

## John on Jesus - One Last Chance

May 12, 2013

How many of you know what this is? It is not an over-developed egg timer. It is an hour glass. An hour glass reminds us time is running out. You want to remember that this morning.



As a church, we are studying our way through the Gospel of John. This morning, we finish John 12. Take your Bible and turn to John 12:36. Take out your outline. If you are using a pew Bible, you will find John 12:36 on page 899.

By way of review, I told you the Gospel of John has a hinge right smack in the middle. The first half of the Gospel of John deals with the two plus years of Jesus' ministry. Beginning in chapter 12, the second half of the book focuses on the last six days of Jesus' life.

Let me lay out how the rest of this Gospel comes together. This morning, when we finish John 12, we finish Jesus' public ministry. The next time we see Jesus in public is for his crucifixion. Chapters 13-16 are Jesus' private instructions to his disciples before his death. Chapter 17 is Jesus praying for us. Chapters 18-21 are Jesus dying for us.

This morning, as we finish chapter 12, we conclude Jesus' public ministry. Last week, we learned it was Monday of Passover week when Jesus came into Jerusalem to the cheers of a crowd most likely numbering more than 10,000. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is often called the Triumphal Entry. Last week, we

learned the Triumphal Entry was much more triumphant than most of us have envisioned. The crowds were crying for Jesus to be king by popular demand.

The temptation to give into the wishes of the crowds was powerful. If we have a hard time fighting a little peer pressure, imagine the temptation Jesus faced in those moments. Jesus was especially courageous when we think about his turning away from the crowds in light of the week he knew he would face by not giving in to their applause. He knew that by turning away from the applause of the crowd, he would face the most horrifying events in all of creation history. Humanly, he would die the most barbaric death created by man, death on a cross. As God, the one who knew no sin, he would become a sponge and soak up all of our sin upon himself. He would face the full, and just, fury of his father's wrath against sin in our place. He would embrace unspeakable horror to save us, but even more importantly, to gain the applause of the one person that matters, the applause of his heavenly Father.

**Take a leap of faith and give my life to Jesus, even if I don't have it figured out.**

As we pick up the story, there are only minutes left to Jesus' public ministry. Time was running out for people to respond. The window was closing. Let's see how these last final minutes unfolded. Jesus just explained to the crowd that he would die. When he died, he would draw not just them but all people, to himself. The crowds couldn't understand how Jesus' dying would bring about a win.

**“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. So the crowd answered him, “We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you**

say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" John 12:32–34 (ESV)

I picture the crowd looking at him with a puzzled look on their faces. They were ready to crown him king. How could he think about dying? Somebody in the crowd got biblical. In Sunday school, they learned Christ would remain forever. He can't die. They asked, "How can you say the Son of Man will be lifted up?"

Prolong the life of the king; may his years endure to all generations! May he be enthroned forever before God; appoint steadfast love and faithfulness to watch over him! Psalm 61:6–7 (ESV)

He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 2 Samuel 7:13 (ESV)

They were thinking about a kingdom established on earth in the immediate future. The idea of Jesus dying to save us from our sins to break the power of Satan, sin and death was not on their radar screens. Are these verses in Psalms and 2 Samuel true? Yes! Jesus fulfilled them through the cross and when he returns. They were not true at this time in history.

The same thing happens with the Son of Man motif. The Son of Man was Jesus' favorite description of himself. It is a description that comes from Daniel 7 where the one like a Son of Man approaches the Ancient of Days, who is God the Father. God the Father gives the Son of Man dominion to rule the earth. Is Daniel 7 true? Will the Son of Man rule the earth? Yes, it is! The way the Son of Man triumphs over Satan, sin and death is through the cross. The crowds talking to Jesus understood their Bibles like I understand the church photocopier. I know

enough to open it up and take out a few pieces but I don't know the details of how it works.

