

eDevotions for Growing Christians

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John 12:44-50

"Then Jesus cried out, "When a man believes in me, he does not believe in Me only, but in the One who sent Me. ⁴⁵ When he looks at Me, he sees the One who sent Me. ⁴⁶ I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in Me should stay in darkness.

⁴⁷ As for the person who hears My words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world but to save it. ⁴⁸ There is a judge for the one who rejects Me and does not accept My words -- that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. ⁴⁹ For I do not speak of My own accord, but the Father who sent Me commanded Me what to say and how to say it. ⁵⁰ I know that His command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told Me to say."

BELIEVING IS SEEING!

Introduction:

"Seeing is believing" is a phrase we often use when a person or a company or telemarketer makes a claim that seems too good to be true. In other words, we'll believe the claim when we see the results! More than likely we'll be disappointed with the outcome, because the product or feat or investment won't measure up to the claim.

Just the opposite is true with our Lord's ministry and claims. The claims of Jesus Christ were backed up 100% by His perfect life and miraculous works. Only the hard-hearted and the closed-minded could see and not believe.

In our Lord's ministry we not only have the truth that "seeing is believing," but we have the Lord's instruction to "believe in order to see"! The phrase "believing is seeing" certainly captures the teaching of the last section of John 12.

Background Notes:

In the Gospel of John, the public ministry of Jesus Christ concludes at the end of John 12. The "Upper Room Discourses" begin in John 13. These discourses or teachings were given to the disciples, not to the general public, 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, and a final appeal to them to believe in Him.

Notice that the whole section consists of the direct words of Jesus. If you're reading a "red letter" Bible, you'll notice that all of these words are in red.

The Lord was speaking here to the crowds gathered in the Temple courts at Passover. It was only a few days before His crucifixion. For the most part, it was an unbelieving crowd that was listening to the Lord as He spoke these words

(v37). Even though some of the religious leaders, such as Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, had become secret believers (v42), the overall mood of the crowd in the temple courts was one of unbelief. Verse 44 tells us that the Lord "cried out." He raised His voice, because He wanted everyone to hear these final words. They were extremely important -- both then and today. Our doctrinal points will emphasize the importance of these final words of Jesus to the general public. They carried 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 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 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 is 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 that you're 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, seen the essence of deity. John 1:18 says, "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 Jesus, when we see the moral glory of His character, we see the moral glory of God the Father.

It 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'?"

So 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 anyone who believes in Me will not remain in spiritual darkness. If you don't believe in me, you can't see God -- you're in the darkness!"

What a claim! That claim is true today. If anyone ever says to you, "I just don't

know what God is like -- I'm confused" you should say, "Look at Jesus!" When you look at Jesus, you see God.

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

"As for the one who rejects Me, and does not accept My words—that very 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 the words of Jesus is to receive Him, and to accept Jesus is to accept God. To reject the words of Jesus is reject Him, and to reject Jesus is to reject God. You can't have it any other way!

In verse 47 the Lord Jesus 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." However, in verse 48 He said, "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." Is that a contradiction? How do you 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, because 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. The Coast Guard responds and sends a helicopter to rescue us. A Coast Guard rescue swimmer is lowered down to the sinking ship, and he tells us, "Hold onto me, and you will be lifted to safety!" But we refuse to obey! Maybe we're afraid of heights, or maybe we don't trust the man or the safety 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 rescuer and his message was to save lives. His 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 "condemned" by refusing to listen to the words he spoke and respond to the offer of rescue.

This illustration demonstrates how verses 47 and 48 are harmonized. When Jesus said that He didn't come to judge the world, but to save the world in verse 47, He was stating His **purpose** in coming to earth -- to rescue us from sin. However, in verse

48, when Jesus said that the words He had spoken would condemn the person who doesn't believe in the last day – that is the **result** for those who refuse this word of salvation, the word that rescue from sin is available in Jesus Christ. "The word I have spoken will condemn him in the last day."

The same thought is found in John 3:17-18. 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." If we reject the words of Jesus, we reject God.

Practical Application:

1. Let your decision now count 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 condemn Him in the last day." What an awesome thought! The words spoken in history by Jesus of Nazareth two thousand years ago will be the means of determining the eternal destiny of the entire human race. Your decision now counts forever!

A few years ago, a book entitled "The Five Gospels" was published. This book was produced by the "Jesus Seminar," a group of liberal scholars. The subtitle of the book is, "What did Jesus really say?" These scholars got together for the purpose of questioning everything that Jesus said. They came to the conclusion that Jesus never really spoke most of what the Bible quotes Him as saying. They decided that most of what was written up in the Gospels as the words and teachings of Jesus was fabricated by early Christians soon after Jesus' death!

I would not like to be in the shoes of any of those Jesus Seminar "scholars" at the last day. "There is a judge for the one who rejects Me and does not accept My word -- the very word which I spoke will condemn Him at the last day."

The unbeliever, the one who rejects and will not accept the words of Jesus – those very words will judge and condemn that unbeliever at the last day. Your decision now counts forever!

2. Make sure you are in the light!

In verse 46, the Lord Jesus said that He had come as Light into this dark world, and everyone who believed in Him would

not remain in darkness. It's important to notice that the Lord did not indicate that unbelievers would **go** into darkness, but that they would **remain** in darkness.

