
Day 1

Learn: Prayerfully read John 12.37-50. Those who actively believe in Jesus as the Messiah [Christ] believe not just in him, but in God the Father [12.44]; to have faith in the Messiah whom God the Father sent was to have faith in the Father himself. Those who could see Jesus were seeing God the Father in the sense that Jesus was the perfect reflection of the Father's character and will [12.45]. As the Son of God, he was in total unity with God the Father, and the perfect image of him. So to know or observe Jesus is to effectively know or observe God the Father. Jesus spoke exactly what God the Father desired [12.49-50], words which bring eternal life to those who believe [12.50]; Jesus came as a light for the world, that those who believed in what he taught [about God, himself, salvation, a relationship with God] would move from spiritual darkness to spiritual light, which is eternal life with God [12.46].

The Greek verb for "judge" [κρίνω; KRI-no] also can mean "condemn": it can mean I give you a judgment [innocent or guilty] or that I give you condemnation [for being guilty]. In 12.47-48, Jesus is talking in terms of condemning people, about judging them to be guilty and deserving condemnation. We have already learned in this gospel that the Son of God will be the judge of all people at the end of time, but that his life here was not so he could condemn people at that time, but so he could offer revelation [light], so people could accept God's gift of grace in faith and thus receive salvation. And yet, Jesus himself is the focal point of God's judgment: all of us deserve condemnation [judgment of "guilty"] for our corruption in character and sinful behavior, but those who come to believe in God's gift of a way out through Jesus will receive grace and mercy, while those who do not believe will remain condemned. The Jews in Israel during Jesus' ministry years had an opportunity to believe by seeing and hearing the truth directly from Jesus, so their rejection of Jesus, their rejection of the truth, validates that they deserved condemnation, and so it is this truth that condemns them.

Reflect: Reflect for a moment on the fact that *you* deserve to be condemned, judged "guilty" by Christ, because *you* have a corrupted human nature and have committed sins by going against God's will or character. *You* deserve to go to Hell. Now pray thanks for God providing a way out, for God extending mercy and grace to you, and for making this a gift through Christ rather than making you try to earn it in some way.

Day 2

Learn: Prayerfully read John 12.37-38. Let's remember our context: sometime during his last week of life, Jesus has hidden himself from the crowds [12.36]. Most of those crowds were not believing in him, despite all his miracles [12.37]. They might get caught up in the enthusiasm of the moment and believe in him as a prophet or declare him to be the Messiah and King [a savior from the Romans], but they did not have true faith, they did not believe he was the Son of God or a Savior from their sin. John quoted from Isaiah 53.1 and said this prophecy was being fulfilled by the people's unbelief [12.38]. John says this "report" or "message" in Isaiah 52-53, was the truth about Jesus. The "arm of the Lord" was a Jewish idiom referring to God's acts of power. Isaiah said the Messiah would suffer at the hands of people, but die for mankind's sin; and this would astonish the other nations who would finally understand revelation about the Messiah-savior, but Israel would reject this Messiah.

Reflect: Isaiah prophesied that the people of Israel would reject their Messiah-savior, so the unbelief of the people in Jesus' day was fully foreseen by God and placed in scripture hundreds of years before Jesus was born. Think about this: once God put it in scripture, it *had* to come true, for God's revelation is always truthful. God, foreseeing rejection of the Messiah, prophesied through Isaiah that the rejection would happen, and therefore made it necessary to happen. Like in a movie about time travel, you can make yourself dizzy trying to work through all the logical relationships involved. Those people deserved condemnation for their corrupted nature and sinful lives, and they rejected the gift of grace through the Messiah-savior with their unbelief, which was both foreseen and required to fulfill scripture. Reflect on all this and get it straight in your mind. Pray thanks to God that he chose to deliver you from unbelief, that he allowed you to come to faith and be saved!

