

# CONCERNING THE WAY

December 1, 2009



## LESSON 83: THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

### Chapter 11 – Christ the Resurrection

In the history of the world, only two people ever escaped dying (Enoch and Elijah). That's because God took them before they quit breathing. For the rest of us, death is a certainty, unless we're fortunate enough to be living the day Jesus comes back for His Church. Death is the great horror that sin has caused (Romans 5:12, James 1:15). We spend our lives ignoring death, and then trying to fight it off, but it will happen.

"As physical death ends life and separates people, so spiritual death is the separation of people from God and the loss of life which is in God (John 1:4). Jesus has come so that people may live full lives (John 10:10)." John Walvoord

Only a few have died and come back to life, and this chapter tells about one of them - Lazarus. Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead and it is the last of seven miracles John tells us about in this book. It also marked the end of Jesus' public ministry.

**John 11:1-3** Now a certain man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village where Mary and her sister Martha lived. (2) (Now it was Mary who anointed the Lord with perfumed oil and wiped his feet dry with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) (3) So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, look, the one you love is sick."

This Bethany is the one close to Jerusalem, not the one across the Jordan River. Lazarus is only mentioned in the book of John, not in the other three gospels, and we're never told what kind of sickness Lazarus has. It's interesting that John points out that this was the Mary who anointed Jesus with oil, because he doesn't relate the story until the next chapter. It looks like he was assuming that his readers would be familiar with that story from the other gospels (Mark 14:3-9)

The Greek word for love in verse 3 is "phileo", which means to love as a friend. The sisters obviously expected Jesus to come, that the friendship was so close that they didn't have to ask.

**John 11:4** When Jesus heard this, he said, "This sickness will not lead to death, but to God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

This statement by Jesus appears to be a contradiction by some people, because Lazarus certainly did die. But Jesus is not speaking of physical death. Jesus did not consider the death of the body of a believer to be real death, but only "sleeping". And Lazarus's body will be brought back from the dead by Jesus, but this is not true resurrection, but resuscitation. Lazarus would die again. True resurrection will be our final transformation into our eternal glorified bodies, which will happen at the Rapture for the Church, and at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom for the Old Testament saints, which is what Lazarus is.

**John 11:5-6** (Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.) (6) So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he remained in the place where he was for two more days.

John inserts this note, because what happens next might lead you to think Jesus didn't really love Lazarus. Jesus stays where He was for two more days instead of hurrying to Bethany to heal Lazarus. This seemed strange to His disciples, I'm sure, but the Lord always has perfect timing, even though it is usually not the same as our timetable.

*"This story teaches us two things about God's delays. The first is that they are inevitable. . . The second point about God's delays is that they are not final. He will come, in His own time and way. No doubt that will frequently be later than we would have chosen. From His divine perspective, however, it will be the right time. God is the best of time-keepers. He created time; He is never late for His appointments."* Bruce Milne

**John 11:7-10** Then after this, he said to his disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." (8) The disciples replied, "Rabbi, the Jewish leaders were just now trying to stone you to death! Are you going there again?" (9) Jesus replied, "**Are there not twelve hours in a day? If anyone walks around in the daytime, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. (10) But if anyone walks around at night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him.**"

Jesus is reminding the disciples here that He is only on the earth for a short time, so He needs to continue to do His Father's will no matter where it takes Him. So, no matter how dangerous it was for Him in Jerusalem, He had to go.

**John 11:11-13** After he said this, he added, "**Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep. But I am going there to awaken him.**" (12) Then the disciples replied, "**Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.**" (13) (Now Jesus had been talking about his death, but they thought he had been talking about real sleep.)

When a believer dies, it is as if the body only goes to sleep. The soul is eternal, and goes to be with the Lord. The way Jesus talks about our bodily death as sleep gives us the hope of resurrection. One day believers who have passed on will "wake up" out of death in their eternal glorified bodies.

