

The Conclusion of Our Lord's Public Ministry

John 12:44-50

John 12:44-50 - *"Then Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me."⁴⁵ And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me.*

⁴⁶ I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.⁴⁷ And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.⁴⁸ He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.

⁴⁹ For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.⁵⁰ And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak."

Background Notes

In the Gospel of John, the public ministry of Jesus Christ concludes at the end of John 12 and the "Upper Room Discourses" begin in John 13. These discourses, or sermons, were not given to the general public. They were given to His disciples.

So in the last section of John 12 we have a fitting conclusion to the Lord's public ministry. It seems to be a summary of the Lord's overall manifestation of Himself to the nation of Israel.

Notice that the whole section consists of the direct words of Jesus. How many of you have "Red Letter" Bibles? If you do, you'll notice that all of these words are in red.

Verse 44 tells us that the Lord "cried out" these words. This doesn't mean that He wept; it simply means that He raised His voice as He called out to the people. Remember, the Lord was speaking here to crowds of people that were gathered in the Temple courts at Passover.

This took place only a few days before His crucifixion. The fact that the Lord raised His voice indicates that He wanted everyone to hear these final words. They were extremely important – both then and today. Let's move to the doctrinal points to consider the importance of these final words of Jesus to the general public. And remember - they carry the same weight and importance today as they did then.

Doctrinal / Teaching Points

1. To believe in Jesus is to believe in God.

“Then Jesus cried out and said, “He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me” (v44). Now that certainly is a claim to deity, isn't it? No wonder the Lord wanted everyone to hear this statement! To believe in Jesus is to believe in God, because Jesus is God. **Jesus is fully God!**

The converse is also true: if you don't believe in Jesus, you don't believe in God. Listen to the words of the apostle John in his first epistle: *“Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also” (1 John 2:23).* So people who say they believe in God, but don't believe in Jesus cannot be true believers. They can't be true believers in the God of the Bible.

That's straight logic, isn't it? Those of the Muslim faith, for example, fall short of believing in the God of the Bible. Those of the Jewish faith fall short of the God of the Bible. They say that they believe in God, but they don't really believe in the God of the Bible because they don't believe in Jesus as God. Groups like the Unitarians also fall short. They say that they believe in the God of Bible, and they say that they follow the teachings of Jesus - but that's impossible, because Jesus clearly taught that He is God. If you don't believe what Jesus taught about God, you don't believe in the God of the Bible. To believe in Jesus is to believe in God.

It's important to understand that believing in Jesus does not mean believing in “another” God, or an “extra” God, or two Gods. No! The Bible teaches that **God is One. God is One in essence but three in Persons:** the Person of the Father, the Person of the Son, and the Person of the Holy Spirit. To believe in Jesus is to believe in the one true God.

2. To see Jesus is to see God.

“And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me” (v45). The Lord didn't mean here that to see Him physically was to see God physically. No, no one has seen God. That is the essence of deity. John 1:18: *“No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”* What the Lord meant in verse 45 was that when we see Him (Jesus), when we see the moral glory of God's character. We see the moral glory of God the Father.

This verse reminds us of what the Lord said to Philip in John 14:8-9: *“Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? **He who has seen Me has seen the Father;** so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?” (emphasis added).*

In essence, this is what the Lord was saying to the crowds in the Temple courts: “Do you want to know what God is like? Look at me! I have come as a Light into the world, so that whoever believes in Me will not abide in darkness. But if you don’t believe in me, you can’t see God. You are in darkness.”

What a claim! And that claim is still true today. If anyone ever says to you, “I’m confused! I just don’t know what God is like.” you should say, “Look at Jesus!” To see Jesus is to see God.

3. To reject the words of Jesus is to reject God.

“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak” (v48-49). To receive and believe the words of Jesus is to receive Him, and to accept Jesus is to accept God. To reject the words of Jesus is to reject Him, and **to reject Jesus is to reject God**. You can’t have it any other way!

In verse 47 the Lord said, *“And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.”* Now is that a contradiction to what the Lord said in verse 48? Verse 48: *“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.”*

How do we harmonize verses 47 and 48? In verse 47 the Lord said, “I didn’t come to judge the world, but save the world,” and in verse 48 He said, “the word that I have spoken will judge the person who doesn’t believe in the last day.” Is that a contradiction? No! The Lord was speaking of two different aspects of His coming to earth: the purpose and the result.

The **purpose** of the Lord’s coming was not to judge, but to save. However, the **result** of His coming will be judgment upon those who refuse to accept that salvation.

Here’s an illustration. Suppose we’re on a sinking ship. The SOS goes out. A Coast Guard vessel responds, and comes alongside to rescue us. They string one of those safety seats between the two ships. Now a loud speaker on the Coast Guard ship booms out, “Strap yourself in the safety seat and you will be rescued!” But we refuse to obey! Maybe we’re afraid, or maybe we don’t trust the device, or whatever. What is the result? The result is that we go down with the sinking ship! We die! Refusal to obey the rescue word resulted in our death.

The **purpose** of the message and the safety seat from Coast Guard vessel was to save lives. Its presence did not cause the deaths of the people who drowned – the deaths were the **result** of people refusing to accept the offer of rescue. They were “judged” by the very words they refused to obey.

Is that a helpful illustration? That is how verses 47 and 48 are harmonized. When Jesus said, “I didn’t come to judge the world, but save the world” in verse 47, He was stating His **purpose** in coming to earth - to rescue us from sin. However, when He said in verse 48 that “the word I have spoken will judge the person who doesn’t believe in the last day” – that is the **result** of His coming for those who refuse this word of salvation, the word that rescue from the consequences of sin is readily available. All we have to do is trust Him! Thus, *“the word I have spoken will judge Him in the last day.”*

The same thought is found in the Lord’s words in John 3. Verse 17 gives God’s **purpose**: *“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”* In verse 18 we have the **result**: *“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the Name of the only begotten Son of God.”* To reject the words of Jesus is to reject God.

Practical Application

Our decision now counts forever.

In verse 48 the Lord Jesus said that the way a person responds to His words now determines that person’s status forever. *“The word I have spoken will judge Him in the last day.”* What an awesome thought! The words of Jesus of Nazareth, spoken in history 2000 years ago, will be the means of determining the eternal destiny of the human race. Our decision now counts forever.

I’m holding in my hand a book entitled The Five Gospels. The “Jesus Seminar,” a group of liberal scholars, produced this book. The subtitle of the book is, “What did Jesus really say?” These scholars got together for the purpose of questioning everything that Jesus said, and to vote on which words they thought He actually said. Their conclusion: Jesus Himself did not actually speak most of what the Bible claims Jesus said. They concluded that most of the biblical words of Jesus were actually invented by early Christian authors!

Believe me, I would definitely not want to be in the shoes of any of those Jesus Seminar “scholars” at the Last Day: *“The word I have spoken will judge Him in the last day.”*

The unbeliever, the one who questions and rejects the words of Jesus – *“the word that I have spoken will judge Him in the last day.”* I trust that no one listening to these Talks questions and rejects the words of Jesus, because our decision now counts forever!