Day 3

Learn: Prayerfully read John 12.37-40. John quoted from Isaiah 6.10. He was not saying what happened in Jesus' day fulfilled this as a prophecy, but that what happened in Isaiah's day illustrates what happened in Jesus' day. God

commissioned Isaiah to take a ministry in which he would be ignored, scorned, and rejected by the people to whom he was to speak. God was sending Isaiah to evoke a negative response in the people, thereby hardening their hearts. God's judgment was already decided based on the people deserving condemnation, but now he would allow them to display how much they deserved it. Thus, God blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts so that they would not perceive and understand the truth and then repent, which might provoke a merciful reaction by God.

Prayerfully read Paul's words to Jewish leaders in Rome: Acts 28.24-28. Most Jews in that generation rejected the Messiah-savior sent by God the Father. This was in part because God had blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts. They already had turned away from God and away from honoring the Mosaic Covenant with God; they already lacked faith in God's revelation about the Messiah and the New Covenant that were coming; and thus they already deserved condemnation [a judgment of "guilty"] by God. When Jesus was here, he offered light, revelation that would save, and some Jews responded in faith, and so they "turned," "returned," or "repented" to God [the Greek in John and Hebrew in Isaiah can mean each of those], and received spiritual healing from God in the form of salvation and true spiritual life in intimacy with him. Most Jews did not repent or believe, in part because God had blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, to provoke their rejection of the Messiah so that their guilt would be crystal clear; faith in Christ and his salvation is the deciding point between who receives mercy and who does not.

Reflect: This can be hard to digest! So take a little time to reflect on what you have learned here. 12.37-38 shows the human condition: unfaithful, wayward, deserving of condemnation to spiritual death. 12.39-40 shows God's participation while Christ walked the Earth, but remember God was not hardening the hearts of innocent or faithful people, he was just pushing the guilty and unfaithful farther into guilt and faithlessness; with Christ's presence, God was provoking them to make a clear decision on faith in God, his revelation, and his Messiah-savior. Take a moment to write down what you have learned in these three days and what you think about those things. Do not be shy about talking with a pastor or another spiritual leader in your church regarding any concerns or questions!

Day 4

Learn: Prayerfully read John 12.41. Translators and interpreters agree that John is saying Isaiah saw Christ's glory and spoke about Christ. We know in passages like Isaiah 52-53, Isaiah spoke about the Christ to come as God's Suffering Servant. But what does John mean by saying Isaiah *saw* Christ? I would translate that Isaiah "perceived" Christ's glory, but that does not help us get at an answer to this question. Here are a couple of theories. One theory notes that in Isaiah 6.1-13, Isaiah had a vision of God on an elevated throne. Isaiah called him "Yahweh" [God's name], "Adonai" [lord], and "king." If Isaiah actually saw the Son of God, rather than the Father, it would connect Jesus with Yahweh [God], consistent with other teachings by John and Jesus in this gospel. It also would suggest that the Son, as the anointed judge of all people, was the one who hardened hearts and blinded eyes. A second theory is that John merely is saying Isaiah saw/perceived Jesus as the suffering servant in Isaiah 52.13—53.12.

Reflect: Whatever John meant in 12.41, it is clear that Isaiah prophesied about the Messiah-savior. In this passage of John, we have seen Isaiah 53.1 being fulfilled by the circumstances in Jesus' day and Isaiah 6.1-13 used as an illustration of the circumstances in Jesus' day. As you go through these devotions, you should be learning more about how to study and interpret scripture. Here you see two ways the New Testament writers used the Old Testament. Reflect on these things and pray thanks to God for the many prophecies about Christ which Jesus fulfilled or will fulfill when he returns.

Day 5

Learn: Prayerfully read John 12.42-43. We know a few religious leaders came to true faith in Jesus. It is not clear if John is talking about them here or about people who were excited by the miracles but allowed the Pharisees to intimidate them out of really considering Jesus in faith. John used the aorist [AIR-ist] tense verb "believed" when he was non-committal about whether it was true faith. In any case, these people lost out, because they were more concerned about being honored by people than about being honored by God, they were more concerned with the rewards of people [including membership in the synagogue] than with rewards from God.

Reflect: Do you ever hold back in your confession of Jesus as the Son of God and Messiah-savior because you are afraid of the earthly consequences? Prayerfully ask God to show you if this is true, and confess and repent regarding any times you know this to be true. Will you now be more bold, seeking honor from God rather than people?