**John 11:14-16** Then Jesus told them plainly, "**Lazarus has died, (15) and I am glad for your sake that I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.**" (16) So Thomas (called Didymus ) said to his fellow disciples, "**Let us go too, so that we may die with him.**"

You can see the continual development of the disciples through the book. Their belief and understanding of Jesus didn't come overnight, but was a developing process. It is the same way with us. Jesus brings us along slowly throughout our lives, bringing us ever closer into relationship, growing in knowledge and faith in Him.

"Didymus" means "the twin" in Greek. Thomas here was speaking of dying with Jesus, not with Lazarus. He's saying, OK, let's go die with Jesus, let's be martyrs! This seems to be a very fatalistic statement, but He is very dedicated to the Lord! Thomas' faith is growing.

**John 11:17-19** When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had been in the tomb four days already. (18) (Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, (19) so many of the Jewish people of the region had come to Martha and Mary to console them over the loss of their brother.)

So it seems that Jesus waited as long as He did so that there would not be any doubt that Lazarus

was dead. There was a rabbinic belief that the soul hovered near the body of a deceased person for three days, hoping to be able to return to the body. But on the fourth day it would see the body beginning to decompose and would leave. We don't know if this belief has anything to do with the four days Jesus waited, but it is possible. Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days so there was no hope that he would revive.

The point is that God wanted the people there and everyone who has read this story throughout the centuries to know that this was an astounding miracle, a demonstration of the unmatched power of God alone, and proof that Jesus was divine.

In those days, bodies weren't embalmed, but covered with spices and perfumes and wrapped with long lengths of cloth. Mourning the loss of the dead was important, some even hired professional mourners - at least one wailing woman and two flute players, more if you were rich. After the burial, family members, friends, and neighbors came to the house to mourn with the bereaved for seven days. Jewish people still practice this custom, it's called "sitting sheva." The family members usually visited the tomb for three days to make sure they were really dead, and not in a coma.

Because verse 19 says many people from the region came to console Mary and Martha, we can assume that they came from a prominent family.

**John 11:20-22** **So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary was sitting in the house. (21) Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. (22) But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will grant you."**

Notice the difference in the response of the two sisters: Martha went out to meet Jesus, while Mary stays sitting in the house. It is similar to the event in Luke 10:38-42. Here again you see Martha concerned with hospitality; she is the one who greets Jesus.

We know from following verses that Martha didn't think Lazarus would be revived, so she's simply saying, "Even though you weren't here in time to help, I still believe God will do what you ask." It was an expression of her continuing faith in Jesus.

**John 11:23-24** **Jesus replied, "Your brother will come back to life again." (24) Martha said, "I know that he will come back to life again in the resurrection at the last day."**

Martha apparently took what Jesus was saying as just the usual expression of consolation - of the general belief in the resurrection of the body at the end of the age, kind of like saying today, "I know he is in a better place."

**John 11:25-27** **Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even if he dies, (26) and the one who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (27) She replied, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God who comes into the world."**

Here we have another I AM statement by Jesus, and it is a statement of deity. And Martha recognizes this and affirms her belief in who He is. This is exactly the response that Jesus wants from us!

Jesus is saying that if you believe in me you may have to experience the first death, but you will never have to go through the second death. This ties in with what Jesus says through John in Revelation 2:11, 20:6, and 20:14.

**John 11:28-32** *And when she had said this, Martha went and called her sister Mary, saying privately, "The Teacher is here and is asking for you." (29) So when Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. (30) (Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still in the place where Martha had come out to meet him.) (31) Then the people who were with Mary in the house consoling her saw her get up quickly and go out. They followed her, because they thought she was going to the tomb to weep there. (32) Now when Mary came to the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."*

Mary had the same reaction that Martha did, indirectly holding Jesus responsible for Lazarus' death (People in the Middle East weren't as direct as Americans are). But she, too, affirms His deity in a different way by falling at His feet. We tend to do what Mary and Martha did - dwell on the "if only". If only this, if only that. We need to remember that God is bigger than our circumstances and He is sovereignly working in all of them.