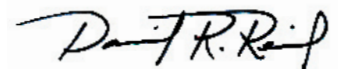
It is rare for an unbeliever to admit that he or she is in darkness. In fact, most unbelievers think that they are more "enlightened" than believers, and that the believers are in the dark. They even scoff at believers for being blinded by their lame religious beliefs and bigotry, and mock them for "living in the Dark Ages."

However, nothing could be further from the truth! According to God's Word, believers have been "called out of darkness into God's marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). Believers now have the great privilege and responsibility to "walk in the light, as He is in the light..." (1 John 1:7).

Unfortunately, unbelievers who pridefully believe themselves to be "enlightened" are actually in the dark. They are the ones who are closed-minded and bigoted, and blinded by the lies and false philosophies of the satanic world system. They have been taken "captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world, rather than on Christ" (Colossians 2:8). And they have always been in the dark! Unless they turn to the Lord Jesus Christ and believe in Him as the Light of the World, they will remain in darkness.

Verses 37-41 (which immediately precede our passage) discusses people who refuse to believe despite the evidence that has been offered to them. The prophet Isaiah is quoted: "He has blinded their eyes, and deadened their hearts, so that they can neither see with their eyes nor understand with their hearts..."(v40). If an unbeliever continues to reject Jesus Christ, God confirms their choice and allows their resistant hearts to become hardened in unbelief.

"Whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.... But whoever comes into the truth comes into the light..." (John 3:18, 19 & 21.)



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Each Sunday morning: Adult classes at Groton (CT) Bible Chapel.

Last Sunday of month: 6PM seminar, Terrill Road Bible Chapel, Fanwood, NJ.

Wednesday evening: Bible study in our home.

Tuesday: 7:15AM breakfast Bible study for men, Central Baptist Church, Westerly, RI.

Contact us at gcm@growingchristians.org for more information.

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Feedback from the Ministry:

From Myanmar:

"Thank you very much for sending your Growing Christian courses. Your materials are a source of God's blessings for me."

From South Carolina:

"I listen to you every morning on 91.7 and I truly enjoy the teaching. I can understand you. Every morning I get a light bulb moment! ...I want to learn the Word, I want to know how to live...I want to give all of me to God."

From Sweden:

"...[I] encourage you to be holy and clean... for Jesus is coming. Thanks and bless and pray and win and worship."

From Georgia:

"I'm writing to say thanks for the CDs of Talks for Growing Christians. The CDs are a blessing and I'm now on week two..."

From Nepal:

"Today I came to visit your site and found a very useful article on Devotions for Growing Christians. I am very much interested in getting the articles you send out."

From North Carolina:

"I listen to your program almost every morning. Please send me some of your information on Daniel, especially on chapters 9-12."

Family and Ministry News:

Ministry News:

In April, Dave led a group of 21 people on a Bible lands tour to Turkey. Why Turkey, you may ask?! Well, many of the apostle Paul's missionary travels were in Turkey, and followers of the Lord Jesus were first called Christians at Antioch, which is now in Turkey, and all seven churches of Revelation 2-3 were in Turkey! We visited the sites of all seven churches and studied the messages given to them by the Lord, as well as the entire book of Colossians. We also visited Colosse, Hierapolis, Miletus,

and the island of Patmos, where the John received the Revelation. Seeing a very early handwritten manuscript of the Gospel of Mark in the museum at the ancient monastery on Patmos was a highlight! In Istanbul we touched bases with Tim Lubbrand, one of Dave's students at Emmaus Bible College, and now serving in Turkey.

This summer Dave should finish taping "Talks on OPsalms." It has taken a long time -- two and a half years-- to complete!

Family News:

As we begin the summer months, we're looking forward to family vacation times. In July we'll spend a week at Camp of the Woods, a Christian family camp in the beautiful Adirondack Mountains of northern New York state. In August, Dave, Kari, Ingrid and Kirsten will be coming from Illinois to spend a week here in Rhode Island with the "New England Reids." Catherine, Kirk, Callie and Connor will travel from New Jersey to join us. We're hoping for good weather for both weeks -- for the beach, of course, plus kayaking, fishing, Jeeping, windsurfing, hiking, cookouts, campfires (with s'mores!), and a 14th birthday celebration for Connor.

Connor is enjoying the competition of spring ice hockey season. Kirk will be helping coach his team for the roller hockey season this summer. Connor is looking forward to sailing camp in July and starting high school this fall. Callie will celebrate her 17th birthday this week by getting her drivers license! She has landed a good part-time job for the summer, and is looking for a second job. She will be a HS senior in the fall.

In May, Kirsten (age 10) achieved the Bronze Award, the highest achievement awarded in Junior Girl Scouts! This award involved earning a lot of badges and doing 15 hours of community service. She chose children's literacy as her project. Ingrid was inducted into the National Junior Honor Society this spring. She will turn 13 in July -- hard to believe we'll soon have 3 teen grandchildren! Also in May - Dave (son Dave) ran a 50 mile trail race on the "Ice Age Trail" in Wisconsin.

David (grandson Dave), age 6, won a blue ribbon and "Best in Show" at a recent art show, among entries from several schools. He painted a picture of the solar system with colorful highlighted planets on a black background. Jon is back on the golf course with his dad, Ron, and "Grandpa Doc." Two days before his 10th birthday he shot a 35 for 9 holes! (He gets to tee off from what we call the "junior" tees!) He'll be doing "golf camp" again this summer.

