: *“They who know your name will put their trust in you; for you, O Jehovah, have not forsaken those who seek you”* (Psl. 9:10.) As Margaret bowed her head over the noon meal, she thanked the LORD for that particular verse to sustain her at this moment. As she ate her noon meal she became aware of her next concern: more food. Fresh meat and produce were no longer coming to the town from the outlying farms, and all the shops in the town were boarded up. The goats that provided the babies' milk were still in the compound; tomorrow she would have to try to milk them herself. Margaret slept uneasily that night, worrying about how she would feed her children; sure of very little except that she should stay in the town and trust Christ.

The next morning she was awakened by the sound of distant gunfire. She knew that she must milk the goats before the actual shelling of the town began. But before handling those goats, Margaret decided to fortify herself with a bowl of rice, and with the new day's Scripture portion. She tore off the old page from the calendar and discovered Christ's promise for this new day: "*Now, therefore, do not be afraid; I will nourish you, and your little ones*" (Gen. 50:21a.) Margaret was still eating her bowl of rice and pondering the day's Scripture portion when a woman stepped into the kitchen carrying a pail of steaming goat's milk. It was Margaret's neighbor, Mrs. Lee—she explained that she had milked the goats for Margaret and since she herself had no family, she asked if she might stay with the missionary mother and her two little children. Late in the day a loud rapping at the gate set the two women's hearts pounding. It proved to be a frail countrywoman, coming to offer a live chicken and a basket of eggs. Christ had proven true to His Word; that night Margaret's heart was full of hope, she prayed that somehow the LORD would spare the town of Shenkiu and the people she loved.

The next morning Margaret rushed down to the little kitchen calendar and tore off yesterday's page, the new page read: "*My enemies shall turn back when I call for help. This I know, that God is for me*" (Psl. 56:9.) Was this too much to believe? Did Margaret dare to literally make this her prayer? As the gunfire drew closer, Margaret and Mrs. Lee began to prepare the house for invasion. By nightfall the gunfire resounded from both sides of the town; the women went to bed fully clothed, prepared at any moment to meet the Japanese invaders.

Margaret awoke abruptly in the early dawn. She was prepared to hear the crunch of military boots on the gravel, but there was nothing except a deep stillness. Cautiously the two women, each carrying one of the children, made their way to the compound entrance. When they poked their heads outside they saw the streets beginning to fill, not with Japanese soldiers, but with townspeople returning from their country hiding places. Just then the Chinese colonel re-appeared; he informed Margaret that the Japanese had withdrawn. No, the Japanese army had not been defeated; nor could anyone explain the reason for their retreat; the enemy had simply turned back. Margaret stepped back into her kitchen, fixed her eyes on that little wall calendar, and lifted up a silent prayer of thanksgiving to the LORD who is in control (*POWER*, 1/30/83, pp. 2-ff.)

How many times have we looked at the immediate circumstances surrounding our lives—marital problems, problems at work, concerns about the future, or our apparent lack of a future—trying circumstances closing in around us like some torture chamber in a horror movie, trying circumstances pouring down upon us like a great Niagara Falls—and we have failed to appreciate the wonderful fact that Christ is in control?

Despite the circumstances, we can put our confidence in Christ, because He truly is in control. That is one of the great messages contained in John chapter seven.

## I. Be Assured that Christ is in Charge; Despite the Opposition against Him

Verse 1 of chapter 7 reports that following the conflict arising over the healing of the paralyzed man in Jerusalem on the Sabbath (an event recorded in John 5,) Jesus confined Himself to Galilee: *“After this Jesus stayed in Galilee; he would not stay in Judaea, because the Jews sought to kill him.”*

Was Jesus afraid? Did He run for His life? Was He seeking a safe retreat in far off Galilee? If such were the case, how could He be our Protector and Defender if He runs away and hides from His enemies?

But such is **not** the case. Jesus did not retreat in panic and fear because He had lost control of the situation. It is not a matter that by means of His miracle and His teaching He has provoked the Jewish hierarchy to concerted action against Him, and now, having unleashed an ominous force beyond His control, He retreats to the mountains of Galilee. On the contrary, precisely because He is in control He would not give Himself over to His enemies until the appointed hour: *“Jesus said to them, ‘The right time for me has not yet come’”* (vs. 6a.) When His appointed hour arrived, our Lord went boldly forth to confront His enemies:

*So Judas came to the grove, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons. <sup>4</sup>Knowing all that was about to happen to him, **Jesus went forward**, and said to them, Whom do you seek? <sup>5</sup>They answered, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said to them, I am he. Now Judas, the one who betrayed him, was also standing with them. <sup>6</sup>When [Jesus] said to them, I am he, **they went backward**, and fell to the ground. <sup>7</sup>Again he asked them, For whom are you looking? They said, Jesus of Nazareth. <sup>8</sup>Jesus replied, I told you that I am he. (Jn. 18:3-8a)*

Our Lord assures us that He is in complete charge: *“No one takes [my life] from me; but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again. This commandment I received from my Father”* (Jn. 10:18.)