**John 11:33** *When Jesus saw her weeping, and the people who had come with her weeping, he was intensely moved in spirit and greatly distressed.*

The Greek word translated "moved" here is difficult to translate, and could also mean to snort with anger; to have indignation. Jesus was angry here, not at Mary or the people, but with the manifestation of Satan's kingdom, that is, death. He was outraged at death.

**John 11:34-35** *He asked, "Where have you laid him?" They replied, "Lord, come and see." (35) Jesus wept.*

It's a well known fact that verse 35 is the shortest verse in the Bible. The Greek word used here for Jesus' weeping is different than the one used to describe the weeping of Mary and the Jews in verse 33 which meant loud wailing and cries of lament. This word just means "to shed tears" and has more the idea of quiet grief. But why did Jesus do this?

He couldn't have been weeping for Lazarus, because He knew He was about to raise him. Some think He was weeping because of the unbelief of the people there. In context, since He began to weep at the thought of Lazarus in the tomb, He may have been continuing to grieve over the effects of sin, death, and the control Satan had over the world. He may also have been thinking of His own tomb that waited for Him.

But, knowing Jesus, I think He was also identifying with the grief that Mary and Martha were feeling. Jesus understands what we go through. When we hurt, God hurts.

**John 11:36-37** *Thus the people who had come to mourn said, "Look how much he loved him!" (37) But some of them said, "This is the man who caused the blind man to see! Couldn't he have done something to keep Lazarus from dying?"*

It seems like no matter what Jesus does, He divides people - we've seen it over and over. Here it was the way He emotionally reacted that split the crowd. Some of the people are indignant with Jesus because He didn't do something to heal Lazarus.

**John 11:38-40** Jesus, intensely moved again, came to the tomb. (Now it was a cave, and a stone was placed across it.) (39) Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased, replied, "Lord, by this time the body will have a bad smell, because he has been buried four days." (40) Jesus responded, "Didn't I tell you that if you believe, you would see the glory of God?"

Instead of burying people in holes in the ground like we do, people then were normally buried in caves. A huge round stone covered the entrance, and it moved in a groove that was dug in the opening of the cave. After a year, when the flesh had rotted off the bones, the family went into the tomb, put the bones in a box, and kept the box in a hole that was chiseled into the cave wall. Martha confirms that Lazarus has been dead and in the tomb for four days, and he's beginning to decompose. No one could possibly say that Lazarus wasn't actually dead.

**John 11:41-42** So they took away the stone. Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you that you have listened to me. (42) I knew that you always listen to me, but I said this for the sake of the crowd standing around here, that they may believe that you sent me."

Everything Jesus did was carefully considered and calculated to bring the greatest witness and glory to the Father, and give people reason to believe in Him. For that reason he allowed Lazarus to die so that He could bring him back to life, and for that reason He prays this prayer out loud.

**John 11:43** When he had said this, he shouted in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"

Again, probably for the benefit of the crowd, He shouted out the command. He didn't need to shout for Lazarus' benefit. In this miracle Jesus shows us that He has the power over life and death. He is the Lord of not just this life, but also the afterlife, and we can trust Him for that just like we trust Him for this one!

**John 11:44** The one who had died came out, his feet and hands tied up with strips of cloth, and a cloth wrapped around his face. Jesus said to them, "Unwrap him and let him go."

He would have been wrapped up from head to toe; even his face would have been covered. So it would have been tough for him to just walk out. Because his legs were wrapped up, he was probably moving with some difficulty, wobbling out instead of striding out!

I think it's interesting to think about the difference in this resurrection and Jesus' resurrection in chapter 20. Lazarus comes out in his grave clothes, and he will need them again at some point. Jesus left his graveclothes in the tomb, and He will never need them again. This is not to lessen the power and importance of this miracle, but to point out that Jesus' resurrection was of a much higher order than Lazarus' resuscitation.