I love the way Jesus handled this. He didn't get into a theological debate. He ignored their questions and told them to believe. Sometimes people won't come to Christ because they have questions. Questions are good, but there is a time to stop asking questions and just believe. With only minutes left to Jesus' public ministry, it was the time to stop asking questions and to just believe.

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. John 12:35–36 (ESV)

Here is the deal. There was a limited window of opportunity for them to believe in Jesus. At the end of verse 36, the window closed. Jesus hid himself from the crowd and the last opportunity for those in the crowd to repent and believe was gone.

This reminds us that the way God works is he gives each of us a limited number of opportunities to repent and believe in Jesus. I don't know how many windows of opportunity each of us have but they are a limited number. Some are given more windows than others. In these windows of opportunity, when the Holy Spirit is drawing your heart and you know you need to repent of your sins and trust in Christ, you need to go for it. Sometimes insisting we have all of our questions answered is just a delay tactic to stall repenting. It is our way of trying to shut the window that has opened. That opportunity may be gone, just as Jesus was gone right after this.

The next thing we learn is how to deal with our questions about Christ. We all have questions about Christ. There are tons of questions out there. Before I came to Christ, I probably had six questions, now I have 6,000. Are we supposed to have all of our questions answered before we believe? Absolutely not! Jesus describes it like light and darkness. The one who walks in the darkness doesn't know where he is going. He is clueless, as he bumps around the room. When the light switch goes on, things begin to make sense. It is the same way with knowing Christ. Before we come to Christ, we are groping around in darkness with our questions. When we trust in Christ, the lights go on. We get many of our questions answered. We still have more questions, but now, we can see where we are going. Things start to make sense because the Holy Spirit comes into our lives to guide us.

Trust in Christ in the limited window of opportunity God gives you. Sometimes we need to take that leap of faith even though we do not have all our questions answered. The Holy Spirit will help us.

### **Why will some people not believe?**

John moves from reporting on Jesus, to editorializing about Jesus. These are divinely-inspired words so we can trust John's editorial comments. John asked the question everyone in the ancient world was asking when they read this Gospel.

**Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, John 12:37 (ESV)**

If Jesus is the Jews' Messiah, why wouldn't the Jews believe in him? John gives us two answers. First, they wouldn't believe because they couldn't believe.

Second, some believed but they were afraid to admit their belief publicly.

**Some wouldn't believe because they couldn't believe.**

Some people think if they were around in the days of Jesus and they saw the feeding of the 5,000, if they saw the blind man receive his sight, if they saw Lazarus come out of the grave, they would believe. I disagree. I don't think seeing miracles makes anyone believe. We already saw this earlier in the Gospel of John. Some people saw Jesus' miracles and they didn't respond with belief. Some people saw Jesus' miracles and they tattled about the miracles to the religious leaders. Why were their hearts so hard? John quoted two passages from Isaiah to explain this.

The first passage comes from Isaiah 53:1.

**Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Isaiah 53:1 (ESV)**

Context is key. This passage comes from a part of Isaiah that is a prediction of Christ. The entire chapter is called the suffering servant passage. It talks about the Messiah coming as someone who was not necessarily attractive. It tells us Christ would not be known as someone of might and power. There would be nothing that would draw people to him. He wouldn't glow in the dark. He would look like an ordinary dude. It tells us he wouldn't act like a conquering hero. He wouldn't ride in for the Triumphal Entry on a war horse but on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

In other words, in the Old Testament, God said people wouldn't believe Jesus' claim to be God the Son, even when he backed up his claims with miracles, because he was so ordinary. Isaiah 53 goes on to say Jesus would be despised and rejected and that Jesus would die for our sins. Jesus was rejected because he was ordinary, not powerful and majestic. The Jews wanted a majestic man, not an ordinary man. That is one reason they wouldn't believe him even after his miracles. God wanted it that way.

Then John quoted again from Isaiah. This time from Isaiah 6:10.