Indeed, in this very chapter, where do we suddenly find Jesus appearing? At the height of this great feast Jesus suddenly appears in the temple, in the very midst of the Jews, boldly proclaiming the Word of God and calling men to Himself (vs. 14, 37.) And what are His enemies able to do against Him?

*Some of the people who were from Jerusalem said, Is not this the man whom they are seeking to kill? <sup>26</sup>And Look! He is speaking publicly, and they say nothing to him. (Jn. 7:25-26a)*

*They were seeking to arrest him; but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come. (Jn. 7:30)*

*The Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring these things about him; so they and the chief priests sent officers to arrest him ... <sup>45</sup>Then the officers came back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, Why did you not bring him? <sup>46</sup>The officers answered, Never did a man speak like this. (Jn. 7:32, 45-46)*

Granted, within the scope of His absolute sovereignty, Christ does permit the devil to effectively, though temporarily, exert a demonic opposition—but all is ever and securely under Christ’s control. Indeed, the hour of darkness is also Christ’s hour: In the Garden of Gethsemane, when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus and lead Him away to trial and crucifixion, He declared, *“This is your hour, and [the hour of] the power of darkness”* (Lk. 22:53b.) Anticipating the cross of Calvary that lay before Him, the Lord Jesus testified, *“The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified”* (Jn. 12:23.) The hour of darkness is also the very the hour in which He gained the ultimate triumph over the devil; referring to His crucifixion and what it would accomplish, Christ declares, *“Now has come the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out”* (Jn. 12:31.)

Be assured that Christ is in charge; despite the opposition against Him.

## **II. Be Assured that Christ is in Charge; Despite the Confusion that may Reign among Men**

According to verse 12, there was much murmuring among the multitudes concerning Jesus. *“Some said, ‘He is a good man’”*—referring to the fact that Jesus had healed the paralytic and done other good works. *“Others said, ‘Not so; on the contrary, he is leading the people astray’”*—referring to the fact that they viewed His act of healing the man on the Sabbath as a violation of the Sabbath, thus making Him a Sabbath-breaker.

According to verse 15, the Jewish leaders were astounded at Jesus’ teaching, unable to figure out how an “uneducated” man could have such knowledge and authority.

When Jesus inquires of the Jews, *“Why are you trying to kill me?”* some of the crowd who came from the regions beyond Judaea and Jerusalem accuse Him of being paranoid and even demon-possessed (vs. 20.) But the people of Jerusalem rightly identify Jesus as the one whom the Jewish leaders are, indeed, seeking to kill (vs. 25.)

The people of Jerusalem further express their perplexity: The Jewish leaders were seeking to kill this man (vs. 25,) but now they do not touch him (vs. 26a.) Can it be that they now recognize Him to be the Messiah? (vs. 26b.) But the question arises, How can he be the Messiah?—the Messiah will be a mysterious figure whose origins are unknown; but, they insist, they know the origins of this man: he is the son of Joseph and Mary! (vs. 27.)

In verses 33-34 we find Jesus informing the Jews that in a little while He will depart and they will not be able to follow Him—upon hearing this, the Jewish leaders are confused as to where He is going:

*Therefore the Jews said among themselves, Where is this man going that we shall not find him? Is he going to the Dispersion among the Greeks, and [will he] teach the Greeks? <sup>36</sup>What does he mean, You will look for me, but shall not find me; and where I am, you cannot come? (Jn. 7:35-36)*

Upon hearing Jesus' teaching, some of the crowd declares, *"This is the prophet!"* They are referring to the prophet whom Moses foretold would come: *"Jehovah your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him"* (Deut. 18:15.) Others declare, *"This is the Christ!"* They rightly identify Jesus as the Messiah Himself, although they did not truly understand His mission. Still others said, "No, he cannot be the Christ, for the Christ does not come out of Galilee; it was prophesied that He would come from Bethlehem" (vs. 41b-42), they are referring to Micah 5:2, *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, [though] you are little among the thousands of Judah, [yet] out of you shall come forth to me the one to be ruler in Israel."*

