

John 12 • Three Responses to Christ

Introduction

There are many lessons to be gleaned from this chapter, but we'll look at the way it's organized overall by the three basic groups of people who interact with Christ. Why is it that some accept Him while others reject Him? Why is it that some appear to be much closer to Him than others? The contrasts and comparisons of these groups provide lessons for believers and non-believers alike where the issue of Jesus the Son of God is concerned.

¹Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ²So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. ³Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, ⁵“Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?” ⁶Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.

⁷Therefore Jesus said, “Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial. ⁸For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me.”

⁹The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead. ¹⁰But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also; ¹¹because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.

[Read v.1-11] Christ & His Friends

Q: Mary, Martha, and Lazarus are mentioned in several places in the Gospel. What might each of them represent spiritually?

1. Martha represents working for Christ.
2. Lazarus represents our walk and witness for Christ.
3. Mary represents worship of Christ.

Q: How does Scripture support arriving at the conclusion that Mary represents worship?

A: It's not just what she's doing here, but she is always found at Jesus' feet. This is where she was found previously when choosing to listen to Jesus' teaching (Luke 10:38-42), and she fell at His feet when He came to raise Lazarus from the dead (John 11:32).

Q: What always seems to happen to believers who show unrestrained love and worship of Christ?

A: There always seems to be a critic who will complain, someone whose heart is ultimately found to be opposite in every way to the heart of a true worshiper. Judas' lips betrayed a greedy heart that worshiped earthly treasure far more than heavenly treasure.

Q: How did Christ intervene on Mary's behalf?

A: By becoming her Advocate.

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;

1 John 2:1

Q: How is Mary's example of devotion one which we should emulate?

1. She gave her best.
2. She gave lavishly.
3. She gave in spite of criticism
4. She gave lovingly.

Point: Christ not only honors right worship but defends such from Satan's attacks.

Application: In this example of “worship”, as with nearly every other biblical example of worship, there is no music or singing involved. What does this teach us about the true, biblical definition of worship? How does this compare with what church services often call “worship time” today? What are we doing that could actually be defined as “worship” according to Mary's example?

¹²On the next day the large crowd who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, ¹³took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began to shout, “Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, even the King of Israel.”

¹⁴Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written,

¹⁵“FEAR NOT, DAUGHTER OF ZION;
BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING,
SEATED ON A DONKEY’S COLT.”

¹⁶These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him.

¹⁷So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify about Him. ¹⁸For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign. ¹⁹So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him.”

²⁰Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; ²¹these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

²²Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus. ²³And Jesus answered them, saying, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. ²⁶If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

²⁷“Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. ²⁸Father, glorify Your name.”

Then a voice came out of heaven: “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it

[Read v.12-36] Christ & the Gentiles

Q: The people are singing praises from the Songs of Ascent, a group of Psalms that even to this day are believed to speak specifically about the Messiah. How did their use of these Psalms at the Triumphal Entry actually betray their misunderstanding of the Messiah?

A: They are quoting the parts which related to the Messiah as the “Conquering King”, the things Jesus will fulfill at His Second Coming. The people were completely ignoring His coming to them first as the Messiah the “Suffering Servant”, which are all the things He fulfills in His First Coming. Jesus had to first suffer and die so that all would have the chance to be saved and later enjoy the benefits of the Conquering King to come.

Point: The Jews wanted to skip past the “Suffering Servant” and go directly to the “Conquering King”.

Q: What is the fundamental difference between the way the Gentiles approached Jesus versus the Jews?

A: Whereas the Jews said, “We want to see a sign” (Mt. 12:38), the Gentiles said, “We want to see Jesus”.

Point: A right relationship with Christ is only possible when approached on His terms and not according to our own desires or expectations.

Q: What might be examples of the differences in the treatment of Jesus between Gentiles and Jews in the course of His earthly ministry?

1. It was Gentiles (the Magi) who first recognized the signs of the times of His coming and first came to worship Him as King.
2. There were several encounters with Gentiles in the course of His ministry who more quickly identified Jesus as the Messiah and Son of David than did their Jewish counterparts.
3. Here Gentiles are more interested in seeing Jesus on His terms than according to the kinds of expectations the Jews were imposing.
4. Others?

Q: How are the Gentiles referenced here? How is this different than how they were previously referred to in Jesus’ ministry?

A: In v.32 Jesus states He will be crucified in order to “draw all men to Myself”, which refers to everyone of every race including both Jew and Gentile. Previously in Jesus’ ministry He had taught His disciples to avoid the Gentiles and concentrate on Israel (Mt. 10:5; 15:24). Now He says **EVERYONE** will be saved through the cross.

Q: What are the conditions Jesus sets in v.22-26 in response to the Gentiles’ request to see Jesus?

A: It’s not limited by race but “he who” – that is, **whoever** – “hates his life”, “serves Me”, and “follow Me”.