**John 11:45** Then many of the people, who had come with Mary and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in him.

Again, this whole thing was orchestrated by Jesus for this very purpose, so that many people would believe in Him. Everything Jesus did was for a purpose.

This event is a wonderful picture of God's Son bringing life to people. He will do this physically at

the Rapture for church saints (1 Thessalonians 4:16), and at His return for Old Testaments saints (Daniel 12:2) and Tribulation saints (Revelation 20:4, 6). Also He now speaks and calls spiritually dead people to spiritual life (Ephesians 2:1-10).

**John 11:46-47** *But some of them went to the Pharisees and reported to them what Jesus had done. (47) So the chief priests and the Pharisees called the council together and said, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many miraculous signs."*

The religious leaders were so dead set against Jesus, that even this miracle was not enough to make them believe. They would not believe the clear signs that He was the Messiah. You would think that displaying power over life and death would have been enough to make them think, hmm, maybe He is who says He is. But their hearts were so hardened against Him that all they could do was wring their hands and say, "What will we do, what will we do?"

**John 11:48** *If we allow him to go on in this way, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away our sanctuary and our nation."*

You see, this was their prime concern. If the people were to anoint Jesus as Messiah, King of Israel, they knew that the Romans would see it as an insurrection and come and put it down, destroying the temple and removing the Pharisees from their positions of authority. That's all they were really worried about.

**John 11:49-53** *Then one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said, "You know nothing at all! (50) You do not realize that it is more to your advantage to have one man die for the people than for the whole nation to perish." (51) (Now he did not say this on his own, but because he was high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the Jewish nation, (52) and not for the Jewish nation only, but to gather together into one the children of God who are scattered.) (53) So from that day they planned together to kill him.*

This is very interesting - there is amazing divine irony here. Caiaphas was plotting to have Jesus killed to keep the Romans from destroying them, but he unwittingly was uttering a prophecy, which John tells us in his note in parentheses. Caiaphas was right; Jesus' death did save the nation from being destroyed at that time. But he didn't know that Jesus' death was for the whole world, and to save people from eternal destruction. It's doubtful that he understood Isaiah 53:8 which said that Messiah would die for the sins of the people. John said he was actually prophesying.

**John 11:54-55** *Thus Jesus no longer went around publicly among the Judeans, but went away from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and stayed there with his disciples. (55) Now the Jewish feast of Passover was near, and many people went up to Jerusalem from the rural areas before the Passover to cleanse themselves ritually.*

From then on, Jesus kept a low profile, waiting for the time of His public presentation of Himself to the nation as Messiah in the next chapter. Ephraim was a small village about 20 miles north of Jerusalem, near the desert, and Jesus stayed there until Passover. This Passover is the third one mentioned in John, and the last while Jesus was on earth. We're now beginning the last week before His crucifixion.

**John 11:56-57** Thus they were looking for Jesus, and saying to one another as they stood in the temple courts, "What do you think? That he won't come to the feast?" (57) (Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who knew where Jesus was should report it, so that they could arrest him.)

Jesus laid low because it was not quite time for Him to be taken. Something very important had to happen first; something which was prophesied very specifically in the book of Daniel, and Jesus was going to fulfill that prophecy to the day.

## Chapter 12 – Christ the King

In this chapter we have the beginning of Christ's final week before the cross. Jesus officially presents Himself to the Jews as their Messiah by riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, as prophesied by Zechariah and at the time predicted by Daniel in Daniel 9:25.

**John 12:1-2** Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom he had raised from the dead. (2) So they prepared a dinner for Jesus there. Martha was serving, and Lazarus was among those present at the table with him.

