

John 12: Surrendered or Self-Serving

Your Choice: Light or Darkness; Confusion or Clarity

John 12.34-36

The Confused Crowd

The crowd spoke up, "We have heard from the Law that the Messiah will remain forever, so how can you say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this 'Son of Man'?"

In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it it. (P 4-5)

- ❖ For the first time, the crowd speaks in response to all that Jesus has said. It is clear that they have understood at least some of what they have heard. They perceive his "messianic status" and they understand that he has been speaking of his death. These are significant perceptions. But in their understanding, it doesn't add up—

"We have heard from the Law that the Messiah will remain forever, so how can you say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this 'Son of Man'?"

- ❖ The issue: it doesn't fit their expectations for the anticipated Messiah.

- ❖ “We have heard from the Law”—this gets to the heart of the issue: what had they heard and from whom had they heard it?
 - ▶ The ones from whom they had learned the Law, the rabbis and teachers, were labeled by Jesus as “blind guides” (Matthew 15.14; 23.16, 24). In reality, what they heard was a complex and distorted interpretation of the Law where oral traditions had supplanted original revelation and intent—a fundamental rule of accurate interpretation (eg. marriage and divorce: Matthew 6.31-32; 19.3-9).
 - ▶ In actuality, the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets spoke extensively about the “lifting up” of the Coming One (eg. Psalm 22; Isaiah 53). Every detail of the Pentateuch pointed toward fulfillment in and through the Coming One (Exodus 12.21-27 / *1 Corinthians* 5.7; Exodus 12.46 / *John* 19.31-36; Leviticus 17.11 / *Matthew* 26.28; Numbers 9.12 / *John* 19.31-37; Numbers 21.9 / *John* 3.14-18).
- ❖ Their paradigm embraced a nationalistic Forever-King (Psalm 89.20-29) but had no concept of his ministry on their behalf as the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 52.13-53.12).

❖ The revelation wasn't unavailable—

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow.

1 PETER 1.10-11

—it was unacceptable, an issue that Jesus has addressed previously and will address again—

“You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.””

MATTHEW 15.7-9

❖ This passage has eternal implications for us: who's teaching (or influence) do we listen to and what do we listen to hear? What kind of Jesus are we looking for? What kind of Jesus are we predisposed to accept—or reject?

The Availability of Clarity

Then Jesus told them, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going.”

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I AM the Light of the World. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

JOHN 8.12

❖ Jesus did not answer their question, “Who is this Son of Man?” Perhaps his perspective at this moment is the same as what he will shortly say to Philip: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? (14.9)”

Instead, Jesus offers clarity, but warns them—

- ▶ *You will not have the light indefinitely;*
- ▶ *Act on the light or the darkness will master you;*
- ▶ *The person walking in darkness is lost and doomed.*

❖ Jesus had already addressed the light/darkness dynamic in his kingdom sermon in Matthew's Gospel:

You can't serve both the Source of Light and the Power that Blinds.

MATTHEW 6.23

Darkness is supernatural and can only be countered by a greater supernatural force.

The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. . . . For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

2 CORINTHIANS 4.4, 6

Light takes the initiative and we must respond by faith, and while there is opportunity: *Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you.*

- ❖ How do we know if we are walking in the light? The Apostle John continues this theme of light and answers this question in his first letter—

This is the message we have heard from Him and declare to you: God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin.

1 JOHN 1.5-7

- ▶ If we believe (trust, rely exclusively) on the words and work of Jesus (1.7)
- ▶ If we love as forgivingly and unconditionally as He has (2.9-11)
- ▶ If we are repulsed by the spirit and lifestyles of those who do not walk in the light (2.15-16; cf. Ephesians 5.1-14)
- ▶ If we long for a righteousness that will stand up to His scrutiny and judgment (2.28-29; 3.18-22)

❖ Jesus has finished speaking to Israel. He will now withdraw to be in private with his disciples. There will be no more parables, teaching, healings or miraculous signs.

When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.

Grace gives every opportunity and God is unwilling that any should perish. But the opportunity has never been indefinite, or according to our terms, timing, or initiative.

See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end. As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion." Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies perished in the wilderness? And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.