And he said, "Go, and say to this people: "'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed." Isaiah 6:9–10 (ESV)

To get this, you need some background on Isaiah. Isaiah was called by God, as a teenager, to be a prophet. He was going to speak the words of God to God's people and call them to repentance. At first, that sounds like a dream job. "Isaiah, God calls you to lead a national revival." You picture Isaiah with dreams of being a mega-church pastor. God told him things wouldn't unfold that way. God called Isaiah to preach and teach but then he told Isaiah, "Don't expect anybody to listen. In fact, for your entire life people are going to think you are a nut job. You are going to preach and teach in my name and nobody is going to repent. Nobody is going to listen. That is the way God wants it. They will not believe," God said to Isaiah, "because they cannot believe. God will keep their hearts hard." That's hardcore, but that is biblical.

John summarized what happened to Jesus by pulling these words right from Isaiah's calling by God and saying these words also apply to Jesus.

**Therefore they could not believe... John 12:39 (ESV)**

What this tells us is it doesn't matter how good you are at sharing the Gospel, there are some people that will never believe in Jesus. For some, the Gospel just won't connect. While the Gospel message is extended to all, only those whose hearts God, in his mercy softens, will believe. I don't tell you this to discourage you but to encourage you. We often think sharing the Gospel is completely up to us. If we could just explain the Gospel with great clarity, everyone would come to Christ. If we could just pull off a few miracles, like Jesus, everyone would believe in Christ. No, they wouldn't! Jesus explained the Gospel better than any of us and not everyone followed him. In fact, most of the Jews didn't get it. Even one of Jesus' disciples, Judas, didn't trust in him. Did somebody need to coach Jesus and tell him how to share the Gospel with better clarity? Were Jesus' miracles not good enough? Absolutely not! They didn't believe because they couldn't believe.

This tells us there are two parts to coming to Christ. There is our explaining of the Gospel or the presentation of the Gospel, but there is also the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart that causes the Gospel message to spring to life. Think of this like farming. Our job is to plant the seed. God's job is to take the dead seed and spring it to life. Share the Gospel. We may not be slick. We may get it a little wrong. Some people will think we are nuts. Others will



experience God using those simple words of God's love for us as the divine way God brings about spiritual life.

In this passage, we learn God sovereignly, by his decision, chose for the majority of the Jews to hear the Gospel, to see the miracles of Jesus, but he chose to not have it spring to eternal life.

I know some of you are mad at God because of this. You don't think it is fair. Why doesn't everybody come to Jesus? Paul talks about this in Romans 9. You will study Romans 9 on your small group worksheets tonight. God has the right, out of the same lump of clay, to make some vessels for noble use and others for common use. It is all to God's glory who he chooses to respond to the Gospel. Interestingly, we will see that he works in a way that those who reject him are still guilty for rejecting him. That is a mind bender. That is the Bible.

Rather than be mad, we need to be glad. If somebody coming to Christ rested completely on our shoulders, we would have an incredible problem. Every time we shared the Gospel and people didn't believe, whose fault would it be? Ours! Share the Gospel. Share the Gospel well. Tell people God loves them and Christ died for them to free them from their sins, but take the pressure off your shoulders for germinating the seed. That is in the hands of God.

Why did God not have many of the Jews turn to Christ after they saw the miracles? It was God's plan that God's people would reject Jesus. They were the ones who, in God's plan, would crucify Jesus. It was by their rejection that the crucifixion would take place and we would be saved. In all of it, God would get glory. God knows exactly what he is doing.

Before we get too bummed for Isaiah, who was given the job of preaching to get no results, we need to know God was still very good to him. Look who Isaiah saw.

Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. John 12:41 (ESV)

Who does John say Isaiah saw in heaven? Jesus! In Isaiah 6:1-7, Isaiah saw Jesus glorified in heaven where the train of his robe fills the temple, beginning in verse 8, it talks about Isaiah's call and that he would have a ministry where nobody believed.