Bethany was near Jerusalem, less than a day's walk east of the city. When picturing meals in the Bible, we must remember that 1st century Middle Eastern meals were not eaten while sitting at a table, but while reclining on your side on the floor with the head closest to the low table and the feet farthest away.

**John 12:3** Then Mary took three quarters of a pound of expensive aromatic oil from pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus. She then wiped his feet dry with her hair. (Now the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfumed oil.)

"Nard" is a fragrant oil from the root of the spikenard plant of northern India. This would have been worth up to a year's pay for the average worker. Notice John's note about the fragrance, spoken by someone who had been there and remembered how it smelled. And this kind of perfume was used to anoint the bodies of wealthy people who had died.

Married women always kept their hair covered in mixed company, so Mary must have been either single or widowed. But this still would have raised a lot of eyebrows. Is Mary making a prophecy of Jesus' death here, does she realize He's going to die? She might have.

**John 12:4-6** But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was going to betray him) said, (5) "Why wasn't this oil sold for three hundred silver coins and the money given to the poor?" (6) (Now Judas said this not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief. As keeper of the money box, he used to steal what was put into it.)

Since Jesus and His disciples weren't working regularly, they had to have some means of supporting the group with food and lodging, at least when they weren't staying at the invitation of others. We know from Luke 8:1-3 that they were supported by others who had the resources to do so. So they had a money box, and Judas was the treasurer (which was like leaving a fox in charge of the hen house).

A silver coin, or Denari, was about a day's pay, so this tells us how expensive this oil was. Mary and Martha must have been fairly wealthy, to be able to afford this kind of extravagance.

John tells us Judas's true nature. He was dishonest and a false disciple before he betrayed Jesus, before Satan entered him. One wonders if the disciples knew this at the time, or if they discovered it later. His act of betrayal then, in return for money, was consistent with his true character. He had evidently gone along with the disciples, thinking he would profit when Jesus established His kingdom and overthrew the Romans. When he finally saw this was not going to happen, he decided to get what he could for his trouble and betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.

**John 12:7-8 So Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She has kept it for the day of my burial. (8) For you will always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me!"**

Jesus knew Mary's heart, and knew that this extravagance was for His glory, she was expressing her love for the Lord. She gave her best to Him. How can you give Jesus your best?

Verse 8 could be taken as a fulfilled prophecy. No matter what scheme of government or economics has been tried throughout history, poverty has never been eliminated; this is as true today as in the days of Jesus. But this means we will always have opportunities to help the poor.

*"How did Mary understand these things when the others, particularly the disciples, failed? The answer is: by being often in the place where we find her now. Where? She is at the feet of Jesus, anointing Him and wiping His feet with her hair. Where is she always? At the feet of Jesus! . . . Mary is at His feet worshipping Him and learning from Him."* James Montgomery Boice

**John 12:9-11 Now a large crowd of Judeans learned that Jesus was there, and so they came not only because of him but also to see Lazarus whom he had raised from the dead. (10) So the chief priests planned to kill Lazarus too, (11) for on account of him many of the Jewish people from Jerusalem were going away and believing in Jesus.**

The word really got around about what Jesus had done. We assume that most of the people that came looking for Jesus and Lazarus came only out of curiosity in hopes they would see another miracle. But many did go away believing in Jesus. We're going to meet many people in heaven that believed in Christ at this time. And the fact that Lazarus was alive and walking around was causing many Jews to believe in Jesus, and so he was a big problem for the chief priests, who were Sadducees, and didn't believe in the resurrection. So they preferred to commit murder rather than admit they were wrong. They planned to kill Lazarus, but apparently it never got beyond that as we never hear of it again.

It's important to note that the religious leaders never questioned whether or not Jesus actually did these miracles. Today many people question them, but then there were too many eyewitnesses, and that's why they finally decided to kill him, because they couldn't explain them away, He had to be stopped.