But in the midst of all this confusion, Jesus is in control: quietly, but dramatically, He verifies the fact that He is the Messiah. In the midst of the feast He suddenly appears in the temple, just as it had been prophesied about the Messiah, note Malachi 3:1b, *"the LORD, whom you seek, will suddenly come to his temple."* Unbeknown to the people, Jesus was born in Bethlehem, He was of the lineage of David, and He is the incarnate Son of God—as Micah 5:2b goes on to declare, *"[his] goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."*

Be assured that Christ is in charge; despite the fact that confusion may reign among men or in your own life. We are given the assurance that the LORD is the God *"[who causes] all things to work in accordance with the plan [he has conceived] by his [own] will"* (Eph. 1:11.) That is to say, the LORD has His divinely conceived purpose and plan, and He proceeds to cause all events to interact in such a way as to secure the fulfillment of that plan. We are given the further assurance, *"for those who love God all things work together for good"* (Rom. 8:28.) As one Christian man expressed it: "Nothing happens to the Christian by chance. Sooner or later, the reasons will unravel and God's wisdom in each of His dealings will appear" (*POWER*, 8/5/90, p. 4.)

Let us take to heart the counsel presented in Isaiah 50:10b, *"he who walks in darkness and has no light, let him trust in the name of Jehovah and rely upon his God."*

### **III. Be Assured that Christ is in Charge; and Will Not Deviate from His Pre-Determined Course**



As the Feast of Tabernacles approached, Jesus' unbelieving brothers challenged Him to go to Judaea—there to perform His miraculous works and so gain a following (vs. 3.) Their reasoning was that no one does anything in secret if he wants to be known publicly (vs. 4.) Galilee was “the backwoods” of Israel, located far to the north of Jerusalem. If Jesus desires to gain a following, He should not waste His time performing His mighty works in Galilee, He should perform them in Judaea, in the vicinity of Jerusalem, during one of the great Jewish feasts so that He may be seen by the greatest number of people. The reasoning and challenge of these unbelieving men goes like this: Jesus should put on a great display of His mighty works before a national audience, thereby gaining the recognition of the entire nation of Israel.

How does Jesus respond to such a challenge? He declares, *“The right time for me has not yet come”* (vs. 6a.) The LORD is referring to the time when He would offer Himself upon the cross of Calvary, and that hour would come at the culmination of His earthly ministry, which was not yet completed.

He goes on to say, *“I will not go up to this Feast; because the right time for me has not yet come”* (vs. 8.) It would be at another Passover Feast, one or two years in the future, that Jesus would reveal Himself by means of His triumphal entry in order to fulfill His work at the hour appointed by the Father. Precisely because Christ is in charge, He will not cater to any challenge to deviate from His pre-determined course—the course appointed for Him by God the Father.

There are times when we challenge Christ to come forth immediately in triumphal procession to obliterate every last vestige of opposition and clarify every bit of confusion—we make the same prayer as did Isaiah, *“Oh that you would rend the heavens [i.e.; rip them apart as though they were a canopy] and come down, that the mountains might tremble at your presence”* (Isa. 64:1.) But once again, our Lord's reply is, *“The right time for me has not yet come.”* However, we may be encouraged by the testimony of the angels at the time of our Lord's ascension into heaven:

*Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, shall come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven. (Acts 1:11)*

Let us be faithful to imitate the example of the Apostle Paul when the LORD refused to deviate from the course He appointed for him, despite the apostle's strong pleadings:

*... there was given to me a stake in the flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me ... <sup>8</sup>Concerning this thing, three times I pleaded with the LORD to take it away from me <sup>9</sup>But he said to me, My grace is sufficient for you; for my power is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (2 Cor. 12:7-9)*

## Conclusion

Despite the circumstances we may encounter in this present world, or in our own lives, we can put our confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ, because He is in control: Christ truly is in charge!

But precisely because He is in charge, let us not expect Christ to cater to any challenge to deviate from His pre-determined course—to deviate from carrying out His purpose for the world, for the church, and for our lives—and doing so in His time and in the way He sees fit. On the contrary, let us confidently entrust ourselves to Him in all the changing circumstances of our lives, resting and rejoicing in the fact that Christ is in charge.