What I find incredibly encouraging is seeing Jesus before Bethlehem in the Old Testament. It is especially exciting to see the rejection of Jesus is prophesied in the Old Testament. Jesus' rejection was not a mistake. It was planned from the foundation of the world. That reminds us that God is large and in charge of everything. Nothing is out of his control. There is another reason why so many Jews did not recognize him.

**Some wouldn't believe because they were afraid to go public.**

The first reason the Jews didn't believe was because of the hardness of their hearts. God didn't choose to soften them because they were the ones God ordained to crucify Jesus for our sins. The second reason why many did not believe in Jesus was because they were afraid to go public for Jesus, especially among the leaders.

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; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. John 12:42-43 (ESV)

Who were these people? These were people like Nicodemus, from John 3. He was a member of the ruling council that believed in Jesus. These were people like Joseph of Arimathea, who took down Jesus' body after the crucifixion. Apparently there were many Jewish leaders who did believe but didn't go public with their belief for fear of being pushed out of the synagogue. They were afraid of losing their jobs.

The synagogue was the source of Jewish social and religious life. To be kicked out of the synagogue was committing social suicide. You didn't move to a church across town. There was no other church across town. Most people were not willing to take the plunge of following Jesus when it came to what it would cost them to follow Jesus. Why weren't they courageous? It goes back to whose applause they were living for —the applause of the crowd or the applause that comes only from God.

Before we label these folks as cowards and wimps, we need to think about this. They wanted Jesus to forgive their sins, but they didn't want the social inconvenience that would come with following Jesus. They wanted to follow Jesus, but they didn't want it to cost them.

We are not much different. We have this thing called a personal relationship with Christ. I challenge you to find that in the Bible. It's not in the Bible. We think knowing Jesus is a private matter, not a public matter. We say our relationship with Jesus is personal. Don't pray with others in public because faith is private. I don't talk about my Bible in public. I don't serve others in Christ's name. I have a personal relationship with Christ that nobody knows

about. That way it doesn't cost me. That way people won't think I am weird. I can be just like the people who love the praise that comes from man and not the praise that comes from God.

I think the privatization of our faith is at epidemic proportions in the American church. We have people who don't want to be part of a life group, because then they would have to talk about Jesus with another Christian. That is too personal. These are the same people that don't read their Bibles. They don't pray with people. These are lone ranger Christians who say they don't need the church. They don't need to love one another. They don't need to use their spiritual gifts to serve one another. "Let's come on Sunday then run for the buffet." They have a personal relationship with Jesus that nobody knows about. Now, of course, I am not in a position to judge people's hearts and souls. That is God's job, not mine. Wouldn't you agree with me that we personalize and privatize our faith all the time so it won't cost us in public?

Think about it like this. Would you treat your wife that way? Imagine what a personal relationship might look like with her — no wedding ring needed so we aren't inconvenienced in public, no card or flowers for Mothers Day. This is a private issue — no holding hands as you walk across the parking lot, no arm around her shoulder in church. You sit on one side of church, she sits on the other because it is a personal relationship. There would be no becoming Mr. or Mrs. with the same last name because that would be too public, no public wedding ceremony with witnesses. "This is a personal relationship. We said our vows at night by the box crusher behind Wal-Mart so nobody would know." If a

couple lives like that, we would send them for therapy. Marriage involves public life. You can't help it. The same is with Jesus. It is a public relationship that influences everything about us, not just a personal one.

### **One last chance on life.**

The final paragraph in this chapter is a summary. It doesn't tell us when Jesus said it. Maybe Jesus came back to the crowds and said this. I don't know. I do know he said it emphatically. It says he cried it out. The word cried is the same word used to describe how loudly Jesus spoke when he called Lazarus from the tomb. Here is what he said:

#### **1. Jesus is the only way to Father God and eternal life.**

And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me." John 12:44–45 (ESV)

"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." John 12:49–50 (ESV)

The Gospel of John is exceedingly clear. The only way to know God the Father is through Jesus the Son. To reject Jesus the Son is to reject God the Father. To see Jesus is to see God the Father. To believe Jesus is to believe God the Father. The two are so tight that everything Jesus said is exactly what God Father said. There is no air space between the will and the words of Jesus and the will and the Word of God the Father.