**John 12:12-13 The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. (13) So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him. They began to shout, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the king of Israel!"**

There was always a large crowd in Jerusalem during Passover. According to one census, there were

256,500 lambs sacrificed in Jerusalem during one Passover season. If we assume a minimum of ten people per lamb were there celebrating the feast, there could have been over 2.6 million people in the city during the feast.

From what the people are saying it is very clear that they are proclaiming the coming of the Messianic King. These expressions come from Psalm 118:25-26 and would have been familiar to every Jew. Some of these people knew their scriptures, like Psalm 2:6-7. Carrying palm branches was symbolic of paying homage to a victor or king.

"Hosanna" is an Aramaic expression that literally means, "help, I pray," or "save, I pray." By Jesus' time it had become a liturgical expression of praise, however, and was used as an exclamation of praise to God.

This is called The Triumphal Entry traditionally, but it really wasn't triumphal at all. Though some of these people truly did believe in Christ and welcomed Him as Messiah, the majority of Jews and the nation as a whole rejected Him, as we'll see. They were only hailing a potential political savior. These Passover crowds were probably expecting Jesus to start some kind of military uprising against the Romans, and they wanted to be there to see it. But He did not come for that.

**John 12:14-16 Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, (15) "Do not be afraid, people of Zion; look, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt!" (16) (His disciples did not understand these things when they first happened, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about him and that these things had happened to him.)**

John didn't repeat the details of finding the donkey that can be found in the other gospels, but he did point out that this was fulfilling the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9, and he points out that the disciples didn't see this as a fulfillment of prophecy at that time, but the Holy Spirit revealed it to them after Jesus returned to heaven.

*"A king came riding upon a horse when he was bent on war; he came riding upon an ass when he was coming in peace. This action of Jesus is a sign that he was not the warrior figure men dreamed of, but the Prince of Peace."* William Barclay

**John 12:17-19 So the crowd who had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead were continuing to testify about it. (18) Because they had heard that Jesus had performed this miraculous sign, the crowd went out to meet him. (19) Thus the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you can do nothing. Look, the world has run off after him!"**

It looks like the Pharisees may have been arguing with each other here, probably saying, "we should have done something about Jesus before, because now it's too late, everyone loves Him and we can't do anything about it!" And considering how many people there may have been in this crowd, you can understand why it looked like "the world has run off after him".

**John 12:20-22 Now some Greeks were among those who had gone up to worship at the feast. (21) So these approached Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and requested, "Sir, we would like to see Jesus." (22) Philip went and told Andrew, and they both went and told Jesus.**

Here we have some Gentiles that wanted to see Jesus. We don't know if they were real believers or not. Many different people came to worship at the major Jewish festivals that did not practice Judaism. Also, we don't know why they approached Phillip, unless it was because of his Greek name.

**John 12:23-24** Jesus replied, "The time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. (24) I tell you the solemn truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains by itself alone. But if it dies, it produces much grain."

We've seen several points in John where Jesus or John says His time had not yet come. Well, now the time has come. He is speaking of His death which will lead to His glorification.

Do you realize that grain is dead? You can store it for months or even years, and all that time it is dead, but if you plant it in the ground and water it, it comes to life, and we still don't know today how that happens. It's a miracle that we take for granted. Jesus is using that as a picture of His resurrection.

*"When a grain of wheat falls and "dies" in the ground it eventually sprouts and bears more grain, which sprout and bear more, and so on and so forth until, before you know it, the initial "death" has led to life a thousand times greater. When we give God our talents, our hopes, our lives – when we die to them (either emotionally or literally) – they too return in greater portion and abundance than we can possibly imagine. Don't ask me how it happens, but it does . . . always." Bill Myers*

**John 12:25** "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.

Jesus is speaking of what is about to happen to Him, the crucifixion and resurrection, the most important event in history. Those of us who realize that should not be clinging to our own lives, because He is our life, and if we cling to Him we will have life eternally. But most people hang on desperately to their own lives because they have nothing else to hope for. And the ironic thing is that they cannot hang on to their lives, they will lose them no matter what they do. Even many Christians lose their perspective and love their life, instead of realizing that we must lose our lives in Christ. A believer should undergo a spiritual death to self (Romans 6:1-14; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Galatians 6:14).