## Appendix: The Complete Text of John 7:1-52

*7 After this Jesus stayed in Galilee; he would not stay in Judaea, because the Jews sought to kill him. <sup>2</sup>Now the Jewish feast, the Feast of Tabernacles, was about to take place, <sup>3</sup>[so] Jesus' brothers said to him, Leave here and go to Judaea, so that your disciples may see the works that you are doing. <sup>4</sup>No one who wants to be known publicly does anything in private. Since you are doing these things, make yourself known to the world. <sup>5</sup>(Not even his brothers believed in him.) <sup>6</sup>Jesus said to them, The right time for me has not yet come; but any time is right for you. <sup>7</sup>The world cannot hate you; but it hates me because I testify that its works are evil. <sup>8</sup>Go up to the Feast; I will not go up to this Feast; because the right time for me has not yet come. <sup>9</sup>After having said these things to them, he remained in Galilee. <sup>10</sup>But after his brothers had gone up to the Feast, then he also went up—not publicly, but secretly. <sup>11</sup>The Jews were looking for him at the Feast and asking, Where is he? <sup>12</sup>Now among the crowds there was much quarreling concerning him. Some said, He is a good man; others said, Not so; on the contrary, he is leading the people astray. <sup>13</sup>Yet nobody would say anything publicly about him out of fear of the Jews.*

*<sup>14</sup>At the mid-point of the Feast Jesus went up to the temple [courts], and taught. <sup>15</sup>The Jews were astonished, inquiring, How does this man possess such knowledge, having never studied? <sup>16</sup>Jesus therefore responded to them, My teaching is not mine, but [comes] from him who sent me. <sup>17</sup>If anyone desires to do his will, he shall know about the teaching, whether it is from God, or [whether] I speak on my own. <sup>18</sup>He who speaks on his own seeks glory for himself; but he who seeks to glorify the one who sent him, he is true and there is no unrighteousness in him. <sup>19</sup>Did not Moses give you the law, and [yet] none of you keeps the law? Why are you trying to kill me? <sup>20</sup>The crowd responded, You are demon-possessed; who is seeking to kill you? <sup>21</sup>Jesus answered them, I performed one work and you are all astonished because of it. <sup>22</sup>Moses has given you circumcision (not that it originated with Moses, but with the patriarchs); and on the Sabbath [day] you circumcise a man. <sup>23</sup>If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses is not broken; [why] are you angry with me because I healed a man completely on the Sabbath? <sup>24</sup>Do not judge according to appearance, but render a righteous judgment. <sup>25</sup>Some of the people who were from Jerusalem said, Is*



not this [the man] whom they are seeking to kill? <sup>26</sup>And look! He is speaking publicly, and they say nothing to him. Can it be that the rulers indeed know that this is the Christ? <sup>27</sup>However, we know from where this man comes; but when the Christ comes, no one will know from where he came. <sup>28</sup>While teaching and speaking in the temple [courts], Jesus cried out, You know me and you know from where I came; I have not come on my own initiative, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him. <sup>29</sup>I know him; because I am from him, and he sent me. <sup>30</sup>They were seeking to arrest him; but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come. <sup>31</sup>But many of the common people believed in him and said, When the Christ comes, will he do more signs than this man has done? <sup>32</sup>The Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring these things about him; so they and the chief priests sent officers to arrest him. <sup>33</sup>Then Jesus said, I will be with you for a little while longer, and [then] I am going to the one who sent me. <sup>34</sup>You will look for me, but shall not find me; and where I am, you cannot come. <sup>35</sup>Therefore the Jews said among themselves, Where is this man going that we shall not find him? Is he going to the Dispersion among the Greeks, and [will he] teach the Greeks? <sup>36</sup>What does he mean, You will look for me, but shall not find me; and where I am, you cannot come?

<sup>37</sup>Now on the last day, the great [day] of the Feast, Jesus stood and cried out, If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. <sup>38</sup>Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, From within him shall flow rivers of living water. <sup>39</sup>Now he was referring to the [Holy] Spirit, whom they who believed in him were to receive; for the Spirit had not yet been [given]; because Jesus had not yet been glorified. <sup>40</sup>When they heard these words, some of the crowd said, Certainly, this is the Prophet. <sup>41</sup>Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, What, does the Christ come out of Galilee? <sup>42</sup>Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the family of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David lived? <sup>43</sup>So there arose a division among the crowd because of him. <sup>44</sup>And some of them would have arrested him; but no man laid hands on him.

<sup>45</sup>Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, Why did you not bring him? <sup>46</sup>The officers answered, Never did a man speak like this. <sup>47</sup>The Pharisees therefore answered them, Are you also being led astray? <sup>48</sup>Has any of the rulers believed in him, or [any] of the Pharisees? <sup>49</sup>But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed. <sup>50</sup>Nicodemus, who had come to Jesus on an earlier occasion and who [himself] was one of the Pharisees, asked them, <sup>51</sup>Does our law condemn a man without first hearing him to find out what he is doing? <sup>52</sup>They answered him, Are you also from Galilee? Search [the Scriptures], and see that no prophet comes out of Galilee. <sup>53</sup>Then everyone went to his own home. (Jn. 7:1-52)