



IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH

SERIES: JOHN (GOSPEL OF TRUTH)

LESSON: CRISIS OF FAITH

JOHN 12:36B-50

SEPT. 12, 2021

MAIN POINT

When God manifests Himself in Flesh (as Jesus), in Word, and in Work, a crisis of faith is created. Jesus encouraged people to believe in Him for the works that He did even if they questioned what He had to say.

JOHN CONTEXT

Every lesson's purpose: *"but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."* John 20:31
John continued to build the case for why a person should believe on Jesus as the Son of God and the consequence of not believing.

The hours and days are quickly closing in on Jesus and His public ministry. The people too have a short window of opportunity to respond to Him in faith. Unfortunately, John summarizes: *“Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him”* (Jn. 12:37).

By John’s chronology, Jesus is finished with what He does with the general population when this chapter closes. With the disciples we will see the following:

Chapter 13: Wash the disciples’ feet, announce his betrayal, and forecast Peter’s denial.

Chapters 14-16: His deepest, most intimate, and significant truths will be communicated to his disciples.

Chapter 17: He will record the prayer Jesus had with the Father.

Chapter 18: He will go to the Garden of Gethsamane, be arrested, tried, and executed.

INTRODUCTION

It seems Jesus wanted privacy, maybe relief from the constant threat and pressure from those who wanted him dead, maybe just a time of renewal before facing the mobs, maybe just a little more time to check in with the Father. But where did he go? Once before he sought to be alone and he went back to where *he had been baptized and heard the Father*. In that instance, John 10:40 states, “He went away again across the Jordan to the place where John had been baptizing at first, and there he remained.” Apparently he had not found much time to be alone. John 13:42 hints that he may have had ministry before some authorities: *“Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue...”*

Can you think of anything more Jesus could have done to cause people to want to trust Him as Savior? The Bible says, “he had done so many things” (12:37). Does it seem that there is more to believing on Him than just information about Him?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ SCRIPTURE TEXT JOHN 12:36-50

The passage quoted from Isaiah had been used before by Jesus. It was his explanation of why he taught in parables. Matthew 13:14-16 explains,

“Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: ‘*You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.*’ For this people’s heart has grown *dull*, and with their ears they can *barely hear*, and their eyes *they have closed*, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.’ *But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear.*”

What do you think this means? Does God make people blind who He does not want to save?

What was the point Jesus was making by bringing up Isaiah not getting a good response from the people who heard him? Do you think that people can have spiritual blindness about the gospel today, just as they did in Isaiah’s day?

It seems Jesus has found himself in the same situation Isaiah found himself. The majority of people who heard Isaiah’s message did not believe, nor did those who heard Jesus. Jesus was clear that their “blindness” had to do with their eyes and their hearts. John quotes Isaiah: “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them” (Jn. 12:40).

We see that in this experience, not only was there a crisis of *faith*, but a crisis of *courage*. *Some who did believe would not go public with it*, because they did not want to fall out of favor with their cronies. There is a social/cultural price to pay for a person who makes this vital spiritual decision. Jesus becomes a dividing line. He said he did not come bring peace (Mt. 10:34). Before John concludes his comments on this experience, he brings to light the seriousness of a person rejecting Jesus’ words about eternal life.

EXPLANATION // ...believe Jesus is the Christ...

It seems the discussions in verses 36-43 were general in nature. But something is about to change dramatically.

Verse 44 says that “Jesus cried out. . .” John had recorded an earlier experience like this. John 7:37-38 says, “On the last day of the feast, the great day, *Jesus stood up and cried out*, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” Jesus was not panic stricken, He knew the

consequences of what people were thinking and doing. *The consequences had to do with who the people perceived him to be.*

Early on in Jesus' ministry he made two statements that this discussion would underscore. Great things had happened over these three years, but these truths were still the same.

- 1) *"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."* (John 3:18)
- 2) *"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."* (John 3:36, KJV 1900)

The most pivotal issue, in Jesus' mind, about what a person decided to do about Him revolved around who people perceived him to be. Earlier Jesus had declared, "I and my Father are one" (Jn. 10:30). This was when he assured his followers that *as one*, the two of them would safely keep their sheep.

Later in his ministry, when the disciples were not quite clear about his identity, the following took place:

Philip said to him, "Lord, *show us the Father*, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? *Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.* How can you say, 'Show us the Father?' Do you not believe that *I am in the Father and the Father is in me?* The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. *Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves"* (Jn. 14:8–11).

The consequences are clear in verse 46. One is faced with the choice to embrace, receive, trust, and accept Jesus. It is either to come into the *light* or to reject Him. To reject is to walk in *darkness*. Jesus had made this very clear earlier in the chapter:

So Jesus said to them, "The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them (Jn. 12:35–36).

To help people understand the seriousness and weightiness of what he was saying, Jesus gave them a stern reminder. He reminds them that what he was saying originated with the Father who told him *what* to say and *how* to say it. Their accountability would not be to a carpenter from Nazareth but Almighty God who sent him. Jesus shared, "For I *have not spoken on my own authority*, but the Father who sent me has *himself given me a commandment—what* to say and *what* to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I

say as the Father has told me” (Jn. 12:49–50). He said His Word would judge them for rejecting him, the Light.

ILLUSTRATION: ART CRITICS

There is an old story about tourists wandering through a European art museum casually making critical comments about some of the paintings they disliked or did not understand. Finally, one of the attendants, unable to put up with their discourteous behavior any longer, responded, “The paintings in this museum are not on trial; only the spectators are.”

So it is with the Word of God. For two thousand years religious leaders and atheists, wealthy and poor, brilliant and ignorant, have critiqued God’s Word, but in the final analysis as John so aptly said, “It will judge us all.”

Understanding how God brings us to salvation is very important. Jesus will say in John 15:16, “You did not choose me, but I chose you. . .” The element of special revelation bringing us to conviction by the Holy Spirit is essential before a person is willing to surrender his own self-will to Christ as Savior. John 6:44-45 also says, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.”

Do you ever think of how the Trinity was all involved in you coming to Christ?

How much do you think a person has to understand about the doctrine of salvation to believe on the Lord and be saved?

Does John’s message of Jesus’ life and teachings build your confidence about your own salvation?

APPLICATION // ...have life in His name.

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

John 12:42-43 explains that some believed but were afraid to go public. Do you think it was pretty serious that some who believed never went public?

Matthew 10:32-33 says, “So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.” Does this verse impact your thinking?

Jesus seemed to be defending himself, as well as announcing himself as light. Do you think our main objective as His followers should be to *defend* Him or *proclaim* Him?

PRAYER

Close in prayer, asking God to press this truth that was studied.