**John 12:26** If anyone wants to serve me, he must follow me, and where I am, my servant will be too. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

We must follow Him, even though we don't see Him. And when we lose our lives in Him, we will always be with Him, and the Father will honor us!

**John 12:27** "Now my soul is greatly distressed. And what should I say? 'Father, deliver me from this hour'? No, but for this very reason I have come to this hour.

He was distressed, full of emotion, because of what He knew was coming shortly. He was fully human, so He was not looking forward to the pain and torture that He would have to undergo. He also knew that His Father would have to turn His back upon Him as the sins of the whole world were heaped upon Him. But He knew that He had come to die, so He wouldn't ask the Father to rescue Him from it. If He had been delivered from death, we would all still be lost.

**John 12:28-30 Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." (29) The crowd that stood there and heard the voice said that it had thundered. Others said that an angel had spoken to him. (30) Jesus said, "This voice has not come for my benefit but for yours.**

God the Father speaks from heaven! Remember John was a witness to this, and heard the Father speak from heaven. We can assume that the “crowd” that was there was made up of Jesus’ disciples and followers. Some that were there did not hear a voice speaking words, but only heard thunder.

**John 12:31 Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out.**

The “ruler of this world”, of course, is Satan. From the moment Adam and Eve sinned, Satan has had authority over this world. The death and resurrection of Christ utterly defeated Satan and ended that authority. The driving out of Satan will take time of course, because He won’t be finally driven out until the end of the age. This may be referring to Satan being cast out of heaven, though. In a real sense, the war is over and God has won, but there are still battles to be fought. The defeat of Satan is still being worked out in history.

**John 12:32-33 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." (33) (Now he said this to indicate clearly what kind of death he was going to die.)**

“Lifted up from the earth” is speaking of His crucifixion. The religious leaders wanted to stone Him, but Jesus knew that wasn’t the way He was to die. The phrase “draw all people” literally means “draw all kinds of people” in the Greek. Obviously not all people have been drawn, because Jesus never loses anyone He has drawn to Him.

**John 12:34 Then the crowd responded, "We have heard from the law that the Christ will remain forever. How can you say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?"**

The ones listening had been taught from the scriptures that the Messiah would reign forever (Psalm 89:35-37, Isaiah 9:7, Daniel 7:14). But they apparently forgot about the verse before in Daniel 7 - verse 13, where it talks about the Son of Man:

**Daniel 7:13-14 I was watching in the night visions, "And with the clouds of the sky one like a son of man was approaching. He went up to the Ancient of Days and was escorted before him. (14) To him was given ruling authority, honor, and sovereignty. All peoples, nations, and language groups were serving him. His authority is eternal and will not pass away. His kingdom will not be destroyed.**

**John 12:35-36 Jesus replied, "The light is with you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. (36) While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become sons of light." When Jesus had said these things, he went away and hid himself from them.**

Remember that Jesus had said that He was the light of the world? Well, He's telling the people that they'll only have the light with them a little longer. He is encouraging those listening to Him at that moment, if they had not yet believed in Him as their Messiah, to do so because He was about to be taken away from them.

This also tells us that the time we have to respond to the Light of the world is limited. The window of opportunity will not always be open. The expression "sons of light" refers to men and women to whom the truth of God has been revealed and so are living according to that truth; they are the "people of God."