This reminds us of Christ being the only way into a relationship with God. All other religions are dead-end roads. Jesus never acts independently of his heavenly Father. There is no plan B.

## **2. We live groping in darkness; Jesus is the light we need.**

**I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. John 12:46 (ESV)**

When we trust in Christ, a supernatural work happens in our hearts. The Holy Spirit comes into our lives and we are, as John 3:16 describes it, born again, born of God. There is a supernatural work of God that happens in our hearts that we cannot manufacture. New life is created in us.

So many people spend life groping around. They live to make money. When hard times hit, they have no hope. They have no idea why they are here. Their marriages fall apart. Life is a disaster. Why is that happening? They are living in the dark. Today, open your heart to Christ. He is king of the world. He is the only way to know God the Father. Ask his death on the cross to forgive your sins and ask him to reign as the king of your heart. Pursue him like you are a newly married man going after his bride. There is nothing more satisfying in this life than enjoying him. The lights will come on.

## **3. Jesus came to save us. He will eventually come to judge us.**

**“If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.” John 12:47–48 (ESV)**

Jesus didn't come to judge us. He came to save us. When talking to people about Jesus, people often think Christians are judgmental. Jesus didn't come to judge us. He came to save us. He came to die in our place for our sins. That doesn't mean he won't eventually judge us. The Bible tells us that someday Christ will return and judge. He will not ride into Jerusalem in peace on a

donkey, he will ride into Jerusalem on his war horse. How will we be judged? It will be based upon Christ's word.

The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. John 5:22–23 (ESV)

It's like flipping an hour glass over. The window is closing. The opportunity is passing. Jesus is pleading for people to believe he is the Son of God. He is pleading for you to believe. Even if you don't have all your questions answered, take a leap of faith, let the Holy Spirit come into your heart and turn on the lights. Time is running out.

He is pleading for those who want to believe but are too scared to go public and are content with a private faith. Go public. There is no such thing as a personal relationship with God. There is nothing personal about it. The publicness of our love for Christ will be just as visible as the publicness of our love for our spouses. Time is running out.

He is pleading with us to talk about the Gospel. He is pleading with us to bring Christ into our conversations and tell people that God loves them. Jesus died for them. Will everybody believe? Of course not! Some will believe. Who will believe? Those appointed to eternal life. Time is running out. The window of opportunity is gone.

## Pray

Jesus, we come to you broken and convicted. We want to admit that too often we shrink back and don't talk about Jesus because we love the praise of men. We are into our own agendas. We are into our own glory and more concerned about our own reputations.

Jesus, thank you for loving us. Thank you for opening our eyes to see you. Thank you for giving us new life.

Jesus, I ask that as we move about in Spirit Lake and Spencer, we would have some of the passion that you had in those final moments of your public ministry when you pleaded with people to trust you, when you pleaded with people to put aside their questions and to trust you and experience knowing you. Lord, we know there is no such thing as any other plan besides Jesus.

We pray right now that you would give us the boldness to bring Jesus into our conversations with friends and neighbors this summer and that you would supernaturally germinate that seed in their hearts. Amen.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the EFCA. He enjoys reading, writing, time with his family and wrestling with his sons. His favorite topics of study are ancient rhetoric and preaching. Feel free to contact him at [ktruck@gmail.com](mailto:ktruck@gmail.com) or visit his web at [www.christ2Rculture.com](http://www.christ2Rculture.com)

© Dr. Kurt Trucksess. You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that: (1) you credit the author, (2) any modifications are clearly marked, (3) you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, (4) you include the web site address (<http://www.christ2Rculture.com>) on the copied resource.