Q: In v.23 and 27 Christ again mentions “the hour”. How has He mentioned this before?

1. (Jn. 7:30) “So they were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.”
2. (Jn. 13:1) “Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.”

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again.”

²⁹So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, “An angel has spoken to Him.”

³⁰Jesus answered and said, “This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes. ³¹Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. ³²And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.”

³³But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. ³⁴The crowd then answered Him, “We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?”

³⁵So Jesus said to them, “For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. ³⁶While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light.”

These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them.

³⁷But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him. ³⁸This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: “LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?” ³⁹For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, ⁴⁰“HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED AND I HEAL THEM.” ⁴¹These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him.

⁴²Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.

⁴⁴And Jesus cried out and said, “He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me. ⁴⁵He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me. ⁴⁶I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness. ⁴⁷If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not

- (Jn. 17:1) “Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You,’”

Point: *It is the hour of His death, but He calls it the hour of His glory! This is quite contrary to the way men often perceived “the right time” and tried to get Jesus to work according to their own expectations rather than according to God’s.*

Q: In v.26 Christ invites “anyone”. How might this describe the ground around the cross being level for everyone?

A: There is no special advantage for anyone.

*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
Romans 3:23*

*as it is written, “There is none righteous, not even one;
Romans 3:10*

*For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.
Romans 11:32*

Application: *It always comes down to what we do with the cross. We may desire all the grander things of the Conquering King as promised in eternity, but we first have a greater need for the Suffering Servant in the work of the cross to ultimately gain those things. There’s no shortcut around the cross.*

[Read v.37-50] Christ & the Jews

Q: How might we summarize this message, which was Christ’s final public message as the end of His earthly ministry approached?

A: It’s a plain warning against allowing the opportunity for salvation to pass by.

Q: What happened after Jesus gave this final message?

A: In v.36 these final words are prefaced, “These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them”.

Point: *The verses following beginning in v.37 explain why Christ hid Himself and why the Jews were therefore condemned. Having rejected His Word, they rejected Him, and thus experienced rejection in return.*

Q: What are the terrible results of repeatedly rejecting Christ’s Word?

- Although they had seen evidence of His divine Sonship, they would not believe. (v.37)
- Because their hearts became hard and their eyes blind, they were incapable of believing. (v.39)
- Because they spurned God’s grace, God ultimately said “They could not believe” (v.40).

Point: *The end result of continued disobedience is to be given over to it. Deception does not happen supernaturally but as the result of one’s personal choices where God’s Word is concerned.*

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judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. ⁴⁸He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. ⁴⁹For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. ⁵⁰I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.”

Q: What is unique about quoting Isaiah 6:10 regarding the hardness of their heart?

A: This verse is quoted seven times in the New Testament (Mt. 13:14, Mk. 4:12, Lk. 8:10, Jn. 12:40, Acts 28:26, and Rom. 11:8). Each and every time it speaks of judgment.

Application: *The unsaved are to never take their spiritual opportunities lightly. “While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become the sons of Light”. (v.36) And in Isaiah 55:6, “Seek the Lord while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near.”*

Q: Throughout the Gospel of John the conflict between light and darkness is repeatedly presented. Light symbolizes salvation, holiness, and life while darkness stands for condemnation, sin, and death. What are the four kinds of darkness described in this Gospel?

1. **Mental Darkness.** (1:5-8, 26). The minds of sinners are blinded by Satan and cannot discern spiritual truth. (See also 2 Cor. 4:3-6.)
2. **Moral Darkness.** (3:18-21) The unsaved love sin and hate the light.
3. **Judicial Darkness.** (12:35-36) If men don't obey the light, God send the darkness so as to hide Christ from them.
4. **Eternal Darkness.** (12:46) To “abide” in darkness literally means to live in hell forever.

“But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

Revelation 21:8

Q: How does this list in Revelation of the kind of people who will go to hell relate to this teaching in John?

A: In v.42-43 many reject Christ because of their fear of man. Notice that at the head of this list are the fearful.

Q: What is ironic about Jesus' statement in v.48 that rejecting the Word of God leads to condemnation?

A: Because the exact opposite is true for those who accept and put it into practice.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.

John 5:24

Point: *The very Bible men reject today will be part of the evidence against them in judgment.*

Overall Application

The common connection between all three groups studied here is God's Word. The degree to which the Word of God is not just believed but put into practice results in the kind of relationship we have with Christ, from the most intimate to outright rejection. When we engage in the study of Scripture, the goal is not to learn information or a set of instructions, but to allow Christ – Himself described as the Word of God – to become a living, breathing part of us so that we might enter into a proper relationship from the heart.

What has been the goal of your own Bible study? Do you see that it's actually related not just to the quality of our love for Christ, but our spiritual worship?