**John 12:37-41** *Although Jesus had performed so many miraculous signs before them, they still refused to believe in him, (38) so that the word of Isaiah the prophet would be fulfilled. He said, "Lord, who has believed our message, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" (39) For this reason they could not believe, because again Isaiah said, (40) "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, so that they would not see with their eyes and understand with their heart, and turn to me, and I would heal them." (41) Isaiah said these things because he saw Christ's glory, and spoke about him.*

Many apparently listening to Jesus still did not believe. John is quoting Isaiah 53:1 and Isaiah 6:10 here. This is judicial hardness. This is when a person continues to harden their own hearts and turn against the truth, refuse to accept it, over and over, and God eventually says that's it, from now on you will be blinded to the truth and your heart will be hardened even more. There appears to be a point that can be reached where it is no longer possible to believe.

The Jews, not everyone but as a nation, continually rejected God, even when He has brought them their Messiah and validated Him with the miraculous signs. For this reason God gave them up to their unbelief, and the majority of them remain in unbelief to this day. John and Paul (Acts 28:26-27, Romans 11:8) both used these verses in Isaiah to explain the unbelief of the Jews. This is a subject we will revisit as we go through both the books of Acts and Romans.

Verse 41 tells us that Isaiah knew who He was talking about when he wrote about the coming Messiah. Isaiah 53, for example, is so obviously about Jesus. Isaiah didn't just have some kind of vague notion about the Messiah, He saw who Christ would be.

**John 12:42-43** *Nevertheless, even among the rulers many believed in him, but because of the Pharisees they would not confess Jesus to be the Christ, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue. (43) For they loved praise from men more than praise from God.*

This is very interesting, it tells us that many of the Sanhedrin did believe in Him, but they were afraid of the Pharisees excommunicating them. We know two of them were Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. But notice how this sentence is phrased. They believed in Him, but would not confess Him openly to be the Messiah. A mental belief in the facts about Jesus is not evidence of your salvation. Open confession is evidence of saving faith (Romans 10:9-10).

This comment in verse 43 is an indictment of many modern professed evangelicals, who often are so concerned with acceptance and prestige among their "peers" that they will dilute Biblical standards of doctrine and practice to attain and keep their standing in the world.

Did you know that since the founding of the new nation of Israel in 1948 any Jew that wanted to migrate to Israel and become a citizen was not allowed to if they were a Messianic Jew (one that accepts Jesus as Messiah)? Therefore, many went to Israel and did not say anything; they did not claim to be Messianic Jews. I'm not sure that was the right thing to do, but that's what they did because they were afraid of being kept out, just like these rulers in Jesus' day.

However, in 2008, this restriction was finally lifted by the Israeli Supreme Court. Now Israel must allow Messianic Jews to come home to Israel. It is hoped that this will start a tremendous conversion of Jews there to Jesus. Isn't that awesome?

Some say the rest of the chapter is John's summary of Jesus' public ministry, pulling quotes from different times. That seems to make sense, because Jesus has just disappeared and it looks like He has said what He wanted to say and has ended His public ministry. In any case, He has said these things before and they are a good review:

**John 12:44-45** **But Jesus shouted out, "The one who believes in me does not believe in me, but in the one who sent me, (45) and the one who sees me sees the one who sent me.**

**John 12:46** **I have come as a light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in darkness.**

**John 12:47-50** **If anyone hears my words and does not obey them, I do not judge him. For I have not come to judge the world, but to save the world. (48) The one who rejects me and does not accept my words has a judge; the word I have spoken will judge him at the last day. (49) For I have not spoken from my own authority, but the Father himself who sent me has commanded me what I should say and what I should speak. (50) And I know that his commandment is eternal life. Thus the things I say, I say just as the Father has told me."**

"The purpose of God's revelation in Jesus is positive: He came to save, not to judge (12:47; 3:17). But rejection of God's Revelation inevitably brings a hardening in sin and ultimately God's judgment. In speaking of Jewish national unbelief John balanced his theological explanation with Jesus' serious exhortation to the nation to repent. In the words of Moses, these "are not just idle words for you—they are your life" (Deuteronomy 32:47)." John